

Education for the new millennium essay

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The internationalization and indigenization of education is a universal issue that has been continuously debated, but a conclusion or consensus to the issue is unlikely in the foreseeable future.

Perhaps a change in perspective will help to resolve this issue. The essence of this approach is to ask: What is the essence of the internationalization and indigenization of education? I believe the essence of the internationalization or indigenization of education, or a combination of both, is the rationality of education. For the convenience of the discussion, I have suggested in this paper two connotations of internationalization and indigenization of education: (1) the internationalization and indigenization of educational practice; and (2) the internationalization and indigenization of educational research. Internationalization of Education No doubt, it is a tangible fact that the internationalization of education is sweeping the world.

The basis of this development is the growth of economic globalization and information science and technology. Such changes have brought about universal participation in the international market, the sharing of information resources, the surmounting of barriers of time and space, and that more people are joining the “ global village. ” These developments are certainly not limited to the sharing and merging of the above; more important, they include the merging of cultures, ideas, thoughts, and behaviour. (Yang, 2005) If education, as a form of culture, attempts to disassociate itself from this great international tide, it would be like trying to “ leave the world by pulling its own hair. Going along with this tide is at least an indication that China’s education does not wish to become a “ marginal individual” and has joined this universal trend.

(Li & Yuan, 2003) It is worth reflecting on whether internationalization of education is a mere behavioural reality. The crux of this question is this: Did education merely follow the great tide of internationalization? Was it passively swept into the tide? Clearly, internationalization did not occur only with regard to education, nor is it a reality only in China's current educational development. More important, it involves an assessment of the present trend. Internationalization is not merely a fact; it is a conviction, a desire. The reason is simple. If internationalization were merely a fact, then compliance with this phenomenon and the internationalization of education that follows can be reduced to this logic: All that exists is rational, and all that is rational is real.

(Yang, 2004) Thus the conclusion is that the internationalization of education is not merely a fact; it should and must be a value, a value choice and behaviour reflecting the new social setting and the spirit of the times confronting education. Huang, 2006) Internationalization of education is both an "inevitable" fact and a "necessary" value. Thus the rationality of the internationalization of education rests in the dialectical interaction between an "inevitable" factual assessment and a "necessary" value choice.

(Chapman, 2002) To test this, one should examine whether education can or should become "amply" or "completely" international. Such an investigation, conducted on the level of educational theory and research, should clarify two issues. . Are there any limits to internationalization? Obviously, all educational theories have their limits, and none can become completely international. Generally, theory is a joint product of culture and society. Western educational theory is the result of abstraction and

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verification made by Western scholars using given tools and methods to study the issues and education of their society.

Educational theory resembles an internal mechanism and a circulatory system. Importing theories from abroad is like detaching an organism, and the transplant can survive only under an entirely suitable environment. In real life, people always consciously or unconsciously rely on an existing mentality and culture, to understand, accept, and apply educational theory from other countries, with the result that “antibodies” are likely to develop causing “rejection” and “complications.” The transplantation of theories from abroad requires a “breaking-in” process in order to adapt to the new environment. Yang, 2004) Such theories cannot be directly used as reference. Furthermore, because of differences in cultural values and background, the theoretical assumptions of Western education on many basic issues are quite different from those of Chinese education.

Since complete internationalization of education does not exist, the rationality of the internationalization of education can only be expressed as an active choice on the basis of complying with objective trends. (Huang, 2006) 2. Is it possible to transplant educational theory from abroad accurately and completely? There are two facets to this question: First, is it possible fully to understand all the educational theories from abroad? There is a huge volume of work on education abroad, and educational theories from abroad are constantly being generated and renovated. Undoubtedly, one cannot be familiar with every one of them. One can only go as deep and as far as one’s antennae can “feel” into such theories in the pursuit of internationalization of research into foreign educational theories. Thus “
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drawing experience from abroad” will inevitably be like “ peeping through a hole” or “ narrow internationalization. (Li & Yuan, 2003) Second, is it necessary to understand every detail of educational theory from abroad? The answer is also no. To the extent that indigenous education has its special characteristics, one should not, nor is it necessary to, understand every detail of educational theory from abroad.

Moreover, Westerners cannot assert that their theories have universal applicability. Many scholars conduct research in China or other countries in order to re-examine and verify their theories. This situation has long existed in Taiwan and Hong Kong, and was, by and large, the nature of research that earlier Western scholars conducted there. (Chapman, 2002) We can see that conforming to the trend of educational internationalization is not necessarily internationalization nor is it rational internationalization. The essence of developing rational internationalization of education does not rest on conforming to the tide but rather on making rational decisions in the face of the tide of internationalization. Indigenization of EducationThe “ indigenization of education” can be defined in many ways, yet one aspect is basic: the clear awareness that all education have national characteristics, and grow and develop only in the soil of its indigenous culture and under given social conditions.

What is the rationale for indigenization as an educational concept and practice? By and large, indigenization emanates from two different mechanisms. The first is an emotional complex, and the second is reason. The rationality of indigenization rests in the interaction between emotion and reason. The “ emotional complex” was originally a psychological concept

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referring to a desire repressed by one's consciousness but that is constantly active in the subconscious. It is an instinctive impulse. Here, I define emotional complex in a broader sense as a contradictory, conflicting, and even distressful sensation produced by a certain nostalgia for and obsession about one's homeland. People with such a complex are deeply aware that the internationalization of education is making inroads into their country amid a trend toward globalization.

Education cannot avoid merging with educational development abroad. However, the subjective mentality of tenaciously defending matters that pertain to one's homeland is expressed in confusion and conflicts. When the "indigenous" collides with the "international," there is a reluctance to discard what must be discarded and an unwillingness to accept what must be accepted. (Yang, 2005) The mind is filled with contradictions and resentment. Fear arises that internationalization will cause education to drift aimlessly, losing its indigenous orientation and deviating from its cultural tradition. (Chapman, 2002) Admittedly, amid the great tide of the internationalization of education, the "emotional complex" in indigenization is, to a certain extent, an emotional motivation to retain the national characteristics and self-respect in education.

If appropriately exercised, it may serve as a "fire wall" that effectively smothers the colonialisation of life and the marginalization of one's status. (Li & Yuan, 2003) However, one should take note that such concerns for survival may be an impulsive emotional expression that may cause education to take an irrational course. Hence one must rationally examine whether the calls for indigenization of education are, in the final analysis, the

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expression of an emotional complex or a rational choice. The answer is clear: The essence of indigenization is a quest for rationality in education. It should and must be the result of rational decisions and rational choices. The rationale for the indigenization of education is as follows: 1. Any indigenized education has its own cultural background, historical traditions, and national characteristics, and at the same time has its limitations. Education must maintain its national nature and national characteristics, but long-term isolation will inevitably relegate indigenous education to a “ marginal zone” of internationalization.

2. Indigenization is a process of constant growth and renovation under given socio-historical circumstances, and rational assimilation will accelerate this process. 3. Indigenous theory developed in China should not be applicable solely to this society and its academics, nor is it an excuse to isolate itself in the name of “ academic self-determination” on the part of a marginal society. Instead, we should, through rational self-reflection, attain self-criticism and self-emancipation. (Huang, 2006) We can see a similarity between the emotional complex and the rational complex in the indigenization of education, namely, the emphasis of both on national characteristics.

At the same time, the two have clear differences: The former emotionally guards the home culture; the latter focuses on the national character of education but rejects the traditions of education. (Yang, 2004) The conclusion is that in the indigenization of education, we should not become a prisoner of our emotional attachment to our country. We should rationally

reflect and make decisions on the basis of a healthy and deep love for our country.

Internalization and Indigenization of Education A Re-examination of the Issue

To conclude, the essence of both the internationalization and indigenization of education rests in the rationality of education. The true meaning of internationalization of education is not to make education conform to a certain " tide" in either form or content, nor to invest it with a certain common international nature. It means that education accepts certain educational concepts, methods, and systems that manifest the spirit of the times and therefore becomes more rational. (Li & Yuan, 2003) Both internationalization and indigenization possess attributes of both rationality and irrationality.

Hence we may formulate the inherent nature of internationalisation as " a value choice for education in the process of globalization. " We may formulate the inherent nature of indigenization as " a manifestation of educational rationality that originates in, but supersedes, national emotional attachment. In other words, the rationality in the internationalization of education lies in a subjective choice made in the objective reality of the globalization trend; and the rationality for the indigenization of education rests on the pursuit of a rational education strongly identified with national character, sentiments, and desires at a specific historical juncture. Clearly, therefore, the orientation of both internationalization and indigenization of education is the sublation of irrationality in the theory and practice of extant education or, more precisely, in extant Chinese education, and the quest for new and greater educational rationality. The problem is this: What is the

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rationality of education? Hegel maintains that the core of rationality is action consistent with regularities. (Chapman, 2002) The basic requirement for action consistent with regularities is the unity of universality and specificity, objectivity and volition.

“ In abstract terms, rationality is, in general, a unity of the interpermeation of universality and specificity. More specifically, rationality here refers to the unity of objective freedom (i. e. , universal will) and subjective freedom (i. e. , personal desire in the pursuit of specific objectives).

(Li & Yuan, 2003) If internalization is interpreted as the universality of education and indigenization is interpreted as the particularity of education, then the combination of universality and particularity “ consistent with regularities” is the dialectical interaction of internationalization and indigenization of education. Perhaps it is still difficult for us to answer specifically and explicitly how the internationalization and indigenization of education dialectically interact or how to realize the rationality of internationalities and indigenization through such interaction—in other words, to realize the rationality of education. However, we can generally point to the internationalization of education that does not embody the spirit of universalisation and to the indigenization of education that does not embody the requirements of particularity.

(Huang, 2006) In other words, further examination must be made of the deviations that may exist in the internationalization and indigenization of education. During the internationalization of education, “ educational imperialism” is a tendency that affects, at a deep level, the rationality of

education, and we should take special precautions against this. It is difficult to provide a concise definition of “ educational imperialism. ” (Chapman, 2002) The British scholar Tomlinson offers us two definitions of “ cultural imperialism” from which we may draw inspiration.

The use of political and economic power to exalt and spread the values and habits of a foreign culture at the expense of a native culture. ’ ” If we expand on this theory, “ educational imperialism” may be understood in two ways: 1. Western nations, from their position of economic, political, and military strength, may begin with a cultural invasion in their efforts to take over the world, and that, of course, includes education. 2. Developed Western nations may not directly proclaim “ educational imperialism,” and it may be difficult to identify and detect. This development against the backdrop of complex political and cultural settings may well evolve into “ educational imperialism,” resulting in the “ sacrifice” of indigenous education. Thus “ educational imperialism” exists in two forms.

One is the deliberate political and cultural action of economically and socially advantaged developed nations; the other is the conscious or unconscious educational and cultural acknowledgment of the developing countries. “ Marginalization of education” is a trend we must guard against in the indigenization of education. 1. The indigenization of education is giving prominence to national specificities and cultural characteristics in the present drive toward educational diversification and between indigenous and international education. It is not overlooking or rejecting internationalization in order to remain in the margin of international education. 2. Guarding against “ marginalizing education” does not mean that a country’s

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educational system should pursue international education in core countries. Modern education and its research should attach importance to, but not join ranks with, international trends.

3. Communication and integration are the major trends in the development of education, and the rationality of education is a result of constant interaction and integration between educational systems of all nations. Such communication and integration give impetus to modern education. It is clear that persisting in indigenization does not mean rejecting internationalization. Internationalization without national characteristics undoubtedly possesses neither prospects nor vitality, but placing oneself in the margin of modern educational culture will deprive one of the opportunities to participate in modern educational development, and cause that process to lose vitality and to exist in isolation. Since the internationalization of education is already an immutable objective reality, marginalizing oneself cannot avoid internationalization. Insistence on marginalization will only result in involuntary internationalization. References Li Bing; Yuan Jianhui.

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