

Preface

China's cultural, economic, and political rise has brought the country to the forefront of global scholarly inquiry. In recent years, international assessments (e.g., PISA, TIMSS) have placed countries of predominantly Chinese descent or influenced by the Chinese writing system and Confucian philosophy at the top of student performance rankings. These results have attracted attention from researchers, educators, and policymakers around the world. From this, lively debate has emerged as to whether or not a distinct Chinese education model can be identified and, if such a model exists, whether or not it is a contributing factor to the educational successes of countries heavily influenced by Chinese culture and philosophy.

Inspired by these debates, this volume embraces the lack of consensus surrounding the topic, drawing upon a diverse set of voices from researchers around the world. It builds from the premise that there is no straightforward, clear-cut way of distilling the notion of a Chinese education model into the bite-sized definition that academics and policymakers so often desire. Even the concept of Chineseness is rich with ambiguity, interwoven with ideas of history, culture, geography, and ethnicity. While the contributing authors have been encouraged to conceptualize Chinese education models from their unique, individual perspectives, the "Chinese" aspect has been interpreted in the broadest sense as *huaren*, extending the concept into the wide range of geographic and cultural spheres in which Chinese influence exists in today's global age. By welcoming a wide range of perspectives from a diverse team of authors, this volume aims to serve not as a book-length definition of the Chinese education model but as a platform for dialogue and a foundation for future research.

The book is divided into four parts, each comprising a distinct theme that may be familiar to comparative education researchers as well as those with a more general interest in education and culture. In Part I "When Past Meets Future," a collection of analyses of the historical origins of the Chinese education model set the foundation for the volume. Particular emphasis is placed on the effects of policy reforms, including educational reforms specifically and those related to political systems, economics, and culture. In Part II "When East Meets West," the key similarities and differences between the Chinese education models in different geographical contexts take center stage. Discussions of the role of Chinese education in Taiwan,

New Zealand, the Philippines, Canada, and Australia, as well as in more globally focused cross-country analyses, come together to illustrate its function in a global age, as highlighted in the title of the book. In Part III “When Theory Meets Practice,” the chapters describe the philosophical and theoretical bases of the Chinese education model and their interplay with pedagogy and education in practice. It is, after all, the relationship between reality and the theoretical framework constructed to explain it that forms the essence of any model. In Part IV “Conclusion,” the preceding 23 chapters are synthesized into a framework that aims to contribute to future research on Chinese education by highlighting and reframing the wide-ranging perspectives from the book into a cohesive and structured summative analysis.

As readers delve into the content of the book, they will above all become aware that it is not a single, monolithic Chinese education model that is described. Instead, the idea of Chinese education models, in the plural, more accurately describes the reality of the issue in terms of history, theory, and practice. The diversity of views presented in the volume is a testament to the dynamic and multifaceted nature of Chinese education models in a global age. From the initial conception of the book, the editors have sought to embrace this aspect of the topic. We greatly appreciate the many months of effort that each and every one of the contributors has put into developing their chapters and making this book a reality and, above all, sincerely hope that its content will be an inspiration to our readers.

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