IJCE relaunch: Setting course for an era of global, open and online education to promote inclusiveness, address grand challenges, break boundaries, and spur innovation

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Abstract
Imaginative and robust education research has an enormous role to play in helping promote inclusiveness, address grand challenges, break boundaries and spur innovation. The International Journal of Chinese Education (IJCE) has been renovated, rejuvenated and relaunched to set course for an era of global, open and online education. We review the pressing need for high-quality education research, IJCE’s relaunch, characteristics and future directions, review recent papers, and explore options for engaging with IJCE.

Keywords
global education, online education, resilient education, Chinese education, education futures

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The pressing need for education research
The sudden closure of campuses and borders at the start of 2020 made clear the intercultural, intellectual and interpersonal connections which weave contemporary education together. Education is a human venture which comprises individual thinking, disciplined learning, searching and integrating information, creating and applying insights, long distance communication and, importantly, meeting together. The prolonged duration of recent closures has had major consequences for students, institutions, teachers, countries and international communities. To keep things moving during this disruption, educators have accelerated shifts
towards online, open and global education. This has spurred design and evolution of distin-
guishing forms of education.

People around the world are searching to make sense out of all this change. Big, novel and
uncertain questions remain unclear and unanswered. How long and how successfully can
online platforms sustain complex and nuanced academic work? What will be the
appetite for in-person transnational study once borders and campuses re-open? When will
it be feasible for teachers and researchers to again move around the world? What new
relationships and patterns of association are emerging? What is a ‘hybrid university’?
What new policies and expectations will be set for higher education, and how will these be
delivered and evaluated?

Research plays a vital role in addressing, and indeed in raising, important questions like
these, and in providing advice and guidance to practitioners and policymakers. Students,
teachers and research partners engage in everyday academic to-and-fro. Policy and institu-
tional leaders invest time designing, overseeing and improving education. As we detail in
recent contributions (e.g. Coates, 2020; Coates et al., 2020), particularly in times of flux
and transition responsibility turns to researchers to provide insight into prevailing arrange-
ments and forecast future developments.

Relaunch of IJCE

This is environment in which the International Journal of Chinese Education (IJCE) has been
renovated, rejuvenated and relaunched. In synch with the zeitgeist infusing education, and
higher education in particular, IJCE is embarking on a new era of open global education.
As Tsinghua’s President Qiu Yong articulated in the 2021 Global Forum of University
Presidents, higher education should strive to be more open, integrative and resilient, in
order to promote inclusiveness, address grand challenges, break through physical and disci-
plinary boundaries, and spur innovation.

On behalf of the Institute of Education Tsinghua University (IOE), we thank you for your
contribution so far and look forward as Editors to engaging with you as readers, authors,
reviewers, advisors and commentators.

IJCE has flourished since its 2011 inception and first papers in 2012, engaging hundreds
of eminent authors in authoring, reviewing and editing influential papers. A total of
nine volumes and 18 issues were published via a paper-based and subscription-only model.
For a decade, IJCE was constructed as a prestigious collegial periodical which nurtured ideas
and talents related to diverse facets of education. We thank everyone at Brill Publishers who
played a role in the first decade of IJCE.

This same period has seen enormous changes in academic publishing, communities, and in
education itself. In 2021 it was timely to relaunch IJCE for the new era and set it on a path for
future growth. IJCE was shifted to SAGE Publishing as an established, fully refereed, online,
continuous and gold open-access journal. The entire backfile with more than a 120 papers was
made freely and globally available to anyone with an internet connection. Each year, around
30 excellent new papers will be published as each is finalised. IJCE will triple in size in terms
of the number of articles, support a much larger readership, and yield substantially greater
value and impact.

This relaunch marks a major inflection point in IJCE’s growth and contribution. From early 2021 IJCE springs into a new era, and has an important role to play. IJCE will
serve as a platform to discuss new futures, the characteristics of online and hybrid education,
emerging topics relating to health, social connection and education, and important intersec-
tions between education and society. While the design and transition work has taken time and
effort, the decision to redesign IJCE largely made itself. This is the way of serious global academic research and publishing.

To mark this transition, in April 2021 the Institute of Education Tsinghua University convened the IJCE Open Access Launch Conference, held as part of the 110th anniversary of Tsinghua University. Eighteen editors, scholars and experts addressed an audience of 100 from around twenty countries. This forum provided a platform for Tsinghua University to affirm the value and development of English language social science journals in Asia and China in particular. The scholars articulated the value of such journals, and their expanding role in global scholarship.

Of course, publishing transitions are not quick or without complexity, as several contributors noted. The shift to open publication brings questions and challenges. ‘Open’ means many things. Open access publication is available to scholars with capacity to fund and conduct relevant work. Open access is available to those with access to internet and appropriate language capability. Open access places additional heavy demands on reviewing and editing, and on promoting the journal and its contributions. Open publishing moves attention beyond attracting readership to fostering more sustained and connected forms of engagement. Such evolution goes to opening up new forms of community and innovation networks.

These kinds of publishing disruptions and changes trigger broader transformations. As portended in Qiu Yong’s ambitions, they go to opening imaginative ideas which clarify and advance higher education research, policy and practice. This places new demands on understanding quality and success, and reflecting on how scholarly articles interface with social and traditional media. The promise of open scholarship is great, and so too are the expectations. Understanding how to leverage open publication in balanced and responsible ways to enhance transnational, intercultural and interdisciplinary cooperation is a major scientific challenge of our times.

Cultivating IJCE’s growth

As the title conveys, IJCE offers a unique window into one of the world’s largest and most influential education systems. IJCE publishes articles in English about Chinese education and about all matters which intersect with Chinese education. This is important for people outside China who want to learn about Chinese education. It offers opportunities for thinking through topics pertaining to China and a changing world. It is important for many thousands of researchers in China who now comprise what is identified as the world’s largest English research ecosystem. It is important for sharing perspectives and insights into one of the most world’s dynamic and inventive education environments.

The aim and scope of IJCE have been refreshed to meet this agenda. The specific aim of IJCE is to improve education research and development in ways relevant to China and Chinese education. IJCE welcomes empirical, theoretical and technical studies. Articles can address all China-relevant education research, policy and practice, including comparative and multi-disciplinary studies. Though many articles focus on higher education, IJCE covers all formal and less formal areas and levels of education. With a grounding in research, articles should be of interest to scholars, advanced students, policy makers, and the interested public. Significant originality is encouraged.

Most IJCE articles will be openly available online as soon as they are accepted for publication. As well, there can be value in more sustained and curated multi-article contributions. IJCE will continue to publish special collections on important topics. Editorial proposals for such collections should be emailed to the IJCE Editors, giving details about the proposed collection (e.g. title, guest editors, theme, abstract, keywords, focus, rationale and paper
requirements), potential authors (e.g. invited contributions, procurement rationales, and recruitment methods), and practicalities (e.g. submission timelines, review details, and publication expectations). Final editorial processes and decisions rest with IJCE Editors, who are happy to welcome and support early career contributions.

IJCE continues to benefit from strong and experienced governance. The Editorial Board has played a very important role in building IJCE over the last decade, and will play an ongoing role sustaining future contributions. Editorial Board members contribute important expertise, engagement and esteem. As Editors we are very grateful for their service. The Editors also give thanks to the support provided by Tsinghua University, and in particular to colleagues at the Institute of Education. Specifically, we offer huge thanks to the Founding Editor, Xie Weihe, and to today’s IOE leaders Liu Huiqing and Shi Zhongying.

**Early papers in this new global online and open era**

There is no better way to launch the enhanced IJCE than with a suite of articles authored by global experts about future higher education. These articles were initially curated for a conference held at Tsinghua University in October 2019 with the ambitious title ‘Constructing Higher Education for the Global Era: Proving student competence’. Of course, little did the authors know that just two months after the conference the world, including higher education, would enter into a period of accelerated disruption and transformation. The authors were able to reflect on important changes, flux and continuities as they revised their articles in late 2020. They were able to recognise the growing importance student competence and education, and education innovation.

As the title conveys, the conference sought a range of expert contributions about future prospects for registering how well higher education does at developing talented graduates. This remains a pressing agenda, particularly after the experiences of 2020. Even after substantial adjusted and change, we continue to live in a world which is replete with thriving and perhaps too many visions of what higher education should do and achieve. At the same time, the world remains replete with distressing stories about students, teachers and universities failing to deliver. There are obvious reasons why education is hard to change, not least that it is big, complex, contextual, and often conflicted. One persistent reason, however, relates to limitations around information about student experience and competence. Student experience and student competence are often viewed as separate things, though in any realistic sense they are closely interlinked. Students, teachers and universities engage for all kinds of intrinsic reasons, but importantly to learn and achieve. Experience and engagement are part of the same educational journey. Identifying and leading patterns in such journeys is an important next step for education policy, practice and research.

With such background in mind, the conference sought to articulate progress that should be made towards proving student competence in the global era, and spotlights the most promising tangible areas for further development. It brought together experts from many countries to share and compare their global insights, and to generate responses to tough questions. How can we articulate what students should know and be able to do? What does effective student engagement look like? What approaches to assessment and evaluation seem valid and viable? What are effective approaches to education and institution development? What are the most feasible steps ahead? While not all of these articles focus specifically on Chinese education, they all offer findings and insights nuanced by Chinese education and its growing role in the world.
Steps ahead

Please help us grow IJCE’s value and contribution! Your expertise is vital to the journal’s success. IJCE has already proven itself as an open and resilient platform which spurs integration, imagination, innovation and change. We look forward to deepening its contribution and impact.

Send us your articles. Reach out to us for editorial advice on how to position, write or refine your paper. Enjoy reading and citing the substantial IJCE back catalogue. Encourage your colleagues to read, contribute to and use the papers. Help review papers, which is important not just for IJCE but also for growing the scholarly community and your own academic skills. Growing peer review across Asia is an important growth frontier for higher education. Make a proposal to serve as editor for a special collection. IJCE is particularly interested in hot topics and emerging directions. There are many options, and we look forward to collaborating.

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