

# Themes of Education Philosophy in Modern Society

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**Keywords:** Modern education philosophy, humanization, expansibility, practicability.

**Abstract:** For education in modern society, corresponding ideology is needed to guide proper and efficient educational work. It is positive for educational work to enhance study of education philosophy in modern society. In terms of current state of domestic education development, problems emerge mainly from objective reality and psychology of teachers and students. Education philosophies and thoughts tend to have several similarities, where humanization, expansibility and practicability of education are the most representative.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Education philosophy is a field where philosophy is used to interpret and influence human educational activities. Dating back to ancient times, some philosophies gave significant enlightenment to educational thoughts and ideas, such as Confucian thought of equal education for various students, and early thought system of materialism advocated by legalists. In modern times, people with lofty ideals paid more attention to education, with emancipation of minds and eastward spread of western culture (Wen Hengfu, Yang Li, 2012). This contributed to the formation of advanced and enlightened education mode which laid a necessary foundation for today's education prosperity. Due to inseparable relationship between education philosophy and educational activities, coordination of them helps achieve the goals — to impart knowledge and educate people and to rejuvenate China. On the contrary, without appropriate philosophy, teaching performance is likely to walk on a wrong path, ultimately trapped in the vicious circle of talent training and giving adverse guide and negative impact to students. Therefore, schools and teachers need some ideas of philosophies as guidelines to ensure their work in a right direction. Guided by education philosophies, teachers are able to grasp main contradictions in educational work, consider and balance all factors and prolong vitality of teaching practice.

## 2 CURRENT STATE OF EDUCATION IN MODERN SOCIETY

As a Chinese saying goes, strong youths lead to strong country. Education is the hope of a country and a nation, with next generation education regarded as a main approach to change future social life. Throughout history, education forms developed from old-style private school and imperial examination in ancient times to modern popular prenatal education, preschool education, compulsory education and higher education (Pan Xiwu, 2011). Whatever their purposes are, people commonly hope children to be well-educated for a better future.

Before studying in school, people, in most cases, are innocent, ignorant and pure. Enjoying those characters, they may fail to cope with kinds of challenges from cultures, interpersonal communication and complex society when they grow up. Education in fact is a process for a person to be physically and mentally matured, and form and perfect outlook on life and values. Both educational activities and philosophies displaying in activities will profoundly and significantly influence the innocent children.

Covering a long history of education, Chinese extracted precious experience and lessons from teaching practices in a long time, such as equal education without classification of students and striving with one's own efforts under teachers'

guidance. Chinese education now faces a huge amount of educated people, various types of education and spotty education levels, showing great differences in terms of time and space (He Junhua, 2008). It is easy to find schools enjoying good equipment, kinds of curriculums and strong teaching staff, while there are schools with few students, blocked traffic, one or two rural teachers, no fine blackboard and desks and chairs. Due to the huge objective differences, educational activities and qualities also diverge greatly from other schools.

In addition, students are forced into fierce competition by gradual saturation of education capacity. Students are compelled to study excessively due to issues of difficulties of going to school or entering higher schools; besides, heavy school work always squeezes out-of-class time. Such cruel learning mode will accompany students from kindergarten to senior high school and university for over ten years. For domestic students, grueling study has turned into a nightmare. In foreigners' eyes, Chinese students always study hard, though they are not born like this. Compared with American children aged around ten who receive liberal education and light homework within one hour, Chinese students have already been imbued concepts about score, test and enrollment rate by schools and parents. As results, student's nature and creative thinking are constricted, contributing to failure to dominate their growth and study even with strong learning inertia. This kind of education will expose its defects rather than improvement in the long run, leading to retrogression of scholastic ability and other students' abilities without promoting domestic education. Advanced educational concepts handed down for years are still significant models for modern education to learn from, such as incorporating things of different diverse nature proposed by Cai Yuanpei and emancipation of minds. However, facing improper distribution of educational resources and partial and rational educational concepts, school, together with teachers and parents loses composure. Proper and effective modern education cannot be achieved without recognition of social reality and stable promotion of education forwardly.

### **3 THEMES OF EDUCATION PHILOSOPHY IN MODERN SOCIETY**

#### **3.1 Humanization of Modern Education**

Humanization practically represents an enlightened attitude and inclination, upholding that respecting

every single person is essential prerequisite for certain social change. The renaissance in early Europe showed that recognition of people's views or thoughts and liberation of human nature can not only ensure correct and scientific guiding thoughts for activities but also accumulate strong spiritual strength for a team or group to promote people's behavior.

Education is a bright field where creative teaching and guiding work are engaged. Long-term psychological construct is required in teachers' imparting knowledge and training students. As with the concept of human innate goodness proposed by Mencius in *The Doctrine of the Mean*, everyone has a sense of sympathy, sense of shame and sense of right and wrong, which are indicated in modern education. Teachers are required to replace reprimand and punishment in class with proper and timely communication and psychological instruction in line with the efforts of function transformation of teachers and schools. For example, teachers are supposed to walk down rostrum into students, make friends with them for psychological intimacy, communicate with them and educate them. The change of attitude and identity not only helps with teachers' and schools' smooth transformation, but also psychologically relax students to carry out learning plan freely. Meanwhile, a bilateral communication mode between teachers and students is formed to gain knowledge and abilities.

In addition, humanization of modern education is also shown in specific teaching activities. Single and old teaching concepts cannot cope with a large number of students with various characters, and students aged around ten or twenty who think even more actively and boldly. Therefore, previous thoughts need transforming to improve education activities spirally and dynamically as soon as possible. At present, firm adherence to familiar pipelining teaching and duck-stuffing teaching hardly stops the teaching dilemma but escalate contradictions between students, teachers and teaching, ultimately destroying teacher-student cooperation. It is more significant to classify students' learning needs and treat students differently. With foci both on group and individual students, teachers are able to get a whole picture of students' learning to make use of scale advantages, and instruct individual student with best efforts for comprehensive development. Though this approach is bound to demand more manpower, and material and financial resources, it complies with its purpose — all for children. With different characters, students who have huge potential will infinitely enlarge positive effect of the investment. Therefore, talents in various fields will be discovered through education, making educational activities charming.

### 3.2 Expansibility of Modern Education

Facing chances and challenges brought by new social elements, domestic educational work now still needs refinement and improvement. Deng Xiaoping has ever pointed out that education shall be oriented to the needs of future, of the world, of the modernization, which now are keys to keep constant development of education.

Current educational work is different from that of two or three decades ago, mainly attributing to development of hardware devices. Teachers now take advantages of multimedia and remote resources in class while students replace their handwritten notes with multimedia courseware and electronic devices. In addition, Internet revolution provides both convenience and temptation for teachers and students through changing traditional class mode with textbook and notes in educational field — the peak of knowledge activities. Despite the easy access to knowledge brought by internet, educators are reminded to think about preservation of education value. Meanwhile, educators are supposed to turn students' volatility in information era into learning desire. Educational expansibility will be retained, with the dynamic tracking of education tendency and social talent demands and the timely understanding of current affairs' influence on talent training. Therefore, demands adjustment is likely to be conducted by catering to the policies.

Khan Academy mentioned in Salman Khan's book persistently carries out free online education which relies on strong internet function of resource transport and broad display platform. It wins good comments and reputation from the world mainly by its use of internet resources along with internet revolution and realization of its value proceeding from public benefit. Besides the development space brought by internet, educators are supposed to pay attention to hot issues, international interactions and educational innovations, which are fresh to people and have strong vitality from birth to death with possible changes. Therefore, people need to dig them up in depth within a very limited time to help with teaching activities, for example, topics may be about air accident of missing Malaysia Airlines flight 370, food safety issues about KFC and McDonald's, FIFA World Cup in Brazil. With topic's involvement in teaching activities, teachers are enabled to guide students to think about reasons of the accidents and instruct their seeing and hearing. Education constant development and innovation need endless materials to provide new ways and references, and various lessons from other parts of society to succeed.

### 3.3 Practicability of Modern Education

Different from the fixed pattern formed by imperial examination for selection of governors in ancient times, modern education particularly has practical significance. Specialized operation with high standards demands of people sufficient basic education and professional education. With the concept of education serving economy and society which is not customized for vocational education, kinds of education are supposed to combine purposes and aims with the demands of talent training. By the combination, education emphasizes more on some particular aspects according to social needs of talent for social and economic construction, in order to overthrow the "useless" bias of education and create fortune for humankind. As domestic education benefited from society should in turn benefit the society, modern education philosophy seems to follow this trend to bring powerful impetus for domestic education which stepped into a plateau.

As teaching plan of practical education is based on adequate practical surveys, teachers are guaranteed to change teaching focus by reliable data and practical experience. For example, in Chinese teaching, students' practical states may drive enhancement of practical writing, reading comprehension and proper curriculum adjustment. In terms of examination, corresponding adjustment may be conducted according to different practical value of different chapters, in order to examine and train students' strain capacity. All these adjustments require schools and teachers to break through the traditional exam-oriented education to optimize structure of teaching contents and ensure maximum benefits for students. Additionally, to discriminate and select good teaching plans also indicates practicability of education, with some impractical and idealistic innovations excluded from educational practice due to grandstanding and flashy contents. Though education is encouraged to stretch thinking and apply innovative concepts, the essences of education cannot be neglected. Education may achieve false prosperity by some strange titles and teaching performance as well as impractical methods which hardly represent the direction of education development, scarcely improve teaching quality but puzzle and disgust students. In measurement and evaluation of teaching innovation, people ought to be cautious to strictly balance practicability and feasibility. Teaching practice is essential to evaluate even fantastic teaching concepts, contributing to the prevention of distortions and the deterioration of education and the formation of precise understanding of education philosophy.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

Under the background of a complex and volatile society, constant development of domestic education essentially requires precise understanding of education philosophy. Studies and discussions conducted by specialists and scholars, along with educators' practices concluded the more clear themes of education: human concern for students, dynamic understanding based on internet and social affairs and continuous enhancement of practicability, all of which provide right direction for education development and space for educators' self-improvement. Meanwhile, other advanced education philosophies and corresponding ideologies will be examined and improved in teaching practices.

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