

## **EDITORIAL**

### **New directions in Chinese educational research**

This special edition of *London Review of Education* arose following the inaugural conference of the Chinese Educational Research Association (CERA) that was held at the Institute of Education, University of London (IOE) in June 2013. The conference attracted nearly 130 participants representing over thirty universities across the UK, with some participants coming from other European universities. There were also visiting scholars from a number of universities in China as well as representatives from the Education Section of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the UK. The conference embraced the widest possible definition of 'Chinese' in order to welcome friends from the Chinese diaspora around the world and also those academics with a strong interest in developments in educational research focusing upon China. It became evident that there was a wide range of research taking place that the Chinese academic community based in Britain and across western Europe were largely unaware of, so it was felt that this growing number of researchers and scholars from China would benefit from having their own research association. The present papers and reviews come from this conference and form part of a growing body of research being produced by Chinese students pursuing educational studies in British universities.

Peidong Yang has been working in an isolated community not far from the border between China and Burma. His paper identifies centrifugal political forces that are strengthening Chinese national identities to the detriment of local linguistic and cultural identities. His focus is upon the structures of the education system and the way it impacts upon the consciousness of the rising generation. Yang adopts a Foucauldian perspective, seeing educational policies as an articulation of state social technologies leading to integration and nation-building. The intersection between state ideology and education is further developed in the paper by Lin Ke and Hugh Starkey who examine forms of citizenship as expressed and experienced through participation in the expanding social media platforms across China. Their concern is the extent to which people increasingly adopt the stance of the bystander, seeking to establish a distance between public participation and their own personal engagement. Ke and Starkey argue that citizenship education can play a positive role in encouraging a more active and committed stance if it focuses upon the potential for active engagement that exists through social network sites. Tinghe Jin examines the implications for the teaching of Mandarin of the complex cultural and social ecology of language which confronts students when they follow a university course in the UK to learn Chinese. She argues for a rethink of the structure of courses on offer across the British university system so that learning Mandarin becomes more closely integrated with social and cultural aspects. She advocates a shift towards language learning as the acquisition of competence in intercultural communication. Danlu Wang works in Chinese community schools in London and records the shifting demographic and cultural landscape facing teachers in such schools. Her paper touches upon the same broad theme as that of Tinghe Jin as she demonstrates the extent to which learning Chinese now involves coping with the complex interculturalism of the student body. For teachers of Chinese in London schools, the nature of the work has changed almost beyond recognition from just a decade ago.

The papers embody one of the dominant themes emerging from the CERA conference, which was that educational research about China, the Chinese people, and Chinese language necessarily involves cross-national and cross-cultural dimensions, something that reflects the changing role and position of China around the world.

Following the selection of papers is a section of book reviews drawing attention to the burgeoning field of China- and Chinese-related educational monographs. One source for such work has been from authors who have spent periods of time studying in universities in Europe, North America, and Australasia. The reviewers are themselves British-based Chinese researchers based at the Institute of Education, London and this initial selection reveals work that is located across the disciplinary fields of the social sciences. In particular we have included a review of a major text that is currently being used in UK schools for the teaching of Mandarin.

CERA will hold its second conference at the IOE in London in June 2014. If readers would like to become involved as contributors and participants they can contact [ceraannualconference@gmail.com](mailto:ceraannualconference@gmail.com). The theme of the second conference will be *Researching New Directions in Chinese Education*. Additionally, the next biennial conference staged jointly by Beijing Normal University and the Institute of Education will be held in London in November 2014. This has become established as a major forum for UK–China dialogue in education and this year contributors will focus on the theme of *Education in a Changing World*. We hope readers of LRE will consider contributing to this conference.

If you would like more information about the work of the Chinese Educational Research Association please contact [cerauked@gmail.com](mailto:cerauked@gmail.com). We are a network whose aim is to coordinate professionals, practitioners, and researchers with a shared interest in Chinese-related educational research. We are also committed to enabling the varied voices of our research community to be heard by others in the educational field and by policymakers. We welcome international members and friends who share our interests and commitments to furthering understanding of Chinese educational issues. Special thanks to Lucia Johnstone Cowan for her work assisting the editors.

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