

Liang Qichao's Thought on Taste Education

Liu Jiaxin

China Jiliang University, Hangzhou, Zhejiang, 310018, China

Keywords: Liang Qichao; Aesthetics; Taste education; Aesthetic education

Abstract: Liang Qichao believes that "taste" is the driving force of life and an important factor in promoting individual active living and social development. Through taste education, individuals can not only experience the essence of life but also cultivate a positive attitude towards life and a sense of responsibility. However, according to Liang Qichao, not all people in real life have the opportunity to experience and enjoy "taste". In order for everyone to savor and live an interesting life, it is necessary to implement practical activities related to taste education. By implementing taste education, people's aesthetic preferences, creativity, and enthusiasm for life can be nurtured so that everyone can appreciate the interest and beauty of existence.

1. Introduction

Taste education is part of Liang Qichao's aesthetic educational thoughts. It represents further development based on emotional education by extending aesthetic taste into every aspect of individual lives. Taste education not only focuses on experiencing art and beauty but also emphasizes integrating this experience into daily life, making life itself an art form. Through taste education, individuals can not only appreciate the beauty of artworks but also discover and create beauty in their everyday lives, thus achieving healthy emotional development and artistic living. With his series of the thought about "taste," Liang Qichao aims to promote taste education as a means to shape interesting personalities with independent thinking abilities and innovative spirits while improving societal atmosphere. It can be said that taste education serves as an important approach towards fostering interesting lives within society at large by unlocking the key through which intriguing aesthetics open up reality.

2. Liang Qichao's educational principle

As an outstanding enlightenment thinker, Liang Qichao has a deep understanding of the importance of education. Liang Qichao once explained education in this way: "What is education? Education is to teach people to learn to be a man -- learn to be a modern man." ^[1]Liang Qichao's understanding of education deeply reflects his keen insight into the changes of The Times and his deep concern for the future of the country. He believes that the core task of education is to cultivate "modern people" who can adapt to the needs of The Times and have modern consciousness. In Liang's view, such people are able to give full play to their potential and make positive contributions to the progress of society. "The purpose of education is always to make the educated people do their best, give full play to their best instincts, and do the most efficient cause for society." ^[1]The education

advocated by Liang Qichao emphasizes individuation and all-round development. He believes that education should respect each person's uniqueness, explore and cultivate each person's strengths and interests, so that each person can find a suitable position in the society, and on this basis realize self-value and make effective contributions to the society. This educational concept opposes a single, exam-oriented education model and advocates that education should focus on students' all-round development, including knowledge, ability and moral character. At the same time, Liang believes that a healthy and noble outlook on life is also an important driving force for social progress, and he sees the importance of education to the development of society and the country. He believes that education is not only the need for personal growth, but also the basis for national prosperity and social progress. Through education, it can provide intellectual support and talent guarantee for national construction.

3. The proposal of taste education

Out of concern for the society and emphasis on education, Liang Qichao put forward the thought of taste education to improve the quality of the people, popularize "taste" in the whole society, and advocate taste-life. He believes that taste education is not only a kind of art and beauty education, but also an important way related to the all-round development of individuals and the transformation of national character. Liang Qichao regards "taste" as a kind of interest in life and spiritual nourishment, and believes that it is a bridge connecting individuals and society, tradition and modernity, beauty and goodness. ^[2]By popularizing taste education, Liang hopes to guide people to discover the beauty in life and cultivate a positive aesthetic taste and attitude toward life. This kind of education can not only improve people's aesthetic ability, but also cultivate people's moral sentiment and social responsibility through the experience and creation of beauty. In Liang's view, a nation with a good aesthetic taste will pay more attention to spiritual pursuit and moral behavior, thus laying a solid foundation for social harmony and progress.

The proposal of taste education is the reflection and transcendence of the traditional Chinese feudal education model. Liang Qichao believes that the traditional Chinese feudal education pays too much attention to the inculcation of classics and test-taking skills, and neglects the development of students' personality and the cultivation of their interests. He was harshly critical of the old feudal education methods that were prevalent at the time, especially corporal punishment in primary education. He pointed out that this kind of education not only destroyed children's physical and mental health, but also seriously damaged their interest in learning and creativity. In such an educational environment, children cannot get the care and correct guidance they deserve, but suffer cruel corporal punishment and merciless treatment. Liang sees this kind of education as damaging to the country's future and believes that if it is not reformed, it will lead to serious consequences. Therefore, he advocated interesting education to oppose the feudal and backward educational thoughts, and through such educational reform, cultivate a new generation of young people with modern consciousness and innovative spirit, improve the cultural level of society, and promote China to a more civilized and progressive direction.

The thought of taste education not only originates from Liang Qichao's profound social concern, but also aims at the perfection and promotion of personality. He emphasized that the true meaning of education is to help individuals learn how to be a person, including moral cultivation, social interaction, critical thinking, creativity, and so on. Subjects such as mathematics, physics and chemistry are tools to help us understand the world and solve problems, while subjects such as history, geography and literature enrich our spiritual world and enhance our cognitive and aesthetic abilities. Subjects such as philosophy, politics, and law help us understand social structures and rules, and develop a sense of social responsibility and citizenship. He believes that education is not only about implanting knowledge and skills, but also about cultivating instrumental talents who can meet the

needs of society. The fundamental task of education is to cultivate people who are sound in the three aspects of "knowledge, emotion and will", that is, people with all-round development. Taste education emphasizes paying attention to students' interests and emotions in the process of education, and guides them to explore and learn actively by stimulating students' inner motivation, so as to form a sound personality and rich inner world. Taste education also pays attention to students' spiritual needs and spiritual growth, helping them build up their love for life and pursuit of beautiful things. This educational concept not only helps students to achieve academic achievements, but also helps them to achieve balanced development in moral, emotional and aesthetic aspects, and become citizens with social responsibility and creativity. ^[3]

4. The ideological source of taste education

Although Liang Qichao's taste education draws on the taste education of Europe and America, there are still some differences between them, and the difference lies in the role of "taste" in education. "I did not create the term 'taste education'. Modern European and American education circles have long been common. But they still use taste as a means. I want to go further and use taste as an end." ^[1] Europe and the United States take "taste" as a means, and use "taste" to guide teaching, so that teaching becomes fascinating, so as to achieve the success of teaching. But Liang Qichao advocates taking "taste" as the goal. He believes that learning should not only be a means to achieve some external goal, but should be out of the inner desire for knowledge and the real love for learning. Here, Liang Qichao draws on Dewey's pragmatic education thought. In his work *Interest and Effort in Education*, Dewey put forward the theory of pragmatism in education, emphasizing that students' interest and spirit of effort should be cultivated instead of imposing external goals in the process of education. According to Dewey, education should pay attention to the development of students' personality, stimulate their inner motivation, and make learning a process of self-discovery and self-realization.

Liang Qichao advocated the educational principle of "doing nothing for nothing", that is, the attitude that education should go beyond practicality and focus on the process itself, which encourages students to pursue knowledge and activities in a pure and enthusiastic way, allowing students to explore and learn freely without external pressure, and doing so helps cultivate their ability to think independently and innovate. Liang Qichao believes that the most important thing in education is to "teach students to know that learning for the sake of learning and activity for the sake of activity; All learning and all activities are ends, not means. Students can grasp this insight, and their interest will naturally last a lifetime." ^[1] This concept of education is antithetical to utilitarianism. If students regard study and work as a means to other ends, for example, as a "stepping stone" or a "springboard" to high office, then they may lose interest and enthusiasm for study and work themselves, leading to boredom and fatigue in life. If students can start from the heart, because they are interested in a certain field of knowledge and choose to study and engage in related work, naturally all work is the end, not the means, then work and life will be full of taste and motivation.

The thought of taste education not only absorbed the essence of Dewey's pragmatic education theory, but also combined with the social reality and cultural tradition of China at that time. Liang Qichao was deeply influenced by Confucius' attitude of "be tireless in learning and teaching". Confucius was able to feel "tireless" because he regarded learning and education as an important part of his life, and they injected continuous motivation into his life. Confucius believed that learning is a process of continuous pursuit of knowledge and wisdom, which can continuously enrich one's inner world and improve one's moral cultivation and wisdom. At the same time, as an educator, Confucius' passion for education is also one of the reasons why he is "never tired of learning". He was committed to imparting knowledge, enlightening wisdom, and cultivating morality, not only to his own students,

but also to influencing the wider society.

Liang believes that just as steam is what makes a machine run, people's taste experience of activities is the fundamental driving force for personal action and development. "The activity must have the driving force -- like the steam in the machine, where is the steam of human activities? It is all in each man's own psychological action -- the feeling of interest in the situation in which he is moving, expressed in positive words, is "joy"; To express him in negative terms is to be 'unweary'." [1]When people enjoy the activities they are doing, this positive emotional experience can stimulate their enthusiasm and creativity, and make them willing to engage in various activities. However, if people can continuously obtain satisfaction and sense of achievement from activities, even in the face of repetitive or difficult tasks, they can maintain lasting investment and enthusiasm, this state can be described as "never getting tired", which is a positive and internal driving force, which comes from the individual's love and interest in the activity itself, just as "interest is the best teacher", Those who know are not as good as those who are good, and those who are good are not as happy as those who are happy. Do a happy knowledge, naturally can do not be tired of learning.

5. The implementation of taste education

Liang Qichao also has a unique opinion on the implementation of taste education, he put forward several key aspects to ensure the effectiveness of taste education: First, taste education has the "best time", should seize the best learning period of the educates, that is, when they are full of curiosity and desire to explore the world; Second, although taste education has the "best time", it also needs to be sustained, because the acquisition of taste is not achieved overnight, but a process of repeated practice; Third, taste education should pay attention to methods, should be vivid and interesting teaching means, so that the education process itself becomes an interesting experience; Fourthly, educators are not only the transmitters of knowledge, but also the guides and models of students' taste attitude. The quality of educators themselves is very important to the cultivation of students' taste. Lastly, the construction of the education system, this system should be able to provide a variety of teaching methods and activities to adapt to different students' interests and needs, while encouraging innovation and exploration, so that students can learn and grow in a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere. These aspects provide specific guidance and reference for the implementation of taste education. The implementability of the concept lies in the fact that it emphasizes the individualization, diversification and humanization of education, as well as the respect and play of students' subjectivity in the education process. Through the comprehensive implementation of these aspects, Liang Qichao believes that taste education can cultivate "new citizens" who have both knowledge and taste and can enjoy the learning process.

Liang Qichao also carried out this concept in family education. He not only pays attention to his children's academic achievements, but also attaches more importance to cultivating their interests and hobbies, so that they can become independent thinkers and creative people. Liang's children have made remarkable achievements in the fields of architecture, archaeology, medicine and military, and his family education achievements are highly summarized by later generations as "three academicians in one school, nine sons are all talented". Liang Qichao attaches great importance to the discovery and cultivation of children's personal interests and hobbies, he believes that everyone has their own unique talents and interests, should be taught according to their aptitude. In Liang Qichao's letters to home, he wrote to his children many times, guiding them in their study and life and encouraging them to pursue their interests and ideals. He encouraged his children to pursue their interests in the profession, research their interests in the knowledge. When their children are not interested in the major suggested by Liang Qichao, he will encourage them to boldly choose their favorite major and respect their children's personal choice. He would repeatedly

tell his children not to live for a living, to do what they are interested in, to pursue personal spiritual growth and self-realization. As long as his children are interested in something, he will fully support them and create conditions and opportunities for them to devote themselves to it. This kind of taste education not only helps children grow up, but also has a profound impact on their career and life concept. ^[4]

6. Conclusion

In a word, Liang Qichao's thought on taste education, driven by social concern, belongs to the cultivation of personality perfection. It not only draws inspiration from European and American taste education but also possesses its own distinct characteristics rooted in Liang's outlook on life. Furthermore, it refines and inherits both Western and Chinese educational concepts. The purpose of Liang Qichao's advocacy for taste education is to nurture "new individuals" with independent personalities, innovative spirits, and optimistic attitudes through the power of education. This aims to promote overall progress and development within society. Not only did this educational concept hold significant practical significance at that time but it also provides profound enlightenment for contemporary educational reform and cultural construction.

References

- [1] Liang Qichao, Tang Zhijun and Tang Renze, Ed. (2018) *Liang Qichao's Complete Works*, vol. 15. China Renmin University Press, 349-391.
- [2] Jin Ya. (2005) *Research on Liang Qichao's Aesthetic Thought*. Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 36-43.
- [3] Zeng Fanren. (2008) *Contribution and Enlightenment of Liang Qichao's Aesthetic Education Thought*. *Debate on Literature and Art*, (03), 143-147.
- [4] Liang Qichao, Commentary by Xie Xizhang. (2021) *Letters from Liang Qichao*. *Changjiang Literature & Art*, 274.