

Alternative Perspective: Educational Research in China and Chinese Community in Australia

Hongzhi Zhang, Philip Wing Keung Chan, Yujia Wang, Cunzheng Yang
Faculty of Education, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

Abstract: It is a common phenomenon that most researchers outside the Western culture usually utilize western concepts and theories to interpret the socio-political issues in local contexts. In the context of globalization, scholars have found that more and more issues cannot be well explained by western academic paradigm. The values of multi cultures have been re-examined and re-respected worldwide. More and more scholars are paying attention to the traditional cultures and local wisdoms to explore the process of knowledge production. Transcultural studies have become one of the hot areas in social science research. Chen (2010) believes critical studies of experiences in Asia might be able to offer a new view of global history. He suggests using ‘Asia as method’ to rethink the process of knowledge production in social culture research. In this paper, the conception of “Asia as method” has been developed in the beginning. Then this paper goes deep into the practical operational level to show the explanatory power of Asia as method through three different research cases in the field of education. The paper concludes that although Asia study has a long history in the research of social culture, it is still a new terrain in the research of education, which needs more and more educational researchers involvement in the discussion on this issue.

Key Words

Western discourse, Asia as method, educational research

Introduction

It is an indisputable fact that the western academic discourses play a dominant role in the research of social science. It is a common phenomenon that most researchers outside the Western culture usually utilize western concepts and theories to interpret the socio-political issues in local contexts. In the context of globalization, people found that more and more issues cannot be well explained by western academic paradigm. The values of multi cultures were re-examined and re-respected in the world wide. More and more local scholars pay their attentions on the traditional cultures and local wisdoms to explore the process of knowledge production. The transcultural studies have gradually been one of the hot areas in social science research. Chen (2010) believes critical studies of experiences in Asia might be able to offer a new view of global history. He suggests using ‘Asia as method’ to rethink the process of knowledge production in socio-culture research.

The purpose of this paper is to pave a new way of thinking for educational researchers. Through recovering the traditional culture and local wisdom, we attempt to establish an arena to dialogue with western academic discourse in educational research. In this paper, the conception of “Asia as method” is defined in the beginning. After that, this paper goes deep into the practical operational level to show the explanatory power of Asia as method by utilizing three different research cases in the field of education: (1) the role of network governance in formulating and implementing Chinese education policy, (2) interpreting ‘Australian education’—a case study of Chinese international students in an independent school, and (3) Chinese parents’ role in students’ attending community language schools. This paper concludes that no matter what kind of research we do, to maintain the cultural autonomy is an important prerequisite for scholars to remain independent thinking.

Asia as method

In the context of globalization, the western values rapidly spread into the world, which promoted the process of global democracy. In this process, the traditional cultures (such as Confucianism, Islamism, and Buddhism) which have a long history gradually 'lost their voices'. Randomly open a textbook of social science, you will possibly find out that the core concepts they use, the theoretical frameworks they construct, the methodology they choose and even the strategies they analyse their data can not escape the influence of western academic discourse. These phenomena do not just happen in the context of China. It is common to see that western academic discourse plays a dominant role in social science research in each corner of the world. Scholars are used to "picture the world as seen from the rich capital-exporting countries of Europe and North America – the global metropole" (Connell, 2007). The global north has been the centre of knowledge production in social science. The role of 'Southern theory' has been the world periphery.

However, the cultural conflict and integration have been the salient features of cultural globalization in the 20th century. Especially after September 11, 2001, western scholars began to rethink and reevaluate the position of western culture in the world. The theories or cultures belonging to the global south (Asia included) have been regarded as a serious research topic, which has been an important part of cultural globalization. Just as Connell (2007, p.vii) indicated "yet only knowledge produced on a planetary scale is adequate to support the self-understanding of societies now being forcibly reshaped on a planetary scale". According to Chen (2010), self-analysis provides a new strategy for scholars in global south to overcome the limits imposed and shaped by western academic discourse. He further proposes that "Asia as method creates new possibilities for intellectual work" in socio-cultural research.

The implication of Asia as method is that using Asia as an imaginary anchoring point can allow societies in Asia to become one another's reference points, so that the understanding of the self can be transformed, and subjectivity rebuilt.

(Chen, 2010)

It indicates that "Asia as Method" is to ensure that Asian localities, rather than western theories, become a reference point of each other. Theorists can counteract hegemonic knowledge production by shifting the reference points for Asia away from the West and toward local sites that share similar socio-historical processes. Pushing the concept one step further, scholars in Asia should pay their attention to discover the cultures' values belong their own in the process of knowledge production, not only the inter-Asia cultural study, but also local cultural study. In other words, Asia as method provides a platform for scholars from different backgrounds to dialogue with each other. It also build a stage for multi cultures to show their updated values in socio-cultural research. It is also a strategy to break the monopoly of Western academic discourse in social science research. However, just as the western theories need to be localized in specific context, when they are used to explain the social issues in different national contexts. Following the same logic, the recovery of traditional cultures is just the first step for the researchers to use 'Asia as method' in the research of social science. More importantly, how to make the traditions occupy a discourse space in the process of cultural globalization is a big challenge for them. The westernization of our traditional cultures is one of the strategies for us to equally dialogue with the West in the process of knowledge production.

Asia as method in Chinese educational research

Asia as method has strong explanatory power in the socio-culture research. However, in educational research few people have focused on this area. On one hand, this is a kind of challenge for us to enter a new academic territory in educational research. On the other hand, because there are no rules to follow, it is also an opportunity for us to explore freely from different directions. In order to show the inclusivity and adaptivity of Asia as method in various fields in different contexts, this paper explores the explanatory power of Asia as method in the specific operational level. Based on our own research fields and interests, how 'Asia as method' is implicated in educational research is discussed through bringing Chinese traditional culture back to the context of West. This process will be realized by analyzing three different research cases in Chinese education.

Case 1: 'Mohe' (磨合) in Chinese education policy-making

In the West, network governance is a major theory which provides a lens for examining interactions between groups that make up networks involved in policy making. There is a substantial body of work concerning the way governance has affected the contribution of central government policy to the policy process (Kjær, 2004; Pierre & Peters, 2005). Rod Rhodes (1997) possibly offers the most prominent and influential account of governance concept. His most influential writings, especially the book called *Understanding governance: policy networks, governance and accountability* (1997), employs governance to explore the institutions, actors and processes of change within the core executive in British. He defines network governance as "self-organizing, inter-organizational networks characterized by interdependence, resource-exchange, rules of the game and significant autonomy from the state" (1997, p. 15).

Scholars examine various Chinese public policies by localized the network governance theory. These policies include reforming of taxation in the rural area (Tang 2004), Chinese politics in the provincial legislatures (Xia, 2008), housing and estates (Zhu, 2008; Zhang & Lou, 2007) and public health insurance reform (Zheng, Jong, and Koppenjan 2010). They argue that "significant autonomy from the state" may not fit in China as the role of the Chinese Communist Party is still dominant in the policymaking. It is still highly resourced and has a range of powers with which to retain influence over public sector agencies. In educational policy, Ball (2010) does not suggest to "giving up by the state of its capacity to steer policy" (p. 748).

In the light of Chen's idea of 'Asia as method' (2010), the Chinese term 'Mohe' provides an alternative way to study policy-making processes. It contributes a method to coordinate various autonomous actors to accommodate each other to solve the societal problems and achieve the collective goals. Xia Ming (2000) uses the emerging concept of 'Mohe' to echo the network governance. He explains that

In Chinese, 'Mohe' combines two words: 'mo' means 'friction' between two objects or conflict between people. 'He' means 'cooperation' or 'congruence'. 'Mohe' is often interpreted as a 'grinding process' as happens to new cars or machines in which new parts adjust themselves in order to accommodate each other and work in harmony. Its best equivalent in English is 'co-petition' (a combination of cooperation and competition, coined recently by a scientist) which also has accurately connoted the crucial meanings of 'Mohe': it is a process in a time frame. Friction exists, but it does not grind an entity (either a group, a system, or a machinery) apart. Rather it helps each part to smooth its jarring quality and form an everlasting coexistence. Since in this situation all actors lose part of their original qualities which cause disharmony, there is no actor with an absolute hegemony to impose its will upon other actors completely, it is hard to argue who is a winner and who is a loser. The more important feature is the reciprocation of cooperation and mutual restraints. (p. 194)

Importantly, the concept of “Mohe” does not exclude the role of the state in a policy-making process. It indicates a continuing process of cooperation through friction and mutual adjustment.

In this case, we will analyze three problems have been overcome by the actors’ participation when the railway state-owned enterprise school was removed from the Ministry of Railways to the Ministry of Education. The main actors involved in this education reform are the local Education Bureau, the General Education Department of Railway Bureau, the principal, current and retired teachers of railway state-owned enterprise school. These actors have their primary goals, perceptions of the issues at hand, and the strategies they employed when they engaged three deadlocked problems, namely, disqualified teacher, excess teacher and retired teacher.

Problem of disqualified teachers

The local education bureau demanded all the teachers have filled the teacher status in the application forms when they applied the teaching post, some in decades ago. It is regardless they got their teaching qualification afterward. The principal solved this problem skillfully.

I first clarified this issue with the district local education bureau and the manpower bureau by saying all these teachers got their proper qualification during teaching, but they didn’t accept. I understood the top-down policy process in China; I went to the Guangdong province manpower department to explain this matter and then got a letter with the official chop from them to identify the teachers with proper qualification, and then I bring this letter to the Shenzhen Municipal manpower department, they accepted it and wrote me another letter, and then I brought these two letters to the local education bureau and the district manpower bureau. They accepted it without saying anything.

(Interview with the principal)

The first action the principal taken is to explain the problem to the relevant government bureaus and hoping it can be solved directly. However, it did not solve properly as the one of the goals of the local Education Bureau was “accept the school with the minimum expense in the transition period and running cost after”. Therefore, fewer State-owned Enterprises (SOE) school teachers return to government schools, less funding required from the bureau. The principal understood the Chinese hierarchal and top-down administrative structure, in which lower level governments, must obey and follow the instruction and decision from higher level governments without hesitation and questions.

Problem of excess teachers

There is a difference in teacher/student ratio between the railway state-owned enterprise schools and government schools. The railway state-owned enterprise schools have a high teacher/student ratio. Therefore, the local Education Bureau did not receive 7-8 excess teachers. The vice director of the General Education Department of Railway Bureau told me the solution to this problem.

We used another condition to exchange and fulfill their requirement; we gave them the houses or apartments which are currently used for teachers’ accommodation, they accepted it.

(Interview with the vice director of the General Education Department of Railway Bureau)

The General Education Department of Railway Bureau offered houses and apartments to the local education bureau in exchange of the acceptance of excess teachers. This is a clear example of how resources can be exchanged within parties to achieve mutual benefit for both parties.

Problem of retired teachers

It is the most difficult issue to solve during the transferring period as it did not have successful case to follow. Different actors have different views on this matter.

We know it is profitable in the railway enterprise. It is a public listed company, so we requested RMB¥20 million in returns to accept their retired teachers.

(Interview with the deputy director of the local Education Bureau)

We had paid a lot of money in this matter [retired teachers] In fact, we have prepared to pay for because we understand if they [retired teachers] will not be transferred to the local education bureau, they will come to our office everyday and it is too costly in administration to keep them.

(Interview with the vice director of the General Education Department of Railway Bureau)

Similar to the solution to the previous problem, the local Education Bureau and the General Education Department of Railway Bureau found their ways to communicate with each other through the method of resource exchange.

Between 2001 and 2003, the retired teachers state their views in the negotiation process with the bureaus through the principal... and they wrote a lot of letters to claim their rights under the Teacher Education Law to the local education bureau and relevant departments, talked to the media, ask councilors to put their agendas to the Municipal Council, report to the higher level government (provincial government and central government) through the petition system. I believed that the central government had a new document (dated on 1st January 2004) related to their issue because of their effort in bargaining.

(Interview of deputy principal)

..... They were also fight for their own, such as contact media, they selected 2-3 people as the main contacts, once the matter related to the transfer, they all response and work together. They also get in touch with the retired teachers in other cities to exchange information and bargain together. Everyone knows that there has significantly different retirement benefit between state-owned enterprise school and the government school. The retired teachers can triple their pension to RMB¥6,600 per month if they are under the local education bureau.

(Interview of senior teacher)

The retired teachers claimed and fought for their rights and benefits under the Chinese Teacher Law both formally and informally. The formal way was to communicate with the local education bureau with direct mails or through the principal. The informal way was to seek help from media and councilors. Other than that, they formed networks to connect with retired teachers in different cities to exchange the information and gathered together to achieve a better bargaining power.

In fact, the final result of this network-kind of negotiation in the case of railway state-owned enterprise school was favored and accepted by the all actors. All actors are better off, with the local Education Bureau the only one disadvantaged actor in this matter, even though it was compensated

by RMB¥20 million. This matches with the claim of Torfing, Sørensen, and Fotel (2009) that ‘the network actors must be prepared to respond positively to constructive proposals, to make concessions, or at least to compensate the losers.’ (p. 291).

In this case, “Mohe” postulates that actors depend on each other for resources and, therefore, enter exchange relationships. In the other words, it is an explanatory motor as to why actors deploy resources for other actors’ resources in the network to achieve their goals. “Mohe” is generally useful and fruitful for understanding the policy process in China. It has a potential to provide a framework to analyze the policy making process in the West, especially for the countries which the state power is still in place and cannot be excluded.

Case 2: Interpreting ‘Australian education’—Chinese international students in an independent School

China is the largest source country of international students to Australia. In the school sector, Chinese students also dominate, contributing to 43.9 per cent, and among them there are 18,367 Chinese students aged between 15-19 years old in Australia in 2010 (Australian Education International). Drawing on a case study of a group of late-teen Chinese international students, this essay explores how they interpret their experience of education in an independent school in Melbourne in relation to the quality of education.

Education in Western discourses, originated from Western Democracy (Dewey 1903), is deeply embedded in the philosophy of the ‘personal well-being’ and ‘the ultimate well-being of learners’, which pedagogy ‘affects’ (Pring 2011:xix). In the Chinese context, education has similar two components from Confucius ethics heritage—Jiao (教, equivalent to the function of pedagogy) and Yu (育, personal development), but the philosophy of wellbeing and correlation between wellbeing and pedagogy that are implicit in Jiao and Yu are obviously different. Given that, the students’ interpretation of Australian education is approached as a process of cultural encounter and cultural reading in the transnational space. The entry point of this case to the major theme of the paper is that neither cultural context is adequate or decisive in explaining and understanding their experience in the Australian educational system. The transnational social space initiates the dialogue between things labeled the West and the Rest. It is not a discussion of quality education per se. In addition, treating education as two components—Jiao and Yu—offers a flexible tool that can capture the dynamics between the two axes beyond the national confines that allow for transnational interpretation. It helps to decompose national readings and philosophies.

The Chinese international students’ assessment of the Australian education is culturally contextualized and relational, as they constantly draw on their educational experience in China as the frame of reference. What’s more, their views are quite mixed. Neither the Australian nor the Chinese education represents the absolute exemplar of quality education, as they point to both strengths and weaknesses of the two educational systems they were once and they are currently located. More importantly, the wholesale nature of the word ‘quality’ in quality education is stretched and loses its legitimacy as a categorical word pertaining simply to things good or bad. Furthermore, the students’ ideas of quality education change as their overseas journey goes on, which makes their interpretations of Australian education on their experiential levels more slippery to grasp. Therefore, *jiayou* (教育) both as a noun and as a verb a conceptual framework helps to understand these students’ interpretation of education based on their Australian experience and their construction of the ideals a quality education entails.

Chinese thought of education can date back to the Chinese Saga and educator—Confucius 2500 years ago. The basic ideas of Confucius thought of education, which in broad terms are ‘whole person’ centred education, stressing virtues over knowledge, have great impact on Chinese traditional education (Chen Lai, 2005, p.204). Jiaoyu (教育) as the English equivalence of education first appeared as a verb in Confucianism successor Mencius’s works (Tan, 2004, p.1). This version of jiaoyu has been colloquially transformed into jiaoshuyuren (教书育人), or literally, teaching content and cultivating and nurturing people. Therefore, it has been widely acknowledged that there are two components of education in China that emphasizes both the teaching and nurturing valences of education.

Contemporary secondary school policy in China proposes ‘people-oriented’ approach to education, emphasizing the importance of aiding students’ understanding of social life and the cultivation of their capacity for independent thinking and creativity (Zhu, 2004, p.30). It can be interpreted as a continuation and varied version of Confucian notion of virtue-oriented education. However, this educational reform in people-oriented education tends to be dogmatic and separates with pedagogical practice (Zhu, 2004, p.26).

Therefore, the notion of each valence of jiaoyu undergoes change within different historical period of China under different socio-cultural contexts. That is, ideas around jiao and yu are constantly revisited with regards to the content, the methods and approaches jiao and yu initiate. In addition, Jiao and yu are not randomly added together. Rather, the relationship between them is more complicated and dynamic.

There are two major themes that emerge regarding Chinese international students’ hands-on experience of the Australian education. The first is about pedagogical practices of teachers and teachers’ role. Their point of assessment and judgement focuses on jiao, or ‘teaching that’ and ‘teaching how’. Some students complained about the low efficiency of teachers in their Australian classrooms as ‘the teachers spent several classes to teach us how to work out one math question, and there is not enough knowledge taught in the class, which is unimaginable in China’. In contrast, they tended to see the Chinese teachers more efficient in jiao or teaching. This reveals a hidden link Chinese international students construct between jiao and the content of knowledge imparted by the teachers in Chinese classes, which defines what and how much teachers should teach, and what the students should expect from the teachers in classes. They have their expectations as to what teachers teach and how much knowledge is to be transmitted by the teachers. Given the examination-oriented nature of the Chinese educational system, it is common for teachers to teach a large volume of ‘shortcuts’ and the tricks and strategies in problem solving.

In the meanwhile, the students come to read the ‘low efficiency’ in the Australian context as a positive yu or cultivation of capacity of the overseas education, an element in jiaoyu, which is lacked in China. This marks a shift of their negative attitude of the lack of teachers’ ‘teaching that’ to their appreciation of their ‘teaching how’. They realize that in China the processes of developing their capacity to work out strategies towards problem solving are not tended to, or simply ignored because the ultimate assessment of teaching is students’ result in entrance examination for universities. It is teachers’ role, not that of the students’, to extract ‘knowledge’ and make it accessible to them. In Australia, they are forced to think about voicing their own voice as a way of knowledge production. In retrospect, they tend to see them as the merits of an overseas education, which is interpreted as yu, referring to a cultivation of capacity for problem solving, the ability to extract the knowledge on purpose, and the way to see themselves rather than the teachers as the producer of knowledge.

Secondly, the Chinese international students identify with a positive *yu* in Australian education in the teacher-student relationship. Referencing their often ‘too busy’ Chinese teachers, they stressed that the teachers in Australia are ‘friendly’ and ‘nice’. Good teacher-student relationship as important factor that facilitates and contributes to students’ learning at school has been widely acknowledged (Metclafe & Game, 2006). One girl student concluded, ‘the teachers show sincere interests to know about you, not just your grade’. At the same time, these students feel that some ‘low quality’ local students overact their freedom and do not show respect to teachers, thus need to be disciplined to make it appear like a ‘school’ proper. This reflects another dimension between *jiao* and *yu*, which addresses the ideal of students’ construct of a quality education: the proper teacher-student relationship that nurtures students should not be too ‘strict’ and not too ‘friendly’.

The split of *jiaoyu* into teaching and nurturing works to capture the complexities of such assessment, pointing to the ambiguities the Chinese students have towards the Australian education so as to avoid the pitfall of wholesale judgmental words such as a good or bad education as the conclusion. Furthermore, the dialectic relationship between ‘teaching’ and ‘nurturing’ captures the dynamics, the changes of students’ attitudes towards the Australian education, and their construction of quality education.

Meanwhile, the findings also feed back to the relationship between the two components of *jiaoyu*, namely, nurturing and teaching. It firstly demonstrates that how much teaching and how much cultivation and nurturing in defining quality education is always an open signifier, where the balance between teaching and nurturing is culturally contextualized, but not culturally defined. Secondly the boundaries between teaching and learning are quite blurred. Some styles of teaching are nurturing in nature. That alerts to the third point to the transformation of teaching into nurturing, while teaching and nurturing as two components of education are always on the priority list, which is also culturally contextualized.

With reference to the findings, it is argued that the Chinese students’ interpretation of the quality of education is an ongoing cultural construct, which is culturally contextualized, but not culturally determined. Challenging the dominance of ‘the West as method’ and as ‘an opposing entity’ (Chen 2010:216), in the transnational social space the students have had a dialogue between ‘the West and the Rest’. Western democracy and Confucius thought that entail education work together as these students construct new meanings of *yu* in *jiaoyu* and see the *yu* part of Australian education more as a humane approach to education in terms of pedagogy, teacher-student relationship, and the emphasis on human power in knowledge production. These contribute to their capacity, and therefore are interpreted as the nurturing component (*yu*) of the Australian education.

Case 3: Chinese parent-child relationship in shaping children’s attending community language schools

Community languages schools (CLA, 2011) or ethnic schools (ESAV, 2010) in Australia are also named heritage languages schools or complementary or supplementary schools in Europe and North America (Creese, 2009; Francis, Archer, & Mau, 2010). The latest statistics show that about 37,000 students attend community languages schools in Victoria and among the students, approximately one third learn Chinese (ESAV, 2010).

In the case study of 16 Chinese immigrant teenage students attending Huawen School, a community language school in Melbourne, “parents made me” is one of the most commonly mentioned reasons for them to start Chinese schooling from young age. Many students indicated that an important reason for them to attend Chinese schools was to fulfill their parents’ expectations and requirements when they were young. Even for those who started recently, parents’ suggestions and

encouragement also played an important role. On the other hand, some students who “really hated it” kept attending Chinese schools simply because this was their parents’ requirement and they believed that they had to obey at the first place. However, now in their teens, many begin to understand the benefits of learning the heritage language and feel grateful for their parents who once “forced” them to learn or continue learning.

Such Chinese parenting practice and parent-child relationship may not be familiar to other communities or cultures in Australia and even be frowned upon by some Chinese people who prefer ‘Western-style’ more equal and less hierarchical parent-child relationship as well. However, inspired by the concept of ‘Asia as method’, which suggests experiences and practices in Asia be developed as an alternative perspective and seen as method to advance a different understanding (Chen, 2010), this case tries to explore the notions of ‘guan’ (管) and ‘xiao’ (孝) in Chinese culture, where such Chinese parent-child relationship originated from, in shaping these children’s attending Chinese language schools.

Parental involvement and guidance in child’s nurturance and education in Chinese culture can be traced back to Confucian philosophy. One of the well-known Confucian classics ‘San Zi Jing’ (三字经 Three-character Classic) contends that ‘to feed without educating is the father’s (parents’) fault’ (养不教，父之过). Chinese parents, therefore, are expected to play an important role in child’s upbringing especially the child’s education. They are supposed to ‘guan’ (concern, care, govern and discipline) their children. Such characteristics may not necessarily be exclusive to Chinese parents and also present in other cultures. What makes parents’ role of ‘guan’ more effective in Chinese community is that children are expected to ‘xiao’ or be ‘xiao’ (children’s filial piety). As prescribed also in ‘San Zi Jing’, a child should learn ‘beginning with filial piety and fraternal love’ (首孝悌), which emphasizes the parents’ authority and duty of being a child as well.

Research on Chinese immigrant students’ educational achievements shows an outstanding parent-child shared expectation in Chinese culture of ‘guan’ and ‘xiao’ (Chao, 1994, 1996; G. Li, 2006; J. Li, 2004). In this parent-child relationship, there is an authoritarian parenting style and children’s obedience to parents. However, whether such parenting style leads to students’ achievements is not the focus of this paper, rather, its implications in students’ community language learning in Australia.

Chinese parents’ ‘guan’ in their children’s community language learning is incarnated in the flowing aspects. Most of the Chinese students in my study mentioned the high educational and career expectations from their parents. Research show diasporic Chinese parents, regardless of class and educational backgrounds, share some similar values, including hard work, strict monitoring of children, belief in the importance of the prestige of college, and high educational and career aspirations. They also tend to rely on Chinese schools as a complement to the mainstream schooling to ensure their children maintain Chinese language and culture while living in Western countries (Archer & Francis, 2006; Louie, 2004). When children are young, parents are supposed to make decisions based on the intentions for their children’s future benefits and wellbeing from parents’ perspectives. Drawing on my case study, the decision of attending Chinese schools was ‘definitely’ made by parents. In addition, most of my research participants started going to weekend Chinese schools from five or six years young. They all indicated that their parents had always been encouraging and supporting them to learn Chinese and to attend Chinese schools, without which some might have already dropped out of the school due to the loss of interests.

Furthermore, these parents value education and as first generation immigrants, they try to plan their children's educational pathways strategically and take the most advantage from the educational system in the host country based on their understandings and experiences in order to fulfill the duty of being parents. Students who had had some formal schooling in China and who had no problems in communicating in Chinese language were also persuaded or highly recommended to attend weekend Chinese language schools in Australia. This is because parents learnt from their community that Chinese was one of the LOTE subjects in the VCE that provided students with bonus marks in their VCE overall scores and this would assist students in the university entry. Therefore children's fluency in Chinese language is supposed to be an advantage to compare with other students who lack such ability.

Apart from the instrumental benefits in relation to students' education and career pathways, learning Chinese is also an important marker of ethnic identity based on the parents' experiences as being Chinese immigrants in the Western countries. Learning Chinese is not only necessary for students to travel back to China, but useful in Australia as well. 'You have a Chinese face and you should learn Chinese. If you don't know Chinese, it'll be embarrassing' was one of the significant reasons for parents to send their children to Chinese schools. For many students in this research, 'looking Chinese' is emphasized by their parents as an important reason to learn Chinese because it is an important marker of being Chinese. Studies on Australian-Chinese have found that although Chinese have tried hard to be included in Australian society, because of their racial features, even the third and the fourth generation Chinese Australians find 'their identities are permanently incarcerated in China (and Asia) while their claims to Australianness are constantly challenged and invalidated', which 'is obstructing their unconditional acceptance as "real" Australians within mainstream society' (Tan, 2006, p. 78). The 'construction of "East" and "West" as mutually exclusive seriously complicates the sense of identity of Chinese people throughout the world' (Ang, 1993, p. 36). To avoid regression of not learning ethnic language at proper age or losing the ethnic language ability in future and accordingly causing embarrassment and confusion in claiming their ethnic identity, parents have guided and led the students in their educational pathway through 'forcing' them to attend Chinese schools.

On the other hand, Chinese parents' 'guan' won't be effective without children's 'xiao' in the community language learning. Parents have the authority in the family and children are expected to respect and obey their parents. Some of the students in my study indicated that they 'really hated Chinese school' or 'didn't think it necessary to attend Chinese schools' and yet they attended so as to obey their parents. For these Chinese students, Saturday or Sunday was an extra school day while they assumed for their Australian peers weekends were for hobbies, entertainment and relaxation. They chose to obey or 'xiao' their parents though reluctantly. However, the students now at senior year levels realize that their parents had their good intentions in thinking about their future educational and career opportunities. Some students are now grateful to their parents who were once strict in requiring or 'forcing' them not to give up anything they were pursuing in learning, such as attending Chinese schools. In fact, most of the students began to realize the benefits of being bilingual and bicultural in one way or another in relation to national and global imperatives now in their mid or late teens.

In Australia where minority immigrant groups are subjected to the linguistic assimilation pressures of school, media, peers and society as a whole, ethnic language loss has been confirmed as inevitable in many families by both census data analysis and research (Smolicz, Secombe, & Hudson, 2001). Therefore, this paper argues that for those who keep attending Chinese schools also largely due to the Chinese parent-child relationship of 'guan' and 'xiao', which has ensured the continuation of Chinese heritage language learning through the generations in some Chinese families. 'Guan' and 'xiao' also provides an alternative perspective and practice in parent-child

relationship in children's nurturing, upbringing and education. This paper suggests such parent-child relationship be applied in other cultures as well though further research is required regarding the balance between the two inseparable aspects of 'guan' and 'xiao', which form the kernel of the Chinese parent-child relationship from Chinese culture.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that in order to get beyond the Euro-American centralism of research paradigm in the field of social science, it is necessary even desirable for Chinese researchers to recover the traditional culture and local wisdom with regard to the issues of Chinese education. Drawing on Chen's view of 'Asia as method', this paper has provided three different research cases to explore how 'Asia as method' works in educational research concerning Chinese educational issues. By discussing network governance theory in the West, this paper argues that the notion of 'Mohe' which is derived from Chinese traditional culture can have more flexibility to accommodate actors in the Chinese education policy arena, since the 'significant autonomy from the state' does not imply in this term. The second case juxtaposed the cultural embedded notion of education in the transnational space where the Western Democracy and Confucius ethics meet. We have argued that cultural reading with regards to the quality of education is a both-and process, and neither culture works in an absolutely dominant way. In addition, we explored how 'guan' and 'xiao', the two inseparable aspects in Chinese parent-child relationship originated from Chinese culture, play a positive role in shaping Chinese children's heritage language learning in Australia.

To sum up, network governance, independent school and Community languages schools, it seems like no connection between these key words. If scholars talk it about separately, each of them is no doubt an independent research project. Asia as method "serves as an umbrella problematic, which links together work that grew out of different historical moments and requires analyses at different levels of abstraction" (Chen. 2010). If we put them under the same academic discourse - Asia as method, the relations between them naturally show up. That is they have the same 'kernel' - cultural identity, for example, 'mohe' as a strategy of network governance in Chinese education reform, the difference between 'jiaoyu' and education, and 'guan' and 'xiao' as the core characteristics in parent-child relationship in Chinese culture. We can neglect it in our own research, but we cannot deny its existence of objectivity. As long as we hold the 'kernel', we take the initiative, at least the equality, to dialogue with the west in the global context.

Reference

- AEI (Australian Education International, 2011) International Student Numbers.
http://aei.gov.au/AEI/PublicationsAndResearch/Snapshots/2011051801_pdf.pdf, Retrieved on 6 June 2011.
- Ang, I. (1993). Migrations of Chineseness: Ethnicity in the postmodern world In D. Bennett (Ed.), *Cultural Studies: Pluralism And Theory* (Vol. 2, pp. 32-44). Parkville: Melbourne University Literary and Culture Studies.
- Archer, L., & Francis, B. (2006). Challenging classes? Exploring the role of social class within the identities and achievement of British Chinese pupils. *Sociology*, 40(1), 29-49.
- Ball, S. J. (2010). Social and education policy, social enterprise, hybridity and new discourse communities. Paper presented at the Social Policy Association Conference 2010. from <http://www.social-policy.org.uk/lincoln/Ball.pdf>

- Chao, R. K. (1994). Beyond parental control and authoritarian parenting style: understanding Chinese parenting through the cultural Notion of training. *Child Development*, 65(4), 1111-1119.
- Chao, R. K. (1996). Chinese and European American mothers' beliefs about the role of parenting in children's school success. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 27, 403-423.
- Chen, K.-H. (2010). *Asia as method : toward deimperialization*. Durham [NC] ; London: Duke University Press.
- Chen, L. 2005. On the basic ideas of Confucius thought of education. *Journal of Peking University (Philosophy and Social Sciences)*. 42(5), 198-205.
- CLA (2011). *Community Languages Australia* Retrieved Feb 10, 2011, from <http://www.communitylanguagesaustralia.org.au/>
- Connell, R. (2007). *Southern theory: The global dynamics of knowledge in social science*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Creese, A. (2009). Building on young people's linguistic and cultural continuity: Complementary schools in the United Kingdom. *Theory into Practice*, 48(4), 267.
- ESAV (2010). *Ethnic Schools Association of Victoria: Ethnic Schools - Statistical Data* Retrieved March 20, 2010, from <http://www.communitylanguages.org.au/DataSummary.php>
- Francis, B., Archer, L., & Mau, A. (2010). Parents' and teachers' constructions of the purposes of Chinese complementary schooling: "Culture", Identity and Power. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 13(1), 101-117.
- Hall, K. A., Ozerk, K., Zulfiqar, M., & Tan, J. E. C. (2002). 'This is our school': provision, purpose and pedagogy of supplementary schooling in Leeds and Oslo. *British Educational Research Journal*, 28(3), 399-418.
- Kjær, A. M. (2004). *Governance*. Malden, MA: Polity/Blackwell.
- Li, G. (2006). What do parents think? middle-class Chinese immigrant parents' perspectives on literacy learning, homework, and school-home communication. *The School Community Journal*, 16(2), 27-46.
- Li, J. (2004). Parental expectations of Chinese immigrants: a folk theory about children's school achievement. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 7(2), 167-183.
- Li, W. (2006). Complementary schools, past, present and future. *Language and Education*, 20(1), 76-83.
- Louie, V. S. (2004). *Compelled to Excel: Immigration, education, and opportunity among Chinese Americans*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Metcalfe, A. and Game, A. 2006. *Teachers who change lives*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.
- Pierre, J., & Peters, B. G. (2005). *Governing complex societies : trajectories and scenarios*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rhodes, R. A. W. (1997). *Understanding governance : policy networks, governance, reflexivity and accountability*. Bristol, Pa.: Open University Press.
- Smolicz, J. J., Secombe, M. J., & Hudson, D. M. (2001). Family collectivism and minority language as core values of culture among ethnic groups in Australia. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 22(2), 152-172.
- Tan, C. (2006). 'The tyranny of appearance': Chinese Australian identities and the politics of difference. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 27(1-2), 65-82.
- Tang, H. F. (2004). Policy network and policy consequence - The analysis of the changing allocation pattern in the rural taxation The *Journal of CPC Zhejiang Provincial Party School*(1), 31-36.
- Torring, J., Sørensen, E., & Fotel, T. (2009). Democratic anchorage of infrastructural governance networks: The case of the femern belt forum. *Planning Theory*, 8(3), 282-308.

- Xia, M. (2000). Political contestation and the emergence of the provincial people's congresses as power players in Chinese politics: A network explanation. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 9(24), 185 - 214.
- Xia, M. (2008). *People's congresses and governance in China: Toward a network mode of governance*: Routledge
- Zhang, J. W., & Lou, C. W. (2007). The Research of Policy Networks on the Real Estate Marco-control. *Journal of Northeastern University (Social Science)*, 9(4), 341-344.
- Zheng, H., Jong, M. D., & Koppenjan, J. (2010). Apply Policy Network Theory to Policy-Making in China: The Case of Urban Health Insurance Reform. *Public Administration*, 88(2), 398-417.
- Zhu, X. M. 2004. Standards and innovation in contemporary moral education course in Chinese Secondary Schools. *Global Education* 33(4), 26-31.
- Zhu, Y. (2008). Housing Problem and Solution in China. *Wuhan Univeristy Journal (Philosophy & Social Sciences)*, 61(3), 345-350.