

Songshan Culture: Songyang Academy and General Education

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ABSTRACT

In this study we investigated: (i) the historical development of Songyang Academy, and (ii) the educational philosophy and general education of Songyang Academy. This research employs qualitative research methods, including document analysis and field data collection through surveys, interviews, observations, group discussions, and workshops. Analysis is conducted based on information provided by 40 participants, and the results are presented in a descriptive analytical manner in line with the research objectives. The research findings are as follows: (i) Songyang Academy was an important inheritor of Songshan culture, with a history dating back to the Northern Wei Dynasty and flourishing for many eras. It was one of the four major institutions in ancient China that taught people about educational philosophy. (ii) In terms of general educational philosophy, people need to study humanities and culture. China has been developing a modern education system, but it is necessary to apply traditional ethics to develop human character. In addition, the institution of ancient Chinese culture also makes a great contribution to the development of the human resources of the Chinese nation.

Key words: Songshan Culture, Songyang Academy, Educational Philosophy, General Education

INTRODUCTION

This unique educational concept is a model for cultivating educational abilities in students. The organizational management methods and teaching methods that the institute has created in the development process have all provided valuable experiences for future generations, and has also played an important role in the formation of the country's education system. According to Deng (2012) Mr. Hu Shi, a famous thinker and philosopher in China today, once said, "Academic institutions have played an important role and have been developed for thousands of years. The developed educational institutions are comparable to foreign universities." The educational institutions in Chinese history have been rooted in the cultural spirit, and these long-held educational concepts of Chinese educational institutions have always had an impact on the younger generations.

The educational model that comes from the academy can be said to be a great miracle in the history of education in China. According to Wang (1998) article, "The Ancient Chinese Academy," it was pointed out that middle-level education can be viewed as a special educational organization, which was mainly established and operated by private individuals. It collected a number of books, gathered students to lectures, attached importance to students' self-learning, and allowed teachers and students to discuss, which is more preminent than general primary education. Liu (2019).

Found that, in China, the academy education model has produced many leading figures in the academic community. It was the first to try the model that emphasizes both teaching and scientific research, which has given rise to many influential schools, per Qian Mu, an expert in Chinese education. Among the traditional education systems, China has the best system, especially in the application of new research, which has greatly improved teaching efficiency. This spirit is the source of the long-term development of the college and the essence of the excellent traditional culture of China. The excellent college-level teaching model includes unique insights into educational components such as teaching management, learning systems, and respect for teachers, all of which play an educational role in promoting learners to be knowledgeable and good-mannered. This research aims to study the history and philosophical system of Songyang Academy, and to provide a basic knowledge for the further development of schools' educational systems in China.

Objectives

1. To study the historical development of Songyang Academy.
2. To study the educational philosophy and general education of Songyang Academy.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Tools

This research used documentary and field study methods with interviews and observations of participants. The research participants can be divided into three types or categories.

1. The first category is the collection of literature websites such as Google Scholar, Maharakham University Library Online Resources, China National Knowledge Network, and Dengfeng Municipal People's Government. This type of research tool is used mainly to collect basic information, theoretical research, and related research on Songyang Academy. At the same time, these tools are used in collecting relevant content about general education to provide text-based materials for the writing of articles.
2. The second category is local chronicles, contemporary and ancient books, promotional films, documentaries and other tools. Mainly to make up for the lack of literature, the authors have researched the historical development of Songyang Academy from the aspects of historical and special research, mainly for the analysis of historical materials.
3. The third category is primary equipment and tools such as voice recorders, computers, cameras, and video recorders. These are mainly used to collect and record data from voice, camera, video, and pictures. All these data are collected in the field and in interviews, so as to facilitate the subsequent sorting and analysis, and to analyze the relationship between the educational philosophy of Songyang Academy and general education.

Data Collection and Analysis

The research has examined the data to meet the objectives, analyze the literature, collect field data, and analyze historical data from interviews. These include pictures, videos and other related media. The researches arranged the development process of Songyang Academy's heritage in terms of history and educational philosophy, analyzed the documents according to the research objectives, and constructed a related language description. This was done in subject areas such as the development history of Songyang Academy, the development history of Songyang Academy's education, and the related content of general education. They then analyzed the relationship between Songyang Academy's educational philosophy and general education. This was followed by a descriptive and analytical report.

RESEARCH RESULTS

History of Songyang Academy

Songyang College is one of the four major colleges in China that developed from Cheng Neo-Confucianism, playing an important role in the history of Chinese colleges. With a history of more than 1,500 years, the college experienced both the rise and fall in the Tang, Song, Ming, Yuan and Qing dynasties, as well as the transitional period to modern

China. From the interview Yi Juanbin said that Songyang Academy puts moral education at the core, cultivates personality with "the way of adulthood," believes that "cultivating oneself, managing the family, governing the country, and pacifying the world" is the fundamental task of scholars. It advocates learning for practical use, and emphasizes the unity of knowledge and action. Its educational thoughts and Confucian studies are an important reference as to the significance for the development of general education.

Ancestors of the songyang school

The Songyang School was first established in the eighth year of the Taihe reign of Emperor Xiaowen of the Northern Wei Dynasty (484 AD). It was founded by Master Zen Da De Sheng, who named the Songyang Temple as a place for Buddhist activities. He chose this sacred land and built a sacred place on a high mountain facing a wide road bordering a stream. In order to seek knowledge during the reigns of Emperors Yang of Sui and Gaozong of Tang, temples, pagodas and classrooms were built to impart knowledge to students.

The prototype of songyang academy

During the Five Dynasties Period (906-960 CE), due to long-term wars and unrest, Chinese society was unstable. During this period, the official school, which was the prototype of Songyang Academy, was severely damaged. Many ambitious people and scholars were unwilling to serve as officials in troubled times, so they lived in seclusion in Songshan Mountain and devoted themselves to Confucian studies. This led to the Songyang Temple remaining prosperous in troubled times and gathering many knowledgeable and far-sighted people. They took it as their responsibility to maintain education and instruct in the teachings of Confucius and Mencius. Thus, they began to give lectures in Songyang Temple. This provided conditions for the emergence and development of academies. Emperor Sizong of Zhou Cairong, in the second year of the late Zhou Dynasty (955 CE), transformed Songyang Temple into the Taiyi School and built a library and classrooms. Scholars gathered here to study and select disciples. Famous scholars such as Lu Mengzheng, Zhao Anren, and Qian Ruoshui played a role in the beginning of Songyang School and the first chapter of the history of school education in Henan Province.

The flourishing of songyang school

In 960, Zhao Guangyin established the Song Dynasty, which is known as the "Northern Song Dynasty." In the early days of the country's founding, there were many things that needed to be accomplished. In order to strengthen the governance system, the rulers introduced reform plans that emphasized civil governance and the role of education. As a result, Songyang School achieved long-term development during the Song Dynasty. The early Song Dynasty attached great importance to scholars who entered the imperial court as officials, so they supported private schools in various forms.

In addition, books and stone tablets were given to promote the development of schools. Song Taizong gave the Taishi Academy tablets to the renamed Taiyi Academy. The Taishi Academy built libraries and classrooms, and gave nine Confucian classics as learning materials, clearly defining the educational content and teaching scope of the school. The ruler of the Northern Song dynasty announced the education of universities. In the third year of the reign of Emperor Da Zhong (1010), nine volumes of classic history were donated to the institute. Emperor Renzong of Song had the Taishi School renovated, renamed it Songyang School, and appointed a dean to manage the school. The emperor gave one hectare of land, which was a scholarship to cover the daily expenses of the school. In the first year of the Baoyuan Dynasty (1038), Emperor Renzong of Song gave another ten hectares of land to the Songyang School, and provided free food and lodging to students who attended the lectures in the school. Around 1059, Emperor Renzong of Song Jiayou, the ruler of Dengfeng County, hired lecturers and selected students to listen to lectures at the Songyang Academy. Famous Neo-Confucian scholars such as Cheng Hao, Cheng Yi, Sima Guang, and others lectured at the Songyang Academy in succession. Cheng Yi also set the rules of the school system of self-education and examination. This attracted hundreds of students from all over the country to Songyang Academy. Because of the excellent teaching staff, Songyang Academy became famous and was one of the four major academies in the Song Dynasty. It also had many outstanding students and became one of the most influential academies in the Northern Song Dynasty.

During the slow development of Songyang School during the Jin, Yuan and Ming Dynasties, Songyang School suffered from political unrest and turmoil, and teaching activities declined. After the Jin Dynasty moved to the Central Plains, wars continued and society was in turmoil. The development of the school was also affected, and some scholars fled to the south to escape the war. During the Jin Dynasty (1161-1189), some scholars tried to restore the situation, but social unrest led to the decline of the Songyang Academy. Although it emphasized the role of education, these schools placed more value on formal schools. Private schools and academies were therefore subject to greater restrictions and developed relatively slowly. The Ming Dynasty had always attached great importance to education. The state set rules for schools, appointing people with good morals and knowledge to be teachers in schools, so that every student would be proficient in one major subject. A learning atmosphere flourished during the Chenghua period of the Ming Dynasty from 1465 to 1487. Songyang College had a short development period, but gradually found a way to develop. From the fifth to the tenth year of the Ming Dynasty Emperor Jiajing (1526-1530), Hou Tai, the ruler of Dengfeng, built another college on the site of Songyang College, restored the name of the college, and built the Echeng Temple. In the late Ming Dynasty, Songyang College was destroyed by war.

Songyang School was revived in the early Qing Dynasty because the rulers attached great importance to civil administration. Further, the school had a high reputation in society,

and was highly praised by some scholars and local officials. Consequently, it developed rapidly and its activities continued to expand.

During the reigns of Kangxi and Qianlong, Songyang Academy gradually declined. In the late Qing Dynasty, the imperial examination system was abolished and schools were established. Songyang Academy, which had existed for more than a thousand years, lost its glory and collapsed.

Educational Philosophy and General Education of Songyang Academy

The meaning of the development of general education can be traced back to Aristotle's liberal education idea, which is a product of Eastern and Western culture. Knowledge reflects the inheritance of people's civilization and culture. In the pre-Qin Dynasty, China's Confucianism focused on the all-round development of people, and had a specific curriculum for learning arts and sciences. Eastern and Western educational philosophies both emphasized the all-round development of people. This correlates with the study of John (2019) who believed that general education has a diverse understanding that emphasizes cultivating morality, wisdom, health and beauty in citizens by teaching people disciplines such as arithmetic, astronomy, dialectics and music. Some support the study of humanities, which is an important content of humanistic thought and the basic concept of current university education. This field of study, also called general education, is a different method of education from professional education. This principle of educational philosophy, to cultivate people to be harmonious and knowledgeable in both mind and body over utilitarianism, has not changed much. Zhang (2016) said that in the 1930s, President Mei Yiqi proposed in Tsinghua University's curriculum, that the scope of learning should be broad and not too narrow, so that one can have a balanced and unbiased view of life. In the world and its cultural changes, one should have a thorough understanding of the emerging trends. As Michael S. Roth (2014) explained in his book "Beyond the University: Why Liberal Education Matters," general education is more about cultivating people to be perfect than about having certain skills.

General education is not the opposite of vocational education, but an existing form of education. Vocational education has the shortcoming of being unable to promote the all-round development of students (Li, 1999). In order for students to have well-rounded development, and have good personalities, they must have the judgment and ability to distinguish differences in beauty, morality and social conduct; have a sense of social responsibility, and experience well-rounded development through the study of basic knowledge, skills and attitudes that are therefore of broad benefit. The concept of general education is an important part of the modern education system, which has deep ideological roots in ancient Chinese culture. Ancient educational institutions emphasized educating sages with the teachings of Confucius and Mencius, and cultivating people with virtue and character. At the same time, it emphasizes the cultivation of talents through responsibility, knowledge, clear discernment and

diligent practice. Nowadays, the concept of spiritual education is in line with the changes of general education in line with globalization and the advent of the social economy era, so it has undergone great changes. Modern education often has a profession that is often emphasized since the separation between liberal arts and sciences. At the same time, the mental problems of students in modern universities should not be overlooked. Inherent in a proper education is the slogan of cultivating the inheritance of morality, intelligence, physical fitness, and aesthetics. The problem of an educational system that emphasizes examinations has neglected the cultivation of students' comprehensive qualities (Harry, 2012). Lewis, former dean of Harvard College, a world-famous undergraduate college, claimed that Harvard had forgotten the basic purpose of undergraduate education, which is to mold students into adults who are knowledgeable, intelligent, and can take responsibility for their own lives (Einstein, 2009). In addition, Einstein also said that "the goal of schools should be to give young people a harmonious personality when they leave school, rather than making them all-round experts. Schools should focus on developing general abilities to think and make independent decisions." Zhu (2014) wrote that Mr. Ye Shengtao, a famous educational thinker in China, believed that education is not only imparting knowledge, but above all, teaching people to know humanity. Education teaches people to be qualified members of society and good citizens. Chinese higher educational institutions are institutions that integrate book collection, editing, reading and lecturing. The purpose is not just to cultivate talents, but to develop people's qualities to, in turn, exhibit comprehensiveness and responsibility for society and the environment. The education system should integrate teaching methods, curriculum systems, and school rules based on morality, as well as cultivate people's interests.

Songyang Academy Educational Concept and General Education

The educational concept of academy education can be said to be true general education, the ideological source of Chinese general education, and is consistent with the essence of modern education. Therefore, adhering to the principle of cultivating within people an all-round development of morality, intelligence, physical fitness, and comprehensive literacy requires the application of general education. It is the spirit of Chinese academies that can provide experience and inspiration for the current development of general education in China.

The idea of cultivating people with virtue is the foundation of education which Confucius has always advocated and is the main task of learning. To cultivate talent, one must first cultivate virtue. These two things are equally important, both of which will help to increase knowledge and expand the scope of literacy. Confucian educational philosophy attaches importance to morality as the tradition of the people, as he proposed that "a good person is a human being." Songyang College is based on this Confucian thought and has inherited an excellent cultural tradition in the teaching process, adhering to the principle of combining moral education with

teaching. This is in addition to not only emphasizing the learning of knowledge, but also cultivating a good personality. The moral education of Songyang Academy is not only reflected in the teaching of words, but also in real action. The story of "Standing in the Snow at Chengmen" took place during the period when the two Chengs presided over the Songyang Academy. This story is a practical embodiment of moral education and has a far-reaching influence on later generations.

Songyang Academy does not discriminate in education, and is not limited by region, nor high and low status; but all aspirants can come to study. Thus, it has attracted many famous scholars and scholars as lecturers, resulting in unprecedented prosperity. Songyang College allows its schools to hold lectures and academic conferences, which are popular. Academic conferences hold academic discussions and debates between schools and colleges. Hundreds of schools come to compete for knowledge. Famous teachers come to the school to impart knowledge to students. This school is therefore a center of knowledge in the past, and remains a model of having an educational philosophy that is a models morality for the development of human resources in the field of teaching and learning in the present educational scene.

Teaching methods of autonomous learning and mutual questioning Songyang Academy's teaching insists on "taking students as the main body," emphasizing individual reading and exploration as the core, taking personal in-depth study as the leading factor, focusing on students' self-study and independent thinking, and having teachers only play a guiding role. Its teaching model mostly adopts the form of questioning and debate, aiming to stimulate students' thinking vitality. The university particularly advocates the value of "questioning." Scholars can question each other, and students can also question teachers. The act of "questioning" is not only a brave challenge to authority, but also an encouragement and nourishment for innovative thinking. The spirit of "questioning" has undoubtedly injected a strong impetus into the vigorous development of academic freedom. Songyang Academy pays more attention to cultivating students' autonomous learning ability.

The core of improving students' independent learning ability lies in self-understanding. Further, teachers can accurately analyze and explain the confusion and challenges encountered by students. This, in turn, can stimulate students' questioning spirit, encourage them to actively participate in debates, and express their opinions. This teaching method is very beneficial to improving students' academic literacy and inquiry ability. Whether they continue in future study or enter society, it lays a solid foundation for students' future further study and development.

These methods focus on the combination of knowledge and action, and attach importance to practice. They combine teaching with moral improvement and character cultivation, which is the most important feature of the college's teaching purpose. Geng Jie was "dedicated to practice" throughout his life. He believed in "practice and adherence to the purposes of Cheng, Zhu and Confucius," and talked about benevolence and filial piety (Dengfeng County Chronicles, 1990). One

must be sincere and return to the Lord. One should establish a teaching style that is not high and difficult to practice and set up a system for examinations. In teaching, the academy always takes education with knowledge and morality as the purpose of teaching. It also attaches importance to the equal status of knowledge and being a good person. It recognizes the importance of practice, and closely links knowledge and behavior, as well as theory and practice, thus achieving true teaching and the education of people.

The old school has a simple and complete management structure. While the number of management personnel is generally optimized, people have to take on many responsibilities. Songyang Academy implements an internal hierarchical management mechanism. Its top person in charge is still the head of the academy. Under the head of the academy, there are hall heads and dormitory heads. At the same time, there are lecturers and scripture heads responsible for student teaching. First of all, as the top person in charge of the academy, this position and role of the head of the academy are crucial. The head of the academy not only combines the power of educational guidance and administrative management, but also is held by scholars with noble character and profound knowledge. They are not only academic leaders who lead the teaching and research direction of the academy, but they are also administrative managers who are responsible for the daily operation and decision-making of the academy. This flat management structure reduces redundancy and barriers between levels, and can ensure the rapid and smooth operation of the academy. In addition, some academies have also cleverly utilized the power of students by selecting outstanding students to serve in assistant management roles such as president, dormitory head, and scripture department head. This move not only enriches the teaching content, but also further promotes the enthusiasm of students to participate in management and improve their own abilities.

DISCUSSION

Songyang Academy is one of four ancient academies in China, with a history dating back to more than 1,500 years ago. During this period, it experienced the ups and downs of the Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties, while continuing to mature in the process of development. It occupies an important position in the development of Confucianism and pedagogy. As a part of traditional Chinese culture and world cultural heritage, such culture needs to be inherited and protected. This concept is similar to Linda Walton's (2018) who proposed that Songyang Academy's status of supporting China's patriotism has been affirmed, starting from the nature of its patriotic education. The Academy's value has also been further elevated through cooperation with Zhengzhou University. In order to achieve the goal of inheriting and protecting the academy's culture as an important representative of education in ancient Chinese academic institutions, the culture of education is an important representative of the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation.

Songyang Academy's educational philosophy deeply reflects the general education concept and has made

remarkable achievements in cultivating comprehensive quality in all-round knowledge. It excels at cultivating morality in students throughout the concept of its breadth and depth of academic research while emphasizing the importance of enabling students to put their knowledge into practice. Thus, students acquire adequate knowledge in order to invent and develop on the basis of tradition. Therefore, these concepts can better adapt to the needs of current education.

Scholars rely on this for self-advancement, and will act on their own without anyone's supervision. They will rely on their habits in Taoist philosophy, so that they can prove saints and interpret scriptures. Philosophers will seek knowledge similar to the ideas of Geng (2005) who also suggested that students turn Cheng's pursuit of mind and nature into life practice. "Taoism exists in each person's daily life and ethics. Confucius speaks of benevolence, filial piety, and brotherhood which are the foundations of benevolence." The "Rules of Songyang School" clearly state that "filial piety is the foundation of Taoism, and gentlemen should strive continuously to improve themselves." It also proposes practices for cultivating basic morality, such as "arrogance brings harm, but humility brings benefit," which is consistent with the tradition of integrating moral and ethical education into teaching methods in ancient Chinese educational thought. Zhu Xi, an ancient educator, read the books of sages to achieve the perfection of his own morality. He naturally combined learning with being a good person, and is a model for ancient and modern educators. Zhu Xi suggests that one should practice what one teaches. This is especially true in terms of cultivating sages; that is, one should "set their minds to respect oneself, train oneself, and examine oneself." While reading, he realized that "everything must be understood and trained by oneself," and that one must "make a genuine effort do it every day; and after an extended time, one will unconsciously become accustomed to doing it, just like in doing ordinary things."

The academy is a teaching organization formed with ancient Chinese characteristics, and with abundant educational resources. A Chinese academy is a research structure that has been passed down for thousands of years, which is an important supplement to the country's feudal system. Modern education will be adapted to the current situation to promote the continuous progress of modern education under the premise of "New Curriculum Reform." The state and society have expressed a higher demand for higher education. Schools and teachers should support new educational concepts, and give practical importance to modern teaching methods and management methods. It will thus develop students' subjectivity, and provide equal and mutual assistance between teachers and students, as well as open academic exchanges, which are very beneficial.

Students can learn through giving knowledge and guidance, through asking questions, discussing, and even debating. Teachers will guide learners to think actively and learn to analyze problems critically, so as to gradually build their own academic perspectives and knowledge systems, thus increasing students' vitality and creativity. Under the guidance of teachers, learners will study how to think independently,

how to examine problems from different perspectives, while also promoting the prosperity and development of the academic atmosphere. In line with the study of Gong (2001) "The words of the sages in the scriptures are only the principles of body, mind, nature and life, and the matter of morality. If learners only search in books, they should communicate and discuss what they read. They must think, check and confuse with friends, so as to finally understand the words of the sages. So, one must discuss the books they have read within the past month with one's classmates.

Since ancient times, Chinese students who have sought knowledge in educational institutions have wanted to read good texts which helps develop language skills and philosophical minds. Their knowledge has been effectively upgraded to the present day, which is consistent with the educational research of Niyet and Ayşe (2024). Their research results found that reading, which improves language and mental skills, is the most effective way to transmit information from the past to the present. Nonetheless, there were exceptionally-high, positive correlations among the sub-dimensions of the scales.

CONCLUSION

As a model of ancient Chinese academy education, Songyang Academy's educational philosophy is closely related to modern general education. The academy focuses on moral education and personality cultivation, while emphasizing the combination of knowledge and practice. These concepts provide valuable experience for modern general education. In today's society, reviving the academy education model and combining it with the concept of modern general education can provide new ideas and methods for cultivating all-round social talents. In the process of modern education reform, one should fully learn from and absorb these traditional concepts. At the same time, one must innovate and develop them in combination with the actual needs of modern education. Through efforts in improving technical methods, international vision, practical applications, interdisciplinary integration and personalized education, scholars can make the educational philosophy of Songyang Academy glow with new vitality in contemporary education, contributing to the cultivation of all-round modern talents.

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