development. For instance, in 2012, the Residential College was established with a public library, discussion rooms, and counselors. In 2014 two interdisciplinary majors were established: “integrated science” combining mathematics, physics, and biology, and “data science” combining mathematics, statistics, and computer science. Furthermore, a sophomore training camp and sophomore seminars were initiated to assist Yuanpei students in adapting to college life and making course and major choices. Conflict may be further escalated, de-escalated or moderated as the Yuanpei Program develops. More follow-up research and long-term inquiry using qualitative and quantitative methods are needed to evaluate what conflict has evolved and how the conflict impacts general education reforms in the long run.

In order to develop into globally recognized first-class universities, more and more universities in China have been initiating general education reforms during recent decades. With some attempts already made, these universities are still at the trial stage, facing common as well as distinctive challenges. Whether general education reforms achieve desirable goals depends not only on how advanced the ideas are and how much support the reforms gain from administrators, but also on the flexibility of the reform itself and the adaptability of students in the Chinese context. This book has implications of great value for general education practices in Chinese higher education, as well as rich reference materials.

MA Liping
Peking University
E-mail: lpma@pku.edu.cn

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教育政策媒体话语研究 [*Understanding media discourses of China's educational policy*]. 徐志勇 [Xu, Zhiyong]. 北京, 中国: 清华大学出版社 [Beijing, China: Tsinghua University Press], 2014. 191pp., (paperback), 29¥, ISBN: 978-730-234-798-9.

Media discourse analysis is currently gaining territory in educational policy

studies. Xu Zhiyong's work *Understanding media discourses of China's educational policy* is a good example in this regard. It explores the main discursive patterns adopted by three different Chinese media in representing the policy issue of dealing with unreasonable school fees at the beginning of the 21st century. In order to explore the impact of a particular media's characteristics on news production (including its ownership, aims and audience), Xu makes constant comparisons between *China Education Daily*, a specialist newspaper published by China Education Press Agency and administrated by the Ministry of Education, *China Youth Daily*, a comprehensive daily print newspaper with a large circulation founded by the Communist Youth League, and SOHU Education BBS, an internet BBS with less government influence. The study reveals that *China Education Daily* primarily represents the voice of policy-makers and government representatives, adopting a propaganda stance. *China Youth Daily*, by contrast, is generally constituted by dialogues and debates regarding policy issues for intellectuals and media commentators. SOHU Education BBS, for its part, is accessed by less privileged groups such as teachers, students, and parents. On many occasions, it takes on the role of a kind of social safety valve, conveying a critical and, sometimes, satirical attitude. These findings provide us with rich knowledge of mainstream and burgeoning media, both official sources and the reactions of populist media, in the Chinese Mainland, as well as illuminating their roles in the policy-making process. However, from my perspective, the author could consider further elaborating on the representativeness of the three selected media in the Chinese Mainland. This would give a greater sense of the research's generalizability.

Another attribute of this book is its use of a quantitative methodology. As Xu notes in his introduction, studies of media publications could benefit from adopting an empirical approach, especially computer-assisted analysis. In the methodology section of Chapter One and the following chapters that report research findings, Xu makes clear how he selected sample texts, how he tracked the main themes of the texts, and how he identified the rhetorical modes and genres of texts. Owing to the detailed delineation of research methods and procedures, the findings and conclusions of the book are well established. As a native Chinese scholar specializing in discourse analysis, I see that Xu's research makes a great methodological contribution to policy studies and media research in Chinese academia, which is often criticized as having research methods that

are not empirical or rigorous enough. However, as a more textually-orientated discourse analyst, I believe that the research would be better evidenced if the author exemplified how he differentiated a commentary mode from a derogatory or neutral one based on the analysis of linguistic nuances.

Xu's book draws upon van Dijk's⁵ and Fairclough's⁶ works as primary sources of reference. Both of their theories view media discourse as social and institutional practices, involving news production, distribution, and reception. Therefore, any media text is supposed to be interpreted both textually and contextually. As noted above, Xu offers detailed and systematic content analysis on a textual level. It is also quite evident to me that he makes considerable efforts in the social analysis of texts, reflecting on questions such as who is given access to voice in different media, how they contribute to news production and consumption, and what impact they may have on policy discourse. These discussions go beyond content analysis to incorporate a sociocultural theoretical perspective to some degree. I do look forward to further research which can offer an even more in-depth explanation of the socioeconomic, political, and cultural embedding of the adopted discursive patterns. Xu's book will no doubt inspire more interdisciplinary studies on policy discourse and mass communication in the Chinese context.

WANG Xi

Beijing Normal University

E-mail: wangxi@bnu.edu.cn

⁵ T. A. van Dijk (Ed.). (1985). *Handbook of discourse analysis*. New York, NY: Academic Press.

⁶ N. Fairclough (1992). *Discourse and social change*. Cambridge, England: Polity Press.