

CULTURAL EDUCATION: ANCIENT AND PRESENT-DAY

- 1) Cultural education under the Chinese context
- 2) Cultural education: implications and problems
- 3) The refinement of core values and cultural education
- 4) Application of cultural education to foreign language majors

CULTURAL EDUCATION: ANCIENT AND PRESENT-DAY

1) Cultural education in primary schools in ancient China

Cultural education in primary schools originated as early as the Western Zhou Dynasty (1046 B.C.-771 B.C.) in China. However, as an institution of education, primary schools did not appear until the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220), though the term “xiaoxue” (primary school) came into use in the early Western Zhou Dynasty, and the extended meaning of that term was derived in the Song Dynasty (960-1279), i.e. exegesis. Earliest extant textbooks serving that educational purpose were such reading primers as The Historian Primer (《史籀篇》), The Yuanli Primer(《爰历篇》) and The Instant Primer (《急就篇》), and those taught at that time were royal children.

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1) Cultural education in primary schools in ancient China

Cultural education in primary schools in ancient China focused on moral values, etiquette training and custom practices.

Education in ancient China gave great prominence to ethic and moral values in the Confucian philosophy. Those values were clarified and became systematized by the Song Dynasty. Neo-Confucianists in the Song Dynasty associated the Confucian ideology with “heavenly principles”, which deified Confucianism, infused elements of moral and ethic education into it and rationalized such education.

Many neo-Confucianists advocated that moral education should start from childhood, and the chief objective for primary school education is to provide children with guidelines for their conduct, but the ultimate goal is to cultivate a “moral heart” in them.

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1) Cultural education in primary schools in ancient China

In terms of moral education in ancient primary schools, the most fundamental aspect was self-respect and respect for others, which all resided in the codes of conduct taught to them, so that they were able to elevate themselves to the level of “daxue” (the great learning, collegiate education) and to the ultimate goal of “self-cultivation, family management, manors administration, and state governance”.

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1) Cultural education in primary schools in ancient China

Zhu Xi (1130-1200), a neo-confucianist, philosopher, educationalist and poet of the Song Dynasty, voiced strong and unremitting support for “xiaoxue” education, thinking that “xiaoxue” education should concentrate on moral education, particularly for children, so as to inspire respect, integrity and good will. In order to better promote “xiaoxue” education, he compiled a textbook called “Xiaoxue” (《小学》) at the age of 58, which consisted of The Internal Part (《内篇》) and The External Part (《外篇》).

The Internal Part is the main part of the textbook with four sections:

- (a) Moral Doctrines (《立教》): moral doctrines preached by previous emperors and monarchs
- (b) Social Relations (《明伦》): relations between monarch and subject, father and son, husband and wife, old and young, and friends, etc.
- (c) Codes of Conduct (《敬身》): ways of self-cultivation, table manners, dressing styles, etc.
- (d) Moral Examples (《稽古》): moral examples set by previous monarchs.

The External Part has two sections:

- (a) Maxims (《嘉言》): a collection of famous remarks by monarchs and noblemen
- (b) Beneficence (《善行》): a collection of stories about the noble behavior of monarchs and noblemen.

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1) Cultural education in primary schools in ancient China

Observations and implications:

- (a) Comprehensive, whole process, holistic
- (b) Underpinned by high-quality teaching personnel with assurance of perfection
- (c) Based on core cultural values refined from generations of inheritance
- (d) Enriched educational contents and well-written textbooks
- (e) A trinitarian model of education consisting of educational bodies, families and communities
- (f) Emphasis given to high morals, sound conduct, well-developed habits and styles, and abundance of norms

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2) Cultural education in the New Era - Universal cultural values refined from:

(a) Confucius culture: forgiveness, fidelity, filial piety, fraternal love, courage, benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and integrity.

(b) Revolutionary culture: “red” cultural values refined from revolution over various periods

(c) Constructional culture: cultural values refined from socialist construction

(d) Political culture; cultural values refined from political ideology, institutions, partisan and administrative ecology

(e) Popular values widely accepted by the general public

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3) The greatest value of cultural education resides in moral construction and talent cultivation.

(a) The nature of cultural education is guiding people with positive human values so as to facilitate interaction between mankind and culture and cultivate people through morality.

(b) The basic implication of cultural education is taking into account both knowledge and moral education for the pursuit of truth and values.

(c) The key to cultural education is giving equal importance to both general and specialized education for the purpose of holistic and personality development.

Culture is the soul of university education, and cultural education can help heighten university education and talent cultivation.

CULTURAL EDUCATION: ANCIENT AND PRESENT-DAY

4) Why has cultural education become an issue that needs to be addressed, since culture together with its influence is omnipresent and omnipotent?

(a) Culture is pervasive, everlasting, and unintentional, with no identification of good from bad and positive from negative

(b) Cultural education is comprehensive and systematic with combined efforts from families, communities and schools

(c) The New Era poses new demands for cultural and social undertakings, as well as school education and talent cultivation

(d) Drawbacks: unclear goals, concepts, systems, demands, assessments, planning, etc. for education

CULTURAL EDUCATION: ANCIENT AND PRESENT-DAY

Understanding cultural education

(a) A mode of thinking for moral construction and talent cultivation

(b) A work habit for moral construction and talent cultivation

(c) A formative process for moral construction and talent cultivation

(d) A spiritual instrument for moral construction and talent cultivation

(e) A fundamental function for university culture

CULTURAL EDUCATION: ANCIENT AND PRESENT-DAY

Functions of cultural education

Value identification

Thinking internalization

Behavioral incentive

Spiritual growth

Character optimization

Self-actualization

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Culture is a comprehensive and wide-ranging concept, and cultural education requires the refinement and selection of core values of a certain culture with focus on two categories:

(a) universal cultures: Confucian culture, core values of socialism, advanced accomplishments of western civilization, etc.

(b) specialized culture: core values refined from the cultures of industries you may undertake in your future career so as to serve as your guidelines of life and work

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For example, core values of the financial sector:

honesty; credit; contract; regulation; service; duty

Guidelines: honor credibility

execute contracts

exercise self-discipline

do one's duty

set a bottom line

advocate integrity

CULTURAL EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY

Guangdong University of Finance has formulated a set of campus cultures in association with its past, present and future and in the light of the industrial background of finance it relies heavily on:

- Culture of financial education
- Culture of financial innovation
- Culture of financial services
- Culture of financial governance

CULTURAL EDUCATION: APPLICATION

Basic principles:

- (a) Incorporate good things of diverse nature while retaining national and local cultural foundation with an open, respectful, inclusive and critical mentality
- (b) Accumulate attainments through acquisition in comprehensive and coordinated development of knowledge, competence and experience
- (c) Stick to the goal of holistic development led by healthy and advanced cultural philosophies
- (d) Encourage full immersion of cultures, as well as creative, critical and independent thinking
- (e) Achieve educational goals of cultivating well-grown, well-developed, and well-rewarded talents

CULTURAL EDUCATION: APPLICATION

Specific measures to be adopted for cultural education:

- (a) Insert cultural courses into curriculums: modules or course sets
- (b) Integrate cultural components wherever and whenever possible through guided readings
- (c) Create appropriate cultural atmosphere through building up platforms, brands, and themes of cultural activities and events
- (d) Form research-oriented cultural promotion teams that share common interests and work goals
- (e) Open up new channels of communication and exchanges between institutions, members of different cultural background, and people of different professional background from home and overseas.