



The Center in Action **October 2004**

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Higher Education Reform in China

Presentation by:
President of Beijing Normal University
Dr. Zhong Binling

Moderated by:
Professor, Michigan State University
Dr. Yong Zhao

When: Friday, October 29, 2004

Time: 11:30 - 1:30pm

Where: 250 Erickson Hall

Dr. Zhong Binling, President of Beijing University will be speaking at Erickson Hall on Friday, October 29th from 11:30-1:30pm. Dr. Zhong will be addressing the issues and challenges associated with current reform efforts targeting higher education in China. Prior to his current position, Dr. Zhong served as head of higher education of the Ministry of Education (MOE) of the People's Republic of China. In his presentation, Dr. Zhong will be joined by Dr. Zhang Binxian, Dean of School of Educational Sciences, Beijing Normal University, Dr. Zhou Zuoyu, Director of Research, Beijing Normal University as well other specialists from Beijing.

Beijing Normal University is one of the premier institutions of higher education in China. Historically, it has been at the leading edge of post-secondary educational reform and a valued national leader on issues of public education in China. Dr. Zhong's presentation should prove important and insightful to those with interests in higher education, Chinese education, and international education.

Conference Brings Education Scholars Together

In August 2004, top education scholars from the United States and Australia visited China to discuss models of assessment and accountability. The conference, hosted in both Beijing and



Chongqing, China, was attended by over 300 delegates from China, including current teachers, administrators, and ministry officials. American models of educational assessment and accountability were presented and discussed. The role of governance in an era of No Child Left Behind was also an important topic related to assessment and accountability, and presenters shared their experiences from the international, federal, and local levels.

The conference was aimed to provide Chinese educators with a model for educational assessment and accountability. Issues of Chinese educational reform were discussed over the 2-day seminar. “Educational reform plays a key role in the modernization of China,” says Jonathan Choi, Chairman of Sunwah Education Foundation. Participants were given the opportunity to share their own experiences and discuss implications for future reform of the education system in China.

A DVD is currently being created for dissemination to those who would like to learn more about educational assessment and accountability models in the United States. Both English and Chinese language formats will be made available in the near future. Below are the presenters and a brief overview of the topics discussed at the August conference.

Brian Caldwell (University of Melbourne)

Title: How Governments are Taking the Lead in the Transformation of Education: An International Perspective

Overview: The powerful role for governments needs to be complemented by strategies to ensure that every student in every classroom can feel the impact. Three of these strategies were highlighted in the presentation: the creation of a capacity for school self-management, the lateral transfer of knowledge about good practice through networks and networking, and shifting the focus to personalization of learning and building a system of specialist schools at the secondary level. An international perspective has been adopted, with illustrations from Australia, England and the United States.

Daniel Schultz (Michigan Virtual University)

Title: How Governments Participate in Education in the U.S.: A Study of Policy, Process, and Politics

Overview: There is no single definition of policy. An easy way to define policy is by answering the question of who gets what, when and how (Laswell, 1958). In a democratic society, people, resources, values, and authority, and their relative importance are constantly debated as part of the policy making process. The policy making process, therefore, competes with basic values including: equity, efficiency, accountability, mandate, equal opportunity, equal opportunity, productivity, personal responsibility, and choice. This policy cycle engages politicians, citizens and experts in determining “who gets what, when and how.” This creates opportunities for external forces to impact the policy process, or for politicians to limit access, which compromises the process for reaching a consensus.

Tom Watkins (Michigan Superintendent of Public Education)

Title: “No Child Left Behind” and “Education Yes”

Overview: In order to compete globally, we need to educate our students to world class standards. This is a reality no matter where you live. We need all of our children to think for a living. We share many challenges that are very similar between our countries, including the need for quality teachers, the challenge of educating all children, and the need for adequate funding from our government to ensure that we can accomplish our goals. Everything we do should measure up to help teachers teach and children learn. YES and NCLB are used to help district identify those children in most need.



Andrew Henry (Learning Point Associates)

Title: State Education Data Systems that Increase Learning and Improve Accountability

Overview: US Dept. of Ed is looking for compliance, particularly with No Child left Behind- this requires that we have discrete data. Early systems were created to manage financial and budgeting information. This system stood by itself, unconnected to other data, and even itself. Within last 5 years the scope has been expanded. The system has moved from very isolated data to data that is aggregated at a very high level and where data is used connectedly. Data needs to be in flexible systems with the ability to make changes to the system to accommodate new legal mandates like NCLB. The need for sharing data is important and formative assessment is needed in order to make effective data-driven decisions

Chris Wigent (Calhoun ISD; Calhoun County, Michigan)

Title: How Intermediate School Districts Implement Governmental Policies

Overview: Intermediate School Districts provide vision and support to local districts so that they can provide services to their students. Although the primary population is k-12, the ISD also works with birth through preschool, and adults. The ISD's programs and services are based on local school districts need. The ISD provides a variety of resources that help local education be more successful. This include: administrative support, professional development opportunities, and technical support. The ISD also follows legislation and lets superintendents know exactly what they need to know. They help to ensure that local districts are correctly enacting legislation.

Arnold Kummerow (Armada Area Schools; Armada, Michigan)

Title: Michigan's School Districts: A Focus on Accountability

Overview: In Michigan, school districts were established and a system for governing was instituted. Various governmental and administrative layers provide the framework of our education system. Michigan school districts generally have the ability to be creative in how they provide instruction as long as they meet the minimum standards set by the state and federal governments. School districts in the United States must comply with many state and federal mandates. Failure to meet mandates, such as NCLB, could result in several penalties, including the loss of revenue, parents being allowed to enroll their children in other, more successful schools, replacing building administrators, and, in the most extreme cases, the takeover of the district by the state. School district superintendents must work closely with not only teachers and building administrators, but also with the local community if they are to assure success in providing optimal educational opportunities for their students.

Richard Njus (Deerfield Elementary School; Novi, Michigan)

Title: How Building Principals React to State and Federal Policies and Maintain Creativity

Overview: Schools should be built upon research and best-practices in teaching and learning to ensure that all children will do well. Deerfield Elementary School is used an example of a school created to meet the needs of its children. The school was built with four priorities: school as a community, curriculum with coherence, climate for learning, character development

Robert Floden (Michigan State University)

Title: Evidence in Educational Evaluation: Recent Developments in US Federal Policies

Overview: One approach to making education research a stronger basis for decision making is to make it more "scientific." In the past 4 years, several US governmental agencies have begun to press for the conduct and use of education research that is scientific. Several of the major government agencies funding education research and evaluation are working to specify what makes education research scientific and to



direct most of their financial support toward scientific research. Although many scholars see value in these moves to make education research more scientific, some express concerns about adopting an overly narrow view of high quality research.

Maenette Benham (Michigan State University)

Title: Educational Leadership and School Quality: A Focus on Accountability

Overview: Leadership focuses on a strong learning community that can do good things. In particular, leadership can increase student learning. The school effectiveness research has confirmed that in part, the school structure and governance, and leadership processes can make a difference in building stronger educational environments that reveal a compelling pattern of student achievement and greater student learning over time. However, we need to keep in mind that leadership does not happen in a vacuum, leadership happens in a socio, cultural, political, economic, and ideological context. Therefore, with current legislation in the US focused on strengthening school accountability through standards-based practice and student assessment, many school professionals are compelled to rethink their work to utilize a range of student achievement data to affect decision making.

John Bell (Michigan State University)

Title: Using Information Technology to Improve Education

Overview: Indirect and direct strategies for improving education were discussed. Indirect support includes administrative aspects such as scheduling and budgeting for student learning. Direct supports can be further divided into deductive, inductive, and abductive support. Deductive support is exemplified in delivering content, learning by receiving, tutorials, lectures, and guided work. Inductive support includes students discovering content, learning by questioning and doing, research, inquiry, projects, and exploration. Abductive support includes learning by re-seeing through metaphor, making a bold conjecture of how things may be and then testing those ideas, and direct engagement with “regularity” and ideas. Advantages and disadvantages of the types of support are discussed.

He-chuan Sun (Shen Yang Normal University)

Title: Effective School Improvement in 8 European countries

Overview: This is a research study that explores the influence of contextual level factors on effective school improvement by examining case studies from countries in Europe. The eight countries compared include: Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Belgium, Finland, England, and the Netherlands. He-chuan identifies important relationships between the characteristics of the national context and successful reform efforts aimed at improving schools.

The Role of Government in Education

Efforts are currently underway to publish an edited book based on several of the topics covered in the conferences held in China. The role of government in education will be discussed in two sections. The first section examines how government policy can drastically change the nature of public education. The second section provides a series of alternative means by which government can influence education including research, technology, and leadership. Section I provides a wide range of personal and analytical insights on the role of government policy in education. Essays from individuals representing the whole range of perspectives from global to local investigate government and the work of schooling. More specifically, the book will explore how the federal government’s role has been increasing in recent years. To demonstrate this changing level of influence, educational leaders from Michigan representing every level of education share their perspectives and understandings of how No Child Left



Behind impacts teaching and learning. This multi-level simultaneous perspective on a reform initiative common to all participants reveals how one policy can have tremendous weight in shaping the work that goes on in classrooms.

X-Pacific Website to Launch in October

The Center will be launching a new website called “X-Pacific” in October. X-Pacific (which stands for “Across the Pacific”) will allow visitors to gaze into the life of two middle schools; one in the United States and one in China. Viewers of the site will be able to compare the two institutions side by side with respect to a whole array of possible characteristics. Matched representatives from the faculty, student body, and administration of each school have agreed to provide weekly information regarding a particular theme associated with school life. The Center will determine the theme, collect the data, and post results to the website for both schools and outside interested parties to investigate. The US-China Center will provide translating services for all incoming 'data' so that it would be accessible to both the Chinese and English speaking communities. Each participating constituent will respond to questions targeting their interests, activities, and issues that were important in the preceding week.

Along with the anecdotal evidence, X-Pacific will collect and post some basic data pertaining to each school and update this data on a weekly schedule. Data pertaining to enrollment, tardies, absenteeism, professional development hours, and other characteristics will allow for a comparison between the two institutions and will provide rich source of primary information for the educational research community to view, ask questions, and find answers.

The ultimate long term goal is to provide a window between countries so that each may learn from the other. How alike are the two schools? How does teaching and learning compare in the two schools? What are the students experiences like? How do expectations differ? How do teachers spend their time? How do curriculums compare? How do tests compare? The website will provide an opportunity for schools on either side of the Pacific Ocean to come together, learn about each other in an interactive and information rich environment.

To visit X-Pacific, go to: <http://ott.educ.msu.edu/x-pacific>

The Western Perspective on Educational Excellence

Five areas of education have been identified by the Center as key influences on educational outcome. These areas are: learners and learning, teachers and teaching, curriculum, leadership, and family and community. The Center has compiled general principles derived from the current literature to guide educators in creating quality educational experiences for students. These guiding principles can be accessed from the corresponding links (each of the five areas listed above) on the Center’s website and are also available in PDF form under the *Products* section for easy printing.

The Center in Action is the monthly newsletter of the **US-China Center for Research on Educational Excellence**. The newsletter is designed to document and disseminate information on the Center’s activities.