

A Study of Integrating a Current Event into a University Chinese Course to Discuss ‘Desire’ and ‘Righteousness’ of Moral Education

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Abstract

There have been campus accidents one after another around the world. In Taiwan, a horrible murder of a university student took place on 2015/3/4; the cause was love-related desire. It is university education’s responsibility and obligation to improve students’ moral character. For this reason, this study was motivated to integrate this current event into a university Chinese course to explore literature related to ‘desire’ and ‘righteousness’ using a qualitative research method. The interpretations of ‘desire’ and ‘righteousness’ in the literature were analyzed and the results were summarized to help improve students’ mental health when dealing with people and situations and to enhance universities’ moral education function.

Key words: *desire, righteousness, university Chinese course, moral education*

1. Introduction

On 1998/3/9, Student A, a female graduate student, from University A, killed her love rival, destroyed the corpse with aqua regia (Huang, 2014). Seventeen years later (2015/3/10), a scary murder in which the body was burnt took place in southern Taiwan. Student B, a male second-grade university student from University B, considered by his classmates as a gentle and mature person with no temper (Huang & Huang, 2015), is thought to have asked for sex and when refused, he strangled the victim, raped her corpse, brought the body to Kaohsiung, and burned it (Li, 2015). Fifty days later, on 2015/4/30, another student C, a male student from University C, wooed a female student while there was another wooer (the victim) and failed. Student C invited the male victim, student D, to have a drink and ‘negotiate’. Student C was suspected of having drugged student D’s drink and strangled him to death. Then, student C burned the body using a gas burner (YE, 2015). The causes of the above three cases are all related to inability to control individual desire and, thus, doing something immoral. To date, University A has only disclosed an investigation report, concluding how important moral character cultivation is and that inability to restrain one’s own behaviors may lead to social unrest when there is no way to maintain harmony and order (The message of National Tsing Hua University, 1998). This conclusion of the report is merely a viewpoint and thought regarding the event, with no practical solution for education. Thus, this study aimed to integrate this current event into the university Chinese course, a required course, to help students identify and learn more about ‘desire’ and ‘righteousness’, in order to implement moral education for students.

2. Literature Review

The previous studies related to ‘desire’ can be divided into three categories: (1) studies exploring ‘desire’ from the aspect of language, (2) studies discussing and making comparisons regarding viewpoints of ‘desire’ by thinkers or in writings, and (3) studies exploring integration of ‘desire’ into theoretical fields. To date,

there has been no study about Chinese teaching materials that combine ‘desire’ and ‘righteousness’ with a current event. Thus, this study wished to make a start and inspire more studies on this topic.

3. Methods

This study aimed to explore the definitions of ‘desire’ and ‘righteousness’, as summarized below. The definition of ‘desire’ adopted by this study was from the chapter “Tai Jia” from the “Book of History” (772 BC - 476 BC : the first history book in China), that included the sentence ‘desire corrupts the law’. In other words, improper ideas may lead to behaviors that corrupt social values. The definition of ‘righteousness’ adopted by this study was from the moral thoughts of Confucius and Mencius, where righteousness means thoughts and behaviors in accordance with morality. This study used the content analysis method, a qualitative research method (Wang, 2001), to explore the Chinese literature related to ‘desire’ and ‘righteousness’ based on the plot of the case mentioned above and select, list, and organize the literature to design the content of teaching materials.

4. Results

4.1 The Relationship between ‘Desire’ and ‘Righteousness’

Human nature is peaceful. Yet, it can be influenced by desire (Huainanzi a, before 139 BC). Once a person has some selfish desire, his behaviors would not be morally upright. Thus, more desire leads to less morality (Huainanzi b). Therefore, one way to avoid troubles is to control desire (Huainanzi c).

4.2 Submitting to Desire and Conducting Immoral Behaviors Will Definitely Lead to Disasters

One should not act based on unreasonable desire (Liji, n. d.). Without introspection and self-control, one may behave evilly (Wei-Liao-Zi, 475 BC - 221 BC). When one is going to do something, one must first make sure one’s morality is above one’s desire. If it is the contrary, ill omens are inevitable (Da-Dai-Li-Jia, n. d.) and cause trouble (Zhu, 1130 - 1200). The penalty is to punish those who follow their desire immoderately (Da-Dai-Li-Jib).

4.3 The Method to Improve Cultivation of Morality

The power of desire is as fierce as a hunting tiger (Book-of-Changes, n. d.). Thus, to improve cultivation of morality, one should begin by reducing unreasonable desire (Mencius, 340 BC-250 BC).

5. Conclusion

On the whole, from preliminary education to higher education, teaching of Chinese courses is usually related to article reading, author introduction, word interpretation, explanation, tone, and article translation. After the murder cases related to the two medical universities, when examining the teaching materials and teaching methods of Chinese courses in universities, the scope should not be limited to the abovementioned methods. Social cases must also be taken into consideration and related education materials should be selected and included, to inspire students to think more about the philosophy of life. Because many moral thoughts and philosophies about ways of dealing with people and situations are hidden in Chinese literature, integrating issues of current events into teaching helps to enhance university courses’ moral education function.

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