**Newspapers:**

***Independent: Are Our Kids Tough Enough? Chinese School, BBC2 - TV review: Perhaps the tiger teachers could learn from these spirited teens***

While British schools have "a culture of child-centred learning", Chinese education was characterised as "authority, discipline and ruthless competition", which in practice meant these year-nines were in for a shock. (Jones)

There is one upside to the British classroom, which is that it produces lots of spirited characters such as chatterbox Sophie, who'll likely be played by Catherine Tate in the Are Our Kids Tough Enough? Red Nose Day special. (Jones)

***The Guardian: Are Our Kids Tough Enough? Chinese School review – a comic clash of cultural differences***

This may be OK in China, where education is based on authority and respect is a given. But less so in a British comprehensive, where autonomy and questioning are encouraged. (Wollaston)

**Peer views:**

***Comparative Education in China:***

The goal of Chinese educators is to build a socialist educational system that suits China's conditions. (Jing and Zhou 240)

The essential aim of educational reforms under way in China is to train more and better qualified personnel, who develop intellectually, morally, and physically to meet the needs of the modernization program. (Jing and Zhou 246)

The offering of this course has played a positive role in broadening the students' view, enlivening their thinking, and improving their abilities in independent study and research. (Jing and Zhou 248)

***Managing secondary schools in China:***

Only 44% progress to the senior secondary system while the other youngsters move directly into employment. (Bush, Coleman and Si 183)

For junior secondary schools, the curriculum comprises ideology and moral education, Chinese language, mathematics, foreign languages (usually English), history, geography, physics, chemistry, biology, physical education, music, fine arts and labor technology. (Bush, Coleman and Si 189)

The main approach to teaching is to carry out the syllabus decided by the government and teachers have little right to change the curriculum. (Bush, Coleman and Si 189)

The emphasis on preparation for examinations, and the large classes, both reinforce the formal mode of teaching. Whole class teaching predominates, using ‘the traditional modes of learning, recitation and review. (Bush, Coleman and Si 189)

The cultural emphasis, reflecting Confucian beliefs, on the importance of individuals working hard. (Bush, Coleman and Si 189)

In the case study schools, homework appears to be given a high priority. (Bush, Coleman and Si 190)

The strong emphasis on examination performance as the determinant of progression to senior secondary schools and, subsequently, to university, helps to sustain motivation. (Bush, Coleman and Si 190)

***Child-centered middle schools:***

The curriculum, instructional methods and materials, guidance efforts, and the overall learning environment of a child-centered middle school demonstrate an understanding of the early adolescence developmental period and a commitment to the education of young adolescents. (Manning 154)

Specially trained teachers provide educational experiences that address young adolescents' needs, interests, and perspectives. Similarly, educators recognize and address young adolescents' differences resulting from culture, gender, and sexual orientation. (Manning 154)

Base educational experiences on young adolescents' physical, psychosocial, and cognitive development; their gender and cultural differences; and their learning styles, multiple intelligences, and individual interests. (Manning 154)

Provide exploratory programs (both curricular and special interest), so that young adolescents will have opportunities to discover their talents abilities and values. (Manning 154)

Provide flexible scheduling and variable learning group sizes that accommodate young adolescents' diverse academic and social needs. (Manning 154)

Child-centered middle school educators value young adolescents' diversity, place emphasis on their developing cultural and gender identities, bolster their self-esteem, and ensure some degree of success for all students in all facets of the middle school program. (Manning 155)

The curriculum in the child-centered middle school reflects young adolescents' interests, concerns, and thinking levels. (Manning 155)

The curriculum, as unique and diverse as young adolescents themselves, must be grounded in child-centered perspectives. (Manning 155)

Place emphasis on thinking and learning how to learn, rather than focusing only on isolated and disconnected facts. (Manning 157)

Provide sufficient flexibility to accommodate young adolescents' diverse learning needs and interests, including a variety of methods such as discovery, inquiry, cooperative learning, and career exploration. (Manning 157)

Allow young adolescents to make significant academic and management choices and decisions about grouping and organizational practices. (Manning 157)

Provide instruction and learning environments that ensure some degree of success for all young adolescents. (Manning 157)

***Education system reform in China after 1978: some practical implications:***

The essential aim of this education system reform was to promote the quality of the whole nation and produce more qualified personnel so as to realize China’s socialist modernization. (Sun 314)

This is not because of the needs of construction of harmonious society, but also because of the economic development in China. (Sun 317)

***The Education System in Shanghai: Negotiating the Nature of Education:***

The Shanghai Medium and Long Term Outline on Educational Reform and Development (2010–2020) (hereafter, the Outline) proposed four guiding principles for shaping the educational reforms in Shanghai: promoting justice, pursuing excellence, fostering innovation and strengthening the role of education in serving the socioeconomic development. (Deng and Zhao 806)

The emphasis on examinations derives from the imperial examination system, which was designed by the imperial central authority to select the best officials for governing society and which has survived for centuries to form a highly competitive education tradition of elitism in China. (Deng and Zhao 806)

This kind of social institution leaves an important legacy in that the Chinese masses have high expectations of education and also form a deeply held belief of each person’s ability to realise social mobility through hard work. (Deng and Zhao 806)

The communist government in modern China has continued to maintain a system of elitism due to the limited educational resources, but the selectivity is often justified on the basis that it serves the needs of national development. (Deng and Zhao 806)

The examinations arouse intense competition among parents, teachers, students and schools for the limited quota of university places, and such an extreme examination-oriented education system jeopardises full development of the creativity and personality of young people. (Deng and Zhao 807)

The high selectivity of the education system is deeply rooted in the high demand for higher education by the general public. (Deng and Zhao 807)

Shanghai played a pioneering role in leading the latest round of national curriculum reform endorsed by the Chinese central government in 1999, which emphasises active and constructive learning, as opposed to the traditional passive learning style, which relies on memorisation and regurgitation. (Deng and Zhao 808-809)

education is not only about ‘individual academic success and excellence’, but involves addressing social justice and ‘reinforcing social cohesion. (Deng and Zhao 810)

***The misdirection of middle school reform: Is a child-centered approach incompatible with achievement in math and science?***

Notions of child-centered curricula and allowing students to discover their interests face skeptical scrutiny. (Bandlow 69)

Recent research shows that critics of the middle school concept may have strong grounds for their concerns about a lack of focus on standards and achievement. (Bandlow 69)

Instead, real reform will require adopting mandatory national standards that apply to every school in the nation and define what children should know and be able to do in math and science at every grade level; (Bandlow 69)

In the judgment of an increasingly skeptical public, middle schools diminish academic achievement by practices such as abolishing honor rolls, emphasizing collaboration instead of individual accomplishment, and valuing diversity in learning styles over challenging standards. (Bandlow 69)

Much of the criticism of the middle school strikes at its organizing principle-that middle grades should be a time for allowing students to grow and discover their own interests. (Bandlow 70)

***A Comparison of Student Management and Secondary School Organization in the peoples' Republic of China, France, and America:***

Ministry of Education in each country develops a basic framework for curriculum nationally from elementary to senior high schools. (Liu 32)

That is, student daily behaviors in the three countries are more self-controlled with more peer coordination, and the campus is supervised less by adults. (Liu 32)

In China, all students are required to do unified stretching-out exercises on the open playground. (Liu 34)

Being in school and working on school activities, academically and socially, are viewed as a student's full time responsibilities. (Liu 34)

Students are fully occupied with school work and school activities every day. (Liu 35)

The spirit of working diligently and taking responsibility for the assumed commitment are fostered in the process of such schooling. (Liu 35)

The rigidity promotes structure, enriched knowledge, good understanding of the importance of education in people's lives, and critical thinking skills. (Liu 36)

Every student's overall growth as a human being should always be the priority of instructional practice, behavior management and physical setting. (Liu 36)