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With the continuing growth of Chinese influence on the world stage, the importance of knowledge of Chinese language has never been greater. Here, the SEJ takes a look at the new PGDE (Secondary) Mandarin at the Moray House School of Education, University of Edinburgh which is helping to ensure that Scotland will be well placed to forge constructive links with China in the future.

Confucius

In the last few years, there has been a surge of interest in Chinese language and culture in Scotland. Scotland has a Chinese community of considerable size and their culture is evident throughout the country in many forms. The Scottish Parliament has actively sought closer trade links with The People's Republic of China through the Scotland China Engagement Strategy and is keen to promote the learning and teaching of Chinese language and culture in Scottish schools.

The University of Edinburgh has been very pro-active in its support of Chinese language and culture and has established a Confucius Institute, which was officially opened by the First Minister, Alex Salmond, on 25th September last year. The Confucius Institute for Scotland in the University of Edinburgh has been set up with Sino-Scottish Government backing, to promote the teaching of Chinese language and culture in Scotland and, among other activities, offers timetabled Chinese language courses from beginner level upwards as well as courses on various aspects of contemporary China. Students following courses benefit from a top quality learning environment.

This coincides with a period of expansion of the teaching of Chinese in schools in Scotland. This has grown so rapidly that it has led to the establishment

of the Scotland China Education Network, comprising over 50 schools and including representatives from the Scottish Government, HMIe and Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS). This has led to calls for the teaching of Chinese to be more formally established in schools with appropriately qualified teachers. It was against this background that I was asked by Pamela Munn, at that time Dean of the Moray House School of Education, to attend a meeting at St. George's School for Girls in Edinburgh in May of 2006 where I discussed with Head Teacher, Dr Judith McClure, and Vice Principal of the University of Edinburgh, Professor Geoffery Boulton, ways in which a teaching qualification in Chinese could be established.

Examining the options

Six months later several options were on the table – a PGDE course in Mandarin; a 4 year degree in collaboration with the department for Asian Studies at the University of Edinburgh, combining language, literature, culture and pedagogy; a Masters degree, also in collaboration with the department for Asian Studies at the University of Edinburgh; and the possibility of professional recognition from the General Teaching Council for Scotland upon completion of the appropriate courses and training, an area where the Confucius Institute could contribute. While the other options are still work in progress, the most popular one was the PGDE course, so the first six months of 2007 saw intense activity as colleagues in the Moray House School of Education, the GTC(S) and the Scottish Government liaised as to the practicalities of creating and validating this new course. Thanks to lots of hard work and close collaboration between the partners involved, it was possible to develop Mandarin as a qualifying subject to be included in the portfolio of languages offered as part of the Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (Secondary) at the Moray House School of Education for session 2007/8. It is testimony to what can be established when real cooperation takes place among partners working towards a common goal. Although I personally was always quite confident that we would achieve our objective, I was extremely grateful to



colleagues in the university, the Scottish Government and the GTC(S) for their hard work and timeous completion of the many tasks involved in the process of making the course a reality against a very tight timeline, punctuated with several deadlines.

Once everything was in place, the adverts went out in the national press and on the University of Edinburgh website and numerous enquiries followed, which resulted in a flurry of applications. From these applications we were able to offer six places for Mandarin on the PGDE(Secondary) Programme and these students started their training in August 2007 and are currently two thirds of the way through their course. As

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additional support, I am pleased to say that the Moray House School of Education has appointed an associate tutor for Mandarin, who supports my colleague, Richard Easton, and myself in the students' training.

The success of this initiative could not have been achieved without the support of a number of schools, in both the state and independent sector across Scotland, who have provided placements this year for these six students and who have been extremely supportive of our students, for which my colleagues and I, as well as the students themselves, are very grateful.

Moving forward

To support developments further, the Scottish Qualifications Authority have appointed a Development Officer and Principal Assessor of Chinese responsible for coordinating the introduction of National Qualifications in Chinese, with Intermediate 1 & 2 examinations being offered in 2009 and Higher and Advanced Higher examinations in 2010.

Last week saw the launch of Access 3 Cantonese and Mandarin, a half day event which provided an opportunity for teachers and lecturers to familiarise themselves with the content and delivery of Access 3 courses. On 1st May there is the Launch Event, (Modern Languages) for Work Purposes, Access 3 and Intermediate 1, a whole day event, which will

provide the opportunity for teachers and lecturers in schools and FE colleges to familiarise themselves with new free standing generic Units and associated Assessment Support Packs (ASPs). The Units will interest practitioners who wish to integrate the study and use of modern foreign languages in a vocational setting, into the delivery of a variety of courses or as stand alone additions to existing provision. The Units will be offered in Cantonese, French, Gaelic (learners), German, Italian, Mandarin, Polish, Russian and Urdu. These days are followed on 8th May by the Launch Event for Intermediate 1 & 2 Cantonese and Mandarin. Presentations will be led by SQA's Development Officer for Chinese Languages, Fan Lin, who will also assist in hosting workshop sessions alongside members of the examining team. There will also be an update from LTS colleagues on the development of teaching materials to support the delivery of the Intermediate 1 & 2 Courses.

Looking ahead

This is an exciting time for our Mandarin teachers in training, who are in at the beginning of many important developments designed to help develop and support the learning and teaching of Chinese in schools and centres and I am pleased that our students have been invited to these events. The first event looking at Access 3 was a very useful event and enabled our students to extend not only their subject knowledge, but also their network of contacts in Scottish educational establishments.

The PGDE year is normally interesting, challenging and intense, but this year our Mandarin students have had a particularly busy time. On 24

October 2007, the Scotland – China Education Network held a China Scotland Leadership Conference at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre. Alex Salmond addressed the conference which was also attended by Madame Xu Lin, Director General of Hanban of China. This event was supported by the Scottish Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society (SELMAS), the Hong Kong Schools Self Evaluation Network (HKSSSEN), the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED) and the Tam O'Shanter Trust. On the 21st February this year, our students received an invitation from Alex Salmond to attend 'Spirit – A Spring Lantern Festival', at Edinburgh's Royal Botanic Garden, the launch event for China Now in Scotland. This was a spectacular start to a host of events and activities, which in addition to the cultural programme has strong business, educational and scientific strands and even a football programme!

With the establishment of Confucius Classrooms at various locations in Scotland, providing an 'online hub' of support for learning about Chinese language and culture, including resources and examples of practice in Scottish schools; China Now in Scotland; and, of course, the Beijing Olympics, the Year of the Rat looks set to raise awareness of Chinese language and culture throughout Scotland. It is fitting that this should be the year that the first qualified teachers of Mandarin trained in Scotland join the teaching community in our schools. We look forward to this being the start of a sustainable development, which will lead to a rich and diversified linguistic and cultural experience for our pupils. ■

– Michael Lynch, Programme Coordinator, PGDE (Secondary), Moray House School of Education



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