

SEARCHING ERIC FOR MATERIALS RELATED TO THE R.O.C.

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ABSTRACT

ERIC is an important U.S. database on education. A search for materials of the period 1985 through 1989 results in 107 records pertaining to the Republic of China. These records are compared with a body of educational literature published in the R.O.C. for the same period. The study shows that the records in the ERIC database make available sources that are not readily accessible in the R.O.C., provide supplementary data on issues that are of concern to the Taiwan educational community, and introduce international, cross-cultural perspectives that will enrich educational research studies in Taiwan.

ERIC, an acronym which stands for the Educational Resources Information Center, is also used as the name for the database the Center provides for collecting and disseminating all types of educational materials. The database includes journal articles, reports, conference papers, curricular guides, bibliographies, dissertations and other documents originated mainly in the United States.

The Center, now operated under the U.S. Department of Education, was established in 1966. It oversees sixteen clearinghouses which form an information network. Each clearinghouse, assigned to a specific subject area, is responsible for identifying, collecting, and processing relevant educational literature for the Center. This

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collective effort has resulted in the most important national bibliography on education: ERIC¹.

What kind of information is collected in this database in regard to education in the Republic of China? Would a literature search on the R.O.C. in ERIC yield information not available in Taiwan? Would this information offer added dimensions and different perspectives to educational practices and research done in Taiwan? To answer these questions, an attempt was made to analyze the literature on the R.O.C. in the ERIC database for a five-year period, from 1985 through 1989. The result was then compared to the literature contained in the 'education section' in the *Chung-Hua Min-Kuo Ch'i-K'an Lun-Wen So-Yin* (Index to Chinese Periodical Literature) compiled by the National Central Library in the Republic of China.

TYPES OF INFORMATION

107 records in ERIC for this period are identified as containing pertinent information on the Chinese educational system in the R.O.C. or on Chinese students from the R.O.C. as international students in the U.S. and other countries. Of these, 52% of the records can be categorized as research and evaluative reports, 29% as general and descriptive reports, 11% as opinion papers, and 8% as a combination of background material, guides and bibliographies.

A typical research and evaluative report includes data collected on a certain aspect of Taiwan education, the methods used in data collection and analysis, the conclusion derived from the investigation, and sometimes a value judgment of the investigator on this subject. Some sample titles in this category are: "Reading Success and Failure among Chinese Children", "The Attainment of Conservation by Visually Impaired Children in Taiwan", "The Gender of Child Discourse: Sex Roles and Communicative Styles at a Taiwanese Kindergarten", and "Language Maintenance and Language Shift in Taiwan".

The general, descriptive reports are usually written with the

intention of introducing Taiwan's educational system to those who may not be familiar with it. Some of these reports are papers or speeches delivered at international conferences by Taiwan government officials or educational administrators outlining basic facts, policies, developments on certain aspect of Taiwan education. Others are state-of-the-art reports or analyses of current practices. Sample titles in this category are: "An Introduction to Education in the Republic of China", "The Sino-American Colloquium on Moral Cognition", "Faculty Development Practices in Taiwan Higher Education", "CAI in Taiwan: State and Problems".

Opinion papers generally contain personal views on a subject. These views are often based on the author's own experience in the Taiwan educational system or on extensive interviews conducted among practitioners in the system. Typical examples are: "The Danger of Catholic Education--Taiwan Style" by an American nun teaching in Taiwan, "An International Student's Perspective on Counselor Education" by a student from Taiwan commenting on his counselor training in the U.S. In "Children of China: a Historical Inquiry into the Relationship between Chinese Family Life and Academic Achievement", the author Douglas C. Smith surveyed and interviewed approximately 200 of his students at Tung-hai and Chung-hsing Universities before forming his own conclusions.

The last category includes teaching guides, annotated, multi-lingual bibliographies and background information on the Republic of China. Some titles are: "History of Chinese Education and Culture", "The Western Impact on Asian Higher Education", "How to Speak English without a Foreign Accent", and "Current Materials for Teaching about China".

During this five-year period from 1985-1989, only nine records collected in the database are in Chinese or in multi-lingual text in which Chinese is one of the languages. Five of these records deal with the teaching and research of the Chinese language; three are handbooks, informational guides for parents of bilingual children in the U.S. school systems; one is a bilingual dictionary

of mathematical terms. Since these records are not specifically focused on education in the R.O.C., they are not included in this analysis.

ERIC AS SUPPLEMENT TO TAIWAN SOURCES

The quarterly publication, *Chung-Hua Min-Kuo Ch'i-K'an Lun-Wen So-Yin*, carries an average of 255 articles in the 'education section' in each issue. These articles cover a broad spectrum of subject matters including education of all levels, educational psychology, teaching methodology, teachers' education, vocational education, special education, and school administration. Compared to this array of publications, the number of records found in ERIC on the R.O.C. seems to be small and insignificant. Further analysis, however, reveals that these records in ERIC quite often are from sources not readily accessible in the R.O.C.

The most noticeable absence in the Taiwan index are papers and speeches presented at international meetings and conferences. Although educators from the R.O.C. are regular participants at these international gatherings, no accounts nor reports of them are found in Taiwan literature. This group of conference literature offers a rich source of information on topics that are of interest and concern to the Taiwan educational community. For instance, during the period of 1985 through 1989, there was an active interest in the development of a viable vocational program reflected in the Taiwan educational literature. Because of the acceleration of its industrialization and the globalization of its economy, the R.O.C. has been transformed from an agriculturally based society to an industrially based one. More industrial workers are needed; these workers, at the same time, require modern-day skills and technological training. The government is aiming to achieve a ratio of 10 to 90 between students of senior high schools and those of vocational schools. At present, the ratio is 30 to 70².

Many societies in other parts of the world are undergoing similar changes; others are exploring, experimenting with ways to

coordinate vocational programs with societal needs. These experiences from other countries are often reported at meetings and conferences sponsored by various vocational education organizations such as the International Vocational Education and Training Association, the American Vocational Education Research Association. To be able to access these papers when needed will be valuable to Taiwan educators and administrators. Other organizations that have provided forums addressing topics that are of interests to the Taiwan educational community are, to name a few, the Conference on Languages for Business and Professions, the Comparative and International Education Society, the Society for Research in Child Development, and Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages.

A second area which is noticeably absent from the Taiwan index is literature on Taiwan overseas students while studying abroad. In 1988, the R.O.C. sent out 7,122 students to study abroad; in the previous years, the numbers ranged from 6,000 to 7,000. Much has been written in Taiwan educational literature on preparation for TOEFL, GRE and other tests required for being admitted to a university in the United States; much has also been written on the problems of 'brain drain' and career placement for the returnees. It is not evident, however, that in the R.O.C. attempts have ever been made to follow up on the social adjustment and academic performance of these students while pursuing their studies in foreign universities. True, there is no lack of reporting and personal narratives in newspapers and magazines detailing the life of a foreign student, but these are literary endeavors rather than data-based investigations. The need to fill this gap is obvious. An understanding of how these students fare in foreign academic environments is important to prospective students and the educators, as well as to Taiwan policy makers. ERIC can serve as an important source in filling this gap. Because over 90% of the students have come to the U.S. for advanced studies, the information collected in the ERIC database can provide a representative picture of Taiwan overseas students as a whole. A search in ERIC

for the five-year period under examination produced articles and reports on subjects such as: studies on the language proficiency of the Taiwan students in relation to their academic achievement, their emotional expression and communication as compared to students from other cultures, comparison of American and Chinese students' attitudes toward international affairs, evaluation of cultural adjustment of international students of which Taiwan students constitute a significant segment, counseling the southeast Asian international students, and a few guides for orientation programs and academic aids for foreign students in the U.S.

A third area to which the ERIC database can contribute as a supplementary source to the Taiwan index is in providing comprehensive bibliographies on Chinese educational system with a truly international scope. A case in point is the annotated bibliography by Franklin Parker entitled "History of Chinese Education and Culture". This bibliography contains 187 items citing works written in Chinese, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Polish, and Russian. All items, English and non-English, are accompanied by English abstracts. Sources of these works include pamphlets, unpublished theses and dissertations, government reports and school archives. Comprehensive bibliographies of multi-language works on a lesser scale are also found in several other records. In general, relatively few western bibliographic sources are cited in the Chinese articles included in the Taiwan index. Yet the awareness of how other cultures view Chinese education often lends added dimension to the topic under discussion. Such awareness also contributes positively toward self evaluation and criticism.

It is to be noted here that the ERIC database is more 'all-encompassing' in the inclusion of its subject matters. It collects literature of many education-related fields such as language arts and information science. In the Taiwan index, articles in these two subject areas will not be located under the 'education section'; more likely, they will be found under the sections of 'language and library and information science'.

ERIC AS SUPPLEMENT TO CROSS-CULTURAL VIEWPOINTS

Compared to the literature of a decade ago, the recent body of educational articles in the Taiwan index reflects an expanding horizon, an eagerness for knowledge beyond the boundaries of the R.O.C. Vocational training programs in Japan and West Germany are described; music education in Austria, and school administration system in Denmark are reported back home; the theory of Jean Piaget is a topic for frequent discussions; and American audio-visual and computer aided instructional practices are held up as models for the R.O.C. to emulate. These articles, however, are often translations from western journals, or reports from fact-finding trips. Few of these can be categorized as comparative, cross-cultural studies from which one can derive a sense as to where Taiwan education stands in relation to the world community.

ERIC, again, can serve as a supplement in this regard. Of the 107 records pertaining to the R.O.C. in the database, over one third are described as comparative analyses or cross-cultural studies in which data collected from the R.O.C. are compared to those from other countries. In the article "Cross-cultural differences in Childrearing Goals", data were collected from eight countries including the R.O.C., then analyzed to explore cultural differences in childrearing patterns. In the conference paper, "Computer Technology Applications in Special Education in East Asian Nations", the practice in the R.O.C. was compared to that in Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore and the People's Republic of China.

Several aspects in Taiwan education have recently been the focal points of interest to other societies. The most notable ones are the high performance of its student body in science and mathematics, the favorable family environment that promotes academic achievement, and the low rate of juvenile delinquency. ERIC accurately reflects these interests in its literature. Quite a few comparative studies are conducted in these areas. Here again, a few selected titles will exemplify the range of studies contained in the database: "Societal Differences and their Influences on

Children's Mathematics Understanding", "Low and High Mathematics Achievement in Japan, China, and American Elementary School Children", "A Comparison of Child-rearing Practices among Chinese, Immigrant-Chinese and Caucasian-American Parents", "Skill Development and Temperament in Kindergarten Children: a Cross-cultural Study", "A Cross-cultural Study of Smoking among Youth in the United States and the Republic of China".

Of the sixteen clearinghouses that are assigned to information gathering in specific subject areas, the Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics collected the most records pertaining to the R.O.C. The fields of collection responsibilities of this clearinghouse include: "languages and language sciences; theoretical and applied linguistics; all areas of foreign language, second language, and linguistics instruction . . . cultural and intercultural context of languages; application of linguistics in language teaching; bilingualism and bilingual education; sociolinguistics; study abroad and international exchanges; teacher training and qualifications specific to the teaching of foreign languages and second languages. . ."³ Chinese language and language teaching has been another area that attracts western attention. Traditionally, studies in this field have been of interest only to the academic community. In recent years however, with increased international trade activities and with the establishment of multi-national companies in Taiwan, the interest in acquiring Chinese language skills by non-Chinese speakers has extended to the international business community as well. The role of second language competency in business communication, and the need for cultural understanding in multi-national corporate life present a whole new study area that has not yet received sufficient attention in the Chinese literature. This area deals with Chinese language training program for English-speaking executives in Taiwan, English instruction for native Chinese employees, communication problems, cross-cultural training, issues involved in curriculum design, and teaching materials and methods for the above. The studies done by Bertha

and Richard Du Babcock drawing on data from five multi-national companies in the R.O.C. are good examples of what can be explored along these lines.

An effort has been made to determine how many of the 107 records in ERIC are authored by current Chinese practitioners in the Taiwan educational system. The assumption is that these authors will likely be publishing in Chinese journals, and their viewpoints and studies will be known through Chinese sources. Most Eric records are appended with brief biographical notes indicating current positions held by the authors. An analysis of this information shows that only 20 (or less than 2%) of the 107 records are authored by current Taiwan practitioners. Of these, only two are identified as having their Chinese counterparts published in Taiwan journals.

CONCLUSION

During the five-year period from 1985 through 1989, although ERIC database contains a relatively small number of records relating to the R.O.C., these records are judged to be significant in complementing and enhancing the body of literature that is included in *Chung-Hua Min-Kuo Ch'i-K'an Lun-Wen So-Yin* (Index to Chinese Periodical Literature). 52% of these records are research studies, 29% general reports, 11% opinion papers, and 8% bibliographies, reference material. The ERIC database makes available sources that are not readily available in the R.O.C., provides supplementary data and studies on issues that are of concern to the Taiwan educational community, and introduces a cross-cultural approach and international perspective to research areas that may or may not be familiar to the Taiwan educators. The last aspect is particularly significant as the R.O.C. looks forward to entering a new decade and new century as an active participant in the world community.

NOTES

1. ERIC database is available in printed form, online, and on CD-ROM. In the printed form, the records in the database are indexed in two separate publications: *Current Index to Journals in Education* and *Resources in Education*. The former covers articles from journals, the latter covers reports, conference papers, unpublished manuscripts, dissertations, and other documents. Online and on CD-ROM, the two separate indices are combined into one. ERIC can be searched online through commercial vendors such as Dialog, BRS, ORBIT. CD-ROM is available through the producers/distributors such as OCLC, SilverPlatter.
2. *Republic of China: a Reference Book*. (Taipei: Hilit Publishing Company, 1988), 337.
3. Educational Resources Information Center. *Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors*, 11th ed. (Phoenix, Ariz.: Oryx Press, 1988), [591].

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