

Re-shaping education for citizenship: democratic national citizenship in Hong Kong, by Pak-sang Lai and Michael Byram, London, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012, 260 pp., £39.99 (hardback), ISBN (10) 1-4438-3531-5, ISBN (13) 978-1-4438-3531-2

Citizenship education has the potential to be one of the liveliest school subjects, which is deeply affected by the social transformation and political innovation, while it also can play an important role in facilitating national formation and democratisation in the contemporary world. Hong Kong is a place where citizenship education has been through many changes with the social fluxes in its history. In September 2012, a big protest was staged in Hong Kong aiming to boycott the imminent introduction of the compulsory course 'national education' that is initiated by the Hong Kong local government but widely seen as a mission to serve the Chinese central government and an attempt to brainwash Hong Kong's young generation (Chong, Wei and Cheung 2012; Liu 2012). This activity stimulated a new round of debates about citizenship education 15 years after Hong Kong returned to China. Many people are interested in the potential reason why the protest happened. What is the key conflict between Hong Kong and its motherland? What will be the future changes of citizenship education in Hong Kong and China?

Pak-sang Lai and Michael Byram's book *Re-Shaping Education for Citizenship: Democratic National Citizenship in Hong Kong* provides some of the answers to these questions. This book is well placed to explore the relationship between citizenship education and national formation. Globalisation and internationalisation, continually changing nations and the changing world, creates a 'changing citizenship' (Osler and Starkey 2005), which may require a new pattern of citizenship education. When different political systems clash and diverse values are intertwined, what kinds of decisions can and should schools or nations make? This school-based case study provides a possible choice of citizenship education to deal with diversity and plurality, not only for Hong Kong, but also for other Asian countries as well as the rest of the world.

The book examines the development of citizenship education in Hong Kong after this city ended its history as a British colony and re-integrated with China as a special administrative region in 1997. The study focuses on a pattern of citizenship education constructed for young students under the policy of 'One country two systems (OCTS)'. It includes nine chapters. Apart from the introduction (Chapter 1) and the conclusion (Chapter 9), the structure of the book can be divided into three main parts: background and literature review (Chapters 2–3), ethnographical case study in the school (Chapters 4–6) and theoretical interpretation and comparative study (Chapters 7–8).

In the Introduction, the authors briefly explain the reason and the purpose of the research: what new national citizenship students learn and how they learn in the OCTS context. Chapter 2 systematically narrates the history of Hong Kong and the background of Hong Kong's citizenship education before and after 1997. Several important time points and official documents are presented as the representatives of transition of local citizenship education, such as 'Guidelines on Civic Education in Schools' in 1985 and 1996, 'Education Blueprint for the 21st Century' in 2000 and 'the Curriculum Development Reform Guidelines' in 2001 (16–7). In Chapter 3, various notions and theories are considered in terms of citizenship and citizenship education in different cities and countries. Through analysing different approaches to citizenship from cultural, political and national perspectives and applying them to examine Hong Kong's situations and problems, the rationale of this research on the citizenship model of Hong Kong emerges.

The case study of a school in Hong Kong starts from Chapter 4. Ethnographic research methods, like school visits, documentary research, class observation and interviews, are used

to investigate a real situation of a secondary school where strong English education traditions and liberal and democratic culture settings have been retained. After showing the learning context of the school, Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the citizenship curriculum of the school. Led by the question of what exactly the students learnt under the OCTS policy, Chapter 5 identifies a composite national identity among students: a democratic national identity towards Hong Kong on the one hand and a de-politicised ethnical national identity towards mainland China on the other hand. Students tend to reinvent national values to embrace Western concepts. Then, Chapter 6, from the students' own perspectives, provides further discussions about students learning experiences of the citizenship education programme and factors that may influence their learning, such as teaching approach and teachers' roles.

When it comes to ethnographic data analysis, the authors in Chapter 7 use a few theories of nationalism to interpret their findings. Some fascinating arguments are proposed. For example, the school can be recognised as 'a place where a public culture rooted in Western and democratic values has been institutionalised and contextualised to foster ideas of nationalism'. The process of constructing national identity is more like a 'consensus-seeking' and 'cultural decision-making' among schools, governments, students, teachers, organisers and other outside school stakeholders (175–6). In order to evaluate this school-based citizenship education programme from other perspectives, Chapter 8 examines the centralised governance role of Hong Kong government and compares it with Singapore. Chapter 9 concludes by summarising the citizenship education programme in Hong Kong as a multi-levelled or multi-layered citizenship mixed by a 'liberal variant of national citizenship of Western democratic individualism' and a 'de-contextualised ethno-cultural Chinese nationalism', which is quite different from a pan-Chinese national citizenship in mainland China (10, 216–217).

As a reviewer, I found three most impressive aspects in this book. First, the authors seem to be familiar with both Asian and Western cultural, political and social background; and they show a distinct and deep consideration on different sources of citizenship education, which are classified into two main types: Asian approaches (e.g. Singapore, China, Taiwan, Malaysia, Thailand, South Korea, Indonesia and Japan) and Western approaches (e.g. USA and Australia). The former is characterised by 'cultural national building', 'anti-colonialism' or 'anti-foreignism', the emphasis on nationalism, the authoritarian role of the state and personal commitments to the state (Smith 1996; Tamir 1993). The Confucian moral order has been addressed in many Asian countries, which advocates self-realisation from individual, progressing up to the collective family, country and the world. Moreover, the inner moral reflections from religious constraint also play an important role in social life (34–9). So-called Western approaches are characterised by 'democratic national building' and the emphasis on 'democracy as a universal principle of equality', 'a way of life' and 'an empowerment to people' (35). In this sense, the model of Hong Kong is more like a combined approach to pursue cultural national identity as well as democracy because of its unique historical and social context. Thus, the citizenship education programme of the case school in Hong Kong provides a possibility that both Western and Asian citizens can understand and learn from each other.

Secondly, this book based on a case study offers a practical situation and many vivid examples about how the school is influenced by the changes of Hong Kong society and makes contributions to the construction of local citizenship. For example, the pre-handover document *1996 Guidelines on Civic Education in Schools* was directly quoted as the aim of the school's citizenship programme; a later official document *2001 Curriculum Reform Report* is also taken as an underpin for the programme. The school started to teach the relationship between Hong Kong and mainland China in the post-handover period. Yet, a yearly citizen-

ship education programme including elements of 'moral education, media education, personal development education and life education' deriving from Western individualism traditions may help students learn democratic citizenship (65–8). 'Students think they were not treated as passive learners and that the teaching was of a closed and exclusionary nature ...' (120). Thus, the authors demonstrate that a school plays both the role of 'a socialising agent' transmitting the government's position on citizenship and 'a socialising agency' running as a public sphere where discussions of citizenship issues take place freely and on the basis of equality (6). These two conceptions, 'agent' and 'agency', can make us rethink and reflect on the function of schools and the aim of citizenship education.

The third advantage of the book is to help the understanding of the real problem of citizenship education in Hong Kong as well as in mainland China. The resistance to 'the national history and guoqing jiaoyu (national affairs education)' from mainland China (50) and the recent protest against Chinese 'national education' show that people in Hong Kong have 'a very strong local identity, particularly the political identification with democracy, rule of law freedoms and human rights that was taught in school' on the one hand and on the other hand, 'the fear of China's communism and the dictatorial political system forms a large obstacle for people of Hong Kong to integrate into the national culture' (48). Like many countries in the world, the development of citizenship education is always full of difficulties and subject to policy swings and u-turns. In this case, it is necessary for Hong Kong, China and other countries to reconsider appropriately wiser ways of teaching citizenship.

To sum up, this is a thought-provoking work which is worth reading. However, there are inevitably drawbacks. First, the lack of detailed study on citizenship education programme in mainland China makes the comparisons between Hong Kong and China not based on an in-depth assessment with enough evidence. Just as Hong Kong has changed its citizenship education in the past 15 years, so too has mainland China. So it should not simply classified two patterns of citizenship as 'individualism' and 'collectivism'; 'nationalism' and 'democracy'. As a matter of fact, the latest citizenship education programme in mainland China has started to highlight the rights and power of individual citizens, civic participation in a local community, and personal and collective influence on public policy-making processes; though the responsibility and loyalty to the state are still important teaching and learning contents (Civic Education Pilot Program 2012a, 2012b). Thus, perhaps, we will see that Chinese citizenship education adds more contents of individual rights and democracy while Hong Kong continues to promote a nationalistic focus? Secondly, the uniqueness of the Hong Kong model might not be easily applied to any other countries. Even so, some interesting open questions proposed in this book certainly merit further reflection: Can a western liberal pattern of democracy be directly adopted by Asian countries? Taking Hong Kong as a successful showcase, should we here make a bold guess that China itself will eventually evolve towards a more democratic citizenship?

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Reading circles, novels and adult reading development, by Sam Duncan, London, Continuum, 2012, 220 pp., £75.00 (hardback), ISBN-10 1441173153, ISBN-13 978-1441173157

Scholarly discussion of reading as a practice amongst adult learners is uncommon. There are a few well known accounts of literacy in adult lives – the work of Deborah Brandt, David Barton and Mary Hamilton comes to mind – but these and other writers tend to treat of a broad range of literacy practices embodied in both reading and writing. There are a few, a highly select few, accounts which look only at reading – Elizabeth Long and Jenny Hartley are two of the authors that Duncan singles out – but those who choose to write extensively about reading circles are rare indeed. The decision to examine reading circles, novels and adult reading development is, therefore, just one of several characteristics that distinguish this welcome, forthright and immensely readable new book by Sam Duncan.

The book is built around Duncan's research on reading circles, including an exploration of when, why and how they were formed (they are not a new development, as Long demonstrates, in her account of sixteenth century French village gatherings). She also examines the variety of what reading circles can offer to adults: not only, as might be expected, developing vocabulary, powers of comprehension and interpretation; but also improving confidence, as learners, students and members of groups, and – equally important – the prospect of companionship, friendship and the opening up of new horizons.

Duncan discusses the informal, peer-led reading circle she and her adult literacy students formed, and how, when this became the subject of her research, the participants came to conceive of reading as not simply amounting to 'following a plot' (though this itself involves much more than meets the eye), but also taking in acts that are at once educational, cognitive, communicative, imaginative and affective. Numerous themes are found to emerge: our reading identities, how to read (understand and decode) words; how a 'story' is built up through individual and group cognition; the relationship between fiction, truth and learning; and the many and sometimes surprising benefits of reading as a group. All these and more are consistently treated with insight and sensitivity, as they are in relation to the pre-occupations, fears and aspirations of adult learners.

The primary argument is that reading circles should be used 'in and as adult learning provision', and it is an argument well made: not only are they already a significant and common reading practice, they also provide means to develop learner autonomy, peer-teaching and peer-assessment; they offer up model examples of open-ended pedagogy and negotiated syllabi; and they can model and scaffold the interpretative aspects of novel reading. And