

WELCOME MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC NETWORK FOR MORAL EDUCATION

Dear friends and colleagues,

On behalf of all the members of the committee of The Asia-Pacific Network for Moral Education (APNME) and of the international Conference Organising Committee, I am delighted to extend a very warm welcome to APNME's 9th Annual Conference, especially to those attending an APNME conference for the first time. I would also like to express our gratitude to our hosts at both Fudan University and Shanghai Normal University for their hard work in the organisation of the conference and efforts to ensure that we are well looked-after and able to make the most of our time in Shanghai. As a prosperous and vibrant city with a rich history that remains at the forefront of the transformation that China has been undergoing in recent decades, Shanghai is a very apt location for this year's conference, given its theme of *Making Moral Education Work: Tradition and Innovation in the Asia-Pacific*.

Within any country, institution or society that has a long enough history there may very often be found traditions and customs that have lasted through time, played a part in its achievements and longevity, becoming an important part of its fabric and perhaps going some way to defining its identity. And yet to remain relevant, to flourish and keep pace with changing times, if not lead them, an institution or society must embrace change and re-inventing itself. So innovation is also often a hallmark of an enduring and successful organisation or society. Tradition and a drive for innovation may appear to contradict or oppose each other but a continuing process of self-reflection and questioning, inspired by a commitment to excellence above all, can help reconcile and balance them.

As we gather for APNME's 9th annual conference, and at a time when humanity is face to face with many major challenges and questions, perhaps these two ideas of critical self-reflection and the quest for excellence have something to offer in our efforts to make moral education work and our endeavours to contribute to society in a meaningful way. Change is inevitable and often welcome and to be sought: traditional, familiar and customary ways of thinking, behaving and interacting with others and nature do not always fit with the times and with new forms of understanding and ways of seeing the world. As such, while they may have served us well in the past, if they are no longer fit for purpose, if they represent outdated modes of thinking that are not consistent with the world we want, with our evolving current understanding of human rights and responsibilities and our place within the grander scheme of things, then we should not be afraid to change and move on. Nevertheless, this is not a licence for reckless, unthinking change for its own sake, change that cuts from under our own feet the foundations that we stand on and the accumulated heritage of best practices and lessons learned. The risk of losing our reference points, of abandoning our own roots and truths in pursuit of appealing but untested quick-fix solutions, is one that we must guard against. Just as reflection adds meaning to whatever we do and experience, and can help ensure that we draw on and remain true to the best of our personal and collective heritage, so also the quest for continuous improvement (not forgetting self-improvement!) can motivate

and inspire us as we continue our journey through life, with the prospect of a succession of better tomorrows as its destination and its realisation as our purpose.

Education itself has always been a key or passport to a better tomorrow but in today's world it is apparent that it is more than this, and that the survival of humanity is highly dependent on what we learn, how we apply our knowledge and what values we live by. While education of any form may thus readily be seen as an inherently moral endeavour, APNME conferences bring educators together to focus explicitly on questions of morality, ethics and values in relation to education and foster academic exchange and dialogue on moral education across disciplines and the region. With this in mind, I wish everyone a memorable conference, hoping that all participants will actively engage in the discussions, raise critical and constructive questions and gain new inspirations, insights and friendships with which to return home.

Christopher Drake
Chairman, The Asia-Pacific Network for Moral Education