

Title of the contribution:

What kind of people to cultivate? Analysing Xi Jinping’s discourse on education

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Abstract:

Throughout the history of the PRC, the political leadership has devoted much attention to education and its related issues, and educational policies have been adapted in accordance with the changing socio-political context. Moreover, education has often proven to be closely connected with the evolving political objectives of the CCP (Doughty 1978; Pepper 1996; Vickers and Zeng 2017). Since 2012, Xi Jinping has, on multiple occasions, unambiguously reiterated the key role assigned to education within Chinese society and politics, as well as in relation to the Party-State’s political and ideological objectives (e.g., Xi 2017 and 2022).

Based on these premises, the present paper examines Xi Jinping’s discourse concerning educational issues, providing an analysis of a corpus of texts (including speeches, reports, documents, etc.) published on institutional websites between 2012 and 2022, regarded as representatives of the leader’s discourse on this macro-topic. The theoretical and methodological framework of the study draws on a combination of Critical Discourse Analysis (especially the Discourse-Historical Approach, Reisigl and Wodak 2009) and Corpus Linguistics, combining corpus techniques with qualitative and interpretative discourse analysis (Baker 2008; Qian and Tian 2014). The aim of the paper is to identify the sub-topics and keywords Xi Jinping’s discourse on education during the last ten years, devoting a particular attention to issues that concern the (social, political, ideological) objectives that, in discourse, are assigned to education, its practises and tools, as well as to the relationship established between education and the cultivation of the students’ “correct” ideological, political and moral conscience.

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Author’s brief bio:

Chiara Bertulesi is a Postdoctoral Researcher in Chinese Studies at the University of Milan, Italy, where she is currently working on a research project on the political discourse on education in the PRC. She holds a PhD from the University of Milan, obtained with a thesis in critical Chinese lexicography and, specifically, on the *Modern Chinese Dictionary* (现代汉语词典). Her research interests and academic publications revolve around Chinese lexicography, especially from the perspective of critical lexicography and the interplay between reference works and ideology, as well as the analysis of political discourse in contemporary China.

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