
2. Maoist ideology and education

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INTRODUCTION

The aspiration and efforts of Republican China to establish the country as an independent, prosperous and powerful nation collapsed under the storm of colonial aggression from Japan. The aggressor was defeated, but the rule of Republican China ended, following a civil war, with the coming to power of the victorious Chinese Communist Party in 1949. The remnants of the Nationalist Kuomintang retreated to Taiwan. The next 40 years proved to be ones of successive and disruptive ideological and political shifts. The purpose of this chapter is to consider the impact of Maoist ideology on education in China during this period, and to indicate some important commentaries through a reader's guide.

It is important to note that there were significant differences between the Russian and the Chinese communist revolutions of the twentieth century. They were both led by vanguard Marxist-Leninist parties in circumstances of political and social fracture brought about by war. However, the Chinese People's Liberation of 1949, unlike the Russian October Revolution of 1917, was essentially the culmination of a peasant war successful only after a long guerrilla struggle against both foreign, imperialist Japanese, and domestic, nationalist Kuomintang (KMT), enemies. In these circumstances, Mao Zedong (1893–1976), the leader of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) laid down the ideological mass-line that state power and authority derived from the will of the Chinese people and must be endorsed by them, audibly and visibly, through mass meetings and popular demonstrations. It emphasized that officials and intellectuals, both members of and fellow-travellers with the Chinese Communist Party, should be monitored and called to account regularly. The ideological purpose was to prevent the emergence of privileged political and bureaucratic hierarchies to ensure that revolutionary momentum was sustained (Morgan, 2015). The essentials of this ideology were set out in Mao Zedong's now famous *Talks at the Yanan Forum on Literature and Art* in May 1941 (Mao, 1956; Lee, 1986, 475–485). These anticipated dramatic further Chinese revolutionary campaigns such as the Great Leap Forward (1958) and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1965–1969).

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The Chinese classical scholars had taught: 'People are the foundation of the nation: if the foundation is firm, then the nation enjoys tranquillity' (Yen, 1925, 1). The reality of Imperial and of early Republican China was that the vast majority remained excluded from formal education and its benefits; and this maintained a stratified semi-feudal governing elite. China had one-quarter of the world's population, but almost 80 per cent did not read or write. Hence the emergence of the Mass Education Movement (*Ping Min Jiao Yu*), founded in 1923, with its belief that: 'Democracy and illiteracy cannot stand side by side. One of the two must go. Which shall it be?' (Yen, 1925, 1). If the democratic Chinese republic was to succeed, it would be necessary, it argued, to educate China's illiterate masses within a decade (Yen, 1923). The Mass Education Movement was significant as the first organized campaign to attempt this in China. It aimed at education for all, bringing it within ordinary people's reach. This would raise the cultural aspirations of the masses, stimulate a demand for education generally, and create a literature that would meet the needs of a growing reading population. Its manifesto commented that hitherto, 'almost anything worthwhile done in literature had been done for the scholar and practically nothing for the common people' (Yen, 1925, 23). The Mass Education Movement claimed to be a popular one unifying the Chinese people and preparing them for democratic citizenship. The already well-educated Chinese understood, it claimed, 'that the welfare of the community depends upon the development and the intelligence of the masses . . . The world can ill afford to see China's millions kept ignorant and ignored . . . she must have something to contribute to the peace and progress of the world' (Yen, 1925, 25).

**TALKS AT THE YENAN FORUM ON LITERATURE
AND ART**

The Chinese Communist Party recognized, on the other hand, as did the international communist movement generally, the importance of ideological education if it was to achieve its political objectives (Price, 1976; Morgan, 2003). It drew on the revolutionary experience of the Soviet Union under the guidance of the Communist (Third) International or Comintern. An example is the 'open entry, self-study university' that Mao Zedong established at Changsha in Hunan Province in 1923. This experience contributed later to Mao's politically important 'Report on an

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Investigation of the Hunan Peasant Movement' (Mao, 1927 [1953]). The experiment at Changsha was a product of Mao's criticisms of the formal and hierarchical style of conventional university studies. It took as its motto: 'Read by oneself; ponder by oneself; mutually discuss and study' (Coletta, 1982, 6). This early experience, followed as it was by the bitter years of revolutionary struggle and war, provided a prelude to Mao's thinking about education and, ultimately, to the attempt at Cultural Revolution following the People's Liberation in 1949 (Morgan, 2003).

Ten years after Changsha, following the Long March of the Chinese Red Army in 1934 and 1935, the Chinese Communist Party established itself in the stronghold of Yen'an in north-west China. It was from this base that it developed its own programme of education, as reported by the American journalist Edgar Snow in his well-known book *Red Star over China*, published in Britain by the Left Book Club (Snow, 1937). This was a campaign of mass adult education through general literacy classes, combined with social and economic programmes such as co-operatives, designed to raise collective consciousness amongst the workers and peasants in the countryside under Chinese Communist Party control. This was, in turn, combined with the education of Chinese Communist Party cadres through the Anti-Japanese Military and Political College or *K'ang-ta* also based at Yen'an (Price, 1976).

Mao had consolidated his dominant place in the leadership of the CCP during the Long March, emphasizing to his Party comrades the lessons of that 'historic punishment' (Morgan, 2003, 112). He was conscious of the dangers inherent in any pact with the KMT, and believed that while Chinese Communist Party membership and support was increasing because of the Japanese invasion, its fundamental class position was being diluted. Consequently, he considered the Mass Education Movement to be an ideological challenge to the potential hegemony, in Gramscian terms, of the Chinese Communist Party (Hoare and Nowell-Smith, 1971; Borg et al., 2002). It posed the fundamental question of the Party's relationship with intellectuals, and their role in its educational, cultural and, most importantly, political work. The CCP remained suspicious of the class origins of those bourgeois intellectuals who had joined it, and considered progressive intellectuals outside the Party as exploitative individualists and idealists. However, after a formal anti-Japanese united front with the nationalist Kuomintang was agreed in 1936, Mao reminded the Chinese Communist Party of the unfortunate truth that, as yet: 'The proletariat cannot produce its own intellectuals without the help of intellectuals already existing in society' (Pepper, 1996, 129). Mao insisted that the Chinese Communist Party itself should 'go back to school' through a mass programme of political education and ideological rectification. Mao's

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Talks at the Yen'an Forum on Literature and Art were key to this campaign and provide a clear statement of a fundamental ideological position that remained basically unchanged in subsequent decades.

At the beginning and also at the close of the *Yen'an Forum*, Mao spelled out the relationship between Marxist-Leninist goals and China's intellectuals, including teachers. He pointed out that the liberation of the Chinese people would take place on 'various fronts, among which are the fronts of the pen and of the gun, the cultural and the military fronts' (Mao, 1956, 1). The military, Mao said, was the primary force, but the cultural army was also necessary to uniting the Chinese Communist Party in its move towards a common ideological goal. He identified the problems facing intellectuals in building this cultural army. First, there was the problem of class position: the Chinese Communist Party's stance was that of the proletariat and of the peasant masses. There were also problems of attitude and of audience. He said that when he himself was a student, 'I felt that intellectuals were the only clean people in the world, while in comparison workers and peasants were dirty.' After a long and painful experience as a revolutionary he came to understand that 'the workers and peasants are after all the cleanest people, cleaner than both the bourgeois and petty bourgeois intellectuals, even though their hands are soiled and their feet smeared with cow dung' (Mao, 1956, 7; Morgan, 2003, 116).

The ideological lesson was that 'the duty of learning from the workers, peasants and soldiers precedes the task of educating them' (Mao, 1956, 17; Morgan, 2003, 116). This was emphasized and re-emphasized as the need of intellectuals to change fundamentally, as he claimed to have done, the attitudes imposed by bourgeois education. It was necessary for the communist intellectual to understand that 'Only by speaking for the masses can he educate them and only by becoming their pupil can he become their teacher'; otherwise, 'no matter how great his talent may be, he will not be needed by the people and his work will have no future' (Mao, 1956, 23; Morgan, 2003, 116). The later case of the prominent British-educated anthropologist and sociologist, Fei Xiao Tong, an expert on rural China as Mao claimed to be, may be taken as an example from among very many (Morgan, 2014).

THE STUDY AND RECTIFICATION CAMPAIGN, 1942–1944

The ideological impulse of the *Yen'an Forum* continued during the Study and Rectification Campaign between 1942 and 1944. This has been described as perhaps Mao Zedong's greatest political triumph, and

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confirmed him as the leader and ideological spokesman of the Chinese Communist Party (Pepper, 1996, 40). Mao insisted that each Party member's political record and revolutionary potential be re-examined, a process culminating in a senior cadres' conference between October 1942 and January 1943. The campaign was a pioneering and totalizing Maoist effort to shape the CCP as the hegemonic model for an emerging communist society. The campaign also foreshadowed the future political objectives and pattern of the Great Leap Forward and ultimately of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. The radicals in the Chinese Communist Party, inspired by Mao, accepted class struggle and ideological mass mobilization as necessary to the construction of a socialist and ultimately communist China. Others in the Party, and certainly the established intelligentsia outside it, believed in the necessity of educating and training an elite of experts, albeit under the Party's control, if economic growth and social development were to be sustained. The search for a *media via*, as recommended by traditional Chinese teaching such as Confucianism, was abandoned during these years of struggle that culminated in the disastrous experiment of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

EDUCATION AFTER LIBERATION, 1949–1965

After the People's Liberation in 1949 there was a period of political and ideological consolidation as the Chinese Communist Party took stock of its gains. As far as education policy is concerned, Suzanne Pepper, in one of her invaluable contributions to the *Cambridge History of China* (1987a), identifies three diverse concepts coming together during the decade that followed. The first was an amalgam of Western inspired philosophies of education grafted on traditional Confucianism, as considered in Chapter 1 of this *Handbook*. The second derived from the Chinese Communist Party's own ideology as practised in its border region strongholds during the 1930s and 1940s. The third was imported to China in the 1950s as the new communist government attempted to learn from the experience of the fraternal Soviet Union (Pepper, 1987a, 185). After the military and political victory on 1 October 1949 there followed ideological consolidation through the mass literacy programmes of the early 1950s. Here the focus will be, albeit briefly, on the educational influence of the Soviet Union in the 1950s, as a prelude and contributing factor to the radical upheavals of the 1960s.

The rationale, says Pepper, was that as the best of Western, especially British and American, science and technology had already been absorbed by the Russians, 'the "quickest and best way" was to take the distilled

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essence directly from the Soviet Union. And since education and industry are the main social institutions necessary for the application of science and technology, their organization and management were also reshaped in the Soviet mold' (Pepper, 1987a, 197). Under Stalin this had become conservative and rigid in both structure and curriculum. It was a system designed to train people for the specialized technical work necessary to socialist construction; and one that came under pressure to reform in the Soviet Union itself following Stalin's death in 1953.

It was this Soviet model that the Chinese Communist Party followed initially, with its influence felt most strongly in higher education that, like the rest of the system, was brought under the control of the communist state which needed trained personnel. According to an estimate cited by Pepper:

as many as 38 000 Chinese went to the Soviet Union during the 1950s for study and training, including scientists, technicians, teachers, students, and workers. Moving in the opposite direction, Soviet experts, advisors, and teachers entered as the Americans and Europeans withdrew. Some 10 000 Soviet citizens served in these various capacities in China during the 1950s, of whom close to 600 taught in China's institutions of higher learning. Among other things, the Soviet educators helped establish new courses and participated in compiling the new teaching materials. (Pepper, 1987a, 201)

The CCP also looked beyond Soviet advisors in recognition of its need to educate and train the personnel required if it were to achieve economic modernization. This led to the false dawn of the proclamation 'Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools contend', inaugurated in May 1956 (MacFarquhar, 1960). This was to have a disastrous effect on many Chinese intellectuals who thus confirmed themselves as Mao's ideological enemies. It was followed only two years later by the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1958.

The key thing to note is that: 'The new system being built along Soviet lines was in many respects, therefore, the antithesis of the Yenan model, which had served the needs of the Communist liberated areas from 1944 onward' (Pepper, 1987a, 209). The fundamental problem remained that, despite slogans, the gap between the educated elite and the illiterate masses continued and even widened in the decade that followed the People's Liberation. But as Pepper concludes: 'the rhetoric remained, promoted by a ruling party within which peasants constituted 69 per cent of the membership, and so did the pressures building within the system. The stage was set for a more radical attempt to merge the conflicting demands at both levels into a single integrated system' (Pepper, 1987a, 217).

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The Great Leap Forward of 1958 is usually taken as the date at which China began its own road to socialism, rather than continuing to follow the model of the Soviet Union. In education policy, however, a compromise was attempted, using the concept of 'walking on two legs', that looked to combine formal and non-formal methods of educating the population. A statement describing one of these legs is found in a document of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee of 19 September 1958. This required ideological struggle against bourgeois concepts such as 'education for education's sake', 'the separation of mental and manual labour' and the belief that 'education can only be led by experts' (Pepper, 1987a, 398–400). However, the ideological tensions that lay ahead, given that there was a 'second leg', were signalled by someone as prominent as Chou En-Lai on 18 April 1959, when he reported to the CCP that:

Full-time regular schools at all levels should make it their constant and fundamental task to raise the quality of teaching and studying; in the first place, we must devote relatively more energy to perfecting a number of 'key' schools so as to train specialized personnel of higher quality for the state and bring about a rapid rise in our country's scientific and cultural level. (Pepper, 1987a, 412)

Mao, from his ultra-left perspective, believed that ideological direction was being lost and attempted a further rectification campaign. This was the Socialist Education Movement that began in 1962 and which proved to be a precursor of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution itself (Baum and Teiwes, 1968). Mao emphasized to students: 'The class struggle is a principal subject for you. Your college should go to the countryside . . . and to the factories . . . [if] you know nothing about the class struggle, how can you be considered as university graduates?' (Hawkins, 1974, 114). As Pepper again points out: 'From 1963, renewed stress was placed on politics and class background as criteria for admission to senior middle school and college. "Socialist education" for everyone, but especially for young people intensified, focusing on Marxism-Leninism, class viewpoint, class struggle and direct participation in labor' (Pepper, 1987b, 424).

The education system that emerged from the policy of 'walking on two legs' in practice renewed Chinese cultural and social inequalities, often through fresh beneficiaries, such as the offspring of Party cadres, taking advantage of the opportunities it offered. Pepper concludes that, as a consequence, it was probably by 1964 that 'Mao decided to destroy the system he had created before it could distort his objectives even further, blaming in the process the "bourgeois educators" responsible for building it' (Pepper, 1987b, 430).

THE GREAT PROLETARIAN CULTURAL REVOLUTION, 1965–1969

Mao's motives were declared explicitly on 10 August 1966 in *Decision 181 of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution*. This stated the urgent need 'to prevent revisionism from usurping the leadership of the Party and State [and also] to prevent the comeback of Capitalism' (Chin, 1979, 105). Mao believed that fundamental change was needed in the cultural and intellectual superstructure, as in the well-known metaphor of *The German Ideology* (Marx and Engels, 1970). This was something to which Mao had referred in his essay *On Contradiction* in 1937 when he wrote:

When the superstructure [politics, culture] obstructs the economic base, political and cultural changes become principal and decisive. Are we going against materialism when we say this? No. The reason is that while we recognize that in the general development of history the material determines the mental, and social being determines social consciousness, we also – and indeed must – recognize the reaction of mental on material things, of social consciousness on social being and of the superstructure on the economic base. This does not go against materialism; on the contrary, it avoids mechanical materialism and firmly upholds dialectical materialism. (Mao, 1937 [1967], v)

Mao believed that the social structure and the intellectual climate, together with the academic forms and curricula they engendered, would continue to promote traditional, hierarchical and capitalist ideology; and that communism's Chinese opponents would justify this on the Confucian grounds of intellectual achievement and personal endeavour. As Jean Esmein commented: 'If there was any chance of reaction this would be the source of counter revolution. If, on the other hand, the whole superstructure became the focus of the proletarian ideology that would, in its turn, affect the whole society' (Esmein, 1975, 22).

This was the Maoist ideological thrust of a cultural revolution that posited a radical educational development model. Mao's aim was to produce, again in Gramscian terms, a new 'organic' intelligentsia that would sustain the hegemony and direction of a revolutionary Chinese Communist Party. John N. Hawkins, an American commentator, claimed that:

By breaking down traditional barriers between school and society Mao Tse-tung [*sic*] has succeeded in creating a 'learning' society whereby education becomes the task of virtually all institutions instead of being restricted to the more formal educational institutions . . . [and that] . . . This attempt to balance the pace of economic development so that eventually the entire society will become a great

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'commune' as well as a great 'school' is perhaps one of the most ambitious national development programs currently underway. (Hawkins, 1974, 15)

The May 7th Cadre Schools that Mao initiated as part of this campaign had the task of uniting education in the army, the factories, the communes, and the bureaucracy, with that of formal education. The same aim was behind the July 21st Workers' Universities. In the *Peking Review* of 2 August 1968, Mao stated:

It is still necessary to have universities; here I refer mainly to colleges of science and engineering. However, it is essential to shorten the length of schooling, revolutionize education, put proletarian politics in command and take the road of the Shanghai Machine Tools plant in training technicians from among the workers. Students should be selected from among workers and peasants with practical experience and they should return to production after a few years study. (Robinson, 1969, 150)

A READER'S GUIDE

The key features of Maoist ideology and its impact on education in China having been considered, this section provides a short and necessarily selective guide to the literature. It is hoped that it will be of value to the student new to this fundamentally important historical issue. As we have seen, Maoist China provides a dramatic example of ultra-left social, cultural and educational ideology in practice. Many Westerners, liberals and conservatives alike, regard the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution simply as an outbreak of fanatic philistinism and it remains one of the best-known and yet still least-understood episodes in the history of modern China, with even its precise dates in dispute. The literature is now very extensive and noted here are only those commentaries that bear on Chinese education which are available in English. It does not refer to material in Chinese, although useful resource material is now being translated, such as the massive *Socialism in China 1919-1965* (Yu, 2010). The following are recommended: Jean Esmein (1975) and Jack Chen (1975) provide readable early accounts. There is also the scholarly assessment of Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals (2006); and more recently, the outstanding critical work of Frank Dikötter, specifically his 'People's Trilogy' focusing on what he describes as the tragedy of the People's Liberation of 1949 (Dikötter, 2010, 2013, 2016). In addition, the literature considered below provides the general reader with comprehensive information about this fundamental historical issue in the development of education in modern China.

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Ronald Price (2012) provides an excellent comparative discussion of Marxist influences on education in Russia and in China; Jane L. Price (1976) gives an early and still very useful introduction to the ideological training of the Chinese Communist Party leadership cadres between 1920 and 1945; Steve S.K. Chin (1979) provides a succinct introduction to the form and content of Maoist thought; and Leo Ou-fan Lee (1986) analyses the *Yenan Forum* in his account of literary trends on the road to revolution. John N. Hawkins (1974) and Theodore H. Chen (1974) are early assessments of the Maoist educational revolution; while W. John Morgan (2003), in a work on international communists, considers Mao Zedong's thought on education and culture based on his speeches and writing. The development of education policy as egalitarian ideology is illustrated in the anthology of commentary and documents edited by Stewart E. Fraser (1971); the chapters 'Education for the New Order', 'New Directions in Education' and 'Education' by Suzanne Pepper in the *Cambridge History of China*, Volumes 14 and 15 (Pepper, 1987a, 1987b, 1991) are invaluable; as are the critical accounts of radical mass education by the same author (Pepper, 1996) and by Vilma Seeberg (2000); and by Ruth Hayhoe on a century of cultural conflict in China's universities (Hayhoe, 1999). There are also many analyses and other commentaries published as journal articles and book reviews. The limitations of space mean that a comprehensive critical review of this literature is not possible. Instead two very detailed and sometimes differing assessments of the ideological attempts at mass education in Maoist China are considered.

Suzanne Pepper's *Radicalism and Education Reform in 20th Century China: The Search for an Ideal Development Model*, published in 1996, remains the major work of scholarly analysis. The author was well equipped for the task by her contributions to the *Cambridge History of China* mentioned above (Pepper, 1987a, 1987b, 1991). In a detailed and yet very readable book, Pepper explains the dramatic shifts in Chinese educational policy between 1976 and 1980, and the outside world's perception of them. Her analysis of the rise and fall of the Maoist educational revolution is developed from three perspectives.

First, from the perspective of the international development community, she explains why the Chinese model found favour with it. According to Pepper, the economist John Simmons, writing in 1980, presented a new consensus when he described China's education system as the one that 'comes closest to the World Bank's model program for a developing country' (Pepper, 1996, 1). The essential features of this Chinese system were, says Pepper, 'a curriculum designed to meet the needs of a mass clientele; the widely promoted goal of ten-year universal schooling; decentralized local administration; and tertiary-level selection aimed at

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minimizing discrimination against the poor' (Pepper, 1996, 1). She also points out that the British development studies sociologist Ronald Dore joined the consensus when claiming that Chinese policy was the first antidote to what he had called the 'diploma disease' to be administered on a national basis (Dore, 1976; Pepper, 1996, 2). Such commentators, Pepper says, believed that severe economic and social problems became virulent when Western educational models were adapted to non-Western societies and to low-income economies (Pepper, 1996, 2). The Chinese, for their part, were nevertheless intent on dismantling an ideology and lack of system that they saw as the cause and consequence of the upheaval of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

Secondly, the Chinese experience is assessed from the perspective of China's educational history in Republican China and immediately after the People's Liberation in 1949. The influence of the Soviet Union on educational policy in communist China between 1949 and the late 1950s, as described by Pepper, is a useful commentary on Sino-Soviet political and ideological relations and the circumstances of the eventual split. This provides the historical context necessary to distinguish continuities from innovations, and to trace communist educational policies back to their pre-communist antecedents. Thirdly, from the perspective of those who had taken part. The rest of the book is based on interviews with and documentation obtained from individuals who had participated in events. Pepper's book is a path-breaking history of the radical educational reform in twentieth-century China that culminated in the traumatic national experience of the Cultural Revolution. This is shown as neither good nor evil, but as a complex, tumultuous and, nonetheless, culminating episode in China's twentieth-century revolutionary history.

Vilma Seeberg's (2000) *The Rhetoric and Reality of Mass Education in Mao's China* is another very informative book on the same controversial topic. It is much less well known than Pepper's book, with which it is worthy of comparison; that is why it has been given rather more consideration here. Seeberg sets out to show 'what happens when ideology and policy are more or less inconsistent with cultural tradition, when ideological rhetoric and enacted policy diverge, when economy and education are divorced, when educational quality and content differ from cultural expectations and when traditional concepts of education are disparaged' (Seeberg, 2000, v). As we have seen, the Chinese Communist Party under Mao's ideological direction, following the *Yenan Forum*, aimed at transforming the traditional Chinese 'backward peasant' into a new 'socialist man'. This was to be achieved through mass education coupled with fundamental economic restructuring according to socialist precepts of collective ownership and equality of distribution.

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Seeberg's theoretical premise is that the post-Second World War optimism about humanity's capacity to rationally design its own future has been replaced, albeit reluctantly, by recognition that poverty, inequality and uneven national development are problems too complex to be resolved through social engineering with its utopian solutions. The Maoist period in China, she argues, is an instructive case of such optimism worked out with ideological determination and followed by catastrophic results. Seeberg's aim is to put Maoist educational ideologies to the test of evidence and to consider whether China had found and aborted an appropriate, non-Western, educational development policy that might still be of value as a model. The book is an extensive record of such evidence, derived from comments by contemporaries and participants, together with historical material from secondary sources. These are compared with the data available to Seeberg on a national and provincial basis from official Chinese agencies. There is also a focus on Anhui province as a case-study that is valuable in analysing the Chinese experience from a local perspective.

Seeberg also provides a review of relevant conceptual frameworks, including theories of international development: rational choice, human capital, social reproduction and organizational management. There is also a short account of the history of Chinese education in the twentieth century, with a focus on the experience of the communist base areas before Liberation. She emphasizes the ideological split that opened up within the CCP that became known as the 'two line struggle'. The Maoists argued, as we have seen, for a reshaping of Chinese education and its cultural basis, informed by a belief in education as social reproduction. The pragmatic, bureaucratic faction of the CCP, epitomized eventually by Deng Xiaoping, and informed by both Stalinist and Fordist concepts of modernization, argued for manpower planning based essentially on human capital theory: a split that led to violent clashes of ideology, policy and practice.

Seeberg focuses attention on both the quantity and the quality outcomes of the educational policies followed between 1949 and 1979. She reaches two conclusions. First, that the effect of the educational and cultural policies of the CCP after 1949 clashed fundamentally with the traditional expectations of the mass of the Chinese people, not just those of the old bourgeois elite. This distorted their aspirations for the new society that followed Liberation. The greater the gap between the reality of schooling on the one hand, and the economic needs of the population and promised social and cultural equity on the other, the more educational participation waned. Seeberg's further conclusion is that despite 30 years of revolutionary promise to educate the masses, and intense ideological struggle about structures, curriculum and the role of intellectuals, literacy among the

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masses increased only relatively slightly. An explanation may be found, she says, in the hitherto neglected role of culture in development.

Culture is long in gestation, in China's case over many centuries, and puts down deep and enduring roots. Mao Zedong understood this, which is why he launched such an uncompromising attempt to dig them up during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. However, the roots resisted. The Chinese people showed that they could not be transplanted into fresh earth ready for the gardener's designs and that individuals are not, in practice, passive, malleable masses, subjects for experiment. The questions are: how do we recognize and interpret culture, especially our own? How is it formed, and how does it affect individual and community responses to patterns and policies imposed from above? This may appear to be a conservative doctrine, but it is not necessarily so. It does not argue that traditional and established cultures cannot and should not be contested, but that they should be recognized as the bases from which people throughout history and across the world have interpreted, accepted or rejected possible exogenous alternatives. This is not a novel theoretical insight, but one that has been taken up by others in recent years, notably at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), as well as by others (UNESCO, 2015; Clammer, 2012). It is, nevertheless, worth re-emphasizing, especially given the human costs of the attempts in China and elsewhere (notably in Cambodia), to ignore it. The Chinese Communist Party's current interest in the relationship between politics and traditional culture may be taken as a symptom of this (Ai, 2015).

CONCLUSION

In the aftermath of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, and liberated from Maoist ideology, the centralizing capacity of state socialism was used to re-establish the educational system in orthodox form. This lasted until the mid-1980s when there was another policy shift as the post-Mao market reforms were applied to education in the form of rising costs, student fees, decentralized financing and the privatization of provision. The Chinese are now struggling with the tensions that resulted from this return of class and its inequalities to Chinese education, and to Chinese society generally. The country is still attempting to cope with two transitions: from a command to a market economy, and from a predominantly rural to an increasingly urban and industrial society.

These transitions allow it to achieve an economic modernization that is not the same thing as industrialization, and to achieve social

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modernization; both of which require an educated population. Political modernization and the emergence of a civil society in place of the Party's authoritarian rule might follow. The demands of a knowledge-based economy, together with the need to ensure the social stability of China's vast and diverse population, present a dilemma for the ruling elite. The question now is whether the educational system can be reformed so that it creates and uses knowledge to contribute both to economic growth and to a civil society with mature political institutions derived from Chinese cultural identity (Ma, 2006; Zheng and Fewsmith, 2008). This is why education in the fullest sense of the word is so important to China, and why it should not be restricted to the necessary but insufficient fields of pure science, engineering, technology, computing and business studies.

As suggested, this does not mean that China needs a 'Western democracy', of whichever of the many brands available, if it is to make social and economic progress. Despite the understandable liberal reaction immediately after the tragic events of 1989, Deng Xiaoping was right when he insisted that what was needed was a 'Chinese'-style modernization, sensitive to both the size and the complexity of the Chinese system, and to the intellectual and cultural diversity necessary for innovation and successful change. This is why the transition in Chinese education from egalitarian ideology to public policy is important in ways other than for educational practice specifically. First, it is essential to the development of China's human capital stock. Secondly, it is an integral part of social policy. This has implications for citizenship education, formally and non-formally. The historical lesson for 'Chinese policy makers in education, as in other aspects of public policy, is that a balance that takes public preferences more readily into account should be attempted in the interests of social harmony and cohesion' (Morgan and Li, 2015, 235).

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