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## 4 Belonging, Being, and Becoming

### Tertiary Students in China in the Battle against COVID-19 Pandemic

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#### Abstract

This chapter provides a critical reflection on a selection of tertiary students' responses in China in the national battle against COVID-19. It explains how tertiary students have responded to the COVID-19 pandemic and why they have responded. Student stories, diaries, and a letter published are reviewed as cases of their response in their national battle against the pandemic. The tertiary students' response to other national events is also retraced through a diary by the author while participating in higher education of China in the 1990s for further exploration. The impact of Chinese education philosophies, policy, system, and practice on the response to COVID-19 by Chinese tertiary students is explored. The belonging, being, and becoming of tertiary students in China is suggested to be the critical factor for the extensive participation and support by the students in the national battle against the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### Keywords

COVID-19 Pandemic; Education Philosophies; Policy; System and Practice; Students' Belonging, Being, and Becoming; Tertiary Students in China

#### Introduction

On December 27, 2019, a pneumonia of unknown cause (PUC) was reported to the local authority of Wuhan, China. On December 31, 27 PUC confirmed cases were reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) by Chinese authorities (WHO, 2020a). On January 3, China reported 44 PUC cases to the WHO and started updating it and countries concerned, regions, and organizations about the disease regularly. On January 4, the head of the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (Chinese CDC) briefed his US counterpart about the PUC disease for cooperation. From that day, to cooperate, the head of the Chinese CDC briefed the head of the United

States Center for Disease Control (U.S. CDC) multiple times regarding the disease. On January 9, the Chinese Expert Team released information on the pathogen causing the disease and made a preliminary judgment that a novel coronavirus was the cause of the disease. Chinese authorities informed the WHO about the progress. Since January 11, China has been updating the WHO and other parties concerned about the coronavirus on a daily basis (Xinhua, 2020).

On January 16, Wuhan began to screen all patients in the city. On January 17, Beijing sent inspection teams to all provinces to guide the local epidemic prevention and control. During January 18–19, the Chinese National Health Commission (CNHC) sent a national senior medical expert team to Wuhan to study the local response to the epidemic (Xinhua, 2020). Professor Nanshan Zhong, Leader of the Senior Expert Group of CNHC went to investigate the condition of the disease in Wuhan. On January 20, the finding was published that the disease was able to transmit between people (Dong et al., 2020). On the same day, President Xi Jinping gave important instructions on fighting the disease with resolute efforts, emphasizing that people's lives and health must come first and above all else, calling for prompt release of the epidemic information and enhanced international cooperation (Xinhua, 2020). On January 23, Wuhan was under lockdown when 571 Novel Coronavirus Pneumonia (NCP) cases were confirmed in the whole country, including 95 severe cases and 17 deaths (Dong, 2020). All provinces in mainland China then activated Level 1 public health emergency response (Xinhua, 2020).

From January 24, 346 national medical teams composed of 42,600 medical workers and 965 public health professionals across China, and 4,000 medical professionals of the armed forces arrived at Wuhan to join local medical professionals to fight the epidemic (Xinhua, 2020). On the same day, the construction of a two-story Huo Shen Shan Hospital with 1,000 beds was started. It was completed on February 2 and started treating patients on February 3 (GMW.cn., 2020). On January 25, the construction of Lei Shen Shan Hospital with 1,600 beds started. It was completed on February 6 and started admitting patients on February 8 (You & Blanchard, 2020). Meanwhile, 16 makeshift hospitals with 14,000 beds were built up within ten days to accept all mild cases in Wuhan (Xinhua, 2020).

The WHO declared the new coronavirus disease 2019 outbreak on January 30 and announced on February 11 a name for it as coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) (WHO, 2020b). It was the most challenging public health emergency in China since 1949. China launched a “people's war” to fight the epidemic (Xinhua, 2020). On March 6, the daily increase of confirmed cases in Wuhan was reduced to below 100 cases, down from a peak of more than 14,000 in early February (Renminwang, 2020). The 16 makeshift hospitals were closed down in Wuhan on March 10 after more than 12,000 patients accepted were cured with zero death (Zhongxinwang, 2020). On March 11, the daily increased domestic transmitted infections dropped to single digits in mainland China and then further dropped to zero cases on March 18, while the infections imported from overseas jumped to 34 cases (Renminwang, 2020).

Since March 18, China has taken rigorous steps to stop inbound cases to guard the hard-won gains in virus control and resume orderly work and production for its economic and social development. On April 26, Wuhan hospitals cleared all COVID-19 cases. By the end of May, 78,307 of a cumulative 83,017 patients, ranging from the ages of newborn babies to patients that were 108 years old, were cured and discharged from hospitals. This amounted to a cure rate of 94.3%. All COVID-19 patients received free testing and treatment in China. By May 31, a total of 163 million students (from early childhood to the secondary levels) returned to schools or kindergartens for normal classes (Xinhua, 2020). China was among the first countries to resume work and reopen schools and businesses (Xinhua News Agency, 2020).

On May 31, China received letters of support to fight the epidemic from more than 170 countries, 50 international and regional organizations, and more than 300 foreign political parties and organizations. It also received donated emergency medical supplies from 77 countries and 12 international organizations, and donations of materials by local governments, enterprises, non-governmental organizations, and people from 84 countries. Meanwhile, China offered assistance to 150 countries and four international organizations and sent 29 medical expert teams to 27 countries. From March 1st to May 31st, China provided \$50 million to the WHO and exported protective equipment to 200 countries and regions to support them in fighting the epidemic. Chinese local governments, enterprises, organizations, and individuals also donated materials to more than 150 countries, regions, and international organizations. China sent the most urgent medical supplies and more medical expert teams and task forces to over 50 African countries and the African Union as well (Xinhua, 2020).

Preliminary statistics show that as of May 31, to fight the pandemic in China, 8.81 million registered volunteers participated in more than 460,000 projects. They volunteered at the front line, standing guard in communities, screening for infection, supporting other residents with their daily needs (Xinhua, 2020). Many volunteers were tertiary students. Universities, research institutes, and businesses across the country also joined forces in developing vaccines and medicines, and treatment. The institutional strengths of 19 provinces were “paired” with 16 cities and prefectures in Hubei to contain the outbreak. Over 42,000 medical workers including academicians and top experts across China joined the local medical professionals to fight the epidemic in Wuhan (Xinhua News Agency, 2020). There were 83 emergency research and development programs initiated. This research and innovation have been fully integrated with pandemic control and clinical treatment, highlighting the use of new technologies including big data and artificial intelligence (Xinhua, 2020). A vaccine developed by them was the first in the world to enter phase-two clinical trials on April 12, 2020. By July 23, 2020, nine enterprises in China started clinical trials of COVID-19 vaccines, and the emergency use of the vaccines has also started. With a decisive achievement in fighting the epidemic, China is now “racing against the clock to win its anti-poverty fight and achieve a moderately prosperous society in all respects” (Xinhua News Agency, 2020). Its economic growth has continued in the third quarter (Morningstar Analysts, 2020).

China has over 0.276 billion students and 16,720,000 teachers on various levels as of 2019. It regards education as the foundation to build up and develop the nation through century-long efforts. (Liang et al., 2019). This chapter is to reflect on the response of tertiary students in China to the pandemic, exploring the student belonging, being, and becoming, in terms of the educational philosophies, policy, system, and practice. After a literature review on the sense of belonging, being, and becoming, cases about the tertiary student response to the pandemic in China will also be reviewed. Based on it, a reflection is provided, including a diary used in retracing the Chinese student response to different events in China in the 1990s, to explore student belonging, being, and becoming, and the relevant education philosophies, policy, system, and practice. A discussion and conclusion are also presented. The limitation of this work includes perspectives of the author; being a participant in higher education in China at different stages and in Australia for the last decades, and personal research and academic experience.

### **Literature Review**

Student belonging, being, and becoming have been increasingly attracted attention and discussion worldwide (Cole et al., 2020; Doroud et al., 2018; Morgan et al., 2012; Robinson et al., 2020; Trieu, 2009) for policy-making and practice in education. Maslow (1943) explained the three concepts in his theory about human needs for motivation. Maslow's theory has been endorsed in Chinese normal (teacher) education since 1949. Although "Maslow's model has been the target of positive and negative criticism over the years since he first suggested it", it has been viewed as an interesting potential "basis" for education research (Raymond, 1992, p. 123). Maslow's (1943) model of five-level human needs included physiological needs of human beings, such as shelter, food, and so on; safety needs for stability and security of physical and spiritual contents, such as safe living and secure job, age, and health system and insurance, and "a safe, orderly, predictable, organized world"; needs for love and belonging; needs for self-esteem and esteem of others; and self-actualization needs (p. 378).

Maslow (1943) mentioned that the five-level human needs were not necessarily in a hierarchical order, while he explained the concept of "belonging" together with "love and affection" at the same level (p. 380). He elaborated that the need for "belonging" was "hunger for affectionate relations with people in general, namely, for a place in his group, and he will strive with great intensity to achieve this goal" (p. 381). He also said that "one thing that must be stressed at this point is that love is not synonymous with sex. Sex may be studied as a purely physiological need..." and "Also not to be overlooked is the fact that the love needs involve both giving and receiving love" (p. 381). Hence, the "love" Maslow (1943) mentioned here can be interpreted as a love for life and love of, or for, people, or the relevant. Furthermore, Maslow (1943) believed that the fulfillment of the belonging needs was connected to "esteem needs", although the order may be changeable. He explained that all people

in our society, with a few pathological exceptions, have a need or desire for the “stable, firmly based”, and usually high evaluation of themselves, for “self-respect, or self-esteem, and for the esteem of others” (p. 381).

Maslow (1943) refers to the needs for “being” to the “desire for self-fulfillment” in the level for “self-actualization” which can be based on the “esteem needs”. Maslow (1943) elaborated, (being is) “What a man can be, he must be” that it refers to “the tendency for him to become actualized in what he is potential” and “This tendency might be phrased as the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming” (p. 382). Thus, the “being” can be viewed as the temporary or partial fulfillment of a person’s potential, while “becoming” can be the actualization of a person’s full potential. Furthermore, Maslow (1943) stated,

Perhaps more important than all these exceptions are the ones that involve ideals, high social standards, high values and the like. With such values people become martyrs; they will give up everything for the sake of a particular ideal, or value. (p. 387)

Maslow (1943) also mentioned, “not all human behavior is determined by the basic needs” and “We might even say that not all behavior is motivated. There are many determinants of behavior other than motives” (p. 390). Those concepts are relevant to the cases being used in this chapter.

Outside of China, although the sense of belonging, being, and becoming can be perceived differently, multiple research reports are viewed as positive for the concepts of belonging, being, and becoming. Matthews et al. (2011) reported that by providing a “space to socialize and relax”, students believed that they were “being given the opportunity to form friendships and establish extended social networks with others in their courses” as well as “peers across different year levels” (Matthews et al., 2011, p. 113). He further explained that the students commented on the “shared social space” (even if not a home-like space as the Chinese students enjoyed) as “‘familiar,’ ‘home-like,’ ‘permanent,’ and the ‘home-base at uni’” (p. 113). The study further revealed that a “shared social space” helped them to “foster a sense of belonging and community” for students in “broad discipline-based programs,” which suggests a “supportive campus environment” and “greater overall satisfaction for student development” (p. 115). Although those research studies were conducted outside of China, it shares sense and values on the needs of student belonging, being, and becoming explored in this work, as addressed by Maslow (1943) as well.

## **Review of Cases**

### ***The Response of the Tertiary Students in China to the Pandemic***

The 2020 Chinese New Year break was historically the longest for tertiary students in China due to the pandemic outbreak. While following the national

and institutional guidance to protect themselves and their families and study at home, many tertiary students voluntarily participated in the national battle, fighting the epidemic vigorously, being even short of time to sleep, and only able to use their actions to write diaries. The following are partial examples randomly collected from countless published stories, diaries, and letters by Chinese tertiary students, used as part of cases in this work to review their response to the pandemic.

Case 1: *Forming the Wuhan Lei Shen Shan Anti-epidemic Team to Save Lives of People from Pandemic*

At the most critical stage after the epidemic outbreak, Wuhan University Zhongnan Hospital took over the Lei Shen Shan Hospital to treat severe NCP patients. About 286 hospitals across China with 3,202 medical professionals, 13,000 builders, and more than a thousand caring volunteers jointly with the Zhongnan Hospital formed the Lei Shen Shan Anti-Epidemic Team. Many of them were Wuhan University student volunteers. From February 8, on opening the Lei Shen Shan Hospital to April 15 when it was closed, the Team adopted the wartime hospital operation mode, with refined hospital management, homogenization of medical quality, and humanization of medical services, operating in a sincere unity in management, treatment, and scientific research. It carried out bold innovations to ensure the efficiency and highquality of the work. The Team received and treated 2,011 severe NCP patients, with a fully cured rate of 97.67% and zero infection, zero accidents, and zero environmental pollution. The Guidelines for the Prevention and Treatment of NCP by the Team has been adopted by many countries. The Lei Shen Shan teamwork has been acknowledged worldwide as the Chinese miracle. The Wuhan University Zhongnan Hospital won two National First Innovation Awards (Ke & Gao, 2020).

This is one of many examples of the Chinese higher education system's response to the pandemic. Preliminary statistics show that 138 tertiary institutions across China sent 14,000 medical professionals of their 371 affiliated hospitals to Wuhan and Hubei from January 24, being an important force in fighting the epidemic (Education Ministry of the People's Republic of China, 2020). Meanwhile, the Chinese military universities continuously sent medical teams to save and protect people from the epidemic in Wuhan. On January 24, the Chinese New Year Eve, the medical experts of the medical universities from the Army, Navy, and Airforce of China already arrived in Wuhan as the pioneering force (Xinhua, 2020). This case reflects that the graduates and students of Chinese tertiary institutes were fulfilling the full potential of their capacity to protect people's lives. It is not only self-actualization, as being and becoming, but beyond it, a great love and belonging to their big family, China, with ideals, high social standards, high values, and scientific spirits.

*Case 2: Launching Free Online Services to Support People's Psychological and Physical Fitness Needs*

On January 27, Beijing Normal University students, guided by their teachers, voluntarily took the lead in launching the epidemic psychological free support online service for the whole country. By February 9, the program already served nearly 3,000 people. To keep people informed and fit during the epidemic, all the students in the Clinical Medicine Class 2016 of Beijing Concord Medical College also voluntarily worked together to produce authoritative knowledge for NCP prevention and control. It is in simple and plain language, recorded in audio and video, and uploaded to the media platform to inform the public about the epidemic and ways to control spread and prevention. Beijing Sports University students, also guided by their teachers, voluntarily launched a series of “home fitness” programs to guide the whole country’s indoor tai chi training for strong lung exercises daily. The first two public programs online were already watched by more than 4 million people/times by February 14 (Shi, 2020).

Again, this activity reflects students’ strong sense of belonging and love to fulfill their ideals to keep people fit with their love and energy.

*Case 3: Launching Free Online Service to Help Primary and Secondary School Student Study during the Pandemic*

On February 23, during the epidemic outbreak, nine students from Hunan University, Beijing University, the Capital Medical University, Tsinghua University, the People’s University, and other universities voluntarily launched a one-to-one free online learning program to help the primary and secondary school students to study at home in Wuhan. They carefully designed the program according to student needs. Within 24 hours after they issued the first notice, 720 undergraduate and postgraduate students joined them as volunteer tutors. A Chinese student in the United States also joined them via the internet. He said that during the outbreak of SARS, a university student voluntarily helped his brother in his study. Now it is his turn to help others. By April 28, 2,561 students from 346 tertiary institutions joined them as volunteer tutors, including 2,459 tertiary students from mainland China and 102 Chinese students from overseas. From March 4 to April 28, the Team already helped 558 school students with their studies in Wuhan. Among them, 221 were children from the anti-epidemic frontline medical workers’ families, or patients’ families, or families with difficulties. A total of 6,210 free classes were taught and the online learning resources developed by them were viewed by 40,000 students/times. The program has been greatly praised by learners and their parents. Student volunteer Yihan Liu expressed, “Life has gradually returned to normal. If the epidemic was on, our service will be on.” (Xie, 2020)

This case reflects the students' sense of belonging to the country and people, and their being and becoming to fulfill their ideals to keep all the children safe and stable in learning with their deep caring.

***Student Diary 1: February 23, 2020: In one-month “lockdown” of the city—My beloved city and campus and I: Wuhan University has protected me as my family and home.***

.... Being a student is lucky, being a Wuhan University student is happy. In order to reduce the chance of contact in the epidemic, the School sent meals to the dormitory downstairs, three meals per day with meat, and eggs, etc, and a mask, hand sanitizer, Chinese medicine, and thermometer for each of us, urging us to report our temperature on time every day. If I forgot to do so, I would receive a private letter from my Fudaoyuan (Teacher in student management). Although I was sorry for my memory, I felt very warm in my heart. Wuhan University has been protecting me as my family and home.

On January 29, ... I immediately applied for participation as a volunteer. I did not want to be a person only protected by others. As a medical student, I can play my part in the battle, although I am unable to fight in the frontline.

The next day I met a lot of enthusiastic classmates and our work was very interesting, sorting out the goods of support received from all over the world. We need to sort all of the couriers into categories, handling each of them. The goods have been continuously arriving by truck. Each courier was with wholehearted love. Some gifts came with dozens of big boxes and other donations from large companies. Some were small bags of personal gifts. Some gifts were goods attached with letters, written with inspiring words, presenting to us deep loving and warm caring. Great people's will have built up the fortress against the pandemic. Wuhan will win. .... (Fan, 2020, paras. 3–5)

The diary reflects the student's belonging, his love, and pride of his belonging, being, and becoming to fulfill his willingness to contribute his efforts to the country in fighting the pandemic.

***Student Diary 2: March 2, 2020: Fighting the epidemic – An “anti-epidemic” diary of a student volunteer born “post-2000” of Nanhua Business and Vocational Institute, Guangdong.***

As the pandemic hits China, our college students must respond to it actively. As a college student born “after 2000”, I will protect our hometown and keep it clean with my strengths. University students protected us from SARS in 2003. It is our turn to protect others.



On the first day being a volunteer in the anti-pandemic war, I arrived at the inspection post earlier than scheduled. I stood working continuously for more than 7 hours. The feet lost sense, but I persisted on, considering it was worth allowing peers a little more rest. We, youths, should take our responsibility. Being able to guard our hometown and contribute my strengths to society, I feel immensely proud.

.... Life is of paramount importance. The pandemic outbreak is a command. It is our responsibility to prevent and control it. As long as we are determined with confidence, working together, scientifically preventing and controlling the pandemic with precise measures, we will certainly win the anti-epidemic war. (Guo, 2020, paras. 2–8)

The diary reflects the students' belonging and love to the "hometown" with scientific spirits and

determination to fulfill his being, becoming for ideals to keep people safe and guard the "home".

***Student Diary 3: February 15, 2020: An anti-epidemic diary by a college student volunteer.***

Today is Saturday, but none of the community staff are resting. My mother and I arrived at the Centre on time at 8:30 a.m. We immediately started volunteering. We are stationed in the Office of Epidemic Prevention and Control, responsible for investigating by phone the situations of the residents who came from and returned to Wuhan, and the Jianhe tourists visiting friends and relatives with close contacts. We are also establishing information accounts and reports for epidemic prevention and control. ... Every day, residents gave me a lot of appreciation, such as, "You've worked hard" and "Thank you" which are great comforts to me. Particularly, we saw 83-year-old academician Professor Nanshan Zhong leading people again in the crucial and dangerous anti-pandemic war. We saw many medical staff working continuously for several days and nights without closing their eyes still willingly persisted in the battle against the epidemic .... We saw those brave heroes protecting people's lives, to guarantee their safety with their great love. They are dedicating their own lives to others, fighting fiercely against the coronavirus, protecting and supporting patients and people .... Seeing those, we feel heartache but deeply moved. It inspired me to be more determined and do better in epidemic prevention and control, and not afraid of any hardship and difficulties.

.... My heart silently shouted, Cheer up, Wuhan! China will win! (Gong, 2020, paras. 3–8)

This diary reflects the student's strong sense of belonging and confidence to her country, and her love, esteem, and pride of her people in fulfilling her

being and becoming through her ideals to keep people safe from the pandemic by working hard voluntarily with her mother.

**An initiative letter by Hubei University Students Association dated January 26, 2020**

Dear Students:

Life is of the utmost value. The epidemic outbreak is a command for our action. Virus prevention and control is our mission. Wuhan, being a “university city” of vibrant and infinite vitality with more than a million tertiary students is the fortress for us to build up our dream and a home for us to grow up. At this moment, most students have returned to their hometowns. .... At the critical stage of the epidemic outbreak, no matter where we are, our hearts are closely related. Let us act promptly to participate in the virus prevention and control, working scientifically and orderly to fight the epidemic with our best resolute efforts for victory. Here we send an initiative to all tertiary students in the University, the City, and this Province: .... (Hubei University Students Association, 2020, January 26, para. 2, as cited in Feng, 2020)

The Hubei University students were one of many tertiary student groups in China who issued an initiative for students to promptly respond to the critical epidemic. It reflects the student “belonging” to the University home, their “being” as students closely related to each other, and they are willing to fulfill their “becoming” by fighting the epidemic vigorously, scientifically, and orderly for victory.

In summary, the cases above reflect the belonging and love of the Chinese tertiary students and graduates to their country, their hometown, university, people, children, and peers; and their being and becoming to fulfill their mission and ideals with high social standards and high values. Facing the death-threatening pandemic, they dedicated themselves to caring, protecting, and saving people from the pandemic. More cases are viewed by the author including the student response to the pandemic in broad areas, such as in translating and preparing materials and equipment for international aid, helping residents with their daily needs, donating protective materials, clothes, blood, and money to people and communities and so on (Shi, 2020). All those demonstrate their belonging, being, and becoming in responding to the pandemic with determination.

**Reflection**

***The Tertiary Students’ Belonging, Being, and Becoming***

Maslow’s (1943) theory on human needs and behavior has been endorsed in Chinese normal (teacher) education as part of the theories for the education

policy since 1949. From traditional Chinese cultural perspectives, “belonging” is a sense of belonging to a human being’s own family for people to share, care for, and support each other. China is a nation with traditional values of family sense endorsed in education on a deep level. Historically, teachers there were valued in status for worship by students and student families. Contemporarily, the sense of “belonging” in Chinese education has been valued as sharing, caring, and mutual support between students, and teachers, and students. It denotes the connection and relationship among students, students and teachers, and students, teachers and the institutes, as well as the nation. With a collective culture, an individual family is usually addressed as a “small family,” while a class collective, school, institute, or the state can be referred to as a “big family”. Being is another level of belonging; it can denote each student’s role and actions related to university life. Becoming can indicate student actualization of their goals or ideals, including their future roles, employment, and achievements. Thus, Maslow’s model has been adopted naturally in Chinese education.

Chinese education policy and the system has paid close attention to cultivating students to develop their sense of belonging, being, and becoming from early childhood to the tertiary and post-tertiary levels. For example, every student has grown up singing their different team songs for children, teenagers, or youths at different stages. Each song clearly expressed their belonging, being, and becoming. Taking the Children’s Team Song since 1950 as an example, it sings, “We are children of New China. We are pioneers of new youths. United and inheriting our father and brother, we are not afraid of difficulties and challenges, we are striving for the construction of New China ....” Another song for children titled “I have an ideal” sings, “I have an ideal which is a great ideal. When I grow up, I will become ....”

### ***Chinese Educational Philosophies and Policy***

Philosophically, education has been valued as paramount in China for thousands of years except for certain interruptive periods. Chinese education is rooted in love and based on human needs to nurture comprehensively developed human beings. Since 1949, the national higher education policy has been set up to cultivate the students to become the successors and pillars for the national cause, with all-round development in the moral, intellectual, and physical aspects. Aesthetic development has also been required since the 1990s. The Chinese educational policy, supporting the traditional education philosophy, requires education institutions and teachers to fully consider and accommodate student needs. Each curriculum has been requested to be designed according to student differences (*yincaishijiao*). Furthermore, Chinese tertiary education is not only designed to meet the academic needs of students but also for developing student humanistic ideals which have been included in the curricula for every level. Also, integrating theory closely with reality in practice for innovation has been emphasized in the educational policy of China since 1949. Overall, education is fundamental to develop

the nation and it is the cornerstone for Chinese revitalization and its social progress. Chinese value education as the hope for personal growth, the hope of families, and that it is the hope for the development of the nation (Liang et al., 2019).

### ***Chinese Higher Education System and Practice***

Chinese higher education system and practice are constructive and consistent with the educational philosophies and policy to address comprehensive needs of tertiary students in ideals, morality, academic achievements, living, health, and so on for personal, social, and professional development. Most Chinese tertiary institutions are in the public education system for Government funding and resources. All the enrolled tertiary students have been guaranteed with stable on-campus dormitories (unless a student chooses to live outside), dining rooms, and a class collective with stable classmates and space till graduation, while students are free to select their academic topics and units.

Every class collective has also a Banzhuren (a teacher in charge of a class) who has been usually an academic teacher for the students' major topic/s, from the beginning of the student enrollment till their graduation. A Banzhuren is responsible to accommodate student comprehensive needs, including each student's academic needs; living needs, including dormitories and dining halls; scholarship, study grants or living assistance grants, and study loans; the physical and health needs; the aesthetic, recreation, and wellbeing needs; and student moral, social, and career development, or employment before their graduation. The system has been reinforced later by increasing one more teacher titled as Fudaoyuan for student management work, such as supervising the students' social practice during holidays. Some universities may also have an Assistant Fudaoyuan for each class, determined by each institute.

Each class has also a student-managed team for the corresponding needs mentioned above, supervised by the Banzhuren/Fudaoyuan. All academic staff in Chinese tertiary institutions have been guaranteed job security, career development, and living stability such as apartments, dining halls, and kindergartens for staff and families. Students and staff have been provided with free medical service via the on-campus clinics or the institutional hospital, gymnastic, recreation, and transportation facilities.

This is an excerpt of a diary entry from 1991 written by the author, while working as a Banzhuren, for a National Higher Education Conference in Student Management in China, regarding student response to other critical events. It can further explain the Chinese higher education system and practices, in terms of the students developing their belonging, being, and becoming.

... All the 40 students in the class have been sharing, caring and supporting each other through years of studying and living together. For example, after Mr. Liu, a student, fell in the bathroom last week,

his classmates voluntarily took turns looking after him until he was fully recovered. Academically, the students have been regularly sharing their learning experiences with classmates and setting up one-to-one plan to help each other for common progress. The rate of academic success for the whole class has reached 98.6% which is higher than the required standards by the University. The students have been continuously learning from Lei Feng (a national hero on collectivism and noble ideals to serve the people selflessly) with their action for response to critical incidents. For example, when a fire was found in the suburbs far away from the campus, at nighttime this semester, they voluntarily rushed to participate in the fire fighting. They also regularly used their weekends to provide free financial consultation, serve the people in the streets, and help the vulnerable with their needs voluntarily. During the semester break at home, they voluntarily joined the local communities to fight the floods and rescue people.

The motto of the class is, “Your existence is the happiness of the people around you.” According to the statistics and the compliment letters received from the community, the students have already voluntarily responded to critical events to help and serve the people and the community 152 persons/times. They have continuously participated in the performing arts and sports matches, and won awards for the University. As a class, collectively, they have also developed a sound relationship with other classes and tertiary institutes. They received multiple awards of Excellent Class from the University and the State, and commendation letters from the communities and individuals for numerous times for being unsung heroes. Being their Banzhuren, I am proud of the students. (Author, Working Diary, June 28, 1991)

In summary, the Chinese tertiary education policy and system respect people and life. It is for students’ all-round development in the moral, intellectual, physical, and aesthetic aspects, accommodating student comprehensive needs. The educational practice is to cultivate better human beings who are not only for their basic needs but also for the realization of the harmonies and happiness of the human community. Chinese students have been highly influenced by the high cultural values of “being the first to become concerned with the world’s troubles, and the last to rejoice in its happiness” originated from the classic by Fan Zhongyan (989–1052). Students have continuously been steered to participate in social practice for learning to integrate knowledge with action for a positive difference.

The national policy to value people and life as the first and paramount principle provides the macrostructural environment for student development. Nowhere has this been demonstrated more than the students’ responses to the pandemic. For example, every person in China has been carefully tested and every patient has been carefully treated in the epidemic, regardless of their age, gender, ethnicities, nationalities, social, or economic status. In Wuhan,

among the fully recovered, 3,000 patients are over 80 years old and 7 patients are over 100 years old. The average cost for treating a COVID-19 patient is 23,000 yuan. For an average patient in severe condition, the cost surpassed 150,000 yuan. In critical cases, each cost exceeded 1 million yuan. The highest cost is about 1.5 million yuan or US\$211,372 for a patient over 70 years old cared for by more than ten medical workers for several weeks, with costs fully covered by the Government. All the patients, confirmed or suspected, received subsidies from the state finance for any medical bills not covered by their medical insurance or the medical assistance fund. About 4 million Chinese community workers worked in around 650,000 urban and rural communities to protect and help residents with daily needs (Xinhua, 2020).

Many Chinese people voluntarily donated money to the communities without leaving their names. There were people who worked extremely hard in building the hospitals and fighting the pandemic, but they refused receiving the payments or donated the payments immediately to hospitals. Some aged citizens determinedly asked communities to accept donations of their retirement savings. All the people are grateful and strong with spirits to care for each other, fighting to protect the vulnerable from the pandemic. Many students from foreign countries living in China during the epidemic outbreak expressed that they were feeling safe and even joined the Chinese students to become volunteers to help others. They said they were not outsiders (Sina xinwen zhongxin, 2020).

Finally, the well-developed information technologies such as WeChat, artificial intelligence, Big Data, and Cloud computing have been valued by many for keeping the students informed and connected. More than a quarter of a billion full-time students resumed their studies in mid-February through online platforms, which was the largest “online movement” in education history (Sengyee, 2020).

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

COVID-19 pandemic is the most challenging event in China and the world in this century. Tertiary students in China faced it by presenting a vigorous response, which expressed their belonging, being, and becoming. It is viewed as a thought-provoking response to a big test for tertiary education policy and system, supported by the educational philosophies, and endorsed in the practice in China. Nurturing the student’s strong sense of connection, mission, and vision with ideals, Chinese higher education policy has maintained consistency with the national policy in respecting people and life and accommodating human needs for all-round development of the students. Through a century-long striving to move from standing up to being prosperous, and then to become stronger with comprehensive development of the nation, particularly, since the Opening and Reform in 1978, Chinese higher education has become the national priority for development. The development of education is philosophized as a need for the development of the nation.

Globally, in the first two decades of the 21st century, human beings have continuously experienced attacks by SARS, H1N1, H5N1, H7N9, Cholera, MERS, Ebolavirus, and now COVID-19. Human beings in the world share the common fate of health and safety and have the same needs to be addressed for survival and the sustainability of the earth for the global community. Meanwhile, a report on September 2, 2019, was stirring the author's mind that each year there have been 800,000 people who have died of suicide. Suicide became the leading cause of death in young people aged 18–29. Every 40 seconds, one suicide happened in the world due to complex issues, requiring coordination and collaboration among multiple sectors of society, such as “education, labor, agriculture, business, justice, law, defense, politics, and the media” (WHO, 2019). People facing other conflicts, such as violence, exclusion, gaps, poverty, and climate change, often ask the same question: What is education for? Being an educator in higher education for decades, I realized that education may not have the power to fix the issues listed. But it is an educator's responsibility to call on educators and education policy-makers to pay more attention to the needs of the young people for their belonging, being, and becoming; for their survival and development; for a harmonious, safe, and sustainable environment, so that young students can equally share, care, and support each other; and all of us, together, the earth, the global home for all.

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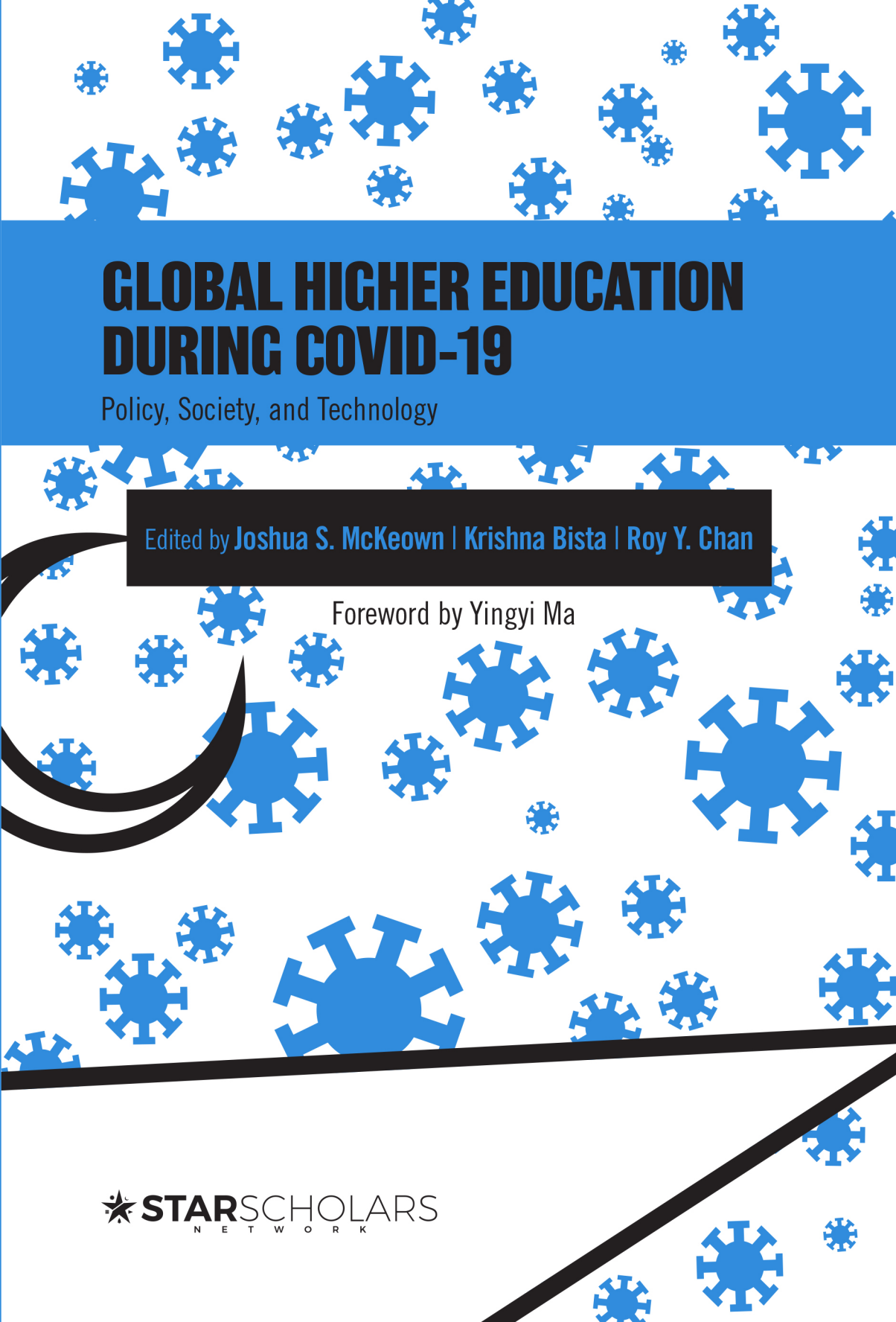


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# GLOBAL HIGHER EDUCATION DURING COVID-19

Policy, Society, and Technology

Edited by **Joshua S. McKeown** | **Krishna Bista** | **Roy Y. Chan**

Foreword by Yingyi Ma

## Praises for this volume

COVID-19 pandemic and digital innovation are making unprecedented disruption to the global higher education landscape. These disruptions have increased academic discussion on how to reimagine the future of higher education after post-COVID 19. Thus, the book, *Global Higher Education During COVID-19: Policy, Society, and Technology* problematized these realities from a global policy context with policy recommendations on issues of racial justice, funding, technology among others. Therefore, I would like to congratulate the editors: *Joshua S. McKeown, Krishna Bista, and Roy T. Chan* for this excellent publication.

*Dr. KS Adeyemo, Senior Lecturer, University of Pretoria,  
South Africa*

*Global Higher Education During COVID-19: Policy, Society, and Technology* is a highly recommended resource for higher education institution policymakers and educators around the globe. Not only does this book provide invaluable insights from higher education institution policymakers, educators, and students during the COVID-19 pandemic, but it also offers useful suggestions on dealing with possible challenges and seeking opportunities in future higher education.

*Dr. Misty So-Sum Wai-Cook, Centre for English Language  
Studies, National University of Singapore*

It's a timely book reporting the most recent responses of international higher education across the world during the Covid-19 pandemic. Besides providing the theoretical contributions, the book also offers practical implications for stakeholders, including policymakers, education managers and practitioners, international students, and parents.

*Dr. Hiep Pham, Director, Center for Research and Practice on  
Education, Phu Xuan University, Vietnam*

*Global Higher Education During COVID-19: Policy, Society, and Technology* is timely and relevant providing a critically engaged reflective account of geographically diverse higher education institutions' response and practice during the COVID-19 pandemic. This book illuminates some of the current

impediments to higher education internationalization within the context of COVID-19 and provides insights into shared learning experiences that address new challenges to internationalisation imposed by the pandemic. A must read for international higher education specialists, practitioners, scholars and researchers.

*Dr. Tasmeeera Singh, Advisor, International Office,  
University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*

A worldwide phenomenon: Strategies and inspiration to address the challenges and opportunities for the new normal in the field of global higher education. I cannot recommend it highly enough.

*Dr. Daisy Kee Mui Hung, Associate Professor,  
Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia*

The movement of people across borders furthered the spread of Covid-19. This inevitably impacted international higher education, which although not reducible to student mobility is its primary form. *Global Higher Education during COVID-19: Policy, Society, and Technology* is therefore a timely edited collection that begins to unpack the multifaceted impact the pandemic has had on higher education worldwide. It adds to the growing conversation on reimagining higher education. The collection will be valuable to current and future scholars of higher education, offering an important snapshot of policy and practice during the pandemic.

*Dr. Will Brehm, Lecturer of Education and International  
Development, UCL Institute of Education, UK*

With the COVID-19 crisis having upended higher education around the world, this timely book provides a deep and much-needed analysis of the roles and responsibilities of universities going forward. It sheds light not only on the shared challenges countries have faced, but also reveals how the impact of the pandemic has varied in important ways across countries.

*Dr. Rajika Bhandari, Author/Advisor,  
STAR Scholar Network, USA*

Case studies provide valuable baseline information for practitioners of higher education as the world begins to emerge from the pandemic. A must-read for those looking to understand how various regions reacted, and how institutional systems changed their models to survive.

*Dr. L. Amber Brugnoli, Assoc Vice-President and  
Executive Director for Global Affairs  
West Virginia University, USA*

This book presents a comprehensive and rigorous worldwide account of Covid-19 impact, challenges and new opportunities. It stands out as a ground-breaking valuable companion for all those involved in the future of internationalization in higher education.

*Dr. Elena de Prada Creo, Vice Dean for International Affairs  
Facultad de CC. Empresariales y Turismo, Spain*

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Global Higher Education During COVID-19: Policy, Society, and  
Technology

*Joshua S. McKeown, Krishna Bista, and Roy Y. Chan*

# **Global Higher Education During COVID-19**

## **Policy, Society, and Technology**

*Global Higher Education During COVID-19: Policy, Society, and Technology* explores the impacts of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) for institutions of higher education worldwide. Specifically, this book responds to the growing need for new insights and perspectives to improve higher education policy and practice in the era of COVID-19. The sub-theme that runs through this book concerns the changing roles and responsibilities of higher education leaders and the demand to rethink global higher education post-COVID. Topics in this book include: international student experiences, pedagogical innovations through technology, challenges to existing organizational cultures and societal roles, international academic relations, and shifting national policy implications for global higher education.

With the increasing threat of COVID-19 on all aspects of the global economy and workforce, this book serves as an opportunity for teacher-scholars, policymakers, and university administrators to reconsider and reimagine their work and the role of higher education in a global context. The ultimate goal of this book is to provide a critical reflection on the opportunities and challenges brought by COVID-19 and how tertiary education systems around the world learn from each other to address them.

**Joshua S. McKeown, PhD**, is Associate Provost for International Education & Programs at SUNY Oswego and International Education Leadership Fellow at the University at Albany, USA.

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# **Global Higher Education During COVID-19**

Policy, Society, and Technology

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**Joshua S. McKeown**

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In memory of those who lost their lives during the COVID-19 global pandemic (as of August 2021):

**4.38 Million**

And to the 204 million heroes worldwide who recovered from the disease.



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# Foreword

*Yingyi Ma*

COVID-19 is upending daily life, and its impact on global higher education (HE) is seismic. How to understand the impacts and improve policy and practice in the field of international HE during and post-COVID? Colleges and universities around the world are wondering about the above questions, and this book has provided a much-needed discussion for those questions.

The editors of this book have done a tremendous job in assembling a wide range of in-depth studies, both in terms of substantive topics and geographic regions. The topics range from the role of HE in society, crisis and innovation through technology in HE, international student experiences navigating the pandemic, national policies, international academic relations, public and private university responses, and the innovative engagement efforts of global HE institutions. Despite the expansive topics, various articles share the theme of exploring the traditional and changing roles of HE in society. Part I presents a few studies grounded in diverse national contexts that show how HE operates and adapts to society changed by the pandemic.

I commend the editors for their efforts to include a wide variety of contexts of HE institutions in different countries. While the impacts of COVID-19 on HE may be uncertain, what is certain is the increasing inequality among countries in dealing with the pandemic due to the unequal access to resources, technologies, and public health management. Part II in this book, in particular, focuses on the Global South (lower-income countries). The studies have shown the devastating impact on HE in countries of the global south due to the faltering economy during the pandemic as well as the incredible resilience of faculty and students in these countries to lessen the hardship through impressive innovations.

Technology-powered online education has been the quintessential innovation of 21st-century HE. Technology is liberating as much as limiting. COVID-19 has forced global HE to confront, leverage, and manage the power of technology to engage with students, experiment, and explore new pedagogy. The editors of this book have presented a wide range of empirically based studies in different HE settings to show that technology is indeed the double-edged sword, and it is incumbent on global HE leaders and educators to figure out innovative ways to use technology well, while fully recognizing and managing its limitations. Part III has been devoted to this theme.

This book is for anyone who is interested in HE in the global world, including but not limited to scholars, teachers, administrators, and students, and for any concerned citizens to reimagine and redesign the global HE in a new era.

## **Bio**

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“Global Higher Education during COVID-19: Policy, Society, and Technology is a timely edited collection that begins to unpack the multifaceted impact the pandemic has had on higher education worldwide. It adds to the growing conversation on reimagining higher education.”

—**Dr. Will Brehm**

*UCL Institute of Education, UK*

“This book is a highly recommended resource for higher education institution policymakers and educators around the globe.”

—**Dr. Misty So-Sum Wai-Cook**

*National University of Singapore, Singapore*

“It’s a timely book reporting the most recent responses of international higher education across the world during the Covid-19 pandemic.”

—**Dr. Hiep Pham**

*Phu Xuan University, Vietnam*

“This book provides a critically engaged reflective account of geographically diverse higher education institutional responses and practices during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

—**Dr. Tasmeera Singh**

*University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*

“A worldwide phenomenon: strategies and

inspiration to address the challenges and opportunities for the new normal in the field of global higher education. I cannot recommend it highly enough.”

—**Dr. Daisy Kee Mui Hung**

*Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia*

“This timely book provides a deep and much-needed analysis of the roles and responsibilities of universities going forward.”

—**Dr. Rajika Bhandari**

*STAR Scholar Network, USA*

“A must-read for those looking to understand how various regions reacted, and how institutional systems changed their models to survive.”

—**Dr. L. Amber Brugnoli**

*West Virginia University, USA*

“This book presents a comprehensive and rigorous worldwide account of Covid-19 impact, challenges, and new opportunities.”

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