



Murphy, M. (2020) Bourdieu and Chinese education: Inequality, competition, and change. *Frontiers of Education in China*, 15(1), pp. 182-184.

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Deposited on: 19 May 2020

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Book Review by Mark Murphy:

Bourdieu and Chinese education: Inequality, competition and change, edited by Guanglun Michael Mu, Karen Dooley and Allan Luke. Oxon: Routledge, 2018. ISBN: 1138098671 (284 pages) Paperback, £26.

To be published in: [Frontiers of Education in China](#)

The work of Pierre Bourdieu has an enduring appeal for education researchers, especially those who see educational practices as saturated with issues of power and privilege. Bourdieu is the standard bearer for these concerns, and the explanatory quality of his work across numerous topics ensures that his legacy lives on in an ever-growing influence over educational publications. This influence in the Chinese education world has been evident for some years, and the publication of the book *Bourdieu and Chinese education: Inequality, competition and change* (edited by Guanglun Michael Mu, Karen Dooley and Allan Luke), is a timely reflection of this level of influence. The book is timely in two ways: as an overview and analysis of Bourdieu in China; but also as a critical appraisal of his ideas and their utility in the Chinese context. The general approach taken through the book is a critical sociological one, explicitly in a number of chapters but also as an implicit driving force behind the positions taken throughout the text.

The book has two aims: to provide an overview of the current status of education in China, and to explore how Bourdieu is being deployed as a theoretical lens to interrogate Chinese education. As stated in the sub-title, three major themes run through the collection – inequality, competition and change, but there are other key themes that are also evident, such as mobility, identity and practice. The first three chapters set the scene, with Chapter 2 in particular providing an excellent account of changes in Chinese society, including rapid urbanisation, industrialisation as well as a shift towards a market economy.

There is no question that dramatic shifts in the political economy of China have had consequent dramatic impacts on education. One of these impacts is on the issue of rural transformation. Rurality, such an important issue in China, is the subject of four chapters, two of which explore its impact on children and their educational lives, and the other two deal with the issue of rural teachers. This rural focus is joined by studies on parental practices, school leadership and the relation between language and pedagogy. This content illustrates the ways in which Bourdieu's work has been adapted for the Chinese context to more fully engage with the particular concerns of Chinese education and Chinese researchers.

The book contents engage with different aspects of Bourdieu's published output, and effort has been made to make use of lesser-known concepts from Bourdieu such as *illusio* (Chapter 6), *hysteresis* (Chapter 8), *heterodoxy* (Chapter 11) and also *doxa* (Chapter 9). This is pleasing to me as a reader as concepts such as habitus, capital and field are already well-catered for in the literature. This is certainly evident in China: Figure 3.2 (Page 50) visualises the network of Bourdieu's key concepts and how they relate to issues in Chinese education. As expected, capital, field and habitus loom large here, being the subject of much more academic attention than other concepts. What is especially illuminating is the fact that the vast majority of papers published on Bourdieu have come after 2002. In effect China has been playing 'catch up' as compared to the UK for example, where Bourdieu's work has been central to the spread of a critical sociology of education since the 1970s.

This may help explain why, as Zhongying Shi and Chunying Li in Chapter 3 explain, Chinese researchers have tended to adopt a non-critical attitude to the application of Bourdieu's ideas, resulting in more of an 'off the shelf' appropriation of Bourdieu rather than a detached analytical approach, a situation that has resulted in 'barely any critiques, challenges or modifications to Bourdieu's sociology'. If this is the case then this book goes some way to rectifying this stance. The book editors made it clear in the introduction that they wish to explore both the reaches and limits of Bourdieu's work in an applied international context, arguing that the use of Bourdieu in China should be subject to the 'same reflexivity' as Bourdieu applied to his own thinking and research.

This is a wise and very welcome position to take, and thankfully is realised in various parts of the collection. Arguably the best example of 'reflexive re-appropriation' is offered in Chapter 8, which focuses on parental practices and academic competition. Here, Xu Zhao, Robert Selman and Allan Luke argue that Bourdieu's work 'cannot wholly account for the psychological, cultural and political complexities involved in the reshaping of individual disposition and practice'. They adopt and adapt Bourdieu to take into account the influence of Confucianism as well as other factors such as the collective trauma experienced by Chinese society as a result of war, famine, conflict and social upheaval more generally. For the authors, Bourdieu's ideas are insufficient as a way to explain the emerging 'new Chinese subject'.

If anything, the book could have done with more of this reflexive re-appropriation, especially when it comes to the relation between Bourdieu's ideas and those of other scholars. That aside, this book is an excellent addition to the field of Bourdieu studies and education research. The collection has relevance outside China and will appeal to a number of audiences, including researchers who already engage with Bourdieu or wish to, in their efforts to develop their own critical sociology of education, comparative education scholars eager to learn more about China, and students who seek exemplars of 'applied' Bourdieu in educational settings.

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