

GLOBALIZATION AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

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As well known, the globalization, caused by the rapid development of ICT (Information and Communication Technology), is becoming an inevitable trend in the present world. The developed part of our human society, not the whole world, is undergoing a fundamental transition from a knowledge-based economy to a knowledge-based society. In general the Chinese government and people in China are taking a positive attitude toward such change.

The rapid economic expansion and the vehement social changes in China since the adoption of reform and opening up policy in 1978 have been one of the hot issues in the international community. Over the last 26 years, Chinese GDP has grown at an average annual rate of more than 9 percent, bringing the per capita GDP 5 times higher (1), and the number of people in absolute poverty has reduced by over 100 million (2). The remarkable poverty-reduction in a country with 1.3-billion people speaks for itself of a substantial contribution to the global stability and development. Many consider China's leapfrog progress and change as a wonder, for just in 1978, the post-Cultural Revolution China was almost in bankruptcy and chaos. In 1965, the entrance rate to elementary schools, junior high schools and senior high schools, was 85%, 22% and 4.4% respectively and the university enrollment rate was 2% (3). All education sectors suffered huge damage during the Cultural Revolution. Teaching activities were stopped and research was postponed for at least 10 years. After the Cultural Revolution, we could say that we did not have money, or research, or human resources as well as no social order. Full-scale reconstruction and construction needed to start. So what was the driving force behind China for such a rapid change?

The reason, in my opinion, is that the late Mr. Deng Xiaoping, the chief-architect of Chinese reform, had responded to public aspiration, and proposed policies of reform and opening up that won unanimous support.

Within a short time, hundreds of millions of people became committed to the reform in action and heart. This force on the part of the public is the most fundamental and greatest drive behind this social and economic development.

The economic change in China, it could be said, is an outcome of the drawing on experience of western developed nations. China is among the first developing nations to embrace globalization, and was an active participant in WTO entry. For more than a decade, top leadership has been engaged in the decision-making and promotion of GATT and WTO negotiation. Negotiation for entrance to GATT and WTO was carried through from July 1986 to December 2001, which is over 15 years. China was among the scores of signatories, almost 40 countries, on the Trade in Educational Services, later called cross-border provision of education. In 2004, China had an import and export of over \$1,000 billion, accounting for 60% of total GNP (1). And it has sent more than 800,000 scholars to universities and research institutions in developed nations after 1978. The students from China now studying in OECD countries are the largest group of overseas students in those countries, accounting for over 10% of foreign students in OECD countries (4). Internet users in China are over 100 millions (5). The Chinese government and people cognize and actively participate in the joint effort in global issues, such as sustainable development and risk management. In summary, the positive attitude toward globalization is the major trend in China.

Why China, a nation long submerged in spontaneous agriculture economy, could embrace an open policy? There are strong philosophic and historical roots behind. The traditional philosophy in China emphasized world over nation, and family over individual. In Chinese culture the country is regarded as an expanded family and the whole world is one big family (天下一家). At the height of Chinese dynasties, the ruling group either tried to pacify the world, or to preach Chinese culture. Of course, there were economic and cultural exchanges between Chinese civilians and foreign counterparts. But the rulers tended to regard these exchanges more as an export of Chinese culture. The gate of the nation had been closed in 13th to 14th century, when its strength declined. In the China-Britain war in 1840, the gate was forced to open and the Chinese were awakened in defeat. And it ushered in more than a century of humiliation, backwardness, and bullying. Many history intellectuals went abroad to seek the way for the retrieval of China. After the establishment of the New China in 1949, China had a period of contacts with the former Soviet Union and some Eastern

European nations, but later closed its door again in the early 1960s. The Cultural Revolution was further featured by beating fellow countrymen with the door tightly shut. This is too abhorrent to many Chinese, who had drawn the lesson of 'the backward would be bullied'. So Deng Xiaoping was enthusiastically applauded when he proposed the reform and opening up policy. People found it easy to take the open concept, especially in economic perspectives.

After 20 years of re-opening, the Chinese started to summarize and reflect on some issues, including the clashes between eastern and western cultures and values.

'When we open the door to let in fresh air, it is inevitable to have some fliers and mosquitoes', this is a sentence often quoted when Chinese talk about the open-door policy. The current globalization process is carried out with economic activities and market entries. What have been introduced to China are often the market-related western cultures and values. However, what people see and experience are often not the best parts of western cultures. Instead, pop songs dominated music imports, sex and violence for online games, money-the-supreme and egoism for values. All these fanned up misunderstandings in China about western cultures and worries of 'culture invasion'. Hence the question of how to retain cultural identity while opening the economy became the focus of attention, and started to influence the drafting of education policies and scheduling of the curriculum. The issues of political and economic steadiness in globalization, of course, are there and closely intertwined with the maintenance of cultural identity. We will not, however, go into great depth to discuss the two issues today except their direct implications on cultural identity.

These reflections of crash between eastern and western culture projected into two different attitudes and approaches in education.

One school maintains that we should intensify traditional culture education among students, for example, to require a five-year kid to recite ancient poems that he cannot understand. A very influential academician in the Chinese Academy of Engineering preached in conferences and newspapers that the Chinese should recite ancient articles, just like Westerners recite the Bible and Muslims recite the Alcoran (6). He requests his graduates in engineering departments to recite the Analects of Confucius, the famous philosopher and educator in China some 2000 years ago, and Dao De Jing (Taoism Scripture) of Lao Zi. Studies in Chinese Ancient Culture have been resumed in many famous universities, and recently some universities have rebuilt departments or research institutes of ancient Chinese culture.

Another school goes to another extreme by advocating that western nations still dominate, or are the mainstream of the 21st century in science, technology, and economy; that materials in English dominate the Internet. So a child should learn English, and if possible, should go abroad to study, the earlier the better. In some cities, especially the ones with better economies, students going abroad are becoming younger and younger. Some Western theories of education and even curriculums are introduced directly to classrooms.

Sino-foreign culture relations often bothered the Chinese during the opening up. The debate on the aforementioned two attitudes, refusing or totally accepting western cultures, has been on and off for more than 100 years. Many patriots have proposed solutions, such as 'using foreign means and ways to serve Chinese interests', 'Chinese substance and western function', etc. But they failed to go into further depth, and did not set down many cases of success or relatively complete theories.

What is culture? It is said to have more than 500 definitions according to some, but at least more than 20 definitions are considered authoritative. A UNESCO official, when he and I were discussing the definition issue, said culture was the daily behavior of people. This definition seems to be too simple. Professor Xu Jialu defined culture as all materials, institutions, and spirits that mankind has created, and categorized culture into three kinds, i.e., material culture, social culture and philosophic culture (7). I would prefer that culture is, or mainly is the representation of the spiritual domain. It may have material or mobiles as the carrier, but culture is actually the spiritual civilization or ideologies that sustain the tangible form. What is culture? I think it should be multi-layers, highbrow and popular. The basic level is daily practice and behaviors. The second level is art, literature, and science, which are the processing, abstraction and sublimation of real life, history, tradition and culture. The third level is theory and thinking, including philosophies. The fourth level is religion and political beliefs.

Culture is superstructure, and is closely interrelated with the development of productivity. There is no such thing as a unified universal culture, though the core connotation might be similar in most of the evolutionary phases of mankind. It is highly important to maintain cultural identity or diversity in globalization.

Cultural identity was put forward and reiterated many times by Professor Fei Xiaotong, the famous Chinese sociologist who passed away only recently. The arrival of the information age and the expansion of globalization, he believed, are making the globe smaller. In such an interna-

tional context, all nationalities, countries and regions will have their cultures communicated, clashed and integrated (8). It is because of this very reason that we should promote cultural identity, and should understand clearly our own culture and others' cultures as well. Only by doing this can we build a better future for mankind in a diversified world. Cultural identity refers to an individual in a certain culture who knows the identity of the culture, i.e., its history, evolution, features and future, without any purpose of 'cultural returning'. It is not for 'returning to the old time' or for total westernization and self-denial. Cultural identity is to enhance self-awareness over cultural change, to be accommodated in a new environment, to choose own development in a new age, to reflect the relations among global cultures in a new situation, to avoid the culture crash and to build understanding and tolerance.

Professor Fei's theory won recognition among sociologists and educators. We need to, in our new times, have serious discussion over feasibility, especially for education. I would like to brief you on some pilot projects and researches currently underway.

Both western and Chinese cultures have their fine parts, where common features could be drawn and easily communicated, as it does in the case of science culture.

I think the culture of science and the value of science are part of the essences of western culture, and also the very thing that the Chinese culture lacks and should have. The culture of science is also something each culture could share. Science knows no border. It is where peoples can find intercommunity and common language. The communication among scientists is always easy. This is why the international science community could launch joint efforts over the years to promote inquiry-based science education in different nations.

The education of science aims not only to impart knowledge, but also to launch a new culture, including the world outlook of life, way of thinking, and orientation of values, etc. The science culture from the West also needs adaption according to Chinese culture. While we study the Western science culture, we introduce it to the Chinese culture environment, and have it reshaped and upgraded.

Chinese culture not only has many traditional arts, crafts, calligraphy and poems, but also advocates the middle way, benevolence and righteousness towards people, and to 'look at a picture from at least two different perspectives'. This is instructive for harmony and steadiness. It could be drawn upon by the western education, including the science culture. Here

I would like to give an example of ‘wind’ teachings in kindergartens and let us see the contrasts. In this module we want children to understand that the air is a kind of material, and the wind is the moving air. This context is taken in French and Chinese kindergartens as well. As a scientific concept it is no different, but as you look at the wall pictures made by children in one kindergarten in Beijing, you can see that already they fast and innately use Chinese philosophy. They put the impacts of wind into positive and negative parts: the wind is our good friend and the wind brings disaster to our society (9). Our colleagues from the French Academy were surprised as they visited this kindergarten and saw these beautiful pictures.

In the past decade, cultural differences in perception; judgment and memory have been observed: Westerners give greater attention to focal objects, whereas East Asians give greater attention to contextual information. I can also cite here a recent study to demonstrate how different Chinese and American approaches can be while observing the same issue. This is a study at the University of Michigan and was published on PNAS last August (10). In the study they measured the eye movements of American and Chinese participants while they viewed photographs with a focal object on a complex background. It discovered that the Chinese made more saccades to the background than the Americans did, the Americans tended to look at the focal object more than the Chinese did. It shows the difference between cultures in the cognition process. The research in our Center is also explaining the difference existing in the emotional development of children between cultures.

To keep the essential part of each culture is not only in the interest of developing nations, who are not leading science, education and culture development in the world, but also in the interest of the developed countries. It requires joint efforts from the two. The developed countries should export their culture essence, not the undesirable parts. China should continue to learn from the West, especially the science culture, a culture underscoring analysis and exemplification, while continuing our whole-picture and two-perspectives approaches. China should learn the western respects for individuals, while inheriting our traditional recognition of family and society, and also the spirit of contribution and sacrifice. The people in the developed nations need to know China, its culture essence, and especially the Chinese values and its comprehensive dialectics. This diversity of cultures and their exchanges and communications will help to build a harmonious and sustainable world. Inquiry-based science education is to be a road to our dreamlands, and a bridge to understanding and cooperation.

About 6 billion people of 2,500 ethnic groups in more than 200 countries dwell on Earth now and the endeavor to build a world of harmony only becomes possible by culture identification and cooperation.

Education is to shape the future. Education is the investment in future. While drafting our education policies, we should think of the future, a future for the irreversible globalization, and think how to build a future that both East and West can develop in harmony. Only by doing this, can we realize the sustainable development of mankind.

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