

## **Report: Principal's Teaching Awards Funding**

### **Project: Ways of Thinking and Practising (WTP) in Chinese and Japanese Studies**

Dr. Chris Perkins and Dr. Daniel R. Hammond, Asian Studies, LLC

#### **Review of Project:**

The WTP project originated in discussions during our participation in the UoE PGCAP programme. Coming from clearly defined disciplinary backgrounds (International Relations, Policy Studies, and History) contrasted with our experience in an Area Studies/ Asian Studies department, which are inherently interdisciplinary in nature. We wanted to investigate what it was we, as a subject area at UoE, were demanding of our students and how this reflected particular understandings of what Chinese and Japanese studies are.

This project was both an investigation into university pedagogy with potential to enhance teaching practices at the UoE, and an investigation into the construction of China and Japan as objects of academic knowledge. It was planned as the first part of a long-term project that would be scaled to national (UK) and international levels of analysis.

The research questions we intended to address included:

- What are the ways of academic thinking and practising associated with Chinese and Japanese Studies?
- How is student development conceptualized and pursued at different institutions? How do students themselves conceptualize their subject areas?
- How is the contested nature of Area Studies rendered workable by particular departments? How is interdisciplinarity managed?
- How is value allocated to the different skills involved in studying China or Japan?
- What conflicts arise over the WTP associated with Chinese or Japanese Studies among academics and with students? How are they resolved?
- What are the hallmarks of effective pedagogy in Chinese and Japanese Studies? How is efficacy defined and assessed?
- What are the key texts and threshold concepts associated with Chinese and Japanese Studies?

We planned to conduct semi-structured interviews with available staff within Asian Studies at the UoE and a student focus group. The interview data would then be analysed taking a Grounded Theory approach using nVivo 9 to facilitate a coded analysis of the material.

**Outcomes:**

We conducted an initial search and review of the available literature on Chinese and Japanese studies. We then constructed a template semi-structured interview. As the project developed we decided to focus our initial study and the budget on the UoE, to treat the project as a pilot for something we could scale up in future with additional funding. We conducted eight interviews and three focus groups all within Asian Studies at the University of Edinburgh providing a substantial amount of data. This was subsequently coded and analysed.

We presented our findings in two venues. First, at the PTAS forum, 26<sup>th</sup> June 2013. This generated a great deal of discussion with colleagues from across the UoE. Second, we presented the following paper, "Ways of Thinking and Practising in Chinese and Japanese Studies: An Initial Study," at the Joint East Asian Studies Conference, University of Nottingham (5-7 September, 2013). This provided the opportunity to present our findings and discussion to our colleagues in the wider area studies community. In both instances our findings were well received and generated a great deal of discussion.

We followed up these presentations with planning for a workshop, contacting colleagues conducting similar research (for example Dr. Norman Stockman, University of Aberdeen) and submitting a funding proposal to the British Academy based on the PTAS project.

We are in the process of writing up our findings for publication.

**Future Plans:**

To continue to seek further funding to expand the project further.

To complete the process of writing up our findings and to publish in suitable venues.