'Comparing Early Years Practice in China and England'

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The same or different: A comparative study of preschool provision in England and China

25 visits to 18 different settings in PRC

What?
Ongoing research over 5 years: using an ethnomethodological to include a small Case Study Approach using Thematic Analysis

Why?
- Globalisation - greater understanding of China
- Opportunity to engage in shared dialogue
- Greater awareness of different EY perspectives
Between 2000 – 2006 - China’s GDP increased by 100+%, resulting in

- Similar increase in people’s disposable income – a new emerging middle class
- Developing need for early years provision with an increase of 60+% in growth in private early years provision (WGM 2006)
Early Years: Some of the emerging issues

- National focus on preschool provision; developmentally and culturally appropriate - Human Capital influence (2-5 years - kindergarten - non statutory)

- Need for **massive** growth in kindergarten provision (decrease in public/increase in private provision - marketisation)

- New 'middle' class - value placed on Western styles of education

- The recognition in 2010 of English as the official 2\textsuperscript{nd} language and the desire for bilingual kindergartens

- The importance placed on Academic Achievement (how does this fit in with EY pedagogical approaches?)

- One child policy and impact on
  - behaviour: 4-2-1 syndrome (Little emperors syndrome);
  - Future employability - 'no single children' to apply (Cameron et al 2013)
    Seen as more self-centred, less co-operative, risk-averse
General Comparisons (MoE; NBSC; DfE):

**CHINA (MOE; NBSC)**
- **64,000,000** children aged 0-4 yrs
- Preschool/kindergarten starts from 3 yrs; fee-paying
- 9 years of compulsory education:
  - School starting age 6 years
  - **341,600** primary schools

**UK (DfE, 2014)**
- **3,914,000** children aged 0-4 yrs (**700,000** preschool children aged 3-5 yrs)
- Nursery/Preschool starts from birth; 5 sessions funded per week from 2-3y (DfE)
- 12 years (..13) years of compulsory education
- School starting age 5 years
- **16,971** primary schools
Significant difference between cities (megalopolis-es) and rural areas

A group of children from a mountain village of Chongqing municipality carry makeshift braziers to fight the cold last month.
The cultural impact - some observations
Chinese and English preschool curricula compared:

**China**
- Health
- Social
- Art
- Language
- Science

**England**
- Personal, Social and Emotional
- Communication and Language
- Physical Development
- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

No statutory curriculum. Chinese kindergarten curriculum guidance (non statutory) was introduced in 2001 by the ministry of education (MOE) suggesting 5 curriculum areas.

... Compared to the 7 areas of the English 'Early Years Foundation Stage' (EYFS) preschool curriculum introduced in 2012 (DfE).
Primary data collected through:

- **Observations** of – ‘a day in the life’ at each setting (ethnographic)
- **Photographs**
- **Videos** and
- **Interviews** with range of staff – thematic analysis (3 themes arose)
  - Training and status
  - Parental expectations and impact on the curriculum
  - Planning
Ethical considerations

This included:
- Informed consent
- Openness and honesty
- Right to withdraw
- Protection from harm
- Debriefing
- Confidentiality

But .... I also had to be aware of the impact of:
- Language (interpretation)
- Culture
- Politics
Listening to the child

是  Yes

没有  No
Initial observations of kindergarten provision:

- Size of the preschools/kindergartens - 250 is small - visited 1000+ place setting; Mix of government and private
- Boarding facilities in a number of government settings
- The curriculum includes many opportunities that encourage children to develop a pride in their country and their culture (Social based on Confucian philosophy);
- Concept of creativity; provision is significantly adult-led rather than child-directed with a focus on traditional arts such as dancing and painting - very much reflected in wonderful displays in most settings
- The daily routine includes 2 hours outdoor exercise and 2 hours sleep
- Focus on professional development - (quality of this?)
- The influence of western pedagogical approaches observed: such as Gardner and Montessori in a number of the settings visited
- Similar issues to those in the UK regarding the status, and pay, of staff working within the early years.

'9 in 10 kindergarten teachers unqualified' (China Daily 2011)
Key themes arising

- Implementation of appropriate curriculum (impact of parental/family expectations on this)
- Developing a professional workforce, with 1,570,756 staff employed in the EY sector - 75% of whom have not achieved a basic education (UNICEF 2011): Diversity in staff training.

- The impact of marketisation and neo-liberal policy
  - decrease in public provision/increase in private
  - quality dependent on ability to pay?
Areas for further investigation …

- The emerging early years professional
- Exploring the effectiveness of early bilingual experiences
- What can be learned from the Confucian approach
- Emerging findings into the impact of the ‘one child’ policy as the first generation enter the workforce
Some of the kindergartens visited
Montessori influence (Public)
Reggio influence (Private)
The Robot Story:

Once upon a time, there was a people and a robot. Giraffe and robots fighting with a dog. The dog said “woof, woof” to the robot. The lamb chased the dog and the dog chased the giraffe, and the giraffe chased the robot. The robot chased the leopard. The dog threw the robot. So the mommy robot said “No throwing robots!” So the dog threw the lamb, and the lamb said “Woof woof!” for the day. The robot say “Don’t chase the lamb.”

The End.

Collaborative story narrated by: Ruth Ripley, Jason Hughes, Hilda, Lucy, Marcus, Lilian, Mila, Manon, Angelina, Iris and Fei Fei.
Case Study Setting
Impact on Teaching and Learning:
“I hear I forget, I see I remember, I do I understand” (Confucius)

The opportunity to spend time travelling and observing children in such a different
country to my own has been stimulating whilst the importance of research for my
students has been reinforced. In addition to developing my own knowledge and
understanding of early years provision in China, my observations on cultural
differences has permeated many aspects of my teaching and learning, not least
discussions on diversity and the implication of globalisation for early years workers.

The chance to become immersed in another culture, visiting, observing and discussing
shared issues around/concerning different aspects of early years provision in China
cannot be over-emphasised. Tina Bruce (1991) talks about giving children the
opportunity and time to ‘wallow’ in ideas and feelings in order to make sense of what
they are experiencing; this has given me the opportunity and time to ‘wallow’ in
another culture and reflect upon what I have seen, making links with what I already
know and begin to expand and develop my ideas, feelings and relationships.

A resulting residential to Beijing in 2012 was ‘life changing’ for
the students


