

Research on Literary Education from the Anthropological Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Research on literary education from the anthropological perspective is a brand-new field that the forefront of literary education theory should open up. Anthropology is the study of human issues; it is a mode of thought and theoretical doctrine based on human historical practical activities, affirming the human world and focusing on the liberation and promotion of human subjectivity. To effectively and rapidly cultivate creative talents who pursue truth, goodness, and beauty, as well as well-rounded personalities, literary education must and should emphasize the exploration of the "human" condition, the core of "human," and the trajectory of "human" within literary education research from the anthropological perspective. This is not only an inevitable choice that literary education theory must make when facing real-world problems but also a necessary requirement for the sustainable development of literary education theory itself.

KEYWORDS

Literary education; Anthropological perspective; Condition of "human"; Core of "human"; Trajectory of "human"

1 Introduction

Vasily Sukhomlinsky said: "Education—first and foremost—is anthropology." ^[1] Research on literary education from the anthropological perspective is a brand-new field that the forefront of literary education theory should open up. Anthropology is the study of human issues; it is a long-existing yet unconsciously recognized integrated discipline with broad but not very clear boundaries. It is "a mode of thought and theoretical doctrine based on human historical practical activities, affirming the human world and focusing on the liberation and promotion of human subjectivity." ^[2] To effectively and rapidly cultivate creative talents who pursue truth, goodness, and beauty, as well as well-rounded personalities ^[3], literary education must and should emphasize the exploration of the "human" condition, the core of "human," and the trajectory of "human" within literary education research from the anthropological perspective. Based on this, the author dares not provide a comprehensive discussion but will specifically elaborate on the analysis of the "human" condition, the exploration of the core of "human," and the speculation on the trajectory of "human" in literary education research from the anthropological perspective.

2 Literary education research from the anthropological perspective must analyze the condition of "Human"

Literary education is fundamentally a human-centered and human-serving endeavor. "Human" is not only the highest goal of literary education but also its core proposition and a significant obstacle to its further development. Throughout multiple selections and diverse transformations, literary education has neglected to study humans who have lost their status, characteristics, and individuality by applying anthropology as an integrated discipline. This indicates that the condition of "human" in literary education research from the anthropological perspective deserves thorough analysis.

2.1 The "Human" in literary education research from the anthropological perspective is a human who has lost status

With the formation of the "Eastward Spread of Western Learning," literary education gradually shifted from humanities to science, causing it to deviate from its proper track. Literary courses, impacted by foreign educational theories and ideological influences, fail to nourish students' intellect, comfort their souls, or allow them to savor poetic enjoyment. They are gradually or have already become a lost spiritual home. As Guo Waiguo stated: "The sharpening and universalization of human issues have left people lost in a sea of smoke and bewildered. This disorientation has led to the realization of irrationality in the contemporary Western world's era of relativism. Relativism, this heavy word, has dimmed all former values (even religious beliefs), making everything doubtful, vague, and elusive. Under the banner of relativism, two offspring—pessimism and optimism—have emerged." ^[4] These reflections ultimately render the "human" in literary education research from the anthropological perspective a human whose status is severely lost.

2.2 The “Human” in literary education research from the anthropological perspective is a human who has lost characteristics

With the advent of industrial unification and unprecedented development of network technology, literary courses, due to the arrival of the information age and the emergence of high-tech products, have turned students into a “wandering” group with “thoughts adrift,” “spiritual calcium deficiency,” and “anemic souls.” In this sense, literary education has become a workshop for processing standardized components, where teachers and students naturally become batches of skilled technicians. A piece of richly fleshed-out and elegant literary work, originally “a fragrant and vibrant flower,” once included in literary textbooks, immediately “turns into a dried leaf pressed between pages”^[5], or even is dismantled into “a set of neatly arranged, logically coherent but lifeless parts”^[6]. This causes literary courses to forget the vitality of “human” in education, making the “human” in literary education research from the anthropological perspective difficult to become a sound and normal person, but rather a human who has severely lost characteristics.

2.3 The “Human” in literary education research from the perspective of anthropology is a person with lost individuality

With the strong impact of the economy and enormous material pressures, literary education also finds it difficult to resist the temptations of practicality and utilitarianism. As a result, literature classes, unable to dispel these practical and utilitarian temptations—especially the “lack of ultimate care for the ‘human’ behind the ‘literature’ ”^[7]—have led to the severing of literary intuition, the fading of literary imagery, the imprisonment of literary imagination, the dilution of literary emotion, and the killing of literary spirituality... What kind of literary education produces what kind of person? Perhaps it is long overdue to critically examine the current serious loss of individuality of the “human” in literary education research from the anthropological perspective.

3 Literary education research from the perspective of anthropology must explore the core of the “Human”

Since the 1980s, there has been an emphasis on researching literary education itself rather than the people involved in literary education. Thus, the universal person has been used to represent the specific person, the partial person to represent the whole person, and the unidimensional person to represent the multidimensional person. While there has been attention to specialized studies on detailed aspects of the person, the use of anthropology as an integrative discipline to study the person in harmony with nature, the person dependent on society, and the person with coordinated body and mind has been neglected. All this indicates that the core of the “human” in literary education research from the anthropological perspective urgently needs to be explored.

3.1 The “Human” in literary education research from the perspective of anthropology is a person in harmony with nature

Ecological research shows that humans are only a part of nature, not the measure of all things. According to the principle of connecting literary education with nature, teachers should guide students to actively discover the aesthetic elements of nature around them and strongly encourage students to condense their exploration, creation, experience, and perception of nature into their writing. This is a real, vivid, and precious life activity that can effectively promote the “human” in literary education research from the anthropological perspective to coexist amicably and symbiotically with nature, thereby achieving harmonious development.

3.2 The “Human” in literary education research from the perspective of anthropology is a person dependent on society

Sociological research shows that as long as any individual exists, they must be situated within various social structures. The existence and purpose of the individual are based on the existence and purpose of society. The interdependence between the individual and society often manifests as a dynamic balance full of vitality. Therefore, the objective knowledge in literary education should mostly be first recognized by social development, then become the required content, and subsequently be internalized and constructed by teachers before being imparted to students. Similarly, students need to actively construct themselves, transforming objective knowledge into subjective knowledge based on its meaning, thus achieving dialogue and cooperation between both sides^{[8] (P6)}. In short, the “human” in literary education research from the anthropological perspective should be someone who can mutually resonate with society,

complement each other, and coexist harmoniously.

3.3 The “Person” in literary education research from the perspective of anthropology is a person with coordinated body and mind

Anthropological research shows that every individual is a unity of body and mind, a state in which the individual's body and mind have reached an adaptation to nature and society during the life process. Therefore, as teachers, we must use the vitality of our own lives and rely on texts in teaching materials that have “good ideological content,” “good language and writing,” and are “suitable for teaching” to awaken students' life awareness, ignite their life wisdom, activate their life potential, illuminate their life talents, pay attention to students' life sentiments, expand their life boundaries, enrich their life connotations, and improve their life quality. In doing so, students can truly and effectively enter the best state where the “human” in literary education research from the anthropological perspective integrates, harmonizes, and balances body and mind.

4 A tentative exploration of the direction of “Human” in literary education research from the anthropological perspective

Contemporary literary education exhibits a lack of the concept of “human” and features of education without a human focus, neglecting the use of anthropological studies as an integrated discipline to research the comprehensive person, the concrete person, and the practical person. This indicates that the trajectory of the “human” in literary education research from the anthropological perspective still needs to be explored.

4.1 The “Human” in literary education research from the anthropological perspective is the comprehensive individual

The “comprehensive person” is someone who can develop to the best level in intellectual education, moral education, aesthetic education, and other aspects; a person who develops equally, completely, harmoniously, and freely; a person whose “essential human content” is fully manifested. This urgently requires integration within the interdisciplinary field of anthropological studies. The theoretical research on literary education from the anthropological perspective can serve as a reference for current literary education practice. Such reference will help promote students to become comprehensively developed individuals with intellect, morality, insight, and will.

4.2 The “Human” in literary education research from the anthropological perspective is the concrete individual

The “concrete individual” is not an abstract person but a living individual situated in historical, developmental, and morphological contexts. Not only is each individual concrete, but the environment or, more precisely, the context in which each individual exists should also be concrete. Therefore, literary education is both a vivid cleansing process of students' thoughts, viewing the imagery significance of literature as far greater than its conceptual meaning, requiring it to be restored with images, melodies, and symbols; and an effective cultivation process of students' emotions, regarding literature as the discipline most infused with emotion, demanding that “the writer's emotions move the words, and the reader enters the emotions through the text”^[9]. Literary education is also an artistic influence on students' personalities, seeing literature as an “artistic shell,” requiring respect for students' unique experiences, as the saying goes, “there are a thousand Hamlets for a thousand readers.” Furthermore, literary education is a process that stimulates the creation of students' lives, viewing literature as a special life phenomenon, requiring attention to the release of students' life potential and the revitalization of life energy. In short, literary education is an immersive process that has a lasting impact on students' wisdom, spirit, aesthetics, and many other factors. It urgently needs anthropological studies as an integrated discipline not only to apply philosophical thinking to study the abstract person but also to thoroughly research the concrete person in many more situations.

4.3 The “Human” in literary education research from the anthropological perspective is the practical individual

The “practical person” is a person who exists through practice, a person engaged in self-constructive practical activities; it is an abstract grasp of the concrete, experiential person. Practice is both a mode of human existence and a form of human development. On this point, Mencius stated very succinctly and clearly: “In the Xia dynasty, there was the

Xiao; in the Yin dynasty, the Xu; in the Zhou dynasty, the Xiang; learning was common to the three dynasties, all aimed at clarifying human relationships”^[10]. This strongly indicates that the original purpose of schools was centered on humans—the practical person—and not anything else special. Mencius’s words should serve as solid historical evidence that literary education research from the anthropological perspective must emphasize the practical person, and they deserve profound reflection by contemporary literary education researchers!

5 Conclusion

The author’s above analysis and discussion of the status of the “person” in literary education research from the anthropological perspective not only helps overcome the narrow technicalism in literary education but also helps clarify the blind spots of extreme utilitarianism in literary education. Moreover, it aids in transcending the limitations of one-sided humanism in literary education, thereby truly realizing literary education’s role in shaping creative talents who “seek truth,” “strive for goodness,” and “revere beauty.” Ultimately, literary education is education of the person. Therefore, only by comprehensively and profoundly grasping the “existential” relationship between the person and literature from the heights of human wisdom, spirit, aesthetics, cultivation, and development can we effectively and rapidly enable literary education, characterized by the distinctive integration of “truth, goodness, and beauty”^[11], to play a profound and stirring melody!

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