Editorial

International Partnerships in Higher Education

As Editors-in-Chief we are delighted with this important issue on partnerships in education and wish to acknowledge and thank the editors of this special issue, Ma Liwen and Joseph L. Subbiondo, for their efforts in conceptualising this special issue and bringing together all the contributors from China and abroad. They are focused on new approaches and paths to increase and advance international education partnerships in terms of their aspirations, goals, and outcomes, as well as two ‘exemplary’ international education partnerships at Beijing Normal University. Looking China Youth Film Youth Film Project, a project running for twelve years, is part of the revitalization of Chinese film culture in the 21st century and is designed to make a leading contribution to world cinema. International Symposium on the Communication of Chinese Culture also is another outstanding project that has successfully over the years showcased Chinese culture to the world. Reports on these ‘exemplary’ projects are balanced by the review of a project designed to overcome inequality of access and participation at St. Edward’s University in Austin, Texas, and papers by two senior US educational leaders who reflect on ‘exceptionalism’ and review international educational partnerships on the basis of their personal experience and commitment over the course of their careers. The issue also contains an empirical analysis of international students in Belt and Road education, a humanistic approach to education in China 2030, and a study to overcome inequality through collaboration. These are diverse papers that demonstrate the variety, breadth, experience, and commitment of international educators to the both the ideal and the practice of partnerships often expressed in terms of the larger goals of peace and harmony.

The concept of partnership has a natural home in the field of public education as a means of recognizing and facilitating the complexity of a set of relationships among stakeholders that includes learners and teachers but also
parents, administrators, policy makers, business and community groups. The complexity of partnerships sits within a wider epistemological and political framework and also rests within a set of disciplinary boundaries and theories. For instance, in the field of international development especially in education the concept of partnership operates expansively as a modality of cooperation where it has become by default ‘best practice’ since the 1970s when ‘community development’ was the central approach. As Mark Mason (2011: 445) indicates: ‘As a development strategy, the concept of partnership includes notions of shared development objectives and policies, shared ownership, shared decisions about where aid is targeted, shared rights, shared responsibilities, and shared implementation strategies.’ Some models of international education have been strongly influenced by this model in international development especially in China where the emphasis has fallen on working with developing countries where the emphasis is on mutual trust, self-determination, shared responsibility and collaboration. In this context the concept of partnership requires an equal distribution of rights and responsibilities among stakeholders and especially ‘the ethical, political and epistemological issues of North–South partnerships’ (Mason, 2011: 453).

School–community partnerships is another field where partnerships figure centrally and have been claimed as a means for promoting student success and meeting student needs yet not always without criticism as partnerships are also seen sometimes as a way of promoting pre-existing objectives under the guise of autonomy. This criticism of doublespeak occurs in situations where power relations are not equally distributed (Perkins, 2015). Yet as most practitioners understand long-lasting partnerships are based mutuality ‘where both parties invest equitably, engage in solidarity with each other, exercise autonomy in governing projects, and equally participate in the planning’ (Mendoza, 2022).

Ma Liwen and Joseph L. Subbiondo’s special issue considers the ‘goals, models, and practices of international education partnerships in higher education’ within the context of globalization with a group of experienced and distinguished international contributors including G. David Pollick, William G. Berberet, Sha Fan and her colleagues–Sha Fan, Qingjie Liu, Kunling Zhang, Biliang Hu, and Liwen Ma–Hangyin Qin, George E. Martin and Caroline S. Morris, who tackle contemporary issues within the changing international climate in China and the US.

It is an important theme and a set of useful and interesting essays and we thank and acknowledge the work of the editors and all contributors and welcome the publication in The Beijing International Review of Education (BIRE).
We are also pleased to announce that \textit{bire} is now a Scopus journal. We would like to extend our thanks and acknowledgements to all those who have been part of the production of the twelve issues that comprise the volumes of first three years of \textit{The Beijing International Review of Education}.

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References

