BRILL
SENSE

BEIJING INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF EDUCATION

3 (2021) 1-3

Beijing
International
Review of
Education

brill.com/bire

Editorial

Education and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

More than two millennia ago the diligent and courageous people of Eurasia explored and opened up several routes of trade and cultural exchanges that linked the major civilizations of Asia, Europe and Africa, collectively called the Silk Road by later generations. For thousands of years, the Silk Road Spirit – “peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit” – has been passed from generation to generation, promoted the progress of human civilization, and contributed greatly to the prosperity and development of the countries along the Silk Road. Symbolizing communication and cooperation between the East and the West, the Silk Road Spirit is a historic and cultural heritage shared by all countries around the world.

In the 21st century, a new era marked by the theme of peace, development, cooperation and mutual benefit, it is all the more important for us to carry on the Silk Road Spirit in face of the weak recovery of the global economy, and complex international and regional situations...Accelerating the building of the Belt and Road can help promote the economic prosperity of the countries along the Belt and Road and regional economic cooperation, strengthen exchanges and mutual learning between different civilizations, and promote world peace and development. It is a great undertaking that will benefit people around the world (National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, 2015)

The Belt and Road (B&R) initiative is an economic strategy and foreign policy diplomacy which was announced in September 2013 by President Xi Jinping, describing it as ‘the project of the century’ (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2013). The initiative aims to strengthen connectivity

and economic collaboration between China, Eurasia and countries in Asia, Europe and Africa, and has since become a major focus for China's economic development. Development in higher education is a major component. This special issue on the BRI, one of the first by Chinese scholars working in English, examines the dimensions of the BRI in terms of its educational implications and possibilities. The BRI is a major part of the 'Chinese Dream', providing a new model of development for China, sometimes called 'Chinese infrastructuralism' and referred to as an alternative mode of globalization, which is concerned to develop greater regional integration, with the potential to reshape both higher and vocational education (Peters, 2020). Infrastructure investment and development has many different layers, not only physical infrastructure such as the development of transport networks (ports and railways) but also people-to-people exchanges emphasizing the new digital Silk Road, University alliances and the development of educational and cultural exchanges.

BRI is a significant new form of educational globalism. A new significant form of globalism has emerged that we can call 'Chinese infrastructuralism'. With over seventy countries involved and over a trillion dollars of Chinese investment to develop economic, digital and social of Eurasian countries, the BRI represents an alternative Chinese model of globalism. There is a close connection between the Chinese Dream and BRI that is seeking to develop a new Chinese model of development and alternative mode of globalisation that matches Chinese infrastructure investment to BRI countries with weak infrastructure across the land bridge that links Asia and Europe. 'Chinese infrastructuralism' is a new philosophy of development that includes 'hard' and 'soft' infrastructure and concepts of (infra)structure including New Digital Silk Road, people-to-people exchange and university alliances. One of the major concepts is interconnectivity to promote regional Eurasian integration, based digitalization, speed, compression, and the new digital technologies (AI, ML, quantum computing) which are important for transport hub development. There is a strong intersection between education and the 'communicative turn' (as an aspect of the cultural turn), considered as a three-tier communication system (Content, Code, Infrastructure) that also includes deep-sea fiber-optic cables required for the Internet. This 'communication model' of education will enable better forms of cultural archival development and student exchange outside the current neoliberal market of export education currently dominated by the US, UK and Australia. The concept of 'Eurasia' is a geo-political concept increasingly related to the conception of the 'civilizational state' that identifies strategic concerns: who controls 'High Asia' controls Asia. 'Educating the Future' is a metaphor for a narrative analysis of the Chinese Dream (Peters, 2019) and its expression of the BRI as an argument about educating future

generations of Chinese students both at home and abroad, releasing the talents and collective intelligence of China mind, which is not just an argument about

human capital but rather we would argue a semiotic view of creative intellectual labour under conditions of increasing connectivity. The educational coda of BRI requires an openness and freedom to imagine, to experiment and also to work at national consensus through CCP guidance that aids the process of thinking about China's future and it's scientific modernization.

We are fortunate indeed to have two of the leading scholars of educational policy in China, Eryong Xue and Jian Li, as the editors of this historic collection of essays on education and the BRI. This issue appears as a fact-based and empirical understanding at a time when there has been a disruption between China and the West in diplomatic turbulence and there is a real need for information in the West about Chinese initiatives and especially about the BRI which is not well understood in the West. We therefore are very pleased to recommend this special issue.

Michael A. PETERS and Xudong ZHU

References

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (2013, September 07). *President Xi Jinping Delivers Important Speech and Proposes to Build a Silk Road Economic Belt with Central Asian Countries*. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/xjpfwzysiesgjtfhshzzfh_665686/t1076334.shtml.
- National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China (2015, March 03). *Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road*. https://en.ndrc.gov.cn/newsrelease_8232/201503/t20150330_1193900.html.
- Peters, M. A. (2019) The Chinese Dream, Belt and Road Initiative and the future of education: A philosophical postscript. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2019.1691481>.
- Peters, M. A. (2019). *The Chinese Dream: Educating the Future: An Educational Philosophy and Theory Chinese Educational Philosophy Reader* (Volume VII). Routledge.