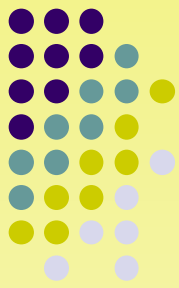


# The Chinese Learners: Changing Contexts, Changing Education



Carol K.K. Chan  
Faculty of Education  
University of Hong Kong

# THE CHINESE LEARNER:

**CULTURAL,  
PSYCHOLOGICAL**

**and**

**CONTEXTUAL  
INFLUENCES**

Edited by **David A. Watkins and John B. Biggs**



CERC & ACER

# Teaching the Chinese Learner:

**PSYCHOLOGICAL  
AND  
PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVES**

Edited by **David A. Watkins & John B. Biggs**



Comparative Education Research Centre  
The University of Hong Kong



- Carol K.K. Chan & Nirmala Rao (2009)

CERC Studies in Comparative Education 25

## Revisiting The Chinese Learner

Changing Contexts, Changing Education



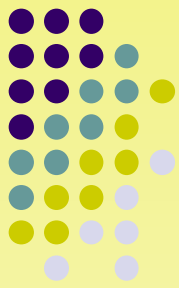
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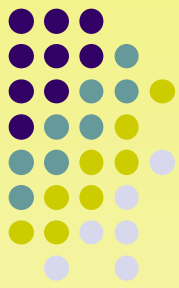




- Images of Chinese Learners

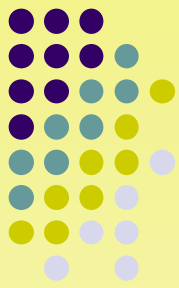


# Some explanations: Success in International Tests



- Confucian tradition and philosophy in Chinese culture (Lee, 1996)
- Asian parents hold higher expectation and are more involved (Au & Harackiewicz, 1986)
- Asian children's motivation for social mobility leads them to work harder (Salili, Chiu & Lai, 2001)
- Asian children attend schools for longer hours and do more homework (Chen & Stevenson, 1989)

**The Chinese Learner**

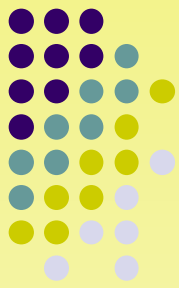


# What are Western Misperceptions?

## Western Dichotomies to Explain Student Learning

- Memorization **versus** Understanding
- Surface **versus** Deep Approach
- Extrinsic **versus** Intrinsic Motivation
- Efforts **versus** Ability Attribution
- Individual **versus** Collectivist Tradition

The distinction is **much more nuanced** among Chinese learners in consideration of the context

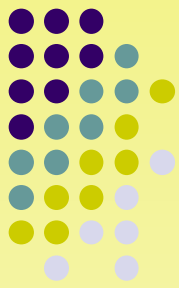


# Key Questions

- How do Chinese students and teachers respond to changing educational context?
- How do studies about Chinese students in changing educational context inform us about the Chinese learners?



# Changing Contexts & Changing Education



Globalization... socio-economic changes...  
technology... Education reforms locally and  
internationally

What can we learn from the successful Chinese  
Learners.. The Chinese learners in  
transition? ..

# Learning to Learn

ASL  
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION  
OF SCHOOL LIBRARIANS

STANDARDS FOR THE  
**21st-CENTURY  
LEARNER**

The cover features a young boy writing in a notebook, surrounded by icons of a laptop, a CD, a book, and a person's face.

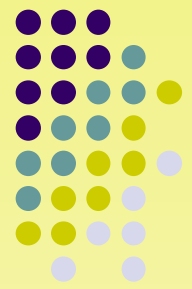
Basic Education  
Curriculum Guide  
Building on Strengths  
(Primary 1 – Secondary 3)

Four Key Tasks

- Reading to Learn
- Moral & Civic Ed
- IT for Interactive Learning
- Project Learning

The diagram shows 'Reading to Learn' and 'Project Learning' connected to 'Moral & Civic Ed', which is further connected to 'IT for Interactive Learning'.

- Healthy Lifestyle
- Breadth of Knowledge
- Learning Skills
- Language Skills
- Habit of Reading
- National Identity
- Responsibility



## Changing Policy and Educational Reforms

21st Century Skills,  
Education & Learning  
A RESOURCE AND POLICY GUIDE

PEARSON  
Prentice Hall

Partnership for  
21st Century Skills

The cover features a group of diverse children gathered around a globe.

Thinking  
Schools,  
Learning  
Nation

Contemporary Issues  
and Challenges

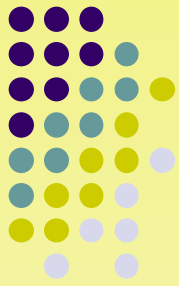
Edited by Jason Tan & Ng Pak Tee

PEARSON  
Prentice Hall

For display

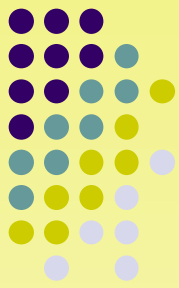
The cover features a collage of children in various learning and play activities.

# Themes



- Traditional and Cultural Beliefs
- Contemporary Changes
- Learner or Learner in Context

# 1. Traditional Beliefs & Values



Influence of Confucian Values

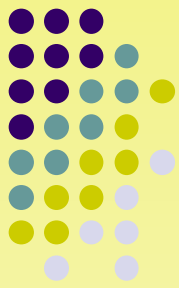
-Children can do well if they try hard enough

-Hao-Xue-Xin (Li Jin) - Heart and Mind and wanting to Learn (diligence, effort, motivation, perseverance)

Extend Western theories of learning into affective constructs

好學心

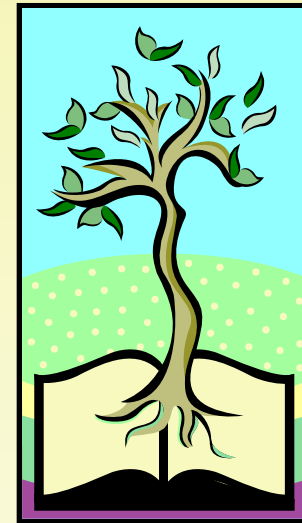
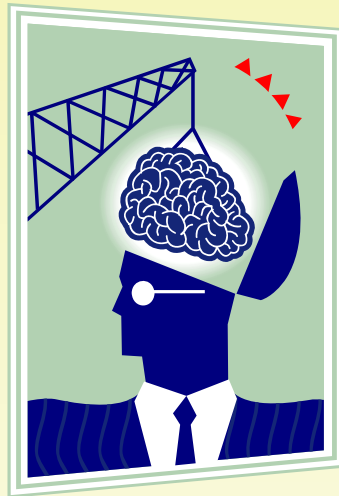


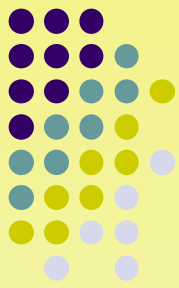


# 1. Traditional Beliefs & Values

- 孟子曰 (Mencius) :

「天將降大任於斯人也，必先苦其心志，勞其筋骨，餓其體膚，空乏其身，行拂亂其所爲，所以動心忍性，增益其所不能。」



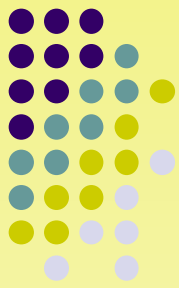


## 2. Contemporary Changes

- Changes in educational policies are bringing about new ways of pedagogy
  - Rao et al.– Teaching Math in China
  - Siegel et al.– Teaching English in China
  - Marton et al.– Reading to Learn



- “將時間交還學生”



## 2. Contemporary Changes

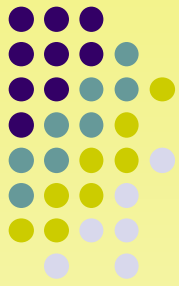
Research show that Chinese learners have new aspiration when provided with new pedagogical experiences (Law et al.,)



Chinese learners are not predisposed to passive learning and cramming; they are highly adaptive, and the develop appropriate strategies and approaches to new task demands



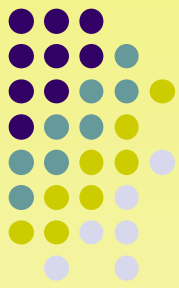
## 2. Contemporary Changes



- While Chinese students like teachers to guide them, they also want to have space to develop views of their own



# 3. Traditional Beliefs & New Changes – Student approach



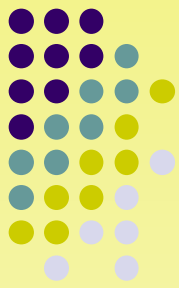
- Western approach tend to polarize and dichotomize
- Chinese learners **transcend dichotomies:**

-Memorization .... Understanding (Marton)

-competition .....collaboration (Watkins)

-open inquiry.... exam revision (Chan)

# Chinese learners working on Knowledge building: Intertwined approach



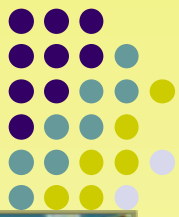
- When working on Knowledge Forum, I really *study* and *revise* geography... there is a place for me *to ask questions and to think*



When we have to respond to classmates' questions, first we have to read our notes and books... But later on, we do not need to read that much, and **I think it helps to shorten the time when we study for the exam because we are already developing this kind of thinking** in normal time when we are working on the forum.

I am already spending time to **understand** and **to study** when I am working on KF. Um.... It seems like what we are discussing is already there in our minds.

# 4. Chinese teachers - Fusion & transformed pedagogy



Debunk teacher-centred versus student-centred approach

Students can be well engaged in large classes

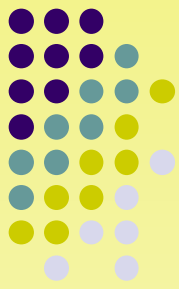
- Fusion of Western and Chinese approaches
- Traditional practice and new approach (Rao & Ng)
- Structured with emergent processes (Chan)

Western approach – child-centred approach.

Chinese approach – integrated....can advance learning theories and practice...



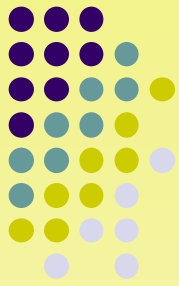
# 4. Chinese teachers – Fusion & transformed pedagogy



- 羣策羣力
- 羣雄獻技

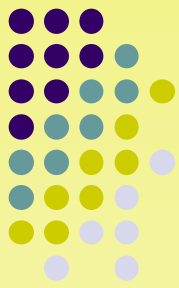


# 5. Chinese teachers – Cognitive & affective goals



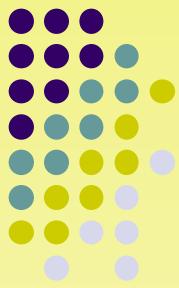
- Moral guidance (Gao) ..... Self-perfection (Li)
- Guiding students to walk the ‘right’ path
- Policies - University and secondary school reforms (334.... Liberal Studies)
- Classroom – ‘Mr L. forced me to think’

# 6. Teacher Development in Chinese context



- Pedagogical Transformation
  - Not grafting Western ideas onto Chinese soil (Tsui & Wong)...
- .. Negotiation in the Third Space...
- Recreating it to make it the Chinese ways....

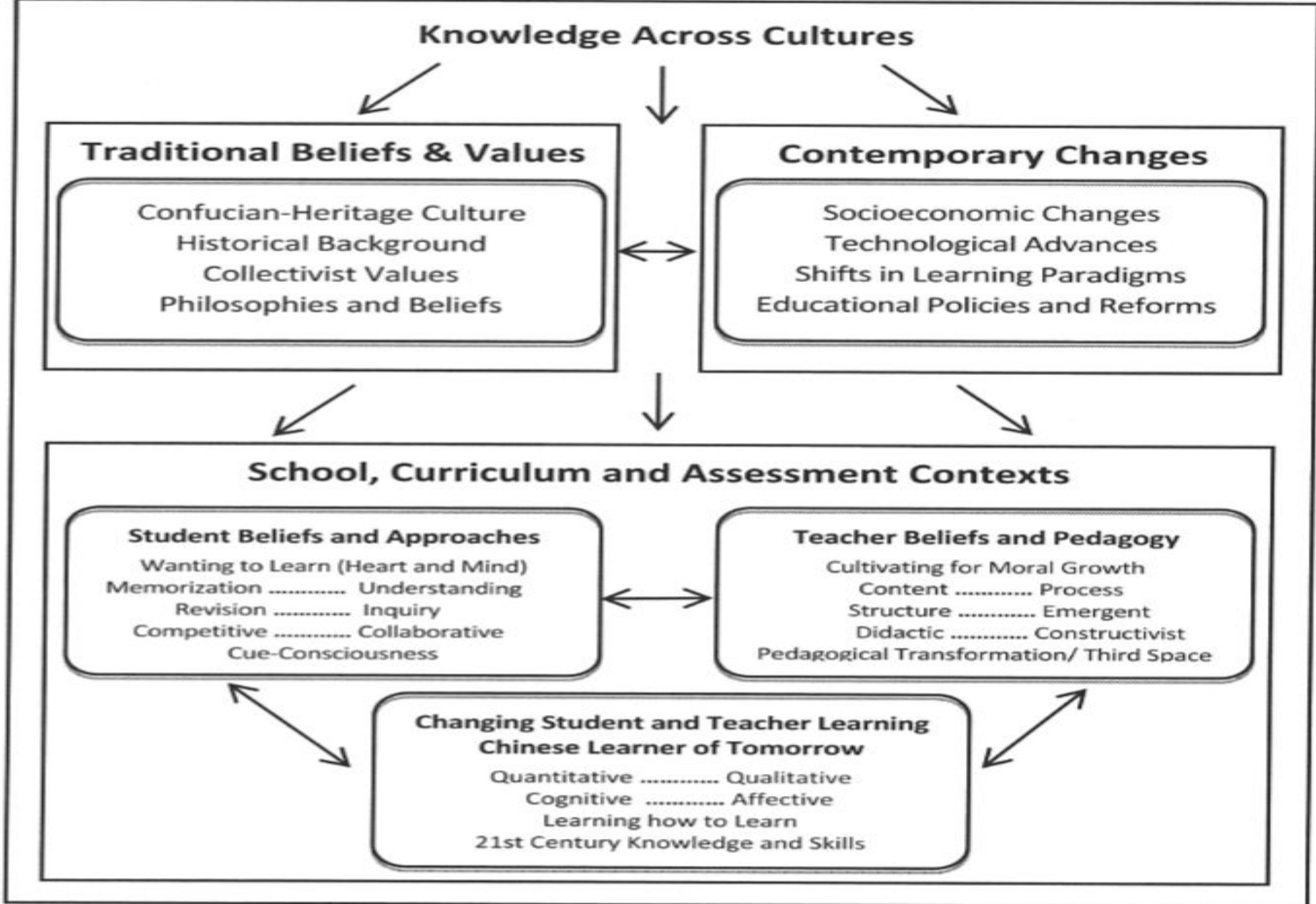
# Conclusion - Implications and What Next?



- Understand cultural patterns....preserve the strengths
- Capitalize on situational challenges... new responses...
- Transcending Dichotomies & Transforming Pedagogy

Chinese learners of tomorrow will continue to go far...(advantages of both worlds)

Chinese Beliefs evolving with New Pedagogy and Practice.. Lessons for Chinese.. Lessons for All



*Figure 11. 1. Teaching and learning for the Chinese learner in changing educational contexts*