



The Essence of Life Education in China from the Perspective of the History of Educational Thought

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Abstract

There are certain differences between Chinese and Western understandings about the essence of life education. With the development of western society's modernization process, life education in some countries tends to revive and innovate, trying to respect the educational principles of individual life. Since the reform and opening up, the mode of life education in China is not only a reflection of the new educational concept of western emphasis on the development of individual life, but also a reflection of the ideological trend of respect for individual life in ancient Chinese education. The innovation of life education concept in turn requires the interaction and cooperation of all levels and links. The most fundamental thing is that the school administration and social media discourse should pay attention to the concept of life education and carry out various activities of life education, so that everyone can cultivate a sense of existence and value of life.

Keywords

Educational thought, life education, educational mode

Educational thought has a long history in ancient China, Mencius once proposed: "A gentleman has three pleasures, but the king does not have them. The first joy is to have both parents and brothers, and the second joy is to have no shame in heaven and no subterfuge in others; the third joy is to have the world's talents and educate them." (Yang Bojun, 1960). Xu Shen explained in "ShuowenJiezi" that "teaching is given by the top and followed by the bottom"; "educating is raising a child to make him good" (Xu Shen, 1963). It can be seen that education is both a practical process of leading by setting an example and also a purposeful value orientation in the family. Literally speaking, moral education is first of all education. And secondly, it also includes the skill teaching. Since the history of China's education, it has mainly focused on ethical education, including skills education, which is mostly one of the ideas serving political governance.

Western education was also strongly developed by the advocacy of religious forces. Of course, western education pays more attention to the internal origin of human beings. We can see that the original meaning of western education is "to educate" or "to derive" through the Latin education prefix "e", which means "out". "To quote" or "derive", that is, the so-called external means of education. The ultimate purpose is to bring out something that is hidden originally in the body and mind. From the perspective of the original meaning of words, in the West, "education" focuses more on internal development: education needs to let nature take its course, and bring out the inherent or potential qualities of natural persons from the inside out, so that they can become a realistic state of development. The reality is only the result, not the direct purpose.

In modern China, Western educational modes have entered the country, but the process has been relatively slow in light of the entire history of modern educational reform.

1. Changes of life education concept in modern China

Education is a very important link in the healthy operation of the whole society. In modern China, great changes have taken place in politics and economy, but the reform of education have lagged relatively behind, seriously affecting the image of people in the education system and the role they can play in society. People of insight have called for change. From Gong Zizhen, who advocated "self-reform" to Lin Zexu, who advocated "learning from the West", both the Westernization officials and the reformers of the Restoration School, extending to the top-down educational reform measures in 1902, all clearly stated that the goal of the new education was to revitalize the national state. This has two meanings: first, new skills must be taught to adapt to the revitalization of the national state; second, the fundamental purpose of "loyalty to the monarch and patriotism" must not be forgotten in the process of learning from the West. Whether it was Zhang Baixi who drafted the "Constitution of the Qin Ding Academy" or Zhang Zhidong who revised the "Constitution of the Zeng Ding Academy", the selfcultivation of moral character was still at the top of the list of all subjects in most of the school system reforms and subject changes. Extended to the Republic of China, the educational elites were still so obsessed with the utilitarian education based on ethics and morality so that it could be pulled apart between the new and the old morality, but the importance of mass education was also finally recognized (Gao, Li-Min, 2010). After the founding of New China, from the 1951 "Decision on Reforming the School System", which inherited both the educational experience of the liberated areas at that time and the reasonable factors of the old school system before liberation, while mainly learning from the advanced experience of the former Soviet Union's school system, to ensure the equal rights of the general public and their children to education. Pay attention to vocational education and cadres' amateur education. Of course, in the later process, the new education also embarked on the road of "more rapid, better and more economical". Until 1976, it was able to resume the normal track of education, but the goal of education is still to train the reserve force to participate in social labor (Peng Zeping, 2014). Of course, both the form and the content of the education reform in modern China has been deeply influenced by foreign educational philosophy. If we consider the educated people as the revitalizers of the nation or the reserve forces of social labor, it is very important to teach the content integrity and frontiers of ethics and various disciplines. However, if we look at it from the perspective of the educated people themselves, the most basic point of focus is that the process of education must first meet their own needs, and the content of teaching can be selective, focused and different, and the skills are also taught from the needs of the educated people themselves.

This is the problem that China has inevitably encountered and eventually needs to think about when learning from Western educational concepts since modern times, that is, whether our education starts from the mastery of basic knowledge and training of thinking or focuses on learning in real life and the cultivation of the ability to adapt to real life. After all, it is not a big probability that scientists will be produced through the educated people. The education is given according to the characteristics of the educated person himself, and the object of education is seen as a self-developer, and various knowledge necessary for real life is granted to help him/her achieve self-development and free development. Intelligent education, if developed to the extreme, will turn into plug-in or barracks education, and life-oriented education should also avoid completely sheepish education in advocating the development of the educated's emotional and aesthetic interests, etc.

At this point in our review, we need to examine the origins and development of the idea of life education and what new ideas should be established when China's modern education faces the above contradictions.

2. The conceptual development of life education in China and the West

Whether it is the individualized education of life or the model education of cultivating effective force for the overall social development, it is actually the product of social progress and development. It can be said that in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with the increasing achievements of human in science, technology and industrial revolution, the development of human beings has taken on an upward trend, optimism has risen and countries paid more and more attention to the development and popularization of their own education. People's demand for education also became higher and higher, and the understanding of human nature, especially the characteristics of young educated people, became deeper and deeper, and the exploration of the nature of education was increasingly on the agenda. Under the background of this development, various educational experiments and educational explorations as well as new educational trends and educational movements emerged in Europe and the United States, such as the New Education Movement in Europe and the Progressive Education Movement in the United States. Their main principles were: (1) The purpose of the new education should be to maintain and enhance the inner spiritual power of children; (2) Educators must study and respect the individuality of the child, keeping in mind that children's personality can be developed only through a training that guarantees the freedom of the child's inner spiritual power; (3) The new school should enable the full de-

velopment of children's natural interests; (4) The school community should be managed by the children themselves in cooperation with the teachers and school authorities in cooperation with the children themselves, while each child must know self-discipline; (5) The new educational system must replace the spirit of free competition with the spirit of cooperation. This spirit of cooperation will lead the children to serve the whole community.

From these principles we can see that the new educational philosophy continues the purpose of traditional elite education while implementing the philosophy of the individual as the purpose of education itself, so that we see the philosophy and principles evolving: education should enable children to appreciate the social and economic complexity of our times; at the same time, it should seek to accommodate the diverse intellectual and emotional needs of children with different personalities; it should help children to better adapt to the demands of social life by developing their individual initiative and responsibility. We should promote a spirit of cooperation, making teachers and students aware of the importance of differences in character and independent thinking. We should guide children to properly evaluate their national heritage and to welcome with pleasure each nation's special contribution to human culture. The progressive development rises from the individual to the contribution of the nation-state. In short, the new education believes that: the personality of the child is sacred; the needs of the child are the basis of any good educational system; and all children should have equal access to the wealth of knowledge and wisdom of their own people. It can be said that the whole educational trend focuses on the freedom of students to have free and natural development. Interest is the motivation for all activities. The teacher is a guide, not an overseer who assigns homework. Scientific research focuses on students' development, greater attention to children's physical development, adaptation to the needs of children's lives, and strengthening cooperation between school and family, etc.

Last, the educational ideas of Dewey and others advocate that education is for life, education is growth, and education is the transformation of experience. Taking growth as the purpose of education, a curriculum theory of learning by doing, and moral education must also be based on the level of psychological development of students (Wang Xiaohua & Ye Fugui, 2009). From May 1919 to August 1921, Dewey came to China to give more than 61 speeches, which had quite an impact on Chinese educational thought (Shan, C. H. & Wang, F. Y., 2007). Hu Shih's annotation of Dewey's philosophy of education extends to local thought of China. Using the philosophy of education of Confucius, using the words of the Three Character Classic, using the commentary of Cheng Zhu, using the Zen thought of clearing the mind to illustrate the philosophy behind Dewey's educational thought (Jiang Yihua, 1998). In a word, it focuses on the growth experience and feelings of the individual educated person. So this thought still had some influence on Chinese educational reform at that time.

There are not only resources of thought in Chinese local thought that focus on the growth of the individual mind, but also broader thought resources that focus on all living beings and life feelings, which is why this connection can occur in modern times. In ancient China, it was also concluded that the most precious thing for human beings is life. Therefore, it should be a very important and popular direction for modern education to let human life grow up healthily and happily.

3. Renewal of Life Education Classroom in China

At the end of the 20th century, life classroom research and life education research began to be indiscriminately conducted in China almost simultaneously. Through the joint promotion of experts and scholars, we have almost reached a consensus: the essence of modern education is life education; the classroom where the concept of life education is implemented can also be called the life classroom; the life classroom is the main channel and the main position for implementing life education. The ideal purpose of life education is the result of the exaltation of humanism; the life classroom is the main ashram for awakened teachers and students to show their life consciousness. To vigorously promote life education and life classroom in China, we need to carry forward humanism, so that education and its classroom can become a model classroom where life inspires life by first knowing and then knowing, and by first realizing and then realizing.

First of all, life (life, survival) education is a new educational concept that is indispensable for students' personality growth and physical and mental health. It can even become a separate subject at the secondary school level in China, but it should not be premature, much less should the establishment of such a subject be presented as a kind of educational achievement, which is the inner meaning of education that should be valued, not a result. Any way of formalizing and conceptualizing life education and attaching importance to the promotion of results is actually a symptom of neglecting the life growth of teachers and students. Secondly, it is also not advisable to link life education with exam-oriented education. Life education should not be bundled with exam-oriented education. trying to encourage students to study more intensively through life education, linking the concept of life education with students' advancement to higher education, making students feel that they have not seized the time to study, wasting their lives, failing the ex-

pectations of teachers and parents, and resolving to use their lives to grow up like studying well, and other forms of feeling education are actually a kind of disguised bundling. The essence of life education is for students to start learning to think about the meaning of life and then try to determine their own goals in life. However, students should not be directly told that studying, going to school, getting rich, etc. are the path to "success", and then use the life education curriculum to advocate students to study every second, and even a scary slogan "as long as learning does not die, to learn to die". Once learning becomes the sole purpose of an individual's life, it is worthwhile for education practitioners to ponder whether it has become anti-life education. From ancient times to the present, education has a direction, but life education as a new educational discipline and educational philosophy, can no longer be marginalized, or be utilitarian, formalized, but should be integrated into the learning life of students, student-oriented, respect for each individual student, so that each student learn to live a healthy life and take responsibility.

And then the old bottles are filled with new wine and life education classrooms permeates all disciplines. All disciplines and educational administration should establish the concept of life education and strive to achieve the form of life classroom. Education in all disciplines, for example, should teach students to ask what, why and how to do it, rather than simply rote memorization that neither understands the meaning of disciplinary learning nor translates theoretical learning into practical motivation. Education should no longer be a purely political appendage, but should draw on useful experiences and adhere to the right direction, based on both developing students' core literacies and penetrating the concept of life education. New wine in old bottles requires renewing educational philosophy from administrators at all levels to professors of subjects, establishing professional ideals, raising the threshold of the teaching profession and material and spiritual treatment, and encouraging teachers to promote life and inspire life in their profession.

Finally, the philosophy of life education should be connected and interactive at all levels and in all segments. Schools in each region should establish a linkage model and conduct regular inspection and interaction of life education, especially between schools with upgraded relationships. Of course, life education, especially life classroom, is not just a subject classroom, it is also a comprehensive education project. First of all family education, the education of parents is still the education of life in the first place, that is, filial piety. It also tells future generations that life is valuable and worthy of respect, but this kind of education cannot be overcorrected. The respect for life should be developed through the form and connotation of love. We should not only focus on the inheritance of life, but also based on the perspective of children's physical and mental health. We should let future generations learn to respect life, love life, experience the love of life, cherish life, understand life, and try to establish a positive outlook on life.

People are the products of society, and the general environment of society is important. Therefore, it is essential that the school administration and the social media discourse pay attention to the concept of life education and carry out various activities of life education, so that everyone from parents to students to society as a whole can cultivate the feeling of existence and the importance of life.

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