



Chang Chien's Thought on Education

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Abstract

Chang Chien (1853-1926) was a native of Nant'ung, Kiangsu. In spite of the various works on Chang Chien, which testify to the significance of his role in modern China, Chang Chien's thought on education is still not well-researched. The purposes of this paper are firstly, to analyze Chang Chien's thought on education systematically and clearly in the hope that it may become a useful reference for researchers on modern China, and secondly, to stimulate scholars for further research. This paper depends more on basic source materials rather than second-hand data. Among various source materials, *Chang Chien's Diary*, *The Nine Records of Chang Chien* and *The Complete Work of Chang Chien* are the most important. Chang Chien's thought on education may be summarized as follows: 1) Education as a means of saving China and education and industry as basis of local self-government; 2) Universal and compulsory education for the primary education; 3) A planned education to be achieved step by step; 4) With special emphasis on industrial education; 5) With special emphasis on patriotic education; and 6) With special reference to Confucianism and strict education. The paper has also discussed the background to Chang Chien's thought on education, the factors which shaped it, and how it developed.

Keywords

Confucianism, Local Self-Government, Education, Industry

Subject Areas: Education, History, Philosophy, Politics

1. Introduction

1.1. Review on the Research Outcome on Chang Chien and the Purposes of This Paper

So far lots of scholars have done research on this topic; however, the answers to this question have not been completely discovered yet. Chang Hsiao-jo's *Biography of Mr. Chang Chien of Nant'ung* is a pioneer work which contains a great many source materials on this topic, however, this book suffers from loose organization and superficial treatment of Chang Chien's thought on education [1]. Sung Hsi-Shang's *The Career of Chang Chien* is less a biography than an annotated collection of source materials, drawn largely from Chang Chien's

works, supplemented by personal remembrances, but touches little on Chang Chien's thought on education [2]. Liu Hou-sheng's *Biography of Chang Chien* concentrates on the political events of Chang Chien's time, and touches little on Chang Chien's thought on education [3]. Samuel C. Chu's *Reformer in Modern China: Chang Chien, 1853-1926* emphasizes Chang Chien's role in industry, education, land reclamation, water conservancy and his involvement in national affairs including Chang Chien's thought on education [4]. Chang K'ai-yuan's *Biography of Chang Chien* discusses Chang Chien's career, political activities and Chang Chien's thought on education [5]. Chang Lan-hsin's *A Research on Chang Chien's education Thought* [6], and Chiu Li-ho's *Chang Chien's educational Thought* [7] both discuss Chang Chien's thought on education in detail, however, they have not discussed enough the connections among Chang Chien's thoughts on industry, education, self-government, constitutional monarchy and republic. Other works by Wong King-kong [8], Chang P'eng-yuan [9], Sun, Shun-chih [10] also give interpretation to Chang Chien's thought on education.

The fourth international symposium on Chang Chien held in Nant'ung on the 25th-28th of November 2006, 88 articles in relation to Chang Chien and modern Chinese society had been submitted to this symposium [11], and the fifth international symposium on Chang Chien held in Haimen on the 17th-19th of April 2009, 120 articles in relation to Chang Chien and Haimen: The Thoughts and Practice in the Early Period of Modernization had been submitted to this symposium [12], however, Chang Chien's thought on education still has not been fully explored yet. The purposes of this paper are firstly, to analyze *Chang Chien's* thought on education systematically and clearly in the hope that it may become a useful reference for researchers on modern China, and secondly, to stimulate scholars for further research.

1.2. Basic Materials

This paper depends more on basic source materials rather than second-hand data. Among various source materials, Chang Chien's Diary [13] is the most basic one, which covers almost 53 years from 24 October, 1873, when he was twenty years three months and twenty three days, to 2 August, 1926, twenty-two days before his death. This diary contains approximately 875,000 words by which we are able to understand the life of a typical Chinese intellectual, to check the exact dates of some writings of his, and to correct errors against related sources. The first part of Chang Chien's diary which covers approximately the period from 1873 to 1892 was published in Taipei in 1967; and the second part of Chang Chien's diary which covers approximately the period from 1892 to 1926 was later published in Taipei in 1969. These two parts of Chang Chien's diary were reprinted together in 1986 in Taipei covering the period from 1873 to 1926.

The Nine Records of Chang Chien [14] (Hereafter cited as Chiu-lu) is an indispensable source material to Chang Chien's thoughts and activities. This collection of his writings is divided topically into: Cheng Wen Lu (On Politics), Shih Yeh Lu (On Industry), Chiao Yu Lu (On Education), Tzu Chih Lu (On Local Self-government), Tz'u Shang Lu (On Philanthropy), Wen Lu (Essays), Shih Lu (Poems), Chuan Lu (Special Section), and Wai Lu (On the Civil Service Examination). Within each topical section the sources are arranged in Chronological order.

The Complete Work of Chang Chien [15] [16], and Extant Writings of Chang Chien [17] include some new data not found in The Nine Records of Chang Chien, are invaluable source materials to Chang Chien's thoughts and activities.

2. Early Life and the Development of Chang Chien's Thought on Education

Chang Chien (1853-1926), *tzu* (courtesy title) Chi-chih, *hao* (alias) Se-an, and Se-Weng, was born the fourth of five sons, on July 1st, 1853 in the village of Ch'ang-lo, Hai-men, Kiangsu, China, and died on August 24th, 1926 in Nant'ung, Kiangsu, China. Chang Chien began his student days in 1856 at the age of only four. His first teacher was his father Chang, P'eng-nien, who taught him to read *Book of a Thousand Characters*. The following year, 1857, Chang Chien was sent to a village school. The teacher was Ch'iu, Ta-chang, under whom Chang Chien in a period of seven years (1857-1863), had finished the primers such as *Trimetric Classics*, and *Books of Family Names*; the basic poetic readers such as *Works of A Thousand Poets*, and *Poems of A Boy Prodigy*; and the Confucian Classics such as *The Great Learning*, *The Doctrine of Golden Means*, *The Analects of Confucius*, *Mencius*, *The Filial Piety Classic*, and *The Book of Odes*.

In 1864, his father employed Sung, Hsiao-ch'I as family teacher to help Chang Chien and his brothers in the preparation for local examinations. The teacher asked Chang Chien to study again *The Great Learning*, *The Doctrine of Golden Means*, *The Analects of Confucius*, and *Mencius*, but from better editions. Then he proceeded

to teach the boy *The Book of History*, *The Book of Change*, *The Book of Rites*, and *T'ao's Commentary of the Spring and Autumn Annals*. Under his teacher's effective guidance, Chang Chien learned to write examination poems and examination essays required in the examinations. Unfortunately, this enthusiastic teacher died in the summer of 1866, and Chang Chien was sent to follow Sung Lin, the dead teacher's nephew, in a neighboring village, Hsi T'ing. Under the new teacher, Chang Chien advanced to study *The Rite of Chou* and *The Book of Ritual* [14] (Chiu-lu, Chuan Lu, chuan 6, 2a-4b).

Chang Chien's examination life was a long and toilsome history. In the first stage, Chang Chien spent only five years, 1864-1868, in preparation, successfully passed through the district, prefectural, and Yuan (one conducted by provincial literary examiners) examinations, placing twenty-sixth in the latter, and was classified a Fu-sheng (Licentiate) in 1868, at the age of sixteen [1].

The second stage Chang Chien spent seventeen more years, 1869-1885, failed five times in the provincial examinations. The degree of Chiu-jen continued to elude him until 1885, when he competed in the provincial examination and succeeded in placing second highest among who passed.

Chang Chien spent nine more years, 1886-1894, in preparation, failed repeatedly four times in the examinations for Chih-shih degree in Peking in 1886, 1889, 1890, and 1892. In 1894, at the age of 42, Chang Chien, at the insistence of his elder brother, Chang Ch'a, and the encouragement of his aged father, once more took the metropolitan examination. This time, his name was found in the sixtieth position. He improved on this in the re-examination by placing tenth, and when the palace examination was over, he was chosen to be Chuan-yuan, the highest of all.

He was duly appointed a Compiler of the First Class in the Hanlin Academy. Unfortunately, only six months after he had won the highest title of Chuan-yuan, he lost his father, who had played the most important role in his examination life. Four years later, in 1898, when he had decided to take no office in the government and when he was busy promoting local development in his home area, Chang Chien did not forget to come back to Peking for his last examination in Hanlin Academy.

Through the traditional training, Chang Chien had accepted the pragmatic and the reciprocal aspects of Confucianism which later functioned as his guiding spirit in promoting industry, education and self-government as the foundation of a constitutional monarchy, and then a republic. Chang Chien's basic idea of serving people has never changed, however, the practical use of industry, education, local self-government, constitutional monarchy and republic had changed according to situations.

3. The Contents of Chang Chien's Thought on Education

Chang Chien's thought on education has close connections with his thoughts on industry, local self-government, constitutional monarchy and republic. The main lines of Chang Chien's thoughts may be summarized as follows: "industry as the basis of education; industry and education as the foundation of local self-government; and local self-government as the basis of constitutional monarchy or later a republic" [10].

The contents of Chang Chien's thought on education can be summarized as the following: "education as a means of saving China and education and industry as basis of local self-government; universal and compulsory education for the primary education; a planned education to be achieved step by step; with special emphasis on industrial education; with special emphasis on patriotic education; and with special reference to Confucianism and strict education".

3.1. Education as a Means of Saving China and Education and Industry as the Basis of Local Self-Government

3.1.1. Education as a Means of Saving China

In order to save China, Chang Chien thought, people should have general knowledge. In order to acquire general knowledge, education should be promoted. Education, according to Chang Chien, was not merely "instruction", but was the means for people to obtain wisdom, learning, and knowledge. Especially, he argued that industry and education are means to wealth and power while education is the key to enlighten people's wisdom [14] (Chiu-lu, Tzu Chih Lu, chuan 1, 8a-8b).

As for various kinds of education, Chang Chien emphasized universal education, primary, normal and vocational education. Vocational education aimed at producing the talents for the improvement of industry, and normal education aimed at training the teachers suitable for primary schools which he regarded as the foundation of

universal education for the people. He said in 1903:

People cannot become learned automatically unless basic education is popularized, and education cannot be popularized without the instruction of teachers. Therefore, to establish schools, priority should be given to normal schools, and then, primary schools [14] (Chiu-lu, Chiao Yu Lu, chuan 1, 17a).

Chang Chien believed that the development of industry was a means by which he hoped to achieve national strength. Industry was deemed necessary for providing the financial basis for education.

3.1.2. Education and Industry as the Basis of Local Self-Government

Chang Chien thought that industry and education were the foundation of local self-government. He expressed this point of view on different occasions throughout his career. In 1904, he said:

I think education is the basis of local self-government, and that education can prove to be useful to the country only after being universal [14] (Chiu-lu, Chiao Yu Lu, chuan 2, 2a).

In 1906, he expressed that:

Let the ultimate initiative of constitutional monarchy come from government, for private individuals had better pay their primary attention to industry and education which will function as the foundation of local self-government [14] (Chiu-lu, Chuan Lu, chuan 7, 14b).

In 1915, he said:

The strengthening of a nation depends upon local self-government whilst industry and education function as the foundation of local self-government [14] (Chiu-lu, Tzu Chih Lu, chuan 2, 9b).

And in 1919 he expressed that:

In an attempt to do something essential, the scholar-gentry ought to devote themselves to the cause of local self-government. The affairs of local self-government are very complicated, yet industry and education should be given first priority, just as Confucius himself had the idea of enriching and educating the people [14] (Chiu-lu, Tzu Chih Lu, chuan 2, 20a).

Obviously, Chang Chien regarded industry and education as the foundation of local self-government, and also avenues to a strong nation.

3.2. Universal and Compulsory Education for the Primary Education

Chang Chien was an advocate of universal education. He saw a system of universal and compulsory education in elementary level as the basis of both local self-government and a constitutional system of government on the national level, and also as a means toward a strong and powerful nation. He was inclined to set up his primary school system in a way that all the school-age children within a given area would have an opportunity to attend school. He attributed the civilization of the West and Japan to their universal education. The following quotations from his works are ample to demonstrate this. In 1904, he said:

The people in the interior are so unenlightened that education cannot be expected to be universal without enforcement [14] (Chiu-lu, Chiao Yu Lu, chuan 2, 2a).

In 1905, he said:

The Western countries and Japan now become forerunners of civilization though they were civilized later than China. The reason is that they develop a universal education [14] (Chiu-lu, Chiao Yu Lu, chuan 2, 17b).

In 1905 again, he said:

The first step toward a constitutional government is universal education [14] (Chiu-lu, Chiao Yu Lu, chuan 2, 11b).

In 1911, he said:

Education is the only way for China to come back to life after death [14] (Chiu-lu, Chiao Yu Lu, chuan 3,

11a).

In 1912, he expressed that:

The Chinese intelligentsia have found themselves disgraced and come to realize the necessity of universal education since the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895 [14] (Chiu-lu, Chiao Yu Lu, chuan 3, 15b).

And finally in 1925, he said:

Education is the basis of a strong nation [14] (Chiu-lu, Chiao Yu Lu, chuan 6, 15a).

Some of Chang Chien's contemporaries had the idea of universal and compulsory education at the elementary level as well. For example, in 1898, K'ang Yu-wei proposed that education must be universal and compulsory at the elementary level. K'ang borrowed this idea from what he knew of Frederick the Great of Prussia. He suggested elementary schools should be built in the villages and let all children seven years of age to attend them. Parents of those who failed to attend would be punished. In 1902, Liang Ch'i-ch'ao expressed his inclination to a system of universal and compulsory education in primary school level as well. K'ang Yu-wei and Liang Ch'i-ch'ao had merely appealed this to the government. However, Chang Chien had made efforts to achieve this on his own [10].

3.3. A Planned Education to Be Achieved Step by Step

Chang Chien thought that education, especially basic education was very important for the people and the nation. But without suitable teachers, it was impossible to extend basic education, and hence he advocated the establishment of various kind of schools in this order: normal schools first, serving as the purpose of training suitable teachers, then elementary schools, secondary schools, and finally colleges and universities. Although in 1901-1902 he failed to convince Liu K'ung-I, then Governor General of Liang-chiang to adopt his development program, Chang Chien himself did carry out this idea in his home country, Nan-t'ung. The establishment of various schools in Nan-t'ung was wholly under his initiation and direction. He established various schools there mostly with his own resources and partly with the help of his friends. The government gave him neither interference nor assistance. His rationale, penned in 1902 was:

I think I have the obligation to promote local development in my home area...If the promotion of education is to rely on the government officials, it would be very hard to anticipate when the program would be carry out [14] (Chiu-lu, Chiao Yu Lu, chuan 1, 15b).

3.4. With Special Emphasis on Industrial Education

Chang Chien thought that "industrial knowledge" was one of the most important elements in education [14] (Chiu-lu, Chiao Yu Lu, chuan 1, 13a).

He had an idea of "parallel advancement and interdependence of industry and education". He said in 1914:

The advancement of industry is the result of technical education, and the development of technical studies is also the outcome of the industrial experiments [14] (Chiu-lu, Chiao Yu Lu, chuan 4, 2b).

He emphasized utility in education and advocated the teaching of science and technology. He cautioned his students on numerous occasions against retreating into ivory towers. He emphasized the utilitarian aspect of modern education, saying that knowledge was to be applied rather than pursued for its own sake. Students should keep abreast of the latest developments at home and abroad so that they could take stock of the larger situation and preserve a proper balance between learning and living. He had no doubt that the pursuit of science and mastery of technology would lead to enormous benefits. He believed that the traditional Chinese tendency to shun exactitude had to be overcome and be replaced by a proper regard for scientific precision [4]. To this point, Chang Chien took notice not only of scientific technology but also scientific spirit of precision.

3.5. With Special Emphasis on Patriotic Education

The purposes of education, for Chang Chien, were to serve as the foundation of local self-government and at the same time, to "save China", and hence Chang Chien emphasized patriotic education. In 1902, Chang Chien

indicated that “Nationalistic sentiment” was one of the most important elements of education by saying:

What China lacks is the three elements of education: national sentiment, industrial knowledge and military spirit [14] (Chiu-lu, Chiao Yu Lu, chuan 1, 13a).

And in 1908, he again stressed the importance of patriotic education:

Why is it necessary for a nation to provide education? The purpose of education is to arise people’s commitment to the nation [14] (Chiu-lu, Chiao Yu Lu, chuan 3, 2a).

And hence patriotic education was one of the major concerns of Chang Chien as a means to “save China”.

3.6. With Special Reference to Confucianism and Strict Education

Chang Chien spoke in favor of Chinese classics as an indispensable component of school curriculum on a number of occasions. In 1903, at the outset of his efforts to establish Nan-t’ung Normal School, he defended classical writing against those who wanted it de-emphasized. He emphasized that it was important to enable normal school students to write Chinese clearly and exactly by teaching them Chinese classical writing [14] (Chiu-lu, Chiao Yu Lu, chuan 1, 17b-18a). In 1907, he added a special section to the curriculum of the middle school for the mastery of classical Chinese [14] (Chiu-lu, Chiao Yu Lu, chuan 2, 26b-27a).

Chang Chien stressed the importance of maintaining rigid discipline in the teacher-student relations. Chang Chien thought that strict discipline would lead to the proper method of dealing with problems, and this in turn would cause people to respect education. He underlined strict education and compared a school to an army in 1912:

An army cannot relax its duties. A school cannot relax responsibility. This is the custom of all the republic in the world today. If an army relaxes responsibility, then it cannot be led by a general. An army without leadership would meet certain defeat. A school without teaching is bound to collapse [14] (Chiu-lu, Chiao Yu Lu, chuan 3, 12b).

In fact, it is inadequate to compare an army with a school as an army emphasizes “absolute obedience”, but a school should be a place to offer knowledge and independence of thought. In spite of his lack of Western ideas of freedom and individualism, Chang Chien had emphasized the utilitarian aspect of education as a means to promote industry and other local affairs to save China.

4. Conclusions

Chang Chien thought that education and industry are mutual assistant, education and industry function as the basis of local self-government, and local self-government service as the basis of constitutional monarchy or later a republic.

Chang Chien’s thought on education may be summarized as follows: education as a means of saving China and education and industry as basis of local self-government; universal and compulsory education for the primary education; a planned education to be achieved step by step; with special emphasis on industrial education; with special emphasis on patriotic education; and with special reference to Confucianism and strict education.

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