



REPORT OF THE WORKSHOP ON “DEVELOPING CHINA STUDIES IN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION”

19-20 JANUARY 2017

Venue: All India Association for Christian Higher Education (AICHE) Conference Room, Delhi

The workshop was co-organised by Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS), United Board (UB) for Christian Higher Education in Asia and Harvard-Yenching Institute (HYI)

The **participants** were from the three organising institutes. Apart from them, there were eight faculty from the network institutions of the United Board in India – these were representatives from Christ University, Bangalore; Holy Cross College, Agartala; Lady Doak College, Madurai; Madras Christian College, Chennai; Salesian College, Darjeeling; Stella Maris College, Chennai; Union Christian College, Aluva and Women’s Christian College, Chennai. These are mainly private and autonomous institutions affiliated to Universities. Madras Christian College is a government-aided minority institution.

The **two days workshop** focused on presenting the current state of China Studies in India; research being conducted on China Studies and its approach and the importance and relevance of China Studies in India in the present context. The second part focused on envisioning China Studies in higher education institutions in India – the modalities; issues; challenges and prospects. The final part was on developing a training programme on China for faculty across India from Humanities and Social Sciences.

Day 1 – 19 January 2017

Introductory Session

Dr. Ruohong Li, Associate Director of HYI, gave an introduction about HYI. She said that the Institute’s core activity has been to offer fellowships for overseas study and research to younger doctoral and post-doctoral scholars at leading East and Southeast Asian universities in all fields of humanities and social sciences.

Dr. Wai Ching Angela Wong, Vice President for Programmes, United Board, then gave an introduction about United Board. She mentioned that the United Board focuses on institutional capacity building in their network institutions which involve leadership building, human resource development, curriculum building, programme building, community engagement, etc.

Prof. Alka Acharya gave an introduction about Institute of Chinese Studies and its focus and work. She then gave a presentation on mapping the current state of China Studies in India – the programmes available; issues and prospects. She raised concerns regarding the inability of the Indian educational system to integrate two very important aspects of studying China - language and area studies. These are taught separately and therefore unable to lead to a wholesome requirement of learning about China.

In the next few sessions the **ICS researchers** gave presentations of their work coming from their multiple disciplines and emphasised the importance of interdisciplinary approach in studying China.

Dr. Aravind Yelery, Assistant Director, ICS presented on “Understanding dynamics behind China’s economic engagement with India”. He said that China started taking India very seriously after India overtook China’s GDP in 2014. Talking about China studies in India, he said it is up to India whether to have a textbook study, non-textbook study or devise its own new way to learn about China

Dr. Tshering Chonzom, Associate Fellow, ICS gave an overview on the state of minorities in China and focused on the ethnic minorities of China and the government’s policies, engagements and reforms related to them. Talking about reforms related to minorities in China, she stressed on the presence of special universities for minorities and the debates revolving about its future existence.

Amongst the many questions asked, one was about why China seems to be getting everything right? Why does everything sound so perfect in China? Is there a problem in this approach? There were several questions on ethnic minorities in China and the challenges of comparing with India’s minorities.

In the next session the faculty of the Health Unit at ICS presented their work.

Prof. Rama V. Baru, Professor, Centre of Social Medicine and Community Health, JNU and Adjunct Fellow, ICS presented her experience of conceptualising a course on Comparative Health Systems, the importance of studying China and teaching China for two decades. A comparison between India and China in this field was very natural to study due to both countries being similar with many variations. The contrast offered enormous potential to study the variation in health outcomes and health services development. She also focused on the interdisciplinary approach and the pedagogy used.

The presentation was continued by Dr. Madhurima Nundy, Associate Fellow of ICS, focused on “Researching Comparative Studies in Health Systems”. She mentioned that comparative perspective enriches us to identify strengths and weaknesses of particular health systems and the policy interventions and the context in which they work. She summarised the research activities of the health unit; the range of topics covered and the collaborative work done with Chinese institutions and universities.

The questions focused on medical tourism, medical education, non-communicable diseases and traditional systems of medicine in China.

In the **next session** three faculties from the United Board network institutions in India gave their views on the **Relevancy of Teaching China Studies in India**.

Dr. Anil Joseph Pinto from Christ University, Fr. George Thadathil from Salesian college and Ms. Geraldine Smith from Stella Maris College were asked to present their views on four questions: What are the most circulated understandings of China and how helpful and insufficient are they? Why would China studies be needed and how would it be related to the Indian higher education? In what ways Indian faculty or student would be benefitted with China studies as part of teaching and learning? What values could be added by China studies?

The panellists understanding of all these questions were somewhat similar. On the question of circulated understandings their answers ranged from 1962 war to trust deficit between the two countries to a huge market of cheap labour. They all considered the prevailing bias about the country due to partial knowledge and agreed on throwing open new avenues in various fields to get a clearer picture. On the question of the need for China studies, the panellists answered that it was always good to learn more about the economic and political aspects of a country that had so much impact on India and its economy and holds such a huge international standing. It was also important to understand about the diversity in China. There was a need for a nuanced understanding of China and to develop a critical reflection. China studies can help bring comparative perspective to Indian students in context of their own country and bring new ways of engagement in various fields. But before bringing China studies to the students, China studies had to be brought to the teachers who will then act as facilitators. According to the panellists the value addition that can be brought in from China studies can be in many forms like engagements in business, research, media, academics, etc. There was a consensus that the approach had to be interdisciplinary and comparative.

The concerns raised from this panel were: China Studies had to move from being Delhi centric; where does one get the resources to establish China studies; ideas about curriculum, personnel, at what level it should be targeted (under-graduation or post-graduation level)?; what were the employability prospects?

Day 2 – 20 January 2017

Dr Cynthia Yuen, Programme Officer for North East Asia, United Board, gave a presentation titled **“From Development to Sustainability: A Review on the Teaching of Rural Economic and Development in China Higher Education”**. She mentioned that agrarian economy of China is the internal economy of China. It was organised to contribute to the industry accumulation. China’s industrial expansion came at a very high cost and resulted in a huge rural-urban divide. Only 14 percent of GDP was from the agriculture sector. She raised concerns and the need to invest more in rural Chinese setup. She stressed that creating innovative and own knowledge systems was important and the need to move from chemical to ecological farming.

This presentation was followed by the next session on **“Teaching China Studies in non-Chinese Contexts”** by Dr. Judith Berling, United Board; Dr. Christiana Singh, Lady Doak College and Mr. Sridhar, Madras Christian College.

Dr Judith Berling spoke about her experience as a teacher who taught religion in China for 41 years in an American context. She focused on pedagogy and importance of different methods of teaching that could range from collaborative learning, using films, calligraphy, rich primary sources etc.

Dr Christiana Singh stressed on the use of information technology for enhancing China studies in the form of online courses, streamlining lectures on China across India through a common portal and virtual classrooms. She mentioned that even if the focus is on learning Chinese language in colleges, it should not be forgotten that language learning requires prior knowledge of culture of that country. She recommended extra credit courses and exchange programmes with different universities on China studies.

Mr Sridhar mentioned there was a conspicuous absence of China in post-graduate courses across social science disciplines in his College as well as in most educational institutes in India. There is a strong prevalence of foreign languages like French, German but Chinese is still trying to make its presence. He recommended the need for creating an ecosystem for studying China and making a mass appeal to students.

The next panel was on **“Envisioning China Studies in Indian higher education for the next decade”**. The panellists for this session were Fr. Emmanuel Kallarackal from Holy Cross College, Dr. Mannoor Itty Punnoose from Union Christian College and Dr. Ranjini Christopher from Women’s Christian College.

The Union Christian College which is affiliated to Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam has recently started a Chinese language programme in collaboration with an institution in Taiwan.

The participants from the colleges mentioned that universities/colleges could have add-on courses on China in the different social science disciplines. The courses could be introduced

at the undergraduate level and then a full programme could be started at the post-graduate level.

Dr. Ruohang Li gave the concluding remarks of the entire workshop by mentioning the need for training programme for Indian students and faculty on China so that interested students and faculty do not have to look towards West in order to study China. She stressed on the importance of both area and language studies for a wholesome understanding on China.

Dr. Alka Acharya then gave her concluding remarks and said that there is no facilitator for China studies in India. There is a need to update the existing courses and a collaboration of China and area studies is required. She pitched for a full-fledged course on China studies at Masters level but she also left it open for the colleges to see what worked best for them as the needs would be different for different institutions.

The final session of the two day programme was a Round Table attended by the organising institutions (UB, HYI and ICS) towards **planning a training programme for teaching China studies in Indian colleges and universities.**

1. The target group for the training programme would be interested younger faculty from any social science or humanities discipline and doctoral students who are about to finish their doctoral studies. The number of participants would be 20.
2. The dates of the training programme – 25th May to 4th June 2017 in Mumbai University.
3. Since there is not much time and this is the first training programme, these participants do not have to go through a selection procedure and could be cherry picked. They will be selected from the United Board network institutions as well as from ICS network institutions.
4. Duration of the programme would be for full 10 days.
5. The programme and resource persons would be worked out by ICS. It would be a rigorous and intense programme with the participants sending a synopsis of their area of interest and making presentations on the final day. The approach would be interdisciplinary and topics would range from – politics, history, culture, religion, social sector and human development and so on. The teaching material will be shared with the participants before they come for the programme.
6. The logistics of the training programme will be handled by United Board.