BOOK REVIEW

Xiaozhou XU (Ed.). 《王承绪教育文集》 [*Selected Writings of Wang Chengxu on Education*], 南京, 中国: 江苏凤凰教育出版社 [Nanjing, Phoenix Education Publishing], 2010, 725 pp. Hardback, US\$15.95, ISBN 978-7-5343-9796-7

This collection of the educational writings of Wang Chengxu was put together as a tribute from China's educational circles to Professor Wang on his 100th birthday, which was celebrated in Zhejiang University in October of 2011. Both an outstanding scholar and a remarkable person, Professor Wang “bridges the pre- and post- World War Two periods in Europe and the West, the Nationalist and Socialist periods of modern China's development, the civilizations of Europe and China, and the approaches to education and comparison that developed in China, England and North America” (Arnove & Hayhoe, 2011, p.159). In more than 700 pages, the volume systematically documents Wang's lifelong passion for the field of education and his committed contribution to the development of comparative education in China. The volume is divided into six main thematic sections: comparative education, educational systems, educational theories, essays and commentaries, narratives, and appendices. In addition, it opens with a review sketching Wang's exploration of education over eighty years, and ends with an editorial written by the editor, Professor Xiaozhou Xu, a Ph.D student of Prof. Wang, who graduated in the early 1990s.

The first section brings together nine articles on comparative education published over the period from 1945 to 2000. It starts with two articles introducing international collaborations in education. The first of these provides a detailed discussion of two publications that came out in 1943, entitled respectively *Education and the United Nations* and *Education for International Security*. At that time, China was cut off from any possibility of international collaboration due to the anti-Japanese war that had started in 1937. The remaining seven articles mainly focus on the field of comparative and international education as a disciplinary inquiry, with comments on how the field has been developed in China, as well as in Japanese and Western contexts. One of these articles discusses the differentiated subfields of comparative education as a discipline.

The second section of the volume includes 34 articles on educational systems. Not surprisingly, most of these writings focus on various facets of the British system where Wang was originally trained in the late 1930s and 1940s, including its public schools, tertiary education, most particularly the University of London, teacher education, and educational development in the post- World War Two period. Among them are two articles that look at the reform and development of

the British higher education system from the 17th century down to the 1990s, portraying the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, London, Edinburgh and their controversial roles in societal development. They also provide detailed accounts of the latest reforms in British universities, especially such new universities as Sussex, East Anglia, Stirling, Kent, and the Open University. The second section also includes some articles on educational systems in other contexts such as Italy, Poland, Turkey, Germany, Sweden, and France in Europe, the former Soviet Union, the US, Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil in the Americas, and Pakistan in Asia. Wang has mainly been concerned about teacher training and higher education systems, public schools and their historical roles in societal development, social justice and American schooling, the massification of higher education and broadened participation in learning, and higher engineering education and employment. Many of these concerns were a reflection of China's own socio-political needs and issues in various periods from the 1940s up to the 1980s.

The third section includes nine articles on educational theories, some of which are Wang's own reflections and commentaries on education and societal development. For example, his article on the models of higher education in various countries from the perspective of institutionalism illustrated the characteristics of higher education systems by reference to four models: bureaucratic agencies, guild-like associations, political systems, or organized anarchies. He then used a triangular figure to depict the trilateral relationships of higher institutions with the state, academic authority and the market in the former Soviet Union, Sweden, France, Italy, the UK, Canada, Japan, and the US. In addition, he outlined six mechanisms within these different relationships for securing financial resources. The article was originally published in 1989 when only very few leading scholars in the field of higher education paid attention to these aspects of higher education. The remaining articles in the third section are translations of some classical English language writings on education in the 1930s by William Heard Kilpatrick (1871–1965), José Ortega y Gasset (1883–1955), Bertrand Russell (1872–1970), Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947), Thomas Percy Nunn (1870–1944), and Fred Clarke (1880–1952), respectively. They were either leading philosophers or pioneers in various educational experiments in different contexts, and most of these translations constituted the first introductions of these scholars to China.

The fourth section garners nine commentaries or summaries on societal development and peace-building in the international arena. The first article was published in 1944, and summarized the then new book, *A Working Peace System: An Argument for the Functional Development of International Organization* by David Mitrany. The summary concluded that international organizations could have multiple roles in peaceful change based on the philosophy of functional evolutionism, which promotes a dynamic and changing concept of international

peace. Another article was published two years later, and recapitulated the book entitled *The Secret Dream: An Essay on Britain, America and Russia* published in 1946 by John Boynton Priestley. In this summary, Wang picked up three key conceptions of liberty, equity and benevolence, highlighting liberty in relation to the UK, equity in connection with the US, and benevolence with the Soviet Union. Wang intended to introduce these ideas to the Chinese people when they were dreaming of a new modern state with democracy after the nightmare of fighting against the Japanese invaders over a long period of time.

The fifth section covers six narratives about Wang's two great mentors, Zheng Xiaocang and Meng Xiancheng, and his personal experiences in participating in international organizations such as UNESCO and the World Conference of the New Education Fellowship. Zheng and Meng were two pioneering theorists of modern education in China, both were returnees from the U.S. and played a very active and dynamic role in China's educational circle from the 1920s onwards. The three narrations documented how Wang was mentored by them, academically, morally and spiritually, from the 1930s when he was a young undergraduate student at Zhejiang University, through several decades while he worked as their junior colleague in the same institution. Two other articles in this section recall Wang's role as the secretary of the Chinese delegation at the Founding Meeting for the UNESCO in 1946, and his UNESCO-APEID Award in 2003 for his devotion over decades to bringing out the best in UNESCO and in education in China. These stories serve as historical records of his legacy.

The three appendices as the final section in the volume are also of great value. The first one lists the chronology of his major life events, while the second is a bibliography of his writings up to 2009. The last one collects some letters written by him as editor-in-chief for the *Eastern Miscellany Supplement*, a new magazine founded in 1944 when he was still doing his Ph.D studies in the Institute of Education of the University of London. The three appendixes give readers a clear and complete set of sources about Wang's life.

Wang's life, as put by Hayhoe (2006, p. 74), reveals "a person deeply rooted in his own culture and civilization who reached out eagerly for new ideas in education and new experiences". His life work established "a deep connection between the understanding of Chinese educational history and that of Europe, which could lead to lasting and effective reform" (*ibid.*, p.75). When I was reading through this bulky volume, I could not help recalling Wang's coedited volume, entitled *Comparative Education* published in 1982, which was selected as one of my textbooks when I was an undergraduate student of education almost three decades ago. This recently published *Selected Writings of Wang Chengxu on Education* is of course a much more comprehensive collection of his works, and it has refreshed my mind, giving me a vivid sense of his lifelong contribution to the field of education.

Wang is one of the few comparativists in China with a strong and persistent focus on the British system and on UNESCO, which have given Zhejiang University a unique set of international connections over a long period of time. It is interesting that Wang's two great mentors were influenced by the US while his own interest has mainly focused on the UK. The main historical reason for this was the British sponsorship for his studies at the University of London in the 1930s and 1940s, but the institutional tradition of diversity and intellectual freedom in Chinese higher education may also have encouraged difference in this way. Wang's scholarship has been ground-breaking in China, and his influence has lasted over several generations. To comparativists, especially junior scholars, this new volume is so valuable that no one can afford to miss it. To educators and policy makers in China and in the wider world, it is a rare bridge that connects the understandings of education and culture between East and West, and a historical witness to the educational exchange and cultural dialogue among civilizations which he fostered throughout his 100 years!

References

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