Economic globalization and advanced communication and transportation technologies have greatly increased interconnectivity and integration of China with the rest of the world. This book explores the impact of globalization on China and the interactions of Chinese education with the globalized world. It consists of twenty chapters which collectively examine how globalization unfolds on the ground in Chinese education through global flows of talents, information, and knowledge. The authors, established and emerging scholars from China and internationally, analyze patterns and trends of China’s engagement with the globalized world as well as tensions between the global and local concerning national education sovereignty and the widening gap between brain gain and brain drain. The book covers a wide range of topics, including:

- Internationalization of Chinese education
- Student mobility and intercultural adaptation
- Cross-cultural teaching and learning
- Transnational talent mobility

The diverse concepts and perspectives represented in this volume provide rich accounts of the effects of globalization on Chinese education and how globalization has transformed Chinese education and society. China’s successes and challenges will inform international researchers and educators about globalization and education in their own contexts with possible implications for change.

“This timely volume opens up fascinating insights into the extensive and growing interconnections between Chinese education and the global community. Concepts such as identity, interculturality, transnationalism and double diaspora are given vivid expression in the experience of Chinese students and scholars in diverse global settings as well as that of international students and teachers in Chinese higher institutions. While there are candid critiques of barriers and prejudices that need to be overcome, there is also a sense of hope and dynamism in the rich outflowing of educational ideas rooted in China’s unique civilization. Editors Shibao Guo and Yan Guo are to be congratulated for bringing together such a remarkable collection of essays dealing with internationalization, student mobility, cross-cultural teaching and learning and transnational talent mobility.” – Ruth Hayhoe, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto
Spotlight on China
SPOTLIGHT ON CHINA

Volume 2

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Over the past decades China has experienced unprecedented economic liberalization, industrialization, mass migration, urbanization, and privatization, which have contributed to the rise of China as an emerging economic superpower. At the same time, China is also facing unprecedented challenges, including rising unemployment, socio-economic disparity, corruption, and environment degradation. Spotlight on China aims to bring together international scholars with contributions from new and established scholars to explore the profound social and economic transformation that has resulted from the market economy and its concomitant impact on education and society in China. The series includes authored and edited collections offering multidisciplinary perspectives and most contemporary and comprehensive analyses of recent social and educational changes in China.

Contact Information:

Shibao Guo, PhD
Werklund School of Education
University of Calgary
2500 University Dr. NW
Calgary, AB
T2N 1N4 Canada

Phone: 403-220-8275
Email: guos@ucalgary.ca
Spotlight on China

Chinese Education in the Globalized World

Edited by

Shibao Guo and Yan Guo

University of Calgary, Canada

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This second volume in the Spotlight on China Series by Shibao Guo and Yan Guo turns from the focus on dramatic educational changes taking place within China under the influences of a market economy to Chinese education in a globalized world. There are a number of reasons why this topic is extremely timely. Not only have Chinese students tended to constitute a significant percentage in the growing number of internationally mobile students in recent years, but China’s universities have also become the third most attractive destination for students around the world, after American and British universities. Over a difficult twentieth century, marked by revolution, internal political turmoil and a period of isolation from the wider world, China has moved from forms of internationalization that focused on self-strengthening and catching up, to an outward orientation marked by its own unique approach to cultural and educational diplomacy. Given the richness of China’s civilization and the historic contributions it made to global well-being, there is much to anticipate from this change and much to learn from the global engagement of Chinese students, teachers and intellectuals more generally.

The four sections of this book give readers many angles for understanding and reflecting on this engagement. A number of fascinating theoretical concepts are introduced in the first section, which are helpful for framing and interrogating the more empirically based chapters that follow. How can the interconnection between the global and the local be best dealt with in world culture theory, unless the global is viewed as a scripted part of the local? What does internationalization mean for higher education in countries such as China, where it has been less a choice than a necessity of self-strengthening in the face of imperialist threat? Will China’s historic concept of “All Under Heaven” (Tianxia) bring a new dynamic into international relations that have continued to be shaped by the Westphalian system and the European concept of the nation state? And how may China’s cultural diplomacy through the Confucius Institute movement be understood and interpreted within concepts of “reorientalism” and “reorientality”?

In subsequent sections we learn about the experience of Chinese students studying in the UK, in USA, and in Sweden, their struggles to adapt, the misunderstandings that sometimes shape their reception and changing trends in terms of career choices, possibilities for emigration and decisions to return. We also learn about the experience of non-Chinese students and teachers, taking up short or long term opportunities for study and teaching in China. There are some thought-provoking interfaces between chapters in different sections. A comparative case study of two British-Chinese joint venture universities in section one is extended and deepened by a chapter in section three that explores the experience of faculty from around the world who have taken
up teaching positions in one of these institutions. An analysis of the adaptation of Chinese students in the UK, based on a series of in-depth studies in section two, resonates with a moving depiction in section four of 8 returnees from the UK to different regions of China. The ways in which they reconnected with family and took up satisfying careers marked by a determination to contribute in meaningful ways to China’s development are inspirational.

All of the chapters are richly empirical, whether in terms of detailed statistical information on changing trends and patterns in the internationalization of Chinese education, informative results from survey research or finely sketched qualitative investigations into the experience of students and teachers, Chinese and foreign, living their lives within the current global reach of Chinese education. Many are also intriguing and eye opening in the ways in which they illumine concepts such as identity, otherization, interculturality, transnationalism and neo-liberalism. One of the most striking features of globalization is the multi-directional character of mobility, perhaps illustrated best by the dilemmas facing the double diaspora – Chinese who have emigrated and taken up citizenship in the West, then later returned to live and work in China under the constraints of their legal status as foreigners.

While the experience of individual students and teachers in China and around the world is the main focus of this volume, there are also interesting and important commentaries on national policy and strategy in many chapters. These are particularly evident in the first chapter of section two and the final chapter in section four. The chapter on Student Mobility between China and the Globalized World points out a deficit in China’s international educational services and makes constructive suggestions for improving its transnational educational development strategy, especially in terms of quality improvement in its programs and greater support for incoming international students. The final chapter on Competing for Global Talents, by contrast, highlights the success of China’s strategy to attract back outstanding members of its diaspora, opening up opportunities for them in academia and high tech industry, also in political leadership.

Readers of this volume will be rewarded by many fascinating insights into the ways in which Chinese educational values are being integrated into global educational thought and practice through a myriad of personal encounters as well as efforts made through China’s emerging cultural diplomacy. Given the richness of the Confucian educational heritage, this brings renewed hope for the revitalization of global education and the move “beyond the Enlightenment” envisaged by Tu Weiming in his presentation of Confucianism for the dialogue among civilizations initiated by the United Nations in 2001. As a scholar who has been immensely enriched by engagement with Chinese education over several decades, I can only celebrate this direction of change, while recognizing all the prejudices and barriers that are yet to be overcome in a world dominated by persisting tendencies to arrogance and triumphalism in the West. I would also like to encourage readers to open their minds
to Chinese educational thought and understanding on a regular basis through reading
the articles and book reviews coming out in four issues every year of *Frontiers
of Education in China*, the first educational journal in the English language to be
published in China for a sustained period of time, beginning in 2006.

*Ruth Hayhoe
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto*
China managed to resist contemporary globalization until 1978, when it launched the “open door” policy that gradually shifted China toward a socialist market economy. Joint ventures were encouraged with foreign companies before foreign direct investment took place in the mid-1990s. With its accession to the World Trade Organization in 2001 and the completion of its market opening pledges in 2006, China formally entered the age of the market economy and an era of neoliberalization (Harvey, 2005). Reforms have taken place in the context of a more broad geographical globalization and neoliberal deregulation. As a result, the country has experienced unprecedented economic liberalization, industrialization, mass migration, urbanization, and privatization – all required by economic globalization (Guo & Guo, 2016). In this view, China certainly qualifies as a neoliberal economy, albeit “with Chinese characteristics” (Harvey, 2005, p. 144). China’s market economy coincided with a new stage of globalization in which further integration of the world economy required China’s cheap labour, its abundant natural resources, and its gigantic consumer market. Without doubt, globalization has increased interconnectivity and integration of China with the rest of the world. It is not clear, however, how such changes have gone beyond the economic sphere to impact education in China. It is therefore the purpose of this book to examine the interactions of Chinese education with the rest of the world in the age of globalization.

CONCEPTUALIZING AND CONTEXTUALIZING GLOBALIZATION

Globalization is an essentially contested concept that incites controversy (McGrew, 2007; Robertson & White, 2007). According to McGrew, polarization of views on globalization within the academy revolves around questions of the reality and significance of contemporary globalization, as well as its supposed revolutionary implications for the classical paradigm of the human sciences. In the public sphere, McGrew argues, globalization elicits sharply divergent responses and fuels radically different political projects from “globaphobia” of the extreme right to the “globaphilia” of neoliberals. It is not surprising then, that there is no agreed-up definition. This lack of consensus in the academic and public worlds is mirrored in the
transnational sphere, with much deviation regarding ideas about globalization from one national context to another (Robertson & White, 2007). Attempts at definition focus on the following dimensions: speed and time, processes and flows, space, and increasing integration and interconnection (Ritzer, 2007). Careful negotiation of these aspects leads Ritzer to a definition of globalization as “an accelerating set of processes involving flows that encompass ever-greater numbers of the world’s spaces and that lead to increasing integration and interconnectivity among those spaces” (p. 1).

The genesis of contemporary globalization can be traced to the early 1970s and the development of sophisticated information technology, economic competition from Japan, demise of the Bretton Woods Agreement, and the oil crisis (Jarvis, 2002). According to Robertson and White (2007), globalization comprises four major dimensions: the economic, the social, the political, and the cultural. Players involved include nation-states, transnational corporations, international governmental organizations (IGOs), international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), and individuals (Thomas, 2007). Among these, the first two are “the most powerful global players” and drive the juggernaut of globalization (p. 87). For their part, IGOs such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are the ones that set global policies and provide incentive structures for states and other actors. Secondary in influence but nonetheless vital to globalization, INGOs are not-for-profit organizations established and run by activist groups. Well-known actors amongst these are Amnesty International and Greenpeace. These groups play an important intervention role, voicing opposition to political and environmental destruction and injustice, as well as intervening in the proceedings of international courts. Finally, discussions of globalization often exclude the individual from the realm of global change. According to Thomas, under contemporary globalization, individuals are, more so than in the past, authorized to discover problems and to take actions to solve them. The multiple players involved in globalization reveal the complexity of global contexts.

One of the most contentious issues in the field of globalization studies today pertains to the significance of the nation-state in the era of globalization (Ritzer, 2007). Bruff (2005) summarizes this debate into a “three waves” analysis. The first wave literature, characterized by a state constraint perspective, maintains that the state is severely restricted in what it can do as a result of unprecedented changes caused by globalization in the establishment of global markets, prices and production. The state has been pushed into a marketized corner, attracting, facilitating and supporting capital. The second wave, according to Bruff, argues that the change has not been overwhelming, and that the state’s capacity to autonomously adapt to new circumstances is still considerable. It stresses the unexceptional characteristics of the present era of “globalization” while also pointing to state capacity in exercising controls over both capital and labour. Bruff criticizes the first wave as overly structuralist, deterministic and narrowly focused, and the second wave as neglecting the extra-state factors that have pride of place in the social world. Bruff goes on
to argue that recognition of a third wave offers a step forward in the analysis of globalization. It seeks to move beyond the empirical focus of the previous two by asking how “globalization” is perceived and acted upon across space and time. It problematizes not just the impact of globalization, but the term “globalization” itself. It posits that globalization is deeply political, contested, contingent and complex. It focuses on how agents interpret and act upon their circumstances. As Ritzer (2007) points out, what matter most from this perspective are these constructions rather than globalization per se. Another important message this perspective conveys is that we should not reify globalization because it is “not a thing, not an ‘it’” (Robertson & White, 2007, p. 64). For Robertson and White, recognizing the conceptual status and understanding the global nature of the interest in, the discourse about and the analysis of globalization are more important than viewing it as an ontological matter. It is this conception of globalization, as a set of discourses that are consumed and reproduced as they are acted upon by particular actors in particular circumstances, that provides the theoretical framework for this book.

In the current literature on globalization, the neglect of the social dimension is “rather glaring”, particularly with regard to questions of social inequality, power and the global-local relationship (Robertson & White, 2007, p. 58). It is evident that globalization from above favours open markets, free trade, deregulation and privatization, all of which work for the benefit of wealthy nations and, moreover, the economic elite of these nations. Some scholars do draw attention to the ways in which markets and deregulation produce greater wealth at the price of increased inequality (Appadurai, 2002). There is evidence suggesting that we are experiencing widening gaps between the “haves” and the “have nots” in global society, devastating environmental problems, declining civic participation and community, and increasing mistrust and alienation among citizenries (Welch, 2001). Global capitalism, it seems, has created a global society that is unequal and unjust (Jarvis, 2002).

Another aspect which deserves our attention is the implications of globalization for education. As Welch (2001) points out, globalization is having substantial effects on education, as manifested in the homogenization, commodification and marketization of higher education. Another key impact has been the creation of English as the dominant global language of communication, business, entertainment, and the Internet. The increasing dominance of English language is contributing to neo-colonialism by empowering the already powerful, forcing unfamiliar pedagogical and social-cultures on its learners, contributing to the devaluation of indigenous knowledge, and displacing many on the route to real possible loss of their first languages, cultures, and identities (Guo & Beckett, 2007). Furthermore, Spring (2014) observes a process of globalization of education which is referred to as worldwide networks, processes, and institutions affecting local education practices and policies. Global educational policies and practices exist in a superstructure above national and local schools. According to Spring, globalization of education prioritizes global corporatization and economization of education over issues of civic activism, human rights, and social justice and equity. In this view, the goal
of education is to produce better workers to meet the needs of corporations and the workplace to sustain free market economics.

Situated in this broader conceptual and contextual understanding of globalization, Spotlight on China: Chinese education in the globalized world aims to explore the impact of globalization on Chinese education and the interactions of Chinese education with the globalized world. This volume is organized into four sections: Section I focuses on the internationalization of Chinese education in the age of globalization (various tensions and confusions facing the internationalization of education in a globalizing China). Section II examines student mobility and intercultural adaptations (analysis of trends of student mobility and country case studies demonstrating experiences of intercultural adaptations and learning in different parts of the world). Section III explores cross-cultural teaching and learning (both international students and teachers at Chinese universities). The volume ends with Section IV which analyzes transnational talent mobility (recent policies and programs as well as general patterns and trends of talent mobility between China and the globalized world).

INTERNATIONALIZATION OF CHINESE EDUCATION

Fuelled by forces of globalization, the internationalization of Chinese education is happening at a rapid pace, particularly in Chinese higher education. However, there has been a great deal of confusion about the relationship between globalization and internationalization. There is a consensus among scholars that internationalization is not globalization (Altback & Knight, 2007; Knight, 2003). Globalization provides the social and economic contexts under which the internationalization of education is taking place, but at the same time they are taken to be very different processes. As Knight (2003) puts it, “internationalisation is changing the world of education and globalization is changing the world of internationalisation” (p. 3). Furthermore, “internationalization” itself is a highly fluid and contested term, which can mean many different things to different people. For some, it means a series of international activities (e.g., academic mobility of students and faculty), international linkages and partnerships, and new international academic programs and research initiatives. For others, it means the delivery of education to other countries through satellite programs (Knight, 2003). At times internationalization is a catch-all phrase to describe anything and everything remotely related to international dimensions of education. Critiques also focus on its neoliberal approach which is driven by economic motives and treats internationalization as business opportunities and marketing strategies (Guo & Chase, 2010; Luke, 2010). The four chapters in Section I examine the above-mentioned tensions and confusions facing the internationalization of education in the context of a globalizing China.

Barbara Schulte opens the section in Chapter 2 with a conceptualization of the global and a discussion of how globalization processes unfold on the ground in Chinese education. The author argues that global paths can only be traced by
scrutinizing the local trajectories of the global. In her analysis of the global she applies the neo-institutionalist world culture theory and actor-network theory to conceptualize actors or carriers in the globalization process. While world culture theory is credited with bringing culture back into the analysis of global education, it has also been criticized for rejecting local agency and bracketing issues of power, friction, and oppression among and between actors in the globalization process. The author argues that the Scandinavian neo-institutionalism has focused on locally induced process of modification and change in the course of global diffusion and that actor-network theory has shifted attention to how actors serve as mediators in social processes. Schulte also outlines the three dimensions that are crucial in researching globalization and education: time and space/place, legitimating myths, and friction/pressures. She ends the chapter by shedding light on how globalization has played out in Chinese education by revealing manifestations of the global in the local.

Rui Yang’s Chapter 3 provides a comprehensive overview of China’s internationalization of higher education with a focus on its latest developments, dilemmas and challenges. Yang traces the internationalization of Chinese higher education to the late 1970s when it was introduced as a national strategy to modernize China. Having gone through three stages of development, by the 1990s it has established a comprehensive international program of higher education. Yang highlights China’s strategies of engaging with the outside world particularly with Western societies and its overemphasis on sciences at the expense of social sciences. One significant dilemma facing China’s internationalization concerns the potential loss of its educational sovereignty leading to ambiguity regarding the legal status of foreign higher education activity in China. Yang’s analysis shows that the seemingly successful Chinese experience is full of contradictions and paradoxical movements. He ends the chapter with interrogations of Chinese discourses on the West, adding a historical perspective to the discussions of the internationalization of higher education in China. He concludes by arguing that Chinese higher education must transcend the mindset of Tianxia as China appears to be regaining its place at the centre of the world development, and the Westphalian nation-state is straining under the weight of globalization.

In Chapter 4 Yi Feng continues to examine the internationalization of higher education by focusing on two case studies. University of Nottingham Ningbo and Xi’an Jiaotong-Liverpool University are two pioneers of internationalization of higher education in China as product and offspring of British and Chinese institutions. Through the analysis of the two cases, the author addresses issues of governance, management, and mission strategies of transnational education collaborations between Britain and China. The findings reveal that both universities have unique governance structures, governed by respective boards with balanced representation from both sides. While the University of Nottingham Ningbo China adopts a British liberal arts education model, Xi’an Jiaotong-Liverpool University creates its own identity through the joint strengths of the two parent universities focusing on sciences, engineering, and management. For the University of Nottingham
Ningbo China, all the curricula are from the home campus of Nottingham, classes are conducted in English, and faculty members serve as individual tutors. Xi’an Jiaotong-Liverpool University introduces a shared control of the curriculum and its graduates receive two separate degrees and a graduation diploma from both China and the UK. Their main strategies, models, and practices differ from each other. The author discusses these differences as well as similarities between the two institutions and their implications for internationalization of higher education in China.

The last chapter of this section by Heather Schmidt explores Confucius Institute (CI) in Canada as partnerships between Chinese educational institutions and a foreign counterpart. Drawing on ethnographic research on the Confucius Institute in Edmonton and the CI Headquarters in Beijing, Schmidt examines the representation of China and Chinese culture to an imagined Western audience in the Confucius Institute project. Established worldwide as a means of promoting Chinese language and culture abroad, the author argues that CIs are caught between reorientalism and reorientality, two competing regimes of value attempting to deconstruct traditional orientalist discourse and make China more comprehensible and marketable through orientalist tropes. Through these two opposing logics, Schmidt argues, CIs both disrupt and reproduce orientalist narratives of China. CIs also encourage active participation of their audiences in Chinese cultural activities through a logic of re-orientality in which foreign body is asked to perform and embody Chineseness, soliciting an emotional investment in Chinese culture. As a global racial project, the CI project meets and resonates with other global and racial projects in the West, specifically in the Canadian context working in tandem with Canada’s multiculturalism and the ideal of global citizenship to reproduce a particular globalized subjectivity.

STUDENT MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURAL ADAPTATIONS

One manifestation of the internationalization of Chinese education is student mobility between China and the globalized world, which has reached an unprecedented level since the advent of the “open door” policy in 1978. As the internationalization of Chinese education intensifies, China has become the largest source country of international students to many countries in the world. For instance, the enrolment of Chinese international students in higher education in OECD countries has reached 22% or 624,910 (OECD, 2015). In the US alone, Chinese students accounted for 31% or 304,041 of the total number of international students in 2014–2015 (Institute of International Education, 2016). It is not clear, however, how Chinese international students are adjusting to different academic and cultural environments in the host country. We are grappling with many important questions such as: What are the general patterns and trends associated with student mobility? How do Chinese international students adapt to an academic environment that is substantially different from their own, with different linguistic, cultural and pedagogical traditions? Have they encountered any difficulties in the transition process? If so, what kind of
institutional support is available? Scholars in the following four chapters present analysis of trends of student mobility and country case studies demonstrating experiences of intercultural adaptations and learning in different parts of the world.

In Chapter 6 Baocun Liu and Qiang Liu lead off this section with a comprehensive overview of student mobility between China and the globalized world, including both inbound and outbound students. They first highlight a number of trends and characteristics associated with Chinese students studying abroad, which has undergone significant changes over the past thirty-five years. They trace the movement of Chinese students to the early 1980s that was entirely driven by state interest and later shifted to self-development and “privatization”. Another major shift illustrated by the authors relates to the choice of specialization by students from natural and applied sciences to economics, management, and financial disciplines. With respect to destination countries, Chinese students are studying in more than one hundred countries, with the majority concentrated in a handful of developed countries. The authors extend the analysis to include the experience of international students in China, which has reached an unprecedented high level. However, the prior academic credentials of these students tend to be low. Many are non-degree path students from neighbouring Asian countries studying Chinese language and culture, representing a sharp contrast with the composition of Chinese students abroad. Liu and Liu also examine challenges of student mobility, including the widening gap between inbound and outbound students, brain drain, and uneven distribution of international students in China. The authors conclude by offering policy recommendations in the hope to further strengthen student movement between China and the globalized world.

Qing Gu’s Chapter 7 examines Chinese students’ transitional experiences with respect to their intercultural adaptations within a different educational and cultural environment in the UK. She explores how, why, and to what extent such experiences may or may not contribute to their personal and professional development on their return to work in their home country. The discussion is set in the broad context of the internationalization of higher education in the UK. Following the launch of the long-term worldwide educational campaign in 1999, the UK introduced a series of national polices to boost the recruitment of international students, which subsequently led to a major influx of Chinese students. The chapter is based on a series of studies that the author has led over the last decade, and adopts a bottom-up approach exploring the internationalization of higher education from the experiences and perspectives of international students of Chinese descent in the UK. Gu identifies distinctive patterns of struggles, changes, and achievements that Chinese students have experienced in the UK. The analysis shows that despite various intercultural challenges and struggles, most Chinese students manage to survive the demands of the learning and living environment and to adapt and develop. For most Chinese students, academic achievement and personal independence are the most important achievements. They have experienced major changes in three main areas related to interculturality, maturity, and intellectual development. The author
also reports an important relationship between students’ sense of belonging, identity, and self-efficacy.

In Chapter 8 Kun Yan and David Berliner continue to explore student mobility and intercultural adaptations with a focus on Chinese international students in the United States. The authors detail demographic trends of Chinese international students in the US over the past decades, their motivations for studying in the US, their acculturation process, and special challenges they face in US universities. Chinese international students represent the largest number of international students in the US, accounting for one-third of all international students in the US. Chinese students demonstrate striking differences between the contemporary movement and the one in the 19th and 20th centuries. Current students’ qualifications are likely to be higher than those of the early periods. In the early periods Chinese international students were home centred, while contemporary Chinese students feature a low rate of return to China. Yan and Berliner identify a number of motivations for Chinese students studying in the US, including pursuing an “American dream” and gaining high prestige and social status from earning an American degree. They also discuss Chinese students’ acculturation features in terms of group-level factors such as culture, social life, employment, and immigration issues. The authors highlight a number of challenges facing Chinese students with language barriers, student-advisor relationship, culture shock, social isolation, visa issues, job opportunities, and immigration concerns. The findings suggest that preparation for adjustments could alleviate acculturative stress and ease the intercultural adaptation process.

In Chapter 9 Fred Dervin shifts the focus to Chinese international students in Sweden. Unlike many studies which focus on institutional preparation, Dervin examines informal intercultural preparation of Chinese students for study in Sweden. Drawing on data from a blog hosted by two Swedish students welcoming Chinese students to their country, the author analyzes how Chinese students are positioned when their adaptation to life in Sweden is problematized. He points out that there is a tendency to “otherize” the Chinese in much of the current work on intercultural encounters between the Chinese and other people in the world. In this chapter, Dervin uses the concepts of identity, otherization and representation to examine how self-other are constructed and the potential effects this can have on intercultural encounters and learning. His analysis shows that intercultural preparation in Sweden adopts a *terra firma* approach characterized by its “lyrebird syndrome” which makes people mimic imagined, superior, and annihilating behaviours, attitudes and ways of thinking. It fails to go beyond an essentialist, culturalist and solid constructions with a process of interculturality from which negotiations, instabilities, and co-constructions matter more than solidity, recipes, and the problematic of generalizations that erases the complexity of intersubjectivity. He concludes by stating that moving away from established yet problematic and ideological descriptions should be the main objective of intercultural learning in study abroad.
CROSS-CULTURAL TEACHING AND LEARNING

As the number of Chinese students pursuing studies abroad continue to rise, China is also accepting an increasing number of international students from different parts of the world. As an emerging popular destination country, in 2014 China hosted 377,054 international students from 203 countries with the majority from Asia (60%), Europe (18%), and Africa (11%) (Ministry of Education, 2015). Many of them face challenges with language barriers, culture shock, and different learning traditions. Meanwhile, China attracted an estimated 530,000 long-term and short-term foreign experts, including Chinese expats, who are contributing to China’s knowledge-based economy. In addition to the above-mentioned challenges, some also face issues of visa and residency (Zhao, 2015). In light of these, scholars in Section III examine cross-cultural experiences of teaching and learning of international students and teachers at Chinese universities.

In Chapter 10 Ling Shi and Rae-Ping Lin present a case study of an expat English instructor teaching English as a global language in China. The study is based on class observations and interviews with the expat teacher and her students, a local Chinese professor, and an administrator at the participating university in Eastern China. In the age of neoliberalism characterized by its core concepts of individual freedom, a self-regulating market, and the right to private property, English has become the global language for business, politics, the Internet, and academic publications and as such, it is learned as a detachable, marketable and sellable resource for global communication and competitiveness. In a globalizing China, there has been a growing interest in hiring native-speaking English teachers from English countries. Shi and Lin triangulate the views of the expat and locals and analyze how expat teachers’ roles and teaching are reassessed in the neoliberal context. Their analysis demonstrates how the neoliberal commodification of English empowers or affects those involved. The authors argue that although English education is driven by a neoliberal discourse, each party (the university, students, and the expat) may have conflicting individual interests creating tensions in the EFL classrooms. The findings imply a concern for the purpose of education in the neoliberal world.

In Chapter 11 Zhen Li and John Lowe report the experiences of British expats teaching on a satellite campus of a UK university in China, a case discussed in Chapter 4. Their study draws on sociological debates over “structure” and “agency” as offering powerful insights into the process by which individuals actively construct their own identities. Li and Lowe collected individual teachers’ narratives about their experiences leading up to their coming to the University and their subsequent experiences at the University. Each of their fifteen interviews provides a distinct story about the “pull” and “push” factors as important influences on their initial decision to move to China. The authors also observe a pattern of the familiar U-shape of cultural adaptation theory with initial enthusiasm quickly falling in the face of confusion and then rising slowly as familiarity, accommodation, or engagement
grows. With respect to career choices, their participants have constructed their career paths through a reflexive engagement with options, possibilities and constraints. In their views, the University offers a safe place from which they can observe China or engage with China as far as they wish, while still having a return route open. The authors conclude by noting that the future professional security and identity of the British expats would be tied to the future of transnational higher education in China.

In Chapter 12 Ming-yeh Lee, David Hemphill and Jacob Perea document a short-term study abroad program in China initiated by San Francisco State University for graduate students and local educators. It is a two-week program involving collaborations among San Francisco State University, University of Hong Kong, and South China Normal University. The program aims to explore the impact of globalization on education in both China and the US and help students define their roles and responsibilities as educators in responding to the implications of globalization. The program is delivered through a blended set of activities, such as lectures, individual research projects, a factory visit, and classroom visits to different types of schools. Four cohorts of fifteen students each have been organized over a period of six years. The authors attribute the success of the program to a long-term partnership with internationally recognized institutions, an internationalized curriculum, a balance of theory and praxis, and a learning process characterized by both formal and informal learning opportunities. Students’ narratives indicate that their theoretical and embodied understandings of the impact of globalization on education and people’s lived experiences have been enhanced through the program.

The next chapter by Ting Wang conducts an in-depth analysis of the experiences of Australian students learning in an unfamiliar culture in China. As a result of rapid increase of international students, China has become one of the top five host countries of international students in the world from South Korea, the US, Japan, Vietnam, and Thailand. However, there is limited empirical research on their cultural and learning experiences in Chinese universities. In this chapter the author conducts qualitative research involving interviews with eight Australian international students who had studied in twelve different Chinese universities for six months to three years. The study focuses on challenges and issues facing Australian international students prior to departure, upon arrival and settling-in, and during their stay in China. The findings reveal considerable differences in teaching and learning between China and Australia, such as learning and teaching approaches, class contact hours, teacher-student relationship, and academic assistance. Due to these differences in learning traditions and teaching approaches, Australian students find it challenging to adapt to the new cultural and learning environment. They also found it difficult to make friends with Chinese students due to separate accommodation, cultural differences, and language barriers. The findings of this chapter provide insights into the cultural and learning experiences of Australian students in China with important implications for deriving strategies to address these challenges and issues.

Dan Cui’s Chapter 14 shifts our attention to the experiences of Chinese immigrant youth in Canada with a focus on factors that affect their learning and identity
construction. Chinese immigrant youth in Canada are often depicted as model minority excelling academically but lacking interest in social activities and sports. However, little is known about their experience of racial discrimination which affects their education experiences, their daily interaction with teachers and peers, and their identity construction as racialized minorities. Drawing on interviews with thirty-six Chinese youths in Canada, Cui examines their struggles as racialized minorities in Canadian society whose voices have been silenced behind a model minority discourse. Her analysis shows that despite Canada’s multiculturalism policy, racial discrimination deeply rooted in Canadian history has not disappeared and, on the contrary, it has been discursively maintained and reproduced in contemporary Canadian society and negatively impacted identity formation in Chinese youth. The way that they are represented by Canadian media often reinforces racial stereotypes, vilifying their social identities as racialized minorities, and associating them with deficit lifestyles and deviant personalities. The author concludes by stating that these experiences affect how Chinese immigrant youths perceive themselves in relation to the dominant White group and their sense of belonging to Canada.

TRANSNATIONAL TALENT MOBILITY

The last section of the book focuses on transnational talent mobility between China and the globalized world. One of the prominent issues facing Chinese education pertains to the widening gap between inbound and outbound students as well as the number of Chinese students going overseas and those returning to China upon completion of their studies. Chinese educators are concerned that the number of inbound students is significantly lower than those outbound, and the rate of leaving is significantly higher than the returns. To this end, China has introduced a number of national policies and programs to attract international students to study in China. Meanwhile, China’s favourable government policies and attitudes towards returnees and their expertise mobilize many expats to relocate to China to work and live there. In recent years “brain drain”, “brain gain” and “brain circulation” (Saxenian, 2005) have emerged as topics of great interest that attract the attention of researchers, policymakers, and educators who are interested in Chinese education. The following six chapters in Section IV of the book analyze some of the recent policies and programs as well as general patterns and trends of talent mobility between China and the globalized world.

Biao Xiang leads off this section in Chapter 15 with a comprehensive analysis of emigration trends and policies in China with a focus on the movement of the wealthy and highly skilled. As a country with one of the lowest emigration rates in the world, China’s emigration is characterized by a widening divergence between the migration of highly skilled and wealthy individuals on the one hand, and of the low and unskilled on the other. Xiang’s analysis shows that the liberalization of visa polices at home and abroad enables high-skilled and wealthy Chinese migrants to enjoy ever-greater freedom in permanent settlement and circulatory transnational movement. They
are motivated to migrate for their children’s education, better quality of life, and long-term political, economic, and social conditions. Low or unskilled migration is mainly concentrated in manufacturing industries, construction, and agriculture, forestry and fishing industries through project-tied collective labour deployment and individual overseas employment. The author maintains that exit controls for the unskilled have been substituted by complicated policies to manage recruitment procedures that continue to serve as de facto barriers to emigration. While highly skilled and wealthy migrants predominantly move to Western destinations, unskilled migrant workers tend to move to destinations in the Middle East (e.g., Iraq, Kuwait) and East and Southeast Asia (e.g., Japan, South Korea, Singapore). With a growing diaspora population worldwide, the Chinese government introduced a number of policies to encourage return migration and diaspora engagement which are widely regarded as great successes. Xiang concludes the chapter by arguing that despite economic growth and rising levels of income, emigration from China will likely remain high for a long time to come.

In Chapter 16 Wei Li and Wan Yu examine Chinese migration to the US with a focus on mobility of highly-skilled migrants and international students, also known as intellectual migration. The authors trace the history of Chinese intellectual migration to the US and highlight its contemporary trends. They analyze a number of factors that have contributed to the growth of global mobility of highly-skilled migrants including economic globalization and changing international relations. More recently the return migration of highly skilled migrants can be characterized as brain circulation that challenges the previous dichotomy of brain drain because migration flows are no longer a one-way ticket but in multiple directions. In the case of Chinese intellectual migration to the US, the authors report that large number of highly-skilled migrants from China emerged after Chinese economic reform, and those numbers continue to grow along with the economic development and openness. Meanwhile, China’s economic growth has enabled Chinese students, particularly fee-paying undergraduate students, to grow in volume in recent years, placing China on the list of top sending countries to US. Li and Yu conclude that intellectual migration can have positive impacts on both sending and receiving countries, potentially achieving a “triple win” for these countries and for migrants themselves.

The next chapter by Yixi Lu and Li Zong examines Chinese students’ propensity to stay in Canada and their transitioning from international student to permanent resident. With a global competition for skilled workers, Canada developed policies to target international students as potential source of skilled immigrants because they are more adaptable to the Canadian labour market than internationally trained workers. Like the case of the US, China has become the top source country of international students to Canada accounting for one third of its total international student population. It has also contributed the highest percent of permanent residents from a student source directly. Drawing from two recent survey datasets, Lu and Zong analyze the major factors which may have influenced Chinese students’
migration intentions. Their analysis shows that Chinese students’ intention to immigrate is associated with their perceived ability to obtain work experience and employment opportunities. Their findings also reveal that Chinese students’ sense of acceptance as well as their experience of discrimination in the local community and Canadian society may also influence their intentions to immigrate. This research suggests that better social and economic adaptation and integration would facilitate their intention to apply for permanent residency in Canada.

Shibao Guo’s Chapter 18 continues the examination of transnational talent mobility from the experience of those who previously emigrated to Canada from China and later “returned”. Situated in the debate around transnationalism, this chapter explores the experiences of Chinese Canadians in Beijing, including motivations for the relocation, their employment and income, social integration, and satisfaction with life in China. In this chapter Guo theorizes an emerging phenomenon of “double diaspora” – a hybrid experience that transcends boundaries of ethnicity and nationalism. The findings reveal that the Chinese Canadian double diaspora in Beijing is a young, well-educated, and economically active community that is becoming increasingly internationally mobile as a result of globalization, modern communications, and transportation. Their negative experiences in Canada form the “push” factors which work with China’s favourable movement policies as “pull” factors in generating a global force mobilizing Chinese immigrants to repatriate themselves and seek opportunities in China. The double diaspora is characterized by a number of dualities as both Chinese and Canadian, living in Chinese and Canadian diaspora, simultaneously diasporas and returnees, playing a double role as cultural and economic brokers between Canada and China. The double diaspora views the diaspora sojourn as neither unidirectional nor final, but rather as multiple and circular. It rejects the primordial notion of diaspora and theorizes diaspora as heterogeneous and conflictual form of sociality. This study provides an alternative framework in understanding transnational talent mobility and representing multiple ways of affiliations and belonging.

In Chapter 19 Scherto Gill investigates the impact of intercultural learning acquired in the UK on the life and work of returned Chinese postgraduates. China’s continued economic growth, economic and business opportunities, and family ties draw many overseas graduates back to China to work and live. As part of the “brain circulation”, the returnees play an important part in China’s economic growth and technological development. Gill’s study focuses on their experiences of re-adaptation and how they deal with the challenges confronting them with regard to the tension between the emerging identity and the expectations of who they ought to be. These findings reveal common factors that motivate Chinese graduates to settle in China, including a desire to play a part in the transformation of modern China, a perception that there are more opportunities for professional development in China, and difficulty finding relevant work in the subject areas in the host country. Re-adjustment and re-adaptation of life styles and values are common experiences among Gill’s participants. At the same time, all her participants are able to immerse
themselves with the intercultural awareness and continue to transform their intercultural understanding and self-perception after returning to China.

Chapter 20 by Su-yan Pan explores China’s brain gain strategies in competing for global talents. The competition for global human capital often starts with the most highly-educated and highly-skilled personnel, who are seen as globally mobile resources and intangible assets that can help enhance a nation’s global competitive advantage. As China continues to be the largest source country for internationally mobile students, it has also introduced a number of policies to attract internationally-trained Chinese nationals back to work and live in China, including policies encouraging them to work for and run businesses in China, recruiting them to senior positions, and offering competitive salaries and more rapid promotion. As a new competitor, China is also emerging as a popular destination for international students from many countries in the world. In this chapter Pan identifies and examines major brain gain strategies that have enabled China to entice foreign-trained Chinese nationals and to become a key competitor for international students. She also examines tensions between the quest for economic prosperity and political stability as embedded in China’s brain gain strategies. Drawing upon China’s experience, this chapter provides an understanding of the complexity and dynamics of brain gain for enhancing a nation’s global competitiveness. Her findings have important implications for understanding global talents mobility between China and the globalized world.

CONCLUSION

Taken together, the diverse concepts and perspectives represented in this book provide rich accounts of the impact of globalization on Chinese education and how globalization has transformed Chinese education and society. The twenty chapters in this volume collectively examine how globalization unfolds on the ground in Chinese education through processes of internationalization of Chinese education, student mobility and intercultural adaptations, cross-cultural experiences of teaching and learning, and transnational talent mobility. It is evident that economic globalization, modern communications, and advanced transportation have increased the interconnectivity and engagement of China with the rest of the world. The examination shows clear patterns and trends demonstrating China’s role as an emerging leader in the global flow of talents, information, and knowledge. This is evident in China’s contributions as the top source country of international students as well as permanent residents to many countries. China is also emerging as a popular destination country for international students, particularly for those from neighbouring Asian countries. At the same time, the analysis also reveals tensions between the global and local, particularly concerning national education sovereignty and the widening gap between brain gain and brain drain. As globalization intensifies, China has joined the global leaders in competing for most talented, skillful, and resourceful. Its favourable brain circulation policies have achieved a
measure of success in mobilizing Chinese expatriates to relocate to China as part of the transnational diaspora, suggesting that the diaspora sojourn should be seen as multiple and circular rather than unidirectional or final. In this view, China is moving into a form of transnationalism challenging the rigid, territorial nationalism that defines the modern nation-state. As such, transnationalism will likely see China more actively engaged with the globalized world in years to come.

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S. GUO & Y. GUO

Shibao Guo
Werklund School of Education
University of Calgary

Yan Guo
Werklund School of Education
University of Calgary
SECTION I
INTERNATIONALIZATION OF
CHINESE EDUCATION
2. GLOBAL PATHS, LOCAL TRAJECTORIES

China’s Education and the Global

INTRODUCTION

In Chinese education and at Chinese schools, the global has become ubiquitous – at least in the urban areas. This is observable at different levels: at the micro level, school children wear Western clothes brands (or imitations of them); Christmas decoration is hanging from the ceilings; classrooms and school yards frequently feature large world maps and huge globes; and the school bells play Mozart or North American children songs. At the meso level, school policies stress the importance of curriculum internationalization; school principals state as their educational aim the formation of global, ‘metropolitan’ citizens; and teachers with international experience have a distinct advantage in being hired. Finally, at the macro level, the global rise of the ‘knowledge economy’ has clearly left its mark on Chinese national educational policies, which make international competitiveness and the training of ‘creative talents’ proclaimed goals of nation-wide strategies in reforming education.\(^1\)

Conversely, China has been clearly added to the educational map of policy makers and educators worldwide due to the Chinese students’ extraordinarily high performance in cross-nationally conducted student assessments (such as PISA).\(^2\)

But what does it actually mean when we say that something has been globalized? Do the examples above point to a global China? Or do they rather represent manifestations of the global in the local, where the global has become a part of the local, as much as the ‘local’ has become “an aspect of globalization” (Robertson, 1995, p. 30)? Studies in and beyond comparative education on the global-local nexus have drawn attention to the dialectic processes of meaning-making that take place at various levels of these translocal encounters (Anderson-Levitt, 2003, 2012; Appadurai, 1996b; Beech, 2011; Carney, 2009; Larsen & Beech, 2014; Schriewer & Martinez, 2004; Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2006; Tsing, 2005).\(^3\) These studies have shown convincingly how what an external onlooker could call identical global phenomena or processes are perceived and acted upon diversely – and sometimes contradictorily – once they enter local contexts. That is, while globalization makes intra- and trans-societal agents across the world become subject to increasingly similar processes, powers, and pressures/potentials, these global forces play out differently, can mean very different things to different actors, and may also entail different consequences for the actors involved.

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\(^1\) S. Guo & Y. Guo (Eds.), Spotlight on China: Chinese Education in the Globalized World, 19–34. © 2016 Sense Publishers. All rights reserved.
Leon Tikly (2010) has pointed to the impossibility of talking about globalization as if this was something general, with generalizable causes and effects. Rather, he argues, ‘globalization’ is nonsensical if not linked up to particular localities:

It has been a shortcoming of much of the existing literature on globalisation and education that the specific contexts to which the theory is assumed to be applicable have not been specified. It is problematic to assume that there is one superior vantage point from which global forces can best be understood. (p. 152)

Thus, ‘global’ paths can only be traced by scrutinizing the local trajectories of the global. But how are we to understand the interaction between the two? How can we pinpoint, for instance with regard to the examples that I gave at the beginning of this chapter, where, how and why the global has hit the ground?

In this chapter, I will discuss various conceptualizations of these ‘grounding’ processes as they have been employed within the field of comparative education. In the following section, I will debate how the neo-institutionalist ‘world culture theory’ (see e.g., Ramirez, 2012) – an approach that has proven to be widely influential but also fiercely contested within comparative education – has led to a specific kind of ‘cultural turn’ within studies on education and globalization. I will then show how the originally constructivist approach inherent in world culture theory was subsequently taken up and developed within Scandinavian neo-institutionalism, while ‘culture’ within the US-based world culture theory approach was increasingly watered down, becoming a sort of cultural ‘add-on’ in otherwise de-cultured studies. I will also point to alternative approaches towards conceptualizing actors or ‘carriers’ in globalization processes – some of which are based on ontological premises that are distinctly different from the assumptions that are guiding the research conducted within the paradigm of world culture theory. This discussion will be followed by an outline of the three dimensions that have proven crucial in research on globalization and education: time and space/place, legitimating myths, and friction/pressures. In a concluding remark, I will refer these concepts back to local Chinese sense-making processes as they occur in interaction with the global.

CONCEPTUALIZING THE GLOBAL

The postulation of a ‘world culture’ being constructed across the globe (see e.g., the edited volume by Boli & Thomas, 1999) has its distinct roots in a social constructivist perspective on social science (Berger & Luckmann, 1967) and, more specifically, in new institutionalism (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991): structures and agency are seen as taking place within communicative and sense-making frames that transcend individual actors but also ground macro-social processes. It is through institutions that meaning and stability are seen to be provided, as institutions communicate and sanction rules and surveillance mechanisms (regulative dimension), articulate expectations (normative dimension), and embody shared conceptions
(cultural-cognitive dimension) (Scott, 1995). In educational research, this approach helped explain, among other things, the worldwide institutionalization of mass education (Meyer & Ramirez, 2000; Ramirez & Boli, 1987): it discarded purely structural-functionalist explanations and instead brought to the fore the cultural-ideological dimensions of global educational expansion. Rather than responding to any particular local requirements (such as economic or political needs), nation states were now understood as striving towards compliance with globally established cultural scripts of how to constitute a proper nation state and a legitimate member of the global community – and part of this script was a specifically structured mass education system (cf. the early exploration into myths by Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

While earlier studies within the neo-institutionalist framework must be credited with bringing culture back in, two severe flaws began to emerge as the world culture approach developed (Meyer, 2010; Ramirez, 2012).

First, local agency was increasingly rejected as an inappropriate conceptual tool for explaining global processes. Frequently, local agency was conflated with studies of the micro-level, which were depicted as having little to say about macro-processes (which were seen as embodying the global). This was despite Strang’s and Meyer’s important concept of ‘theorization’, within the framework of new institutionalism: this concept posits that there are different ways of making sense of the world, and that for a model to become adopted and integrated successfully, it has to resonate with local actors (Strang & Meyer, 1993). Clearly, the world culture approach has turned the local and the global into dichotomous, mutually exclusive entities. By operating increasingly from a diffusionist perspective, world culture theorists place the local at the receiving/reacting end of global diffusion (of e.g., educational models), thus ignoring both the dialectic, inter-penetrative relationship between the global and the local (Robertson, 1995) and the active, creative part that local agents play in this interaction (see below on Scandinavian new institutionalism).

Second, the world culture approach brackets issues of power, friction, and oppression among and between actors. Most studies within this paradigm tend to ignore the more unpleasant circumstances of educational transfer, e.g. when an educational model is imposed due to financial constraints, political dictates, or cultural hegemony. However, if ‘culture’ in the world culture approach is stripped off its contentious nature, what then is left to legitimize using the term ‘culture’ at all? This negligence or even refusal to address issues of power and coercion has led critics to suspect that the adherers of world culture theory were actually promoting the benefits of (a mostly Western-framed) ‘world culture’, rather than just researching it (Carney, Rappleye, & Silova, 2012). More probable, I would argue, world culture theorists’ tendency to ignore power, conflicts, and struggles might be a legacy of their neo-institutionalist origins. As Peter A. Hall and Rosemary C.R. Taylor observe,

the approach that sociological institutionalism takes […] often seems curiously bloodless. That is to say, it can miss the extent to which processes
of institutional creation or reform entail a clash of power among actors with competing interests. After all, many actors, both inside and outside an organization, have deep stakes in whether that firm or government adopts new institutional practices, and reform initiatives often provoke power struggles among these actors, which an emphasis on processes of diffusion can neglect. In some cases, the new institutionalists in sociology seem so focused on macro-level processes that the actors involved in these processes seem to drop from sight and the result begins to look like ‘action without agents’. (Hall & Taylor, 1996, p. 954)

In an important return to the actor, W. Richard Scott has emphasized and conceptualized the role of ‘carriers’. Carriers – or actors in processes of diffusion, transfer, and adoption – are “not neutral vehicles, but mechanisms that significantly influence the nature of the elements they transmit and the reception they receive” (Scott, 2003, p. 879). He distinguishes between four different types of carriers: (1) symbolic systems in which meaningful information is coded and conveyed; (2) relational systems, consisting of interpersonal or interorganizational linkages; (3) routines in the form of habitualized behavior; and (4) artifacts (material culture).

Similarly, the Scandinavian variant of new institutionalism (see e.g., Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996) has focused on locally induced processes of modification and change in the course of ‘global’ diffusion. These studies specifically employ the concept of ‘translation’ in order to stress the agency and creativity inherent in these local processes. Diffusion is no longer a transmission e.g. across national borders but acts of translation, with far-reaching consequences for both actors and objects: “Each act of translation changes the translator and what is translated” (Czarniawska & Sevón, 2005, p. 8). Others have used the terms “editing” (Sahlin-Andersson, 1996) or “framing” (Snow & Benford, 1992) to denote these processes of appropriation and transformation. Importantly, Scandinavian neo-institutionalists have also differentiated between different types of translation and have thus unpacked the world culture theorists’ concept of ‘isomorphism’: while in some cases actors may take over a model without admitting it outspokenly (e.g. by calling it something different), in other cases actors may evoke a globally popular model or reform and pretend to be adopting it – while in reality implementing something else. This has been termed isopraxism in the first case, and isonymism in the second (see Erlingsdóttir & Lindberg, 2005; Solli, Demediuk, & Sims, 2005). Often, these are strategic choices depending on political climate and/or economic priorities. The concept of ‘isomorphism’ reflects these different and often conflictual processes only insufficiently since it tends to overemphasize cosmetic similarities (such as e.g. ‘human rights education’ across different countries), while overlooking underlying commonalities that are, however, labeled differently, precisely due to the world culture theorists’ excessive focus on macro processes.

Another way to look at globalization and social agency that has proven influential for comparative education is through the concept of ‘networks’. Research on
networks has figured large in studies on governance (Clemens & Cook, 1999; Milward & Provan, 2000) and has found its way into comparative education mainly in studies that are critical of nonstate, ‘neoliberal’ networks (see Ball, 2008). Here it is above all the powerful, often unholy alliances between specific actors that are seen as essential for specific ‘global’ models to succeed or fail on a local plane. Steiner-Khamsi (2006) has been particularly interested in the rationales of early and late adopters of educational models and has repeatedly pleaded for the contextualization of educational diffusion and transfer (e.g. Steiner-Khamsi, 2012). More specifically employing a social network analysis (SNA) approach, Roldán Vera and Schupp (2005) have looked at the worldwide diffusion of the monitorial system of education, while Schulte (2012a) has analyzed the social ties among (national and transnational) actors in the vocational education movement in Republican China. Social networks, Schulte argues, can illustrate both the flows of ideas (carried by people or organisations) and the flows of power. The nature of the nodes (actors) through which ideas pass can tell us something about how the ideas get processed and changed, and how this has a backlash on actors and their behaviour. [...] [Social network analysis] can illuminate the ‘how’ of social relations, and it can explain the longevity or ephemerality of certain phenomena that are created, maintained, or abolished through social relations… (Schulte, 2012a, pp. 96–97)

Departing from a flat ontology and directing attention to the nonhuman world, studies of translation processes have also been drawing on Bruno Latour’s work and his approach towards social reality as an actor-network (e.g., Latour, 1986; also the Scandinavian neo-institutionalists have been inspired by Latour, 2005). Originally, this approach emerged within studies on science in the making (science and technology studies, or STS): taken-for-granted trajectories and narratives of scientific development began to be questioned. Decentering e.g. the role of grand scientists or ‘compelling’ scientific theories, Actor-Network Theory (ANT) assumes that causality emerges out of interactions and connections within an actor-network. Such a relational network is thought of consisting both of human and nonhuman actants. Any entity can thus become a source of action (or an actant), “including objects, subjects, human beings, machines, animals, ‘nature’, ideas, organizations, inequalities, scales and sizes, and geographical arrangements” (Law, 2008, p. 141). This relational, symmetrical approach is consequently no longer constricted by the macro-micro distinction so prevalent in social theory; nor is it caught within the structure-agency dichotomy that has shaped so much of social science thinking.

Since a relational perspective shifts attention to how actors serve as mediators in social processes, which are thought of as networks, the idea of ‘translation’ is a natural characteristic of this approach. Latour distinguishes between intermediaries – who have no impact on the information that passes through them – and (human or nonhuman) mediators, who possess shaping power:
Their input is never a good predictor of their output; their specificity has to be taken into account every time. Mediators transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry. (Latour, 2005, p. 39)

Translation, according to Callon (1981), who develops the concept further, consists then of bringing things together that were previously apart or disconnected; such a process always involves the negotiation of actors’ identities and possibilities of (inter)action. It also requires that things are perceived as ‘problems’ in the first place (problematization), actors become interested in them (interessement), and a sufficient number of actors can get mobilized (Callon, 1991). As Callon points out, translation also means a displacement of alternative possibilities.

An important concept within science and technology studies is the idea of blackboxing. Blackboxing denotes the process of obscuring (technological) complexity: things that themselves are actor-networks (consisting of complex interrelationships) become at some point ‘punctualized’, appearing as obvious and self-evident to the onlooker (like the computer I’m using in my daily work). They thus become black-boxed and are converted into a single point or node in another network (Callon, 1991). A school book for example may become blackboxed in its interaction with teachers, students, the classroom or the curriculum – although it is clearly socially and historically contingent, having emerged out of previous, complex interactions. As Law notes, black boxes are seldom of permanent character but can be re-opened:

Punctualization is always precarious, it faces resistance, and may degenerate into a failing network. On the other hand, punctualized resources offer a way of drawing quickly on the networks of the social without having to deal with endless complexity. (Law, 1992, p. 385)

For instance, a textbook may at some point in time become the target of criticism, such as from minority groups or teacher unions, and can thus be unpacked.

Also with regard to educational transfer, this shift of focus onto different kinds of entities that are involved in processes of transfer and interaction – human and material – is potentially productive. However, only few studies on globalization and education have made use of this approach more than metaphorically (see e.g. Fenwick, 2010; Resnik, 2006) and it remains to be seen how influential this approach will prove in the future. As it requires a radical ontological re-orientation, it is somewhat questionable whether it will gain a stronger foothold among comparative educationists.

DIMENSIONS OF THE GLOBAL

Elsewhere I have identified three foci in conceptualizing globalization processes in education (Schulte, 2012b) and will re-introduce them in the following three subsections.
GLOBAL PATHS, LOCAL TRAJECTORIES

Time and Space/Place

This first focus starts from the assumption that the selection, adoption, translation, and appropriation of models are not timeless and placeless phenomena but are intricately linked to both (perceived, construed) needs of adopters and a “time axis” of developments (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012); they are historically contingent. Before a model can look convincing to potential adopters, it has to become visible in the first place. Czarniawska and Sevón (2005) use the concept of ‘fashion’ to explain why certain ideas are attractive at a specific point in time while others are not; fashions pose a potential threat to existing ideas/institutions and can cause their transformation or demise (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996). Others have used the idea of discourse or “discourse coalitions” (Schriewer, 2000, p. 73) to explain why certain ideologies gain hold in a group/society. From a system theory’s perspective, ideas are seen as becoming selected and filtered “according to the changing problem configurations and reflection situations internal to a given system” (Schriewer & Martinez, 2004, p. 32; my emphasis). Similarly, Lieberman (2002) argues that rather than constituting exogenous forces, “shocks” are generally homemade and an outcome of earlier tensions within a given society. This has far-reaching consequences for the alleged stability and universality of certain ideas: “[C]oncepts such as ‘liberty’ or ‘equality’ might be invoked to support very different practices in different contexts by people who all the while believe themselves to be upholding a timeless and unchanging political tradition” (Lieberman, 2002, p. 702).

In congruence with a more general spatial turn in the social sciences, place has also moved more literally into focus by turning attention to how place and space themselves can act upon diffusion and translation processes. Space is not just being compressed through globalization processes, maintain – for example – Larsen and Beech (2014), but has become an actor itself, with performative capacities, and should therefore turn from “an object of study” to “a framework for analysis” (Beech & Larsen, 2011, pp. 194–195). Drawing on Lefebvre (1991), they plead for a relational notion of space in which space, place, and social agency constitute one another.

Legitimating Myths

Ramirez (2012) points to the importance of “myths” as basic human strategies to add meaning to one’s existence – and to legitimate one’s action. He thus takes up again a perspective that has been put forward in earlier neo-institutionalist writings, which sees myths as helping an organization to look “appropriate, rational, and modern”. Their use “displays responsibility and avoids claims of negligence” (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 344). By attributing to myths “[c]eremonial criteria of worth and ceremonially derived production functions” and by using terms like “labels” or “vocabulary” (1977, p. 351), Meyer and Rowan make it clear that myths are less creeds to be believed but beliefs to be performed, in order to gain legitimacy. While
they underline the constructivist character of myths, they pay less attention to the
temporality and locality of myths (see previous section).

Roland Barthes develops the idea that myth is not just a concept, but a “system
of communication” (Barthes, 1972/2009, p. 131) or a “type of speech chosen
by history” (2009, p. 132) and is thus “open to appropriation by society” (2009,
pp. 131–132). This appropriation is culturally contingent:

Myth has an imperative, buttonholing character: stemming from an historical
concept, directly springing from contingency […], it is I whom it has come to
seek. It is turned towards me, I am subjected to its intentional force, it summons
me to receive its expansive ambiguity. (2009, p. 148; emphasis in original)

Barthes further observes that myths serve to naturalize historically specific decisions
and preferences – they make “contingency appear eternal” (2009, p. 168) and hence
depoliticize interaction (that is, detach beliefs from specific interests and goals). It
shares some similarity with the above-discussed process of blackboxing.

It is worth asking whether the world culture approach itself has not bought into
the eternity and stability of the myths that it had set out to analyze, and whether it
has not failed to look at the re-politicization of myths once they enter a different
context. This becomes particularly salient when globally circulating myths hit upon
local myths, thus producing global-local networks of myths with highly differential
consequences for politics, economics, and everyday lives.

From an empirical perspective, one of the originally central concepts of the world
culture approach, myths, is only insufficiently operationalized. Often, the mere fact
that countries engage in or take over aspects of world culture models is taken as
proof that these countries embody (parts of this) world culture. To raise an example:
to what extent can we treat the number and distribution of human rights institutions
as evidence that the respective country that hosts these institutions has actually
implemented human right norms (cf. Koo & Ramirez, 2009)? For an approach that
takes both time/place and myths/legitimacy seriously, it is imperative to explore also
how human rights are understood and enacted in each of these societies. One has to
take into account, in Lieberman’s words,

the goals and desires that people bring to the political world and, hence, the
ways they define and express their interests; the meanings, interpretations, and
judgments they attach to events and conditions; and their beliefs about cause-
and-effect relationships in the political world and, hence, their expectations
about how others will respond to their own behavior. (Lieberman, 2002, p. 697)

To move local enactments of myths back into focus does not mean that the global
dimension needs to be sacrificed. On the contrary, such a move can add to an
understanding of how the power of global institutions and ideas materializes. While
the growing legitimacy of certain global scripts – such as mass schooling or human
rights – is an undeniable fact, this legitimacy has been put forward differently, by
different actors within different settings through different scripts. At times, what
is called ‘variation’ initially even subverts the original idea. Such is the case for example with the US import of ‘academic freedom’ to Singapore, where it became twisted to strengthen the hegemony of the state (see Olds, 2005). If we are to take the idea of myths seriously, there is not one world culture, but a variety of both scripted and on-the-spot constructions of world culture that have repercussions in the ‘real world’ (i.e., resulting in certain choices, actions, and policies). So not only are the narratives played out differently (implementation), but they are also scripted differently – although they are engaged with each other at the global level.

This is not just a matter of ‘decoupling’, as maintained by Ramirez (e.g., 2012). Explaining variation by decoupling disguises the failure to come to analytical terms with difference; it has become a black box within this strand of research (and probably even a ‘black box’ in Latour’s sense in that complex relationships have become punctualized). The solution of course cannot be to construct a myriad of independent case studies where each shows how world culture is experienced differently. As already Bertrand Russell (1956, p. 195) noted, “[w]hen one person uses a word, he does not mean by it the same thing as another person means by it.” It would be a hopeless enterprise to try and map every single local understanding of globally travelling myths. However, comparative research can contribute by working on a typology of narratives as they are diffused and transformed across the world. Göran Therborn (1995), for instance, notes at least four different routes to modernity that may correspond with different understandings of world culture: the European gate of revolution or reform (endogenous change); the New Worlds of the Americas (transcontinental migration and genocide, independence); imposed or externally induced modernization in Asia (external threat, selective imports); conquest, subjection and appropriation in Africa; and combinations of these different types. Similarly, approaches within the framework of multiple modernities (Eisenstadt, 1999; Schwinn, 2006, 2012) have proved fruitful in comparative education for showing how societies modernize and reform on their own terms, even when they are ‘borrowing’ (or translating) from other countries (see e.g., Schriewer & Martinez, 2004). Comparative education has yet to find a balance between indulging in a multiplicity of idiosyncratic case studies (that is, a myriad of local ‘appropriations’) on the one hand, and on the other, risking over-ambitious generalizations (that is, the diffusion of one model in which the specificity of the local actor, or the translator, no longer plays a role).

Friction and Pressures

When different layers of discourses, fashions, or orders come into contact and possibly conflict with one another, there arises friction (or interruptions, from a system perspective). Lieberman sees politics as occurring in “multiple concurrent orders” (2002, p. 702) where friction between these orders leads to action and change:
Measuring friction, then, is a matter of deriving, from the historical record, accounts of these incentives, opportunities, and repertoires that arise from multiple sources of political order and impinge simultaneously on the same set of actors. (2002, p. 703)

Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, from an anthropological perspective, understands friction as arising out of encounters and interactions that take place in “zones of awkward engagement, where words mean something different across a divide even as people agree to speak” (2005, p. xi). Like Lieberman, she emphasizes the creative property of friction, which “reminds us that heterogeneous and unequal encounters can lead to new arrangements of culture and power” (2005, p. 5). The concept of friction is also apt to capture the dialectic relationship between the local and the global: friction emerges where the global touches local ground – Tsing talks of “engaged universals” (2005, p. 10) – and it keep[s] global power in motion. It shows us (as one advertising jingle put it) where the rubber meets the road. Roads are a good image for conceptualizing how friction works: Roads create pathways that make motion easier and more efficient, but in doing so they limit where we go. The ease of travel they facilitate is also a structure of confinement. Friction inflects historical trajectories, enabling, excluding, and particularizing. (Tsing, 2005, p. 6)

While friction, as I have discussed it so far, is more concerned with how an organization, group, society, or system processes and internalizes external forces, this does not preclude that these more subliminal internalization processes are preceded, accompanied, or prompted by more palpable pressures such as coercion or brute force. Already DiMaggio and Powell (1983), in their widely cited article, differentiate between coercive isomorphism, mimetic processes and normative pressures. It is conspicuous that the world culture approach has tended to neglect the first element in this set. As Scott (2003) notes, it should have an impact on the outcome of diffusion whether models were taken over from soldiers or bankers (or from academic experts, I would add).

CONCLUSION: MAKING SENSE OF THE GLOBAL IN CHINESE EDUCATION

China often lends itself as a case where ‘everything is different’ (as remarked once by a critical colleague of mine). Are case studies on China, or more particularly, on how global models play out in Chinese education, thus only adding to the ‘myriad of local appropriations’, of which I warned above? Or can insights from the Chinese case actually tell us something about globalization as such? I believe the latter is a more valid statement, at the same time as I am siding with Leon Tikly (2010; see introductory section) in that I see no point in looking at globalization only in general terms – if we want to attach meaning to globalization, we will have
to investigate how globalization processes unfold on the ground. In the following, I will sketch a few of these grounding processes by drawing on some previous studies (both by myself and others). Very obviously, the volume to which this chapter contributes provides further ample evidence of a globalized/globalizing China.

Looking more closely, China is not as ‘exotic’ a case as often maintained. China has been part of what we today call the ‘international community’ for a long time and was both agent and patient of East-West and West-East knowledge interchange (for a brief and recent overview, see Schulte, 2013). Regarding contemporary China, scholars have been particularly interested in seeing how deeply ingrained traditions of teaching and learning are impacted by the import of global educational models (such as student-centered learning, communicative language instruction, etc.). Various case studies show how local teaching and learning practices continue to draw on indigenous conceptions and practices (Tan, 2015; Zhao, 2013) and in a curious combination of both embracing and resisting ‘Western’ teaching and learning models, the latter become creolized (Ouyang, 2003), thus leading to “hybrid reforms” (Paine & Fang, 2006). There is still very little research on how these local re-interpretations of global models may have a backlash on the environments from where these models emerged – for instance, how these Chinese hybrids have an impact on North American conceptions of teaching and learning (but see Tucker, 2011, to get an impression of where this may lead).

In a large comparative case study of educational knowledge over a period of several decades in Spain, Russia/the Soviet Union, and China, Schriewer and colleagues investigated what ‘global’ or ‘international’ actually mean in each context by scrutinizing international references in these societies’ educational research journals (e.g., Schriewer, 2004). From a bird’s eye perspective, increased international references may simply point to an increased internationalization of these societies (or rather, of these societies’ academic discourse on education). However, looking more closely at what kind of international authors (educators, psychologists, philosophers etc.) were cited, the project could actually identify rather diverse ‘international’ reference societies, and thus “alternating constructions of internationality” (Schriewer, 2004, p. 509).

Closing up on one important international reference, namely the appearance of the educator and philosopher John Dewey in Chinese educational discourse, Schulte (2011) has looked at how one and the same reference can stand for very different and even conflicting ideas about education, depending on the time period and the concomitant political and academic climate. Here, as well as in Schulte (2004), which discusses the abuse of the postmodern argument of ‘relativism’ and thus a reversed orientalism in Chinese academia, it becomes evident that the ‘international’ or the ‘global’ often serve as a strategic argument to push forward local interests. Similarly, in another comparative project on how vocational education programs
were integrated into Argentina’s and China’s modernization schemes, Oelsner and Schulte (2006) note how the adoption of international models is contingent upon these societies’ (often competing) perceptions of problems in the first place, as well as their (often historically grounded) bonds with foreign reference societies. Frequently, the apparently ‘global’ became reduced to one or two countries that were particularly visible in the Chinese or Argentine contexts (termed ‘reference horizons’ by Oelsner & Schulte, 2006).

The discussion above is by no means exhaustive but is to illustrate how case studies that are grounded in one or more distinct localities can nonetheless yield important insights into the workings of more encompassing processes like globalization. Rather than choosing a “view from nowhere-in-particular” (Jensen, 2011, p. 2), such studies make conscious use of a culturally sensitive, relativist approach – without making the investigated processes unique to the point of incommensurability. To conclude with the words of Jensen,

[comparative relativism is understood by some to imply that relativism comes in various kinds and that these have multiple uses, functions, and effects, varying widely in different personal, historical, and institutional contexts; moreover, that those contexts can be compared and contrasted to good purpose. (Jensen, 2011, p. 2)

NOTES

1. This becomes for example apparent from the current Ten-Year-Plan of informatizing education (see MOE, 2012).
2. There has been a debate about PISA both with regard to fundamental aspects of its design and its technical implementation. The first concern raises the question of to what extent assessment studies like PISA can really reflect a student cohort’s level of competence and knowledge, what kind of knowledge is entailed in PISA’s design and, whether this knowledge is what we would want our children to learn (see e.g. the discussion in Meyer & Benavot, 2013). The second critique raises concerns about the sampling procedures (Kreiner & Christensen, 2014), which, especially with regard to the Chinese PISA (or rather Shanghai PISA), has prompted some criticism – something I cannot go into detail here (but see for example the blog by Loveless, 2014).
3. See also the special issue Re-Conceptualising the Global-Local Nexus: Meaning Constellations in the World Society in the journal Comparative Education, 48(4) (2012). In the present chapter, I draw on arguments that have been presented in my contribution to this special issue (Schulte, 2012b).
4. See e.g. the critique in Carney, Rappleye, and Silova (2012).
5. See for instance Barnard’s and Spencer’s understanding of culture as a “site of contestation” (1996, p. 141); see also Morley and Chen (1996).
6. Note the similarities with Appadurai’s concept of ‘scapes’, which distinguishes between ethnoscapes (people/groups on the move), mediascapes (information/images on the move), technoscapes (technologies on the move), finanscapes (capital on the move), and ideoscapes (ideas/ideologies on the move) (Appadurai, 1996a).
7. ANT distinguishes between agency and intentionality: somebody or something may serve as an agent without necessarily having the intention to act for a specific purpose.
8. See also the peculiar integration of the concept of ‘creativity’, the buzzword of today’s knowledge economy, into Chinese education (Schulte, 2015).
9. This strategic move has been extensively discussed in Zymek (1975).
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