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Citizenship and Education in Contemporary Chinese Societies:
Contexts, Perspectives, and Understandings

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Title: *The New Textbooks on Xi Jinping Thought as Tools of Citizenship Education in Contemporary China*

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Abstract:

The PRC has a long tradition of citizenship education, which has been an integral part of the education system since the 1950s. As pointed out by Hsu et al. (2022), since then a connection has existed in China between good citizenship and loyalty to the Party, in that “good citizenship is manifested through loyalty and obedience to the CPC”. This connection appears to have been strengthened since Xi Jinping came to power in 2012. As part of the new educational reform launched in 2019, the Chinese leadership is devoting specific efforts to strengthening political and ideological education at all levels of schooling (Zhonggong Zhongyang/Guowuyuan 2019). With this objective in mind, in July 2021 the Ministry of Education issued a new set of textbooks to teach Xi Jinping Thought to students at different levels of schooling (from primary to upper secondary schools).

According to Lazar (2008, 5), “citizenship” is defined as a “bundle of practices that constitute encounters between the state and citizens”. Therefore, “the processes and practices that make someone a full member of a given community” constitute a primary object of interest in the study of this issue. Starting from these assumptions, the present paper argues that the new set of textbooks on Xi Jinping Thought should be understood and analysed as an instance of citizen-making practices and as concrete tools of citizenship education in contemporary Chinese society. The paper employs analytical tools from critical textbook analysis and critical discourse analysis to examine the diverse contents and discursive strategies through which these textbooks – by teaching young citizens the official ideology and fostering their love for the Party – contribute to strengthening the idea that being a full and good citizen of the PRC is strictly linked to one’s loyalty to the political leadership and compliance with its fundamental values.

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