

Research on the Characteristics of the Historical Evolution of China's Educational Purpose

Dong LI

Suzhou Vocational University, Suzhou 215104, China

Email: lidongtjnu@163.com

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Abstract: Throughout the history of China's education development, the purpose of education in different periods has distinct characteristics of the times. To sort out the historical evolution of China's educational purpose and analyze its characteristics can better grasp the law of educational purpose evolution.

1. Introduction

Education arises from the needs of social production and promotes human development by passing on experience. As the starting point and important basis for educational behavior, the purpose of education “turns certain educational values into the trend of educational action, and makes it a standard for guiding and regulating educational behavior.” [1] At different historical stages, the emphasis of educational values is different, and the purpose of education also has distinct characteristics.

2. The Historical Evolution of China's Educational Goals

In the history of China's educational development, different eras and different characters have different understandings and judgments of human survival and development, and different ideas and choices for educational purposes. Combing the historical evolution of the purpose of education in China, looking back at history, we can learn from the past.

2.1 Evolution of Educational Purpose in Ancient China

The education of primitive society is restricted by the low level of productivity, and education is scattered in social production and social life, the purpose is to cultivate the basic survival skills of adults and form the moral quality of people. In the slavery society, a new form of education appeared in the separation of education and labor, but the class nature of education was obvious. Only a few people could enter schools to enjoy the right to education. The main purpose of education at that time was to cultivate a ruling class with military skills and political ideas. . In feudal society, in order to maintain the long-term operation of the state apparatus, the conservative hereditary system and strict hierarchical system were strictly observed, which also had a profound impact on school education. The purpose of education during this period was to cultivate virtuous

gentlemen to govern the country and the country. In the era of imperial examinations, the political function of education became more prominent. The purpose of school education is to “reserve talents to respond to subjects”, that is, to reserve knowledge through learning, apply for imperial examinations, and pursue official careers. In the Ming and Qing Dynasties, under the control of cultural autocracy, the imperial examination system became more and more the core of the education system, and school education gradually became a vassal of the imperial examination system.

2.2 Evolution of Educational Purpose in Modern China

During the Westernization Movement, under the guidance of the concept of “Secondary education is fundamental, Western learning is useful”, Chinese education began to focus on Western civilization. The focus of education is to maintain national culture, absorb foreign culture, learn advanced foreign technology, and continuously improve national strength on the premise of adhering to traditional ideology. Since the establishment of class society, the right to education of the working people at the bottom has been suppressed and restricted. Since the separation of mental work and manual work, manual workers have been in a disadvantaged position. Comrade Mao Zedong’s educational purpose in the Central Soviet Area was to closely link education and labor, emphasizing that everyone is equal, and everyone should have the obligation to work and the right to education. This was of epoch-making significance under the social background at that time.

2.3 The Evolution of Educational Purposes after the Founding of the People's Republic of China

In the early days of the founding of New China, the workers and peasants received extensive educational opportunities. At that time, the purpose of China's education was to cultivate “educated and socialist-conscious workers” who “developed in moral education, intellectual education, and sports”. [2] Affected by the social reality in the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the close integration of education and labor became an important policy for talent training at that time. In 1958, Mao Zedong proposed the “two musts” related to education: “Education must serve proletarian politics” and “education must be integrated with productive labor”. [3] The purpose of education during this period was society-oriented, and continued to strengthen the close connection between education and labor, which promoted social progress and economic construction, but lacked attention to individual development.

Throughout history, from “distinguishing the scholars, distinguishing their superiors and inferiority” to “elite education”, and finally achieving universal education, the educated group is constantly expanding. The purpose of education is affected by many factors such as social reality and cultural background. It has its own characteristics in different historical stages. It represents the course of human pursuit of progress and records the footprints of educational history.

3. The Evolutionary Characteristics of China's Educational Purpose

3.1 The Connotation of Educational Purpose is Constantly Enriched

Affected by the level of social production, education in primitive societies is closely related to life, and the purpose of education is narrow. Generally, it is to guide people to better serve life and production. In slavery society and feudal society, the purpose of education was basically society-oriented, with strong political color and obvious class nature. Maintaining political power and ensuring long-term stability are the main educational goals. After the founding of New China,

people as the main body of education received more and more attention. Before 1980, China's expressions of educational goals generally focused on moral education, intellectual education, and physical education. From the beginning to face up to the value of people and the cultivation of morality, intelligence, and physical, to the integration of aesthetic education, to the introduction of quality education and attention to the overall development of people, the evolution of the educational goals reflects the continuous enrichment of China's educational goals.

3.2 Deepen the Understanding of People

With the development of the times, from the loyal officials cultivated in ancient times to the citizens cultivated in modern times, the value of people after the founding of New China has been continuously discovered and affirmed. The purpose of education is to cultivate free and healthy people. It focuses on the awakening of human subjectivity and the knowledge of humans themselves. Ancient education aimed to “educate officials.” The purpose of Confucius' education is to cultivate gentlemen who govern the country and achieve good morals. Through private school education, the ruling class is constantly sending talents with political and ideological awareness and moral cultivation. Modern education aims to “educate the citizen.” In 1936, the Kuomintang government stipulated in the “Draft Constitution of the Republic of China” that “the educational purpose of the Republic of China is to carry forward the national spirit, cultivate national morals, train the ability of autonomy, and enhance the intelligence of life in order to create a healthy citizen.” After the founding of New China, education aimed to “educate people.” With human development as the starting point and end of education, we will continue to cultivate all-round socialist builders and successors. Continuous progress and comprehensive development in ethics, culture, ideals, and discipline will lay the foundation for personal growth and contribute to the cause of socialism.

4. Conclusion

Regardless of whether it is “learning to be excellent”, “sound citizens”, or “socialist builders and successors”, in the context of real society, only a dialectical understanding of the relationship between people and society can correctly guide the direction of educational goals. Realize the coordinated development of people and society. “The purpose of education should be the unity of human development and social development. This is because human development and social development are inherently inseparable, and both depend on education”. [4] Education in today's society must adapt to the development of modern countries, and through education, improve people's ability to understand the world today and create the world in the future, and promote social progress better and faster. At the same time, the realization of social goals continuously provides necessary conditions for human progress and helps human beings complete their own meaning construction.

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