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Comparative Education and the Bridge of Faith

By Ruth Hayhoe

It is truly an honor to be invited to contribute a chapter to the final section of this handbook on the Responsibilities of Comparative Education. As a senior scholar long past retirement age, I am no longer doing new research but focusing on mentoring younger scholars and translation of significant texts from Chinese into English. Thus I was pleased to respond positively to the editor with the suggestion of an auto-ethnographic contribution in which I would elaborate on my experiences of comparative education and bridge building across cultures in difficult geo-political times. The idea of a bridge of faith brings in a spiritual element and a recognition that purely secular value-neutral approaches to the field may be less capable of deep intercultural bridging among peoples who are divided under geo-political tensions such as that of the Cold War or the more recent global divides.

Given the auto ethnographic stance I have taken, I will begin with some family history that has given me the sense of a deeply rooted calling, but became significant in my thinking only recently. People often ask me about my strange surname, in some cases imagining it has something to do with my long-term connection to China. In fact it goes back to my family history. Recently I was given a beautiful glass painting by Thomas Kincade with the title “Bridge of Faith.” Standing in a window with the sun glowing it depicts a rustic stone bridge with a light wooden railing crossing a flowing waterway. This took me back to ancestors who were French Huguenots with the name Pierpont, meaning stone bridge. They had to flee France for England after the Massacre of St. Bartholomew in 1592. Simple farming people, they knew little English and so the name Hayhoe was constructed from two words familiar to them and passed down in the family ever since. Centuries later some descendants moved on to Canada where I was born, once again in a time of geo-political conflict. My father lost his father in the great flu of 1918 and was adopted by his father’s sister into the Hayhoe family in Toronto, then drafted into the Canadian navy during World War II. On the very day the war ended, August 15, 1945, I was born in the tiny town of Prince

Rupert in northern British Columbia, just south of Alaska, and facing over the Pacific Ocean to Asia.



The Bridge of Faith by Thomas Kinkadee

Growing up in Toronto as the third child in a very traditional Christian family of eight children, I chose to study the Greek and Latin classics in university, reading the Iliad and Odyssey in the original, alongside many other ancient texts. On graduation, instead of taking up a scholarship in Greece I chose to move to Hong Kong to visit another Hayhoe, an elderly cousin of my father who had spent her life as a missionary in China and had a small school for underprivileged children in Hong Kong. I started to learn Cantonese two days after arriving in Hong Kong and my mind and heart were so captivated by both the spoken and written language that a planned stay of one year extended to eleven years. My rigorous classical language training undergirded the years of study and immersion in Chinese as I taught in a Hong Kong secondary school and lived for six years in a family where no English was spoken. One of my classics professors at the University of Toronto had told me that even if I never used the languages I had mastered in the program, the experience would give me “a mind like a steel trap.” That may be what lay behind the fluency I gained, first in Cantonese and subsequently in Mandarin, and also a degree of competence in written Chinese.

Language in Comparative Education

This brings me to the issue of language in comparative education. With the global dominance of English and the prominence of international large-scale assessment tests such as the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) and the OECD's Programme for International Assessment of Student Achievement (PISA), it is possible to carry out extensive comparative research into educational achievement across multiple countries, with the focus on both educational and broader societal factors that are seen to be responsible. But what kind of bridgebuilding comes out of this approach? It is largely a matter of competition encouraged by local and national governments to showcase their educational systems. It has also been used to justify the imposition of methods and standards from the global north on the global south with very little reciprocal learning. Thus, I would encourage all students of comparative education to ensure they are fluent in the languages of the societies whose education they wish to research and that they find opportunities for immersion in these languages. This is essential for genuine inter-personal, intercultural and inter-societal engagement and understanding.

In my years as a teacher in Hong Kong from 1967 to 1978, Cantonese was the mother tongue for the people of Hong Kong and widely used in the first six years of schooling. However, most secondary schools used English, and parents saw mastery of English as important for their children's future. Only after the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976 did the teaching of Mandarin gain some attention. Then with Hong Kong's return to China in 1997, the language policy for education promoted three spoken languages (Cantonese, Mandarin and English) and two written languages (Chinese and English), summarized in the phrase *sanyu liangwen*. In my early years in Hong Kong I had noted the difficulty and sense of alienation of secondary school students in English medium schools, and when I returned in 1997 to take up leadership of the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd), I was drawn into a major reform of the education system. It was a move away from the elite system of the British colonial era, in which only a small percentage of secondary students were given the opportunity to qualify for university education, to a broader and more egalitarian system that coordinated well with the patterns of both Mainland China and North America. On the language side there was concern that secondary school students were getting only a superficial grasp of major subjects in the curriculum because they were being taught entirely in English. They were often heard discussing what they were learning with fellow students and teachers in Cantonese, using "Chinglish" to refer to the core concepts, since they had been taught the English terms but not the Chinese ones! A key reform direction was to restore mother tongue teaching in the majority of schools while giving strong emphasis to both English and

Mandarin as second languages. This clear acknowledgement of the importance of the mother tongue in education was not easy to implement.

From the perspective of bridge building I came to see how my early commitment to mastery of Cantonese had resulted in a bridge that had kept me closely connected to Hong Kong in the years between 1978 and 1997. I had first pursued masters and doctoral studies in Comparative Education at the University of London, spending two years at Fudan University in Shanghai where I taught English and gathered material for my doctoral thesis at the University of London. After returning to Canada as a postdoctoral fellow in 1984, I started a professorial career in 1986 but after just 3 three years as assistant professor I was drawn back to Asia with a two-year appointment on loan to serve as cultural secretary in the Canadian embassy in Beijing from 1989 to 1991. On return to Canada my academic career was again interrupted by a call back to Asia when I was invited to take up the leadership of the Hong Kong Institute of Education in 1997, the year Hong Kong returned to China. In these opportunities I could see my fluency in both Cantonese and Mandarin, alongside qualifications and experience in comparative education, were crucially important.

Let me go back therefore to Hong Kong in 1997, when it was decided that Cantonese as the mother tongue should be used in the majority of schools at both elementary and secondary level. This might be seen as a response both to the end of the British colonial regime, and the newly significant influences from Mainland China, now that Hong Kong was a Special Administrative Region. It was clear that neither English nor Mandarin as languages of instruction would have the best educational outcomes. The mother tongue was crucial to effective learning and understanding. Thus my fluency in Cantonese, as director of the institution responsible for the majority of teacher training in Hong Kong, was appreciated. The Education Department arranged for a video of me promoting mother tongue education in Cantonese to be shown repeatedly on local television as part of its effort to persuade Hong Kong families to embrace this policy. Once when I was re-entering Hong Kong after professional travel abroad, a young customs officer looked at me intensely and spoke in rapid-fire Cantonese. When I replied immediately, he broke into laughter. “I saw you on television,” he said, “but I wanted to test you and see if your fluency was real!!”

This experience led to me reflect on the bridging role of language in comparative education and how vital it is for scholars to take language learning seriously, if they wish to engage in comparative research that reaches a deep level of understanding and has the potential to make a difference. In those years of serving the significant educational transition of Hong Kong moving from its colonial identity to its current status as a special administrative region of China, language issues were a constant focus. They were also important for Hong Kong’s role in bridging

educational interaction between China and the Western world. Although the academic and administrative tasks of creating a university of education out of five low-level teachers' colleges were overwhelming, I managed to write a popular article on mother tongue education¹ as well as an academic article on Language in Comparative Education.² In the latter I sketched out the role of language within three widely used frameworks for comparative research. The first was positivism and large-scale testing of educational achievement, as is done within IEA and PISA studies, where translation is largely a technical issue. The second was the dependency or world system versions of neo-Marxism, where language issues are crucial in the struggle for decolonization. The third was cosmopolitanism or constructivism, a value explicit approach that differs from both the value neutrality of positivism and the value determinism of neo-Marxism, with the embrace of a preferred future or relevant utopia. It is here that language mastery for scholars of comparative education can make a difference in terms of responsibility for both envisioning and implementing effective reform. In my case this played out in my doctoral research and subsequent involvement with the rebuilding of Chinese universities after the destruction resulting from the Cultural Revolution.

The Bridge of Faith

If language is important in comparative education, another essential dimension lies in spiritual vision and faith. During my years in Hong Kong as a young teacher, I observed the devastation taking place in China as the Cultural Revolution unfolded, ending only with the death of Mao in 1976. At that time I had begun studies in comparative education at the University of Hong Kong and decided to go on to graduate studies in the University of London. I wanted to pursue research on Chinese higher education that might lead to a mutually respectful integration of external cultural and epistemological ideas into China's rich intellectual heritage and the emergence of an authentic Chinese university model. In Hong Kong I was close to missionaries who had spent years in the Mainland and maintained deep Christian connections there despite the constraints of Communist rule. I was thus aware of the potential for harmony between values of Confucian China and the Christian West. Thus when I got to London to begin my Master's program in Comparative

¹ R. Hayhoe (1998), "Language Education and the Mother-Tongue: A Personal Experience", *New Horizons in Education*, Vol. 39, pp. 74-78.

² R. Hayhoe (1998), "Language in Comparative Education: Three Strands", in *Hong Kong Journal of Applied Linguistics*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 1-16.

Education I was delighted to secure an opportunity for teaching and research in Shanghai. A visit to the Chinese embassy opened up an opportunity for me to serve as a foreign expert at Fudan University in February of 1980, after I had completed my MA and started a doctoral program.

While many China scholars were trying to understand why the Cultural Revolution had happened, most focused on political struggles within China, between Mao and his opponents, also political differences with both the Soviet Union and the Western world. For my part, I kept wondering what was cultural about the cultural revolution. Why it was that the deep intercultural understanding between Chinese thought traditions and the Christian West that I saw in local Christians in Hong Kong seemed to be missing. These were people introduced to me through the missionaries I knew, as well as connections with the local Anglican Church in the school where I was teaching. It became clear that my doctoral work needed to begin with history and go back to the founding of the first modern universities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Fudan University could not have been a better context for this historical approach. It had been founded by a remarkable Chinese thinker from a family steeped in the Chinese classics since the 12th century CE and Catholic since the time of Matteo Ricci in the 16th century. Ma Xiangbo also had a profound knowledge of European classics through his Jesuit education and travels in Europe. In 1903 he donated a valuable piece of land belonging to his family in Shanghai to French Jesuits to create a new university that could be built on a foundation created through the integration of Chinese and European classical thought. When this did not happen with l'Université Aurore (*Zhendan*) he created Fudan University as a second Aurore in 1905. Subsequent frustration with its failure to lay this kind of foundation led him to create Furen University in Beijing in 1926 as a Catholic University with deep historical roots in both civilizations.³ His faith and determination had made this possible and I was able to meet his granddaughter and learn a lot about this history while teaching at Fudan.

The quest of Ma Xiangbo thus shaped the comparative analysis developed in my doctoral thesis, which began with the epistemological and structural patterns rooted in China's long history of higher education. I looked at contrasts with the European university and the interaction with specific external patterns introduced in different historical periods and the ways in which these had harmonized with China's own patterns and made possible mutual enrichment. The

³ R. Hayhoe (1998), "A Chinese Catholic Philosophy of Higher Education in Republican China," *Tripod*, No. 48, pp. 49-60.

comparative element involved creating ideal types to clarify the core values and patterns of the most influential external models – German, French, American and Russian. Then higher education development was analyzed in each major historical period, from the founding of the Republic in 1911 to the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. The surprising result of this analysis was to see the greatest convergence of values between China's Confucian tradition and American pragmatism, with Dewey seen by many Chinese as America's Confucius. In contrast, the greatest conflict was evident with the highly specialist knowledge patterns of the Soviet system. Thus the top-down imposition of Soviet patterns after the Communist revolution in 1952 constituted China's most painful experience of imperialism, a contradiction that challenged the main tenets of a neo-Marxist frame, which sees imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism. Once the Cultural Revolution was understood at this deep cultural level as a reaction to Soviet socialist imperialism, it was possible to anticipate a different outcome for Chinese higher education in the period of opening up to the world under Deng Xiaoping. Given strong leadership from Chinese universities themselves and an eclectic approach to reform in interaction with various Western countries, it was not surprising to see rapid success. This was of course also a period shaped by the global influence of American patterns,

It was one thing to construct an intellectual analysis that made sense but another to proceed from theoretical understanding to practical application. The thesis resulted in a book that was translated into Chinese and has been widely used for higher education programs in China, a rewarding affirmation of the Chinese response to its insights.⁴ Then in the later 1980s and the 1990s I had the opportunity to work with both the World Bank and the Canadian International Development Agency in developing programs to support the revival of Chinese universities after all they had gone through during the Cultural Revolution. A cosmopolitan vision, made explicit in the core values of equity, autonomy, solidarity and participation put forward by the World Order Models Project, made it possible to support a wide range of higher education partnerships and document the mutual benefits and collaboration to each side. These stood in strong contrast to the violent reaction to Soviet patterns in the Cultural Revolution. The bridge of faith which made possible mutually beneficial interaction between Chinese and Western universities was then tested during the geo-political conflicts arising from the June 4th tragedy and subsequent political tensions. The result was an ever deepening educational community at the level of people-to-people relations in fields from management to agriculture and environment, which is described in some detail below

⁴ R. Hayhoe (1996), *China's Universities 1895-1995: A Century of Cultural Conflict* (New York: Garland Press), 290 pp. R. Hayhoe Xu Meide 許美德 (2000), *Zhongguo daxue 1895-1995: yige wenhua chongtu de shiji* 中國大學：一個文化衝突的世紀 (Beijing: Education Science Press, 2000)

My personal experience of comparative education over this period involved two years as first secretary for education, science and culture in the Canadian embassy in Beijing from 1989 to 1991 when official interaction between China and Canada was at a complete standstill, as was the case with most Western countries in their relationship with China. I had just launched a graduate course in International Academic Relations, drawing on the literature of international relations within political science, when I was appointed to this position in the Canadian embassy in Beijing. Thus I had the opportunity and challenge of working out ways for higher education to create mutually enriching people-to-people collaboration in the absence of any national level political support. This was another expression of the bridging role that could be played by comparative education when it was rooted in faith and mutual respect across cultures. It enabled educational institutions to be responsible actors for the regional and global good in spite of geo-political conflict. While political and economic relations were on hold, cultural relations were expanded with an increasing number of Chinese scholars provided with opportunities for shorter and longer visits to Canada, as well as Canadian scholars and students coming to China.

Even more consequential was the playing out of a series of university partnerships that had been initiated under a development agreement between the two countries in 1983. It had begun with a focus on Management Education and a series of collaborative projects among universities on both sides running from 1983 to 1996. It then progressed to a wide range of university linkages in the areas of agriculture, medicine, engineering, environment, education and minority cultures, running from 1988 to 2001. Subsequent smaller scale projects included legal education, the training of judges and various aspects of civil society development. I was privileged to lead the first phase of the main education project, which involved cooperation in joint doctoral education with normal universities in China's six major regions. Subsequently collaborative research led by Chinese returnees in the areas of moral education, women's education and minority education was given a further phase of support. As China prospered economically and experienced a dramatic social transformation these kinds of assistance were gradually phased out in the early 2000s. Over the same period of time, the World Bank had made major loans to Chinese higher education which were largely focused on the restoration and renewal of infrastructure after the devastation of the Cultural Revolution.

When we gathered leaders from participating universities on both sides for a conference at Tsinghua University in 2014 to review the results of these efforts to implement the cosmopolitan vision of comparative education that had inspired their design, it was rewarding to find remarkable benefits on both sides in almost every area. Canadian universities and indeed the Canadian economy have benefitted as much as the Chinese from the striking achievement of agricultural

cooperation in the development of canola as an edible oil. There had been parallel successes in many other areas, one of the most notable being a widening collaboration in clean energy and environmental protection. All this has been documented in a book publishing the major conference papers.⁵

A New Bridging Responsibility involving both Language and Faith

In the midst of these unfolding partnerships and all they involved, a new opportunity for bridging opened to me with a stunning suddenness. Hong Kong was destined to return to China as a special administrative region in 1997, under an agreement signed between Deng Xiaoping and Margaret Thatcher in 1984. One of the key concerns in this transition was for the upgrading of education, with five low-level teachers' colleges to be upgraded to university status. To my great surprise I was nominated for the position of Director of the Hong Kong Institute of Education in that year of transition. I therefore took up the challenging task of bridging the deep cultural divide between colonial Hong Kong and Mainland China in September of 1997. Both language and faith played into the way comparative education supported me in this demanding role. The fact that I had lived in Hong Kong for eleven years and was still close to the Chinese family I had lived with, also that I had been trained as a teacher in the University of Hong Kong, gave me deep roots, not only in the language and culture, but also in the local Christian community. However teacher education had a low status, as it had been left behind by Hong Kong's colonial administration when the universities had expanded in number and enrollment. As a result, students only chose to enter teachers colleges when they could not compete for university entrance. While education was a field having highest status and importance in the Confucian tradition and China had succeeded in creating national normal universities with the same level of prestige as comprehensive research universities, teachers for early childhood and elementary education in Hong Kong were trained in programs of two years or less and received qualifications that were only recognized locally.

The challenge was to take the five teachers' colleges which had been given a beautiful campus in the New Territories and upgrade them to university status, offering degrees for every level of education. These needed to be compatible with programs in Mainland China as well as internationally recognized. Creating a vision for forms of excellence that embraced both theory and practical application and would make the learning process a joy for teachers and students was

⁵ R. Hayhoe, J. Pan, & Q. Zha (2016) *Canadian Universities in China's Transformation: An Untold Story* (McGill Queens Education Press).

the first challenge. The creation of Bachelor's degree programs in education, including the field of early childhood education, involved rigorous accreditation processes with local as well as international experts participating. This in turn was connected to a reform of the whole education system, away from an elitism that limited access to university entrance to a system that gave all secondary students the opportunity to compete for university entrance. Given this academic upgrading, transformative results in learning from early childhood to secondary education were of vital importance. Research was important yet needed to have genuine potential for local application. We spent more than a year developing a vision statement of twelve words in both English and Chinese to guide the process: "Optimizing each child's potential through the shared joy of learning and teaching" (*Gongxiang xuejiao xiyue, jinzhan chizi qianneng* 共享學教喜悅，盡展赤子潛能).⁶

Our first Bachelor of Education degrees were conferred in 2002, but upgrading the Institute to university status was not achieved until 2016, 14 years after I had retired. Over those years I held an advisory role and struggled with the question of whether we should become a normal university or a university of education. The normal university was a model established after the French revolution in reaction to the elitism of the traditional European university and giving education a high status to assure the quality of teachers in the newly established state system of education. No wonder it had been embraced in China as a model that harmonized with the Confucian tradition in ways that overrode the conflicts that had arisen with other dimensions of the European university tradition. The education university had emerged in Japan after World War II, when American advisors suggested that Japan's normal colleges should be upgraded to local comprehensive universities, following the American experience. The Japanese response reflected their Confucian heritage, in that they decided the normal colleges in each prefecture should become universities of education (*kyoiku daigaku*). This set a standard for all early childhood and elementary teachers to hold a degree and raised the quality of education across the country. It was a profoundly Asian model of the university, unknown in the West!

After much debate and consultation, the leaders of the HKIED decided it should become an education university rather than a normal university. The normal university model from France had been a comprehensive university in terms of a wide range of arts and sciences, with education

⁶ R. Hayhoe (2001), "Creating a Vision for Teacher Education Between East and West: The Case of the Hong Kong Institute of Education," *Compare*, Vol. 31, No. 3, pp. 329-345.

in the lead, and the traditional professions of law, medicine and engineering omitted. By contrast the university of education gave education the highest status and shaped all programs towards the curricular requirements of teacher preparation, giving special importance to music and the arts. Since these fields had never been included in university entrance examinations, they tended to have a low academic status in Hong Kong, and we wanted to ensure they were highly respected. While the normal university still exists in France, where it was founded, it has been largely forgotten in the English-speaking world. The idea of an education university is clearly rooted in the core values of the Confucian tradition that undergird East Asia. It was thus a step of faith to create a new university that could be fully Asian and express the richness of a Confucian epistemology giving highest respect to teachers and to education as an integrated inter-disciplinary field. The application of knowledge for the public good stands in contrast to the core focus on knowledge for its own sake in the Western university and the elitism associated with the specialist disciplines and traditional professions.

The Importance of Faith in Building Bridges

At this point I cannot resist a quote from the Book of Hebrews in the New Testament, possibly the only book in the Bible written by a woman: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.”⁷ During my five years leading the Institute of Education I saw a reform of the whole education system towards greater openness and equity, and the gradual development of a new identity as a special administrative region of China that enjoyed a high degree of autonomy. It was a particular joy for me to have created partnerships with a number of normal universities in different regions of China. This facilitated opportunities for our students to spend time there learning Mandarin while also offering support in projects such as those supporting girls in the ethnic minority areas of the Northwest.

With all that has happened in recent years, culminating in the imposition of a National Security Law on Hong Kong by Beijing in 2020, it would be easy to lose hope and conclude that the bridges built through educational collaboration and the relationships of mutual respect and mutual learning could not be maintained. However, the more one reflects on comparative education from a historical perspective, the more one realizes how genuine change for the good on a global scale takes time, and patience is needed. Even under the most painful geo-political

⁷ Hebrews 11:1 (NIV) Hoppin, Ruth. (2009) *Priscilla's Letter: Finding the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Lost Coast Press.

tensions and strains, it is possible to maintain and enhance people-to-people relationships, thus strengthening the foundation for deeper mutual understanding and reconciliation in the future.

In my personal experience, as a scholar who considers Hong Kong my second home but was not able to go back between 2019 and 2023, when I made a brief visit, there have been deep reasons for concern. I have concern over the threats to academic freedom in the universities and the reality of many scholars and teachers deciding to leave Hong Kong for what they see as safer and more supportive environments in the Western world. At the same time a number of scholars whom I had worked closely with in my years in Hong Kong made the decision not only to stay but to take on positions of leadership in the institutions I know best – the Education University of Hong Kong where I am president emerita, the Chinese University of Hong Kong where I did my language studies long ago and the University of Hong Kong where I experienced teacher training. Their commitment to leadership in a time of contention and anxiety is a beacon of hope and offers some degree of confidence and security to those faculty members who choose to stay. For me personally, looking back on the tense days of the post Tiananmen period when I was serving in the Canadian embassy in Beijing, there is a sense that the Chinese government may well open up in new ways and make possible further and deeper bridging.

The fact that Furen University is still flourishing in Taiwan, with roots going back to the faith and vision of Ma Xiangbo, the great educator and thought leader of the Republican era, is one encouraging signpost.⁸ At a deeper level it is rooted in the remarkable legacy of Matteo Ricci and Paul Xu Guangqi's collaboration in the early 17th century, which inspired Ma Xiangbo. I am thus happy that I had spent the weekends of my two years in the Canadian embassy in Beijing translating his writings for a book I co-edited with a doctoral student entitled *Ma Xiangbo and the Mind of Modern China*.⁹ The foundation of trust and interaction established between Matteo Ricci and Xu Guangqi in the 17th century survived a period when the Jesuits were banned from China, up to the mid 19th century when they had come back to establish the College St. Ignace (*Xuhui Gongxue*) in Shanghai. There the young Ma Xiangbo was able to study and subsequently take educational and broader leadership rooted both in China's classical culture and his Catholic faith.

Most recently a parallel translation project has given hope for the 21st century in the survival and continued inspiration of the heritage of 16 Christian universities established in China in the early

⁸ Both Chiang Kaishek and Mao Zedong sent condolences on his death in 1939.

⁹ R. Hayhoe and Y. Lu, eds. (1996) *Ma Xiangbo and the Mind of Modern China 1840-1939*, (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1996). 333pp.

20th century. My new co-edited book, *Liberal Arts and the Legacy of China's Christian Universities*, contains thirteen chapters by senior historians, sociologists and educators in China on the current and future significance of all that was learned in institutions closed by the Communist government in 1952.¹⁰ These texts were published in Chinese books and journals between the mid 1990s and 2019, in some cases based on doctoral research and drawing on rich archival materials in China, North America and Europe. What made all this possible was the courage and leadership of the senior Chinese historian, Zhang Kaiyuan, who was a graduate of the Christian University of Nanking. He served as President of Central China Normal University in Wuhan from 1984 to 1990, and this institution had inherited the beautiful campus of another historic Christian university. After China opened up to “modernization, the world and the future” in the early 1980s, to use the words of Deng Xiaoping, he established a center for the study of China's Christian universities. Alongside his extensive historical research as an expert on China's 1911 Revolution, he pursued pathbreaking research on this dimension of China's higher education history. Many of the doctoral students whom he supervised on this topic now hold leading positions in top universities and have published their research in China in spite of the reality of increasing political constraints.

Some of the striking findings include the conclusion that the Christian campuses were responsible for a revival of classical Chinese architecture in their design. This might not have happened otherwise, given the political turmoil that marked much of the Republican period. Another relates to the rich programs in Chinese studies and the liberal arts that brought together the classical traditions of China and Europe in forms of synthesis that carried forward the efforts made by Ma Xiangbo at an earlier period. Examples include Yenching University in Beijing and Zhijiang University in Hangzhou. Service was one of the watchwords of these institutions, including social work and outreach to poor rural communities, also forms of medical training that set new standards for the country. Most recently as China has been struggling with COVID, it has been noted that four leading medical schools, Beijing University, Sichuan University (in Chengdu), Shandong University (in Jinan) and Central South University (in Changsha, Hunan Province), all having their roots in former Christian universities, have been noted for reaching out in service and care for the most needy. It is in this kind of historical awareness that we can see the rewards of faith as “the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.”

¹⁰ Peter Ng, Ruth Hayhoe & Leping Mou, eds. (2023) *Liberal Arts and the Legacy of China's Christian Universities*. Springer.

The completion and publication of our book has coincided with the centennial celebration of the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia, first set up in New York in 1922 to channel support from various Christian denominations to the universities in China. With the break in US-China relations in 1951, the Board re-shaped its mission to support Christian universities throughout Asia. The lessons of their thirty years in China were thus built upon and shared in programs supporting whole-person education, Christian service, interfaith understanding, environmental protection, women's studies and many other areas. Also a network for cooperation and mutual support across Asian universities was created, with China rejoining after US-China relations were restored in 1978 and the Board setting up an Asian office in Hong Kong in the early 2000s.¹¹

It was my privilege to serve as trustee and then secretary of the board from 2001 to 2010 and to visit affiliated institutions in South Korea, Thailand, Indonesia and India. Thus I was able to observe and participate in the blossoming made possible on this bridge of faith as it moved towards the centennial year. This experience deepened my conviction of the importance of religious faith being given greater attention in the literature of comparative education. Together with a younger colleague, who shared this conviction, we reached out widely to colleagues within the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) for chapters from many regions of the world which are included in our co-edited book, *Religion and Education: Comparative and International Perspectives*, published in 2018.¹²

To conclude these personal reflections on the responsibilities of comparative education, I believe we need to look at the long term, decades or even centuries, to see the consequences of the kinds of action for the good made possible by bridges built through faith-based visioning and dedicated action. The Chinese have a telling proverb that expresses this well: It takes ten years to grow a tree but one hundred years to make a person. (*Shinian shumu, Bainian shuren* 十年树木，百年树人)

¹¹ A Centennial Album with the history of the UBCHEA, authored by President Nancy Chapman, can be found on this website: <https://unitedboard.org>

¹² M. Sivasubramaniam & R. Hayhoe, eds. (2018.) *Religion and Education: Comparative and International Perspectives*, Oxford Studies in Comparative Education, Oxford: Symposium Books.