

The Cultivation of Preeminent Teachers: Multi-Value Orientation and Core Value Guidance

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Abstract

Preeminent teachers, the public-received example in the modern teacher cultivation system for this new era, represent the specific pursuit of educational value and the significance of value education. This paper focuses on the goal of the education value of “preeminence” as a key theme. It analyzes the generation, reconstruction, and conceptual reshaping of educational values, based on which to illustrate the nature of the ecosystem of educational and cultural values for teachers with multi-value orientation as the foundation and with teachers as the major participants. It provides a “non-instilling” and goal-orientating surviving strategy for the learning and practical subjects and a discovering mechanism for core educational value so as to consider the value-oriented growth and cultivation of future teachers from the perspective of values.

Keywords

Preeminent Teacher, Preeminent Teacher Cultivation, Multi-Value Orientation, Core Value Guidance

1. Introduction

The *Opinions of the Ministry of Education on Implementing the Preeminent Teacher Training Program 2.0* stipulates that generally it is necessary to “innovate mechanism model, deepen the collaboration in talent cultivation, and make the connection before and after one assumes the position” so as to “cultivate high-quality, professional and innovative primary and secondary school teachers with deep commitment in education, solid professional foundation, boldness in teaching innovation, knowledge of comprehensive education and lifelong learn-

ing and development ability”. In terms of the target, “by 2035, the comprehensive quality, professionalism and innovating abilities of normal school students should be improved significantly, and a solid foundation laid for cultivating millions of backbone teachers, hundred thousands of preeminent teachers and ten thousands of educator-level teachers.” To implement the *Preeminent Teacher Development Program 2.0* is an inevitable requirement for building a high-quality, professional and innovation-driven teacher team in China for the new era. To explore what is “preeminent teacher” and how to cultivate preeminent teacher, we need to focus on the value and dimension of the value.

2. The Value of “Preeminent Teachers”

Preeminent teachers, the public-received example in the modern teacher cultivation system for this new era, represent the specific pursuit of educational value and the significance of value education. According to its definition in the Opinions of the Ministry of Education on Implementing the Preeminent Teacher Training Program 2.0, the goal for cultivating such teachers can be interpreted as follows: First, preeminent teachers should be outstanding before assuming the position and still so after, so the means of cultivation and resources should be integrated throughout the whole process. For preeminent teachers are playing a major role in education, “preeminence” is not an abstract or permanent concept, and instead, it is historical, dynamic, conditional, and procedural through the whole study and career processes of teachers. More popularly, the sayings of “there is no best but better” and “always on the way toward better results” reveal the pursuit of preeminence. Second, preeminent teachers are required to follow the core value and boast relevant knowledge and professionalism. In one word, the cultivation of preeminent teachers involves at least two dimensions of time—before and after the employment and three requirements for their quality—value, knowledge and ability. “Preeminence” is a combination of appeal to value, the pursuit of knowledge and requirements for the ability for the trainers and the trainees. Specifically, educators need to receive related education ahead of time before becoming preeminent teachers with deep commitment in education, solid professional foundation in knowledge, boldness in teaching innovation, knowledge of comprehensive education and lifelong learning and development ability. Among them, the appeal to value exercises controls over the pursuit of knowledge and requirements for ability, because the acquisition of knowledge and ability training for the learners are based on the appeal to value as the internal driving force. The activity to acquire knowledge and the ability training process contains the judgment of the value by the subjects, the value orientation and the behavior of value selection. Therefore, it is believed that the primary problem of preeminent teacher training can be attributed to value issues. The existence of human beings is oriented by nature, so the development of teachers in the future relies on their pursuit of value. The concept and image of the “teacher in the future” are created here to indicate their traditional roles, in-

cluding the roles of normal school students but also the expectation for the future “preeminent teachers” and the cultivation of the future educators. In this sense, the cultivation of preeminent teachers is mainly a kind of value-based training relied on the present and oriented toward the future. It is necessary to give play to the value of teacher education and the leading role of ideas and beliefs, and also to highlight the subjectivity of the participators, stimulate the survivability of the trainees, and thus enhance their ability to reflect on educational practices.

3. Value-Oriented Education: From Value Generation and Reconstruction to Conceptual Reshaping

The generation and reconstruction of education value and the conceptual reshaping are not only the endogenous processes of general educational practices but also the historical premise for the cultivation of preeminent teachers as a certain activity of value education. Therefore, we need to explore the secrets of these processes in educational practices and daily interactions and happening sites, to decode how the meaningful world of education is constructed.

3.1. Educational Practice and Value Generation

1) The dual structure of practice. According to Marx’s point of view, practice is a perceptual and objective material activity of human beings to actively transform the world. “All social life is essentially practical.” [1] A specific practical activity involves two kinds of relationships—the objectivity relationship between the subject and the object in practice, and the communicative relationship between subjects in practice. The two relationships are preconditioned, mutual conditioned, and mutual constrained, and together constitute a dual dialectical structure of practical activities.

2) The object-oriented practice and the building of value relationship. In practice, the object is a concept in relation and contrast to the subject. The objectification of the subject is the process of transforming, infiltrating and integrating of the essential power of the subject as human. Accordingly, the essential attributes and laws of the object are constantly open to the subject, and the object continues to approach the subject and meet the needs of the subject according to the subject’s scale. Thus, based on the objective activities of practice, the value relationship between the subject and the object can be constructed, and the subject and the object unified.

3) Communicative practice and generation of values. The construction of the value relationship between the subject and object of practice is the process of the generation of value consciousness such as value judgment (exist or not), value evaluation (high or low) and value selection. From the initial generation of the subject’s consciousness of value until the final formation of the value concept is inseparable from the communication between the subjects of practice and their relationship. According to Marx, “The essence of human is not the abstraction of

a single person. In reality, human is the sum of all social relations.” [1] With human as the subject of practice, the generation of values comes from the objectification of practice and the communication of subjects of practice. In essence, this generation is the result of social and spiritual communication, and hence that of social culture.

3.2. Educational Communication and Value Reconstruction

1) Education is communication. The opposition and unity of teaching and learning constitute the basic contradiction of educational activities. The communicative existence of both teaching and learning subjects indicates the essential existence of education as to “what it is” and “why it exists in this form”. The “teaching” by teachers and the “learning” by students mainly revolve around the educational and teaching objectives for “knowledge and skills, processes and methods, and emotions, attitudes and values”. Here, the text imbued with information and conveying “knowledge and skills” has become the object and medium of communication among various subjects in the field of educational activities. In this process, there are at least three types of communications, namely, that between teachers and students, that among students and that among teachers. The teacher-student communication constitutes the subject of educational communication, and the teacher-student relationship becomes the main part of educational communication.

2) Educational communication and value reconstruction. Intersubjective communication acts as the main part of educational communication and targets at a perceptual and specific people in reality. Its value is to satisfy people’s needs, especially those for the growth of students and the development of teachers. Thus, the level of human beings as subjects is higher than that of the text as the carrier of knowledge, and the value of human is higher than that of objects. The intervention of educational communication and related mechanism converts the single and one-way knowledge imparting in traditional educational activities into the process of value reconstruction, which is the return to the reconstruction of value relationship and the initial intention of education. It will inevitably lead to the transformation of the relationship between teachers and students, among students and teachers, and then realize the successful transition from knowledge-based standard to human-oriented standard.

3.3. Educational Discovery and Concept Reshaping

The relationship between thinking and existence is a basic philosophical issue. The unity and opposition of both highlight the first position of the “existence” and the independence of human consciousness. “I reflect on myself three times a day.” Why does and can education exist, or that education is an activity specific to human beings instead of animals lies in human’s independent reflection on objects, themselves and others, and related construction of meaning and value discovery. According to D. Schon, a US scholar, the teacher’s professional

growth is essentially a process of “practice-reflection.” The essence of reflection is about the teacher’s examination of himself or herself (and the group he/she belongs to) based on educational practice and experience, equal dwelling on students and the rediscovery of education. “Practice-reflection” constitutes the core link of the mechanism of the entire educational discovery. It links teachers’ educational discovery and the journey toward preeminence.

The generation of education concept, or the concept of education value, represents the subjective consciousness activity of an individual and also the product of spiritual communication in a group. It involves three stages: Reflection on practical experience—discovery of educational value—reshaping of educational concepts. It concerns the relationship of three types of subjects: that between teachers and students, that among students and that among teachers. It is also about three types of objects of educational value: teachers, students and education. Here, the reshaping of educational values embodies the “the negation of the negation” of the core values of education, that is, the outlook on teachers after the discovery about teachers, the outlook on students after the discovery about students, and the outlook on education after the discovery about education.

4. Cultivation of Preminent Teachers: Multi-Value Orientation and Core Value Guidance

On the basis of investigating how the value of education is generated, reconstructed and reshaped conceptually, the preminent teacher training for the new era should be based on the subject-based practice and the logical and historical consistency in multi-value orientation and core value guidance for teacher education at a higher level. To inspect the value dimension in preminent teacher training, we need to insist on the dialectical unity between “multi-element” and “core”, “orientation” and “guidance”, and “logic” and “history”. That is to say, we should not only admit the objective existence of multi-element education but also stress on the historical discovery of the core educational value. We should also attach importance to the exploration of the discovery methods and generative mechanism of core educational value.

4.1. Value Orientation: An Examination of the Concept of Multi-Element Education Value in Reality

“As a subjective phenomenon, value is pluralistic in essence; because the subject is pluralistic, value pluralism can basically be regarded as another way of saying that ‘value is a subjective phenomenon’.” [2] We can begin with the subjectivity of value and reflect on the teacher education in China today from a pluralistic perspective, and on the basis of exploring the generation, reconstruction and conceptual reshaping of educational concepts, consider the value of training preminent teachers from the standpoint and interests of the participator, which is the existence of teacher education in terms of values.

The research on the value orientation of education for teachers is inseparable

from the exploration of the value of the subject of education. In a specific field of teacher education, several teacher education activities are involved with multiple subjects participated and teaching and learning as the core. The trainees also include normal school students. According to the logic in which concept guides the action, and the value guides the behavior, the educational activities in which the specific subject participates must inevitably contain the educational value orientation of the subject. At the same time, this value orientation must be based on individuals, with dynamic and generative characteristics. In the educational practice, the cultivation of preeminent teachers is also the process where the value orientation and value guidance of each subject involved in educational activities generated. This process has characteristics of discontinuity and context-based generation. In the same educational field, the diversity of the subject indicates that of value orientation, and is manifested in the “harmony yet difference” in outlooks on teachers, students and education in the opinion of the subject.

Considering the theoretical propositions and practice-based topics of preeminent teacher training from the standpoint and interests of the participating subjects is of great educational value in itself. Kant believes that “empirical rules are not suitable for neither universal external nor universal internal legislation; because everyone resorts to the subject as the basis of their hobbies, while other resorts to another subject, the hobbies that have priority clouts with the subjects are ever changing.” [3] Recognizing the multi-value orientation based on multiple subjects can, first, enhance the initiatives of the participates involved in education; second, promote exchanges, collisions and integration among multiple educational concepts and viewpoints; third, gather teachers’ education resources to form a background in this regard with supports from multiple sides; fourth, further highlight and ensure the key role of the normal school students as the subjects for value expression and an important pole in the coexistence of multiple values.

It is the diversity of the subject of education that determines the diversity of its educational value orientation. Therefore, there are hidden contradictions and conflicts among pluralistic values in the relationship among multiple subjects. Such contradictions and conflicts are manifested in: First, because each subject is based on different presuppositions in terms of educational value, it is difficult to form a consensus on values; second, because each subject is based on different relationships in terms of “education”, “teacher” and “student”, it is difficult to form shared value; third, because the cultivated experience the transformation from an object to a subject, the normal school students are still in a “poor” position at least in the initial stage when it comes to the expression of their values as multiple values coexist, and their subjective powers in education may be concealed or lost.

In summary, from the standpoint of the subject, the existence of values around the cultivation of preeminent teachers is structural, and its mul-

ti-symbiosis is manifested in:

First, the subjects participated in teacher education activities are diverse. The ontological intersubjective relationship, which is mainly that between the trainers and trainees, supports a more multidimensional intersubjective relationship.

Second, each participant has multiple educational concepts. There are outlooks on teachers, students and education, which are different for the different meaning constructions of each subject.

Third, each educational concept is multi-layered in value dimension. It is mainly related to time (past, present and future), space (individual, collective and group) and content (symbol, text and thought). With the values about students as an example, the students' images based on teacher's perspectives of the past, present and future can better reflect the students' characteristics of growth and the appeal to embodying the social fairness and justice.

The alienation and interaction among the multiple subjects of multi-element education, the conflict and integration of multi-dimension educational concepts, and the coexistence and transformation of multi-layer values have jointly constructed an ecology about the modern teacher education culture value based on a specific field. This kind of structural and systematic value ecosystem serves as the basis and cultural soil for the quality training and value inculcation for preeminent teachers.

4.2. Value Guidance: Historical Discovery of the Core Educational Value

According to Marx's concept that "an educator should be educated first" and the practical proposition regarding preeminent teacher training, we find that the trainees, or the future teachers, are both objects and subjects alike who should never absent from the construction of the education value relationships. They should be present, and the result is the establishment of value from value losing. They can critically examine the practical issue of the cultivation of preeminent teachers. As a core educational value (not the ultimate educational value), "preeminence" exercises control over the multi-value system of teacher education and marks the value guidance of various teachers' educational practices. The essence of guidance is the guidance of value, or any kind of guidance must contain value orientation, such as the guidance of ideological and public opinion in social and political life. From general value education activities to universal teacher education practice to specific topics about preeminent teacher training, a process of value transmission and progression is involved that covers "orientation - value orientation - core value orientation". However, the orientation we are talking about here is "non-instilling". Based on the core education value concepts, the learning and practice subjects will create logical and inner life, living, and survival activities. This kind of orientation, that is, the survival-oriented activities with purposes, includes the suspension of core value objectives, the presupposition of the meaning of educational value, and the resetting of the

mechanism of educational discovery. As for the issue of education discovery, Wu Yalin, a scholar, believes that discovery is about “uncovering” and “removing the cover”; “the process of value discovery should be about considering others in one’s own place and solving future problems based on the existing solutions”; “One should at first discover the value of his or her own existence and life.” [4] Thus, the future teachers should rediscover the ideas about teachers, students and education based on the extensive communication with teachers and students in education, and form new outlooks on teachers, students and education in a dynamic manner. In this paper, we define the “re-discovery” activities based on the multiple communication relationships between teachers and students as a generative mechanism, transmission route, and expanding way for core value concept. It should be the perceptual enlightenment, rational consideration, and questions about values, and the essence is about the exploration and discovery of the value of education. Being familiar with something does not mean knowing its essence, but thanks to the involvement of “discovery” tools and mechanisms, the subjects concerned are still able to turn “impossibility” into “possibility”.

4.2.1. Outlook on Teachers after the Discovery of Teachers

The awakening of human self-consciousness is a key to and leapfrog step toward the enlightenment of the human as subject and individual subject either when human beings bid farewell to savagery and greeted the civilized era or when children entered the stage of conscious competence from infancy. Future teachers will conduct self-examination and self-questioning based on role-playing and professional learning and practices to achieve professional identity. It is a journey of self-objectifying or of discovering the role of teachers by the subject of education. Based on the shared identification of people from home and abroad to teachers, it is a social symbol that refers to his or her quality, knowledge and skills. As a social identity, it is based on the profession and industry. And in social relationship, it serves as a link among schools, families and society. Therefore, the future teachers’ discovery about this identity or career should be the reflection on, discovery and recognition of the symbolic value, occupational value and relational value, on which basis the new concept about teachers is created. Here, the generation of the outlook on teachers indicates the discovery about teachers based on the value judgment, value evaluation and value selection with teacher being the symbol, occupation and the sum of relationships. Only with the discovery about teachers, could the reconstruction and reshaping of values for teachers happen. Therefore, the subjects who will face the future teachers and teachers who will be trained for better adapting to future are both required to discover the essence of teachers.

4.2.2. Outlook on Students after the Discovery of Students

The “research-based” teacher education advocates that future teacher must learn to observe and study about children. For the future teachers, their generation of

outlook on students is based on the discovery about students and the realistic review of the relationship between teachers and students. Discovering of students is the logical starting point for future teachers' generation of the correct outlook on students. According to the view on discovery-based image, "Children are active learners who can acquire knowledge in an environment that cultivates their qualities and imparts knowledge." [5] It is consistent with the image of the children in a background of self-learning, cooperation and exploration advocated in China by the new curriculum after its reform. It inspires us to view and treat students in their shoes and shape the image of students in our mind. Specifically, it is necessary to discover students by putting them on an equal basis and studying about them, so as to integrate the subject of education with the educated and the essence of teachers with that of students.

Putting students on an equal basis means the establishment of an equal relationship between teachers and students from the perspective of children, and the formation of an education pattern oriented on students. The discovery about students is mainly to understand and study about students, that is, to focus on the needs of students and grasp their characteristics through static observation and dynamic communication. Here, "the research on students is a process of discovering students, constantly correcting the position of one being an educator and seeking a better way to interact with students. Of course, it is also a process of knowing more about the significance of the study about students." [6]

The key to understanding and studying about students is to achieve the integration of the subject for teaching and the object for learning. Sukhomlynsky believes that "teachers should not only impart their knowledge to children but also be the researchers on children's spiritual world. They are researching the complex mental work and the formation of personality. Only those who are good at analyzing their own work can become effective and experienced ones. To analyze various educational phenomena in one's work marks the first step toward the peak of wisdom in education." [7] "The wisdom of education" means the "culmination in education" in China. It represents certain apex as one devotes all the efforts to learning and exploring, or as "teachers and students have achieved unity." For teachers or students as leading parts in education, the "objectivization of essential forces" is a synchronous and mutual-influenced process. In the outlook on students after the discovery about students, each student is an independent individual with vitality and unique personality. A student is a subject, a life space, and a social network. The premise and foundation of education are to understand and study about and thus promote the improvement of every student.

4.2.3. Outlook on Education after the Discovery of Education

The discovery of education is not about discovering the origin of education, or what education is. Besides, its mission is to discover the meaning of education. There is an important concept in phenomenology—intersubjectivity. It holds that intersubjectivity is the sharing of meanings among subjects. "When a rule is

understood and used by a group of people, a common context is created. The meaning of 'education' will be shared in this group of people. It is used under the same rule. Phenomenologically, it is due to the fact that these people have something in common in the 'lifestyles' constructed socially and historically, including the intention, pursuit, purpose, interest and others. That is how 'intersubjectivity' is formed." [8] Therefore, it can be held that the meaning of education results from the interaction among the subjects of education and the emergence of intersubjectivity.

The teacher education theory in phenomenology advocates that "teacher training should proceed from the world the teachers live in and the meaning of their life." [9] That is, educational wisdom should arise from the world where we live. The discovery of the meaning of education by future teachers is a return to the grasp of the mechanism and process in which the meaning of education is generated based on intersubjectivity. This mechanism and process indicate the generative mechanism and process of the outlook on education held by future teachers. The discoverers of the significance of education should be the subjects of education discovery and must be the participants in educational activities. It requires future teachers to first go deep into the scene of educational activities rather than holding an indifferent manner or attempting any ineffective solution; second, it is necessary to engage in frontline education practice in advance. Besides, normal school students are also required to carry out systematic probation, internship and study. Finally, such systematic activities should go through the whole process, be comprehensive and involve all. They should be continuous in time and extensive in terms of participation, and function as a mandatory requirement for all participants.

5. Conclusion

The existence of human beings is oriented by nature, so the development of teachers in the future relies on their pursuit of value. The cultivation of preeminent teachers is also practiced to promote their values. Value oriented education lays a foundation for the generation, reconstruction and conceptual reshaping of educational values. The structural existence of multi-element educational values indicates the building of a cultural value ecosystem for teacher education in the ontological sense. The guiding role of the core educational value directs to the life, living and survival of the subject in terms of value. The oriented, or purpose-directed survival of teacher education, includes the set of core value objectives, the presupposition of the meaning of educational value, and the resetting of the mechanism of educational discovery. The future teachers will form new outlooks on teachers, students and education in a dynamic manner based on their rediscoveries about the teachers, students and education. The "cultivation of preeminent teachers" is an important theoretical and practical topic that emerged during the transition from traditional to modern teacher education. The discussion on the topic of value education is constantly conducted with new

achievements, which is of theoretical value and practical significance for the overall development of teacher education. As for the discussion about value education based on teachers' education, the theoretical value is that common studies on value education mainly focus on the recessive or explicit objects of young students, lacking the reflections or reviews on the educators, or teachers. As for the practical significance, determined by the idealism and value of the career of teacher, our exploration on the value education issues of teachers is still unfinished. Important as the requirement on teachers' professionalism is, we should never ignore the value-related cultivation for the development of teachers. The life of teachers should be illuminated with the meaning of life and reshaped in a poetic space. The generation and discovery mechanisms of educational value concept, which this paper focuses on, take the communication behaviors of all the subjects of education as the logical premises. It does not discuss the inheritance and promotion of culture, especially the core educational value, in the community with a shared future for mankind. The conflict about the education codes between individual subjects and the universal ones for all mankind will generate another problem, without the participation of the individual education subject, will the universal concept of value still exist? Maybe the answer lies in the history of the education practices of all mankind.

Note

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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