

Chapter 24

Chinese Education Models in a Global Age: Myth or Reality?

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Abstract The extent to which a distinct Chinese education model can be identified is the subject of much debate. Among the many studies that approach the question, there is a tendency to be selective in elaborating the constituent elements of what could be viewed as a Chinese education model. Moreover, conceptualizations of Chinese education risk implying homogeneity in what can be more accurately understood as the overlapping of heterogeneous notions and practices in different educational contexts. By synthesizing evidence presented in this book and the research that has preceded it, this chapter aims to delineate the main aspects of what has been referred to as a Chinese education model. The chapter first argues that the Chinese education model is characterized by three attributes: dynamism, hybridity, and heterogeneity. It then makes the case that the Chinese education model can be more clearly understood by conceptually disaggregating it into its three key elements: norms, institutions, and individuals.

24.1 Introduction

As the preceding chapters in this book demonstrate, there is no clear-cut, straightforward way of conceptualizing a Chinese education model. Today, even the term ‘Chinese’ itself, in the broader socio-cultural sense, spans many historical eras, geographical locations, and peoples. The diversity of “Chineseness” in a global age complicates any attempt to distill the notion of a Chinese education model into the bite-sized definition that academics and policymakers so often desire. Nevertheless, the contributions that make up this volume represent an attempt to shed light on the issue. Instead of suggesting that chapters subscribe to a certain conceptualization of Chinese education, the book has encouraged authors to approach the issue from different angles and express a wide range of relevant viewpoints.

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Although no chapter or book could adequately summarize Chinese education models in their entirety, this concluding chapter attempts to identify some of the key aspects and themes that contributing authors have touched upon in this book and in the research that preceded it. It argues that a conceptualization of Chinese education models inclusive of three attributes—dynamism, hybridity, and heterogeneity—and three elements—institutions, norms, and individuals—offers a framework for more clearly understanding the issue. While it would be impractical for any individual study to take all of these into account, future research on Chinese education models would do well to be aware of its place within this framework as well as within the greater body of relevant literature.

24.2 Attributes

Chinese education models are characterized by three major attributes: dynamism, hybridity, and heterogeneity. By no means a collection of unchanging theories and practices, Chinese education models are *dynamic*, evolving over time and highly influenced by the prevailing political, economic, and cultural forces of an era. Moreover, Chinese education models today can be most accurately understood as *hybrid* models shaped by the continuous exchange of ideas and people across borders and between cultures. Finally, because Chinese influence extends far beyond the geographic borders of mainland China and education systems themselves are composed of many different parts, Chinese education models are *heterogeneous*, differing by geographic region, discipline, level, and institution. These three attributes are highlighted in the sections that follow.

24.2.1 Dynamism

The history of Chinese education spans several millennia, representing a longevity and richness matched by few other cultures in the world. As contextual factors in China have changed, dynamism has been a key attribute of the education models as they have undergone a constant process of evolution and adaptation. Moreover, these contextual factors have been both internal and external in nature, each with their own corresponding impacts. The basic idea of an education model in China has far outlived any individual political regime or historical era. Although a comprehensive review of the history of Chinese education is far beyond the scope of this chapter, suffice it to say that, as human geography has shifted and dynasties and kingdoms have risen and fallen over the years, major aspects of the education models have changed accordingly.

It is a common undertaking for researchers to identify key events and periods in the history of Chinese education. While it can be reasonably assumed that the most basic notion of education in China predates recorded histories, the origins of the education system have been traced as far back as the sixteenth century BCE (Guo-Brennan 2016). Confucian philosophy, which has come to describe concepts now

recognizable in popular culture around the world, is one of the most frequently cited contributors to the theory and practice of education in Chinese societies today. With Confucian thought emerging in the sixth century BCE during the Spring and Autumn period, long has it played an influential role in the development of educational traditions. The Chinese writing system has also been an important factor in shaping Chinese societies. Their influence not only is apparent in mainland China itself but also extends into the many other cultures shaped by Confucian philosophy and Chinese writing, including those of northeast and southeast Asia and the Chinese diaspora's settlements in cities and regions around the world.

Depending on the perspective taken, there are several ways in which researchers have described the dynamism of the education model in China over the past several 100 years. As the Qing Dynasty rulers struggled in the mid- to late-nineteenth century with the damaging impacts of colonial intervention, the heavily Confucian-influenced education model became increasingly inadequate and educational reforms became inevitable. In the last 50 years of its existence, political and economic reforms led to a radical restructuring that impacted institutions of all types, education inclusive (Li 2016b). Since the dynasty's collapse in 1911, the Chinese political landscape has undergone a series of dramatic changes, and the education model has evolved dynamically as a direct result (Chou 2016a; Deng 2016). Figure 24.1 summarizes several ways in which the preceding chapters in this book have conceptualized the development stages of the Chinese education model since the mid-nineteenth century.

The timelines of education model development in mainland China described in the book and visualized in Fig. 24.1 reveal the dynamic nature of the Chinese education model. Although each author represents a different perspective on the issue, there is broad agreement that dynamism is a key attribute. Throughout history, the education model has undergone constant changes resulting from sociopolitical, economic, and other forces. Furthermore, the timelines also show the inherent hybridity and heterogeneity of the Chinese education model as discussed in the following sections.

24.2.2 Hybridity

Tightly intertwined with their historical dynamism described above, Chinese education models are also hybrids influenced by the education systems and political establishments of other countries. Education models worldwide have borrowed from existing systems, philosophies, and institutional structures, so the notion of a pure model unaffected by external or historical forces is but a fantasy in all but the most isolated geographic and cultural contexts. As Li notes, even educational institutes from over a millennium ago were modeled off of other institutes, as with the mostly autonomous academies (*shuyuan*) of the Tang Dynasty in the eighth century, which were developed along the lines of Buddhist and Taoist temples (Li 2016b). Tan and Reyes' expand on this in their analysis of education policy borrowing,

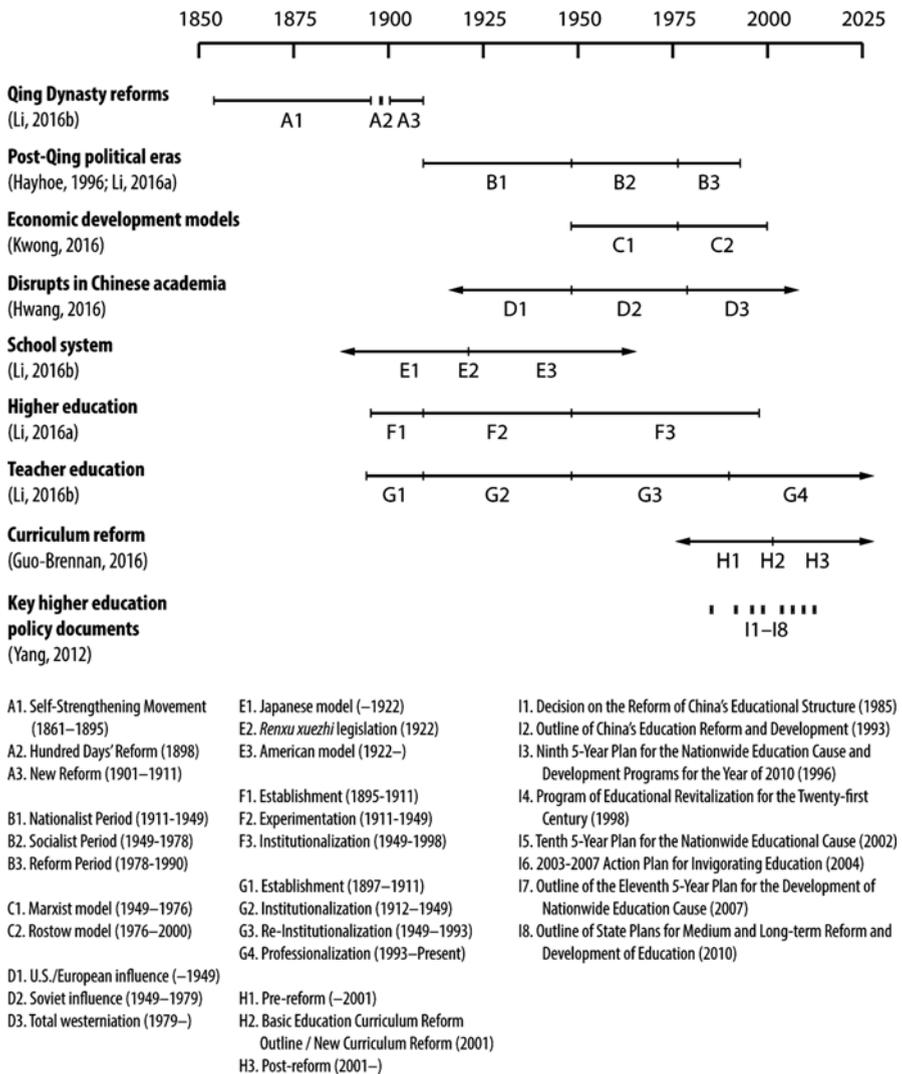


Fig. 24.1 Timeline of education model development stages in mainland China since the mid-1800s

arguing “that a hybrid model of education exists in China that combines foreign and local ideas and practices. Rather than wholesale policy borrowing from the West, the foreign ideas and practices are being internalised and indigenised in China as they interact with local traditions, values, ways of doing and actors” (Tan and Reyes 2016).

The process of borrowing both from preexisting local models and contemporary foreign models has long been ongoing. Over the past two centuries, European,

Japanese, Soviet, and North American education systems have all influenced Chinese education models at different times. Indeed, even the term *jiaoyu* for education was imported towards the end of the nineteenth century from the Japanese language (Li 2016b). Likewise, important figures outside of mainland China have taken note of key aspects of Chinese education. The *keju*, or imperial examination, and the integration of imperial bureaucracy and higher education institutions, for example, were objects of admiration for European philosophers and Jesuit missionaries (Li 2016a).

At the end of the nineteenth century, aspects of the Japanese education model, which was itself based in part on the French education model, were introduced into China. From the collapse of the Qing Dynasty until the end of the Republican period, key aspects of the American education model were adopted in China, as were some features of European education models (Hwang 2016a; Li 2016b). Among Chinese intellectuals of the time, ideological inspiration came in large part from the ideologies of social Darwinism, scientism, and anti-traditionalism (Hwang 2016a). Following the Chinese civil war, Soviet influence drove many of the education system reforms in communist China. This lasted for several decades until the Reform and Opening Up of the 1980s, when aspects of the American model again began to make their way into the Chinese education system. While some research has shown that educators of Chinese descent today view a hybrid of Chinese and American models as ideal (Beckett and Zhao 2016; Ho and Wang 2016), others have suggested that the result of conflicting models can lead to reality shock, struggle, or resistance for teachers and students (Guo-Brennan 2016; Hsu 2016; Wang 2016a).

Today, several aspects of the Chinese education model provide evidence of its hybridity. These include the shifts towards decentralization, the autonomy of educational institutions, constructivist pedagogy, formative and alternative assessment, active participation and student-centered learning, emphasis on lifelong learning, innovation, and experimentation and knowledge by doing (Beckett and Zhao 2016; Tan and Reyes 2016). Although some have suggested that the realization of systemic weaknesses has led to policy borrowing and the creation of a hybrid education model in China, it has also been attributed to the existence of a pragmatic ethos and accommodative nature in China throughout its recent history (Li 2016b; Tan and Reyes 2016). In other countries, Chinese education has been hybridized with local education models, as has occurred in Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Taiwan, the U.S., and so on (Da and Welch 2016; Ho and Wang 2016; Hsu 2016; Kotah 2016; Spangler 2016). Whatever the impetus for policy borrowing has been, the evidence from history and today reveals that, along with dynamism and heterogeneity, hybridity is one of the key attributes of the Chinese education model.

24.2.3 *Heterogeneity*

Because Chinese education models exist in many different contexts, it follows that they differ in significant ways depending on contextual factors. Heterogeneity is thus the third inherent attribute of what could be termed Chinese education models. Broadly interpreted, contextual factors contributing to their heterogeneity include geographic region, discipline, and institution type.

24.2.3.1 **Geographic Region**

Education models influenced by Chinese history, culture, and philosophies are present in many different geographic regions, both within mainland China and around the world. As a result, there are significant differences between what could all be generally classified as Chinese education models. In China, geographic region has affected the education model throughout history. For example, remote areas of the country have long been host to education models distinct from those of major population centers. Such was the case in the past when educational institutions in developed areas were linked to the imperial bureaucracy while rural schools were more autonomously run (Li 2016a). Today, a similar divide can be seen between cities such as Shanghai, where schools churn out some of the world's highest achievers on international standardized tests (e.g., PISA), and rural Western China, where "education resources are limited, school facilities and infrastructure are dilapidated and unsafe, teachers have little access to professional training and development, and poverty and illiteracy rates are the highest in the country" (Guo-Brennan 2016). The stark contrast between geographic regions, even domestically, makes it clear that presuming that there is one Chinese education model applicable throughout the country would be far from accurate.

The geographic heterogeneity of Chinese education models is perhaps even more apparent in the ethnic Chinese enclaves that exist in many countries globally. From Chinatowns to individual family units of Chinese descent living around the world, aspects of Chinese education models manifest themselves in people's everyday lives. While common practices and ways of thinking among these populations do exist, their diversity is greater than any single similarity between them. In their analysis of parenting practices of Chinese immigrants in Australia, Da & Welch comment, "the long history and great size and diversity of the Chinese diaspora, in many different contexts, means that the Chinese should no longer be considered a homogeneous group: a proper account needs to be taken of their diverse social and economic status, countries and regions of origin, religion and languages they speak" (Da and Welch 2016). Nevertheless, although not universal, some common features have been identified, including high educational expectations of children, high-stakes testing as academic achievement, emphasis on supplementary education, and credentialism (Chou 2016b). Indeed, it has even been found that the belief in the link between education and upward social mobility has been an important motivator

for some Chinese parents in deciding to immigrate (Ho and Wang 2016). Other potential commonalities, such as perspectives on physical punishment, have been questioned or refuted by recent research (Da and Welch 2016).

24.2.3.2 Discipline

Apart from their geographic heterogeneity, Chinese education models also differ by discipline. Within the context of Chinese-influenced education, each discipline, be it mathematics, languages, or citizenship education, has differences that shape and are shaped by the broader education model. As a result, understanding these as distinct models that share certain characteristics may often be the more precise way of conceptualizing them.

Pedagogical practices in mathematics, for example, that are distinctive aspects of a Chinese mathematics education model, such as an operational mathematics curriculum and solution-oriented problem-solving strategies that encourage high performance coupled with risk aversion, do not necessarily translate to other disciplines (Chiu 2016). Other aspects, such as the East–West dichotomies in mathematics education identified by Leung (2001), including “product versus process; rote versus meaningful learning; studying hard versus pleasurable learning; extrinsic versus intrinsic motivations; whole class teaching versus individualized learning, and competence of teachers,” may be representative of cross-discipline commonalities (Wang 2016b; citing Leung 2001). Similarly, while the Chinese language education model historically emphasized literacy over oral competency, such findings for a given field could not necessarily be applied more broadly (Sung and Poole 2016). Despite the variation across disciplines, it is nevertheless evident that commonalities do exist. Such commonalities are the impetus for many of the studies attempting to refine our understanding of education models in contexts influenced by Chinese history, culture, and philosophies.

24.2.3.3 Institution Type and Level

The heterogeneity of Chinese education in the broad sense of the term is also evident when comparing institution types and levels. Wide variation among schools falling under the Chinese education model umbrella can be observed in many different instances, particularly given the diverse objectives of different types of educational institution. Commonalities between the curricula of mainstream and vocational schools, for example, may be limited, as they seek to achieve different outcomes for their student populations. Moreover, the educational theories and practices of supplementary educational institutions, such as evening and weekend preparatory and cram schools, differ to varying extents from their formal institutional counterparts. Countries have also implemented alternative or supplementary education models in order to provide disadvantaged students with modified opportunities for educational advancement. Students from minority populations, those

coming from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and students with disabilities or other special needs may simultaneously be a part of both the education models of the mainstream school system as well as education models or systems modified to address their specific circumstances. In the case of Taiwan, where the education model already offers clear evidence of hybridity and heterogeneity, the education model designed for disadvantaged students is both different from that of the mainstream model and reflects the influences of policies implemented elsewhere (Cheng and Jacob 2016). Needless to say, the education models of different levels of institutions, from preschool to higher education, likely have at least as much that distinguishes their respective models from one another as they have in common.

Studies that raise doubts about the existence of a Chinese education model often emphasize its hybridity. Although it is apparent that there is no purely Chinese education model fully isolated from external and historical forces, suggestions that none exists whatsoever neglect that three key attributes define it. Chinese education models are characterized by dynamism, hybridity, and heterogeneity, and these attributes continue to shape them to this day. Understanding these attributes is crucial to delivering well developed analyses of Chinese education models, and it is our hope that, taken together, the chapters in this book can offer a foundation for future research on the subject.

24.3 Elements

In addition to the three key attributes that characterize Chinese education models, it is also useful to disaggregate the models into their constituent elements. One possible conceptualization, as is suggested in this concluding chapter, is a disaggregation into three elements: norms, institutions, and individuals. Each of these elements has a reciprocal but unequal effect on the other two, as indicated in Fig. 24.2.

24.3.1 Norms

Norms are the glue that binds together individuals and institutions and their respective theories and practices within a society. To a large extent, research about Chinese education models is founded on observations of the institutions and individuals upon which relevant norms have had a significant impact. This section looks at a select few of the main objects of education-related norms—society, teaching and parenting, and learning—that evidence in this book and elsewhere suggests play an important role in shaping Chinese education models.

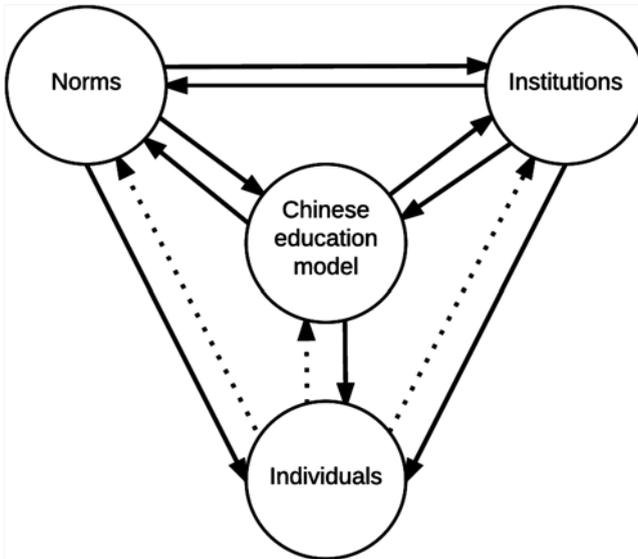


Fig. 24.2 Elements of Chinese education models (Note: *Arrows* indicate the direction of effects. *Solid lines* indicate major effects whereas *dotted lines* indicate those that are less prominent. Although individuals have an effect on the institutions and norms that also comprise the education models, the converse effect—that is, the effect of institutions and norms on individuals—is greater)

24.3.1.1 Society

Certain norms applicable to society at large have an important impact on the models of education in that society. In contexts influenced by Chinese history, culture, and philosophies, these include a high regard for education, particularly in terms of its role in social mobility as well as individual and national development; meritocracy; collectivism and family and social cohesion; filial piety and deference to authority; and high societal and extended family expectations.

Throughout history, education has been a valued institution in Chinese societies. As Li writes, the “belief in the importance of learning, teaching and schooling has been deeply imbedded in Chinese culture over the past 2000 years” (Li 2016b). At the heart of Confucian philosophy is an emphasis on education. Such is its centrality that the first word of *Analects* is “learn” (*xue*). The collection begins, “The Master said, “To learn and then have occasion to practice what you have learned—is this not satisfying?”” (Confucius, in Slingerland 2006, p. 1). Over the two millennia since its writing, the high regard for education has continued to be a norm in Chinese societies, surviving the rise and fall of dozens of political establishments within China. Moreover, it has become a global force, expanding into neighboring cultures influenced by that of China as well as spreading globally in parallel with the Chinese diaspora.

Moreover, since at least the advent of the civil examination system in the fourth century, there has been a close link between the normative importance of education and the belief in its role as the key to upward social mobility (Wang 2016a; citing Biggs and Watkins 2001; Siu 2004). Today, this belief continues (Ho and Wang 2016). Emphasis on education has also been seen as the path to individual and national development (Li 2016a). Evidence of such models of development can be found in many instances in China's history as well as in other countries influenced by the Chinese.

The high regard for education and the Confucian tradition have also been an impetus for and mutually reinforced by other norms, including meritocracy; collectivism and family and social cohesion; and high societal and extended family expectations. Views that education is the route to success at the individual, family, and national level are cause for exceptionally high expectations of learners. Indeed, it is not uncommon for parents or teachers to discourage or prohibit any activity seen as a distraction from students' educations (Da and Welch 2016). These norms about the structure of society, combined with the Confucian-inspired norms of filial piety and deference to authority, create an environment for education that is indicative of what may be loosely considered a Chinese education model.

24.3.1.2 Teaching and Parenting

Norms regarding teachers and teaching as well as parents and parenting are also a key element of Chinese education models. In Chinese and Chinese-influenced societies, the ideal teacher is embodied by several key characteristics. First, they are an authority figure. Within the classroom, teachers are expected to maintain an orderly and disciplined learning environment, and in doing so, they are the sole decision makers (Tan and Reyes 2016; Wang 2016a). In recent years, education reforms in China, Taiwan, and elsewhere have pushed for what has been termed a more student-centered curriculum. However, these efforts differ significantly from the notion of student-centered learning in other geographic contexts, such as the U.S. Emphasis is placed on increasing students' active participation and cooperation in the classroom, but these "student-centred approaches exist within a teacher-dominated environment where the teacher still retains the respect, control and decision-making" (Tan and Reyes 2016).

Second, the ideal teacher is an exceptionally competent bearer of knowledge. Traditionally viewed as respected scholars, they must take their deep knowledge of their subjects and impart it unto students, who must strive to learn this content in its entirety. The knowledge-orientation of Chinese educators ties into the textbook-orientation of the corresponding curricula. Curricula tend to be highly structured and content-rich. Both teachers and teaching materials serve the purpose of transferring large quantities of static knowledge to students, and those students most capable of retaining and reproducing this knowledge are the ones with the highest levels of academic achievement.

Third, the ideal teacher is a model citizen. They embody the virtues that students are expected to uptake, including a dedicated work ethic and willingness to make the effort to succeed at all costs. In many ways, the ideal teacher–student relationship closely parallels that of the ideal parent–child relationship. Parents are tasked with getting their children to excel academically and will use their authority and go to great lengths to ensure that it happens. Children bear the burden of putting in the effort to meet or exceed the expectations of parents, extended family, teachers, and society.

24.3.1.3 Learning

Celebrated for millennia, devotion to learning has long been a key aspect of Chinese-influenced societies. Norms about learning and learners permeate the lives of all individuals and shape models of Chinese education. The high value placed on learning contributes to the deeply ingrained nature of related norms. All interwoven with one another, these include an emphasis on hard work, persistence, and effort over abilities; focus on memorization, repetition, and drilling for knowledge acquisition; high levels of resource investment and sacrifice; parental engagement and supervision; supplementary education; and risk-aversion.

The importance placed on effort and persistence forms the normative foundation of many Chinese education models. Learning involves a commitment to investing whatever time and effort it takes to master the knowledge or skills at hand. With enough effort, anyone can learn and achieve their academic aspirations. This contrasts with models of education in continental Europe and the U.S., where a great deal of emphasis is placed on identifying each individual student’s specific abilities and encouraging them to excel in that domain. With knowledge acquisition as the goal and effort and persistence as the pathway to achieving it, tactics for learning stress memorization, repetition, and drilling (Sung and Poole 2016). Exam-orientation also lends itself to this, as is discussed further in the following section.

In order to maximize the opportunities for learners’ to put in the effort, parents in the context of Chinese education models demonstrate high levels of resource investment in their children’s education in terms of both finances and time. Families in Confucian societies lead globally in terms of their levels of financial expenditure on education. The vast numbers of students attending various forms of supplementary education in private evening and weekend institutes is but a part of this. Indeed, many parents go to even greater lengths to provide optimal educational opportunities for their children, some opting to emigrate for that sole purpose. Moreover, immigrant families have also been known to go one step further. In Australia, for example, “[s]electing the best educational institutions for children is a prevalent phenomenon among Chinese parents ... some make considerable sacrifices to buy houses near desirable schools, for example, and also enrol their children into private coaching colleges” (Da and Welch 2016). Two implications of the norms discussed above are that Chinese-influenced societies have indeed managed to produce some of the world’s highest achieving students as determined by international standardized

assessments but such accomplishments are often the result of extrinsic motivating factors (Spangler 2016; Zhou and Wang 2016).

24.3.2 Institutions

The structure of education is shaped by the institutions that it is composed of, and institutions influenced by Chinese education models exist in different contexts and have different objectives. The effects of this diversity combine with those of the education models themselves to produce many different types of educational institutions. These include public and private, comprehensive and specialized, and offline and online at all levels from primary to continuing education. Yet educational institutions themselves comprise only a portion of the institutions that influence education systems. Others in the public and private sectors, including government agencies, enterprises, and nonprofit organizations, both shape and are shaped by the education models in their respective contexts. Evidence from the chapters in this book suggests that there are some commonalities between these institutions and within these education systems. Among these, centralization, standardization, emphasis on examinations, teacher-centrism, and credentialism feature prominently, though it must be understood that not one of these characteristics is universally applicable across these institutions.

24.3.2.1 Governmental

Government agencies and policymakers have a key role to play in nearly all education systems. Legislation often decides the structure of educational institutions and designs the systems used within them. Thus, what governments devise becomes a reality within educational institutions and affects the individuals involved in them. In many cases, the institutional structure of government is reflected in that of educational institutions and vice versa. Throughout Chinese history, an emphasis on centralization and meritocracy through standardization and high-stakes testing has been designed into bureaucracies as well as the institutions within their sphere of influence (Guo-Brennan 2016; Wang 2016a; Chou 2016b). In terms of centralized authority at the national level, the Ministries of Education in societies influenced by Chinese history, culture, and philosophies tend to be the key decision makers regarding domestic educational institutions. Yet another commonality among government institutions that is reflective of the Chinese-influenced context as well as local educational institutions is the examination-centric process of entering civil service. Backed by a meritocratic rationale historically, standardized civil service examinations, such as the National Civil Service Exam (*Guojia Gongwuyuan Kaoshi*) in China, the Civil Service Exam (*Gongwu Renyuan Kaoshi*) in Taiwan, and the Common Recruitment Examination in Hong Kong, are common features at the national level in countries with populations of predominantly Chinese descent and

are indicative of the common models employed by government and educational institutions.

24.3.2.2 Business

The structure and practices of private enterprises operating in contexts influenced by Chinese history, culture, and philosophies also share certain parallels with and links to their local education models. Credentialism is among the most immediately apparent. Businesses both reinforce and are shaped by the norm of credentialism prevalent in many societies affected by Chinese education models (Chou 2016b). Centralization is yet another common feature of private enterprises in such contexts, with higher-ranking authorities serving as the sole or primary decision makers.

24.3.2.3 Educational

Needless to say, educational institutions themselves, diverse as they may be, are the primary institutional elements of education models. Evidence suggests that certain features are common, but by no means universal, among those institutions operating in broader Chinese contexts. Some of those discussed throughout this text include centralization, teacher-centrism, rigid evaluation systems, textbook-centrism, and supplementary education.

As with relevant government agencies and enterprises, centralized structures are common at the institutional level, with top-level administrators being the central decision makers in their respective roles. As a rising tide of scholarship has noted, educators in their teaching roles often find themselves with limited voice within their institutions and subject to the whims of administrative decisions (Chou 2014; Hwang 2016a). Yet within the classroom, the authority to make decisions is largely carried by teachers themselves (Sung and Poole 2016). Indeed, teacher-centric classroom environments are no new phenomenon in the greater Chinese context.

Also a feature of many such educational institutions is the integration of rigid and standardized evaluation systems. This takes many different forms. For students, it is manifested in an emphasis on examination as the dominant form of assessing student achievement and also serves as the go-to method of determining which individuals are qualified for admission to an institution vis-à-vis entrance exams. A direct corollary to the evaluation-orientation built in to educational institutions is textbook-centrism, with textbooks containing precisely the knowledge required by students to excel at specific standardized tests (Guo-Brennan 2016). For professors, the emphasis on rigid and standardized evaluation systems is manifested in the powerful influence of institutions using bibliometric citation indices, such as the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), as the primary component of assessments regarding promotion and tenure. Pressure to publish in outlets with greater global reach is a double-edged sword. On one hand, it may benefit institutions in their efforts to rank higher globally. On the other hand, it can have detrimental impacts on educators by

drawing them away from locally relevant issues and their roles as teachers (Chou 2014; Hwang 2016a). Although educational reforms, such as the curriculum reform pushing for “quality-oriented education” launched in Shanghai in 2001, have attempted to shift curriculum away from its traditionally exam-centric approach, the emphasis remains deeply rooted in the structure of many educational institutions at all levels (Tan and Reyes 2016).

In order for students to remain competitive in preparation for assessment, an entire industry of supplementary education has arisen in many Chinese contexts. The longevity and scale of supplementary education in societies influenced by Chinese history, culture, and philosophies far surpass that of other regions in the world. As Bray (2009) writes in a UNESCO report, “In East Asian societies such as Japan, Hong Kong, Korea, and Taiwan, tutoring has long been a vigorous activity and is deeply embedded in the culture. Part of the explanation for this lies in Confucian traditions which value education and which stress diligence” (Bray 2009, p. 24). The emphasis on supplementary education has also followed the Chinese diaspora around the world, with evening and weekend schooling of different varieties being common among families of Chinese descent (Ho and Wang 2016; Hsu 2016).

24.3.3 *Individuals*

At the heart of institutions that make up the overall structure of Chinese education in its many contexts are individuals. Although individuals play many diverse roles within these institutions, this section focuses on those of teachers and students.

24.3.3.1 *Teachers*

The behavior and actions of individuals, including teachers and students, are so highly influenced by their normative and institutional contexts that they are largely a reflection of them. Educators, highly respected in Chinese-influenced societies, follow established social and cultural norms in the process of formulating their own educational theories and practices. Many teachers operating within the diverse contexts of Chinese education integrate such practices into their teaching routines. These include an emphasis on effort and perseverance; a disciplined learning environment with themselves as authority figures; high expectations of students; meritocratic pedagogy; instilling values that schooling is the pathway to success; and so on (Stevenson and Stigler 1992; Da and Welch 2016; Ho and Wang 2016; Zhou and Wang 2016). Other aspects of their teaching practices are a reflection of their institutional environments and commitments, such as knowledge-, textbook-, and examination-centric pedagogy and a focus on memorization, repetition, and drilling as primary forms of knowledge acquisition and retention. Undoubtedly, few individual educators in Chinese contexts adopt all of these aspects of Chinese education

models, but evidence from the chapters in this book and previous research suggests that there is a tendency for these practices to manifest themselves in such contexts. Teachers are as diverse as their normative and institutional environments, and it is therefore no surprise that not all practitioners reflect the models of education under which they operate and, in some cases, have even taken to resistance of such influences (Guo-Brennan 2016; Hwang 2016b).

24.3.3.2 Students

As with teachers, normative and institutional influences in many ways shape the ideas and practices of students. In Chinese contexts, broadly interpreted, students have demonstrated a tendency towards high levels of academic achievement, the respect for learning and discipline that contribute to it, and many of the learning strategies encouraged by their teachers and families (Chiu 2016; Da and Welch 2016). On the other hand, evidence also suggests that some students have a reverence for Western education models while maintaining the theories and practices that they have internalized over the years (Tsai 2016). Needless to say, the dynamism, hybridity, and heterogeneity discussed in the first half of this chapter applies as much to individuals (including students), institutions, and norms as it does to Chinese education models taken as a whole.

24.4 Conclusion

Based on evidence from both within this book and relevant past research, this concluding chapter has argued that conceptualizations of Chinese education models would do well to take into account its key attributes: dynamism, hybridity, and heterogeneity. In other words, models of education that have been influenced by Chinese history, culture, and philosophies are *dynamic* in that they change over time based on many factors, including sociopolitical shifts, economic trends, and other systemic developments. Figure 24.1 clearly illustrates this dynamic evolution. In many cases, Chinese education models are also *hybrid* models derived not only from Chinese education systems historically but from the systems and beliefs of other countries as well. This is evident both within China and in other Chinese-influenced societies. Within China, Soviet, Japanese, French, American, and other education models have made major contributions to the direction of domestic educational development over the years. Outside of China, its education models have merged with those of other countries. Many of these, including Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Macau, New Zealand, Singapore, and the United States, have been discussed in the preceding chapters, revealing that hybridization has occurred in both directions, with Chinese education models both influencing and being influenced by other models. It thus follows that, in addition to being dynamic and hybrid, such models are *heterogeneous*, differing greatly while simultaneously maintaining

certain characteristics, as detailed above, from one context to the next. Geographic location, discipline, and institution type and level are among the most salient contextual factors contributing to this heterogeneity.

The second half of the chapter has suggested that disaggregation of the concept of Chinese education models into three of its elements—norms, institutions, and individuals—can offer a broad framework for related research. The *normative* elements explored relate to society, parenting, teaching, and learning. As for the *institutional* components of Chinese education models, government agencies, businesses, and educational institutions themselves all play influential roles in shaping—and being shaped by—them. Lastly, the *individual* constituents of Chinese education models, including teachers and students, have an important place in the education models in which they are a part, most notably in that they are conveyors of relevant norms, beliefs, behaviors, and practices. Although no academic work could adequately offer a comprehensive account of all that embodies Chinese education models, it is hoped that the diverse contributions of the 23 preceding chapters and the synthesis and broad framework presented in this concluding chapter provide a useful foundation for future research on the topic.

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