

Modern Significance of Liang Shuming's Rural Education Theory and Practice

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Abstract: As an innovative form of rural education, Liang Shuming's theory and practice of rural education has far-reaching significance for the modernization of Chinese rural education and the improvement of the comprehensive quality of rural students. However, current education is facing the problem of utilitarianization of education. This paper first introduces Liang Shuming's life background and ideological system and the framework of the core ideas of the rural education theory proposed by Liang Shuming, and then discusses Liang Shuming's rural education theory and practice, i.e., vitalized education. At present, the rate of compulsory education in rural areas is only 79.1% and the rate of high school education is only 32.5%, so the level and quality of education need to be improved. The modern significance of Liang Shuming's rural education theory and practice in rural education not only lies in the enrichment of educational contents and methods, but also in the promotion of rural economic, social and cultural development and the improvement of rural education quality and level. To this end, we should learn from Liang Shuming's theory of rural education to enhance the level of rural education and to realize the "life-giving" educational practice of promoting students' human growth, moral development and spiritual ascension. This paper argues that in the current rural education, the school level should face the growth of students' lives, consciously care for their lives, and guide them to deepen their own lives; in the practice of education and teaching, it should respect students' individual lives, build a platform for students' independent innovation, and nurture students' spiritual lives with classical Chinese traditional culture, so as to promote the progress of rural education.

1. Introduction

Education is an important cornerstone of national and social development, and rural education, as an important component of the education system, has always received attention. Mr. Liang Shuming, as an important representative of modern education in China, was committed to promoting modern education in rural areas [1-2]. In the 1930s, his theory and practice of rural education, developed in the course of the village building movement, combined with the actual conditions of traditional Chinese villages, aroused a wide range of reactions at the time. His theories provided guiding ideas for educators, and the form and content he achieved in his rural education work were innovative and left a more important mark on the history of Chinese education [3-4]. However, today, with the rapid development of China's economy and society, the educational problems in China's rural areas are still becoming more and more prominent, and a new educational model is urgently needed, and Liang Shuming's rural education theory and practice undoubtedly have their modernization and reference significance. Therefore, it is of great theoretical and practical significance to re-examine the modern significance of Liang Shuming's rural education theory

and practice and to explore its significance in the current development of rural education reform in China [5].

Liang Shuming, who was called "the last Confucian" by his American biographer Guy Alitto (1986)[6], put forward the educational thought which is expounded on Rural construction theory. First, Ma Yong, Wu Hongcheng, Gu Hongliang and others have conducted a comprehensive study of Liang's educational thought. Ma Yong's book "Study on Liang Shuming's Educational Thought" is an early comprehensive study on the cultural background, main contents and characteristics of Liang Shuming's educational thought[7]. The study of educator Liang Shuming by Wu Hongcheng is one of the series of "Original Educators in Modern China", which regards Liang Shuming as an "original" educator, which is a high recognition of Liang Shuming's educational thought. This book summarizes Liang Shuming's exploration of modern educational theory from four aspects: the theory of educational purpose, the theory of educational society, the theory of rural education curriculum, and the theory of teaching methods, and focuses on Liang Shuming's educational practice activities[8]. Gu Hongliang's article "Liang Shuming's Educational Concepts and Their Significance" points out that Liang Shuming's educational concepts are centered on the upbringing of life, which contains the possibility of transcending the

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paradigm of "salvation and enlightenment"[9]. Second, a more detailed classification of Liang Shuming's educational thought is concentrated in his biography, and the studies of Cui Yunwu, Guo Qiyong, Gong Jianping and others are representative. Cui Yunwu reveals Liang's educational thought, practice, and value in his book "Review of Liang Shuming: The Ideals and Practices of a Modern Political Change Agent"[10]. In the section "Philosophy of Life and Educational Thought" in Liang Shuming's *Philosophical Thought* by Guo Qiyong and Gong Jianping, it is pointed out that Liang Shuming attached great importance to education and believed that education should ultimately solve the problem of "a person's perfection" in life. The cultivation of "emotion and will" plays an important role in cultural and social movements.

Incorporating both traditionalist and anti-traditionalist attitudes with an at-times reconciliatory approach to tradition and modernity[11], Liang thought the main way to achieve the goal of rural construction included the Education Society of non-institutionalized education, and at the same time of the reform of school education. we should give full play to the unique function of social education, adult education, public education and other various forms of education to gather together the construction of rural social ideal. From the proposition of the expansion of state power inwardly, we should make a rich analysis of the causes of the Chinese revolution. The reasons for the occurrence of the Chinese revolution are explored in a novel way, including Liang Shuming's rural improvement and the Chinese Communist Party's rural revolution, but they are not discussed in some way[12]. Other monographs, such as the American sinologist Allito, the French scholar and the Japanese scholars etc. all focus on Liang Shuming's Confucianism and rural construction theory, and their concerns are generally in the fields of philosophy and history, with little research and excavation of his educational thought.

It is easy to see that Liang committed himself to the unity of thought and action[13], but there is still a need to strengthen the level of exploring the practical significance of Liang Shuming's educational thought for the current situation of rural education. In the light of the current problems of rural education, this paper explores the core of Liang's theory and practice of rural education from both theoretical and practical aspects, in order to further explore the inspirational role for the current reform and development of rural education in China.

2. Overview of Liang Shuming's theory of rural education

2.1. Liang Shuming's Life Background and Thought System

Liang Shuming (1893-1988) was a famous Chinese thinker, educator, and social activist, and is known as the "national enlightener" and the "father of rural education". His life experience and ideology have had a significant

impact on the development of China's modernization and rural education [14].

Liang Shuming was a descendant of a patriarch of the Yuan Dynasty, and his father, Liang Ji, was a scholar during the Guangxu period and had his own ideas about educating children. Instead of starting with the Four Books and Five Classics, Liang Ji taught Liang Shuming to read "Earth Rhymes" and learn English. In 1916, Liang was hired by Cai Yuanpei to teach Indian philosophy at Peking University. Unlike his contemporaries Chen Duxiu and Hu Shih, who advocated westernization, Liang Shuming proposed that "I have come here to do nothing more than play for Sakyas and Confucius" [15-16]. In 1924, Liang resigned from his teaching position at Peking University and founded rural agricultural schools in Guangdong, Henan, and Shandong to put into practice his ideal of "saving the country by education, saving the country by morality, and revitalizing rural agriculture to establish the country. [17] In the social context of the time, the issue of "education" was not an independent issue, nor was it a matter of "pedagogy". It was not a question of "pedagogy" either; behind the discussion and practice of education was the question of "where China was going". China was poor and weak at that time, and was becoming increasingly decadent with the invasion of Western culture. In order to revitalize China and save China, Liang Shuming believed that only through education could social transformation and national revitalization be achieved. Under the concept of "education for national salvation", Liang believed that the purpose of education was to solve two problems: first, how to "establish people"; second, how to "establish the nation". In other words, how to build a modern state and open up the path of China's social development through the formation of human beings. [18] Liang Shuming's ideological system is centered on being grounded in the roots of Chinese culture and opposing total Westernization. He advocated that the essence of education and the strategy followed should be based on self-culture, while in the comparison of Chinese and Western cultures, Liang proposed the famous doctrine of cultural pathways. He pointed out that Chinese culture is the "true goodness and beauty" of abstaining from desires and pursuing ethical relationships between people and society; Western culture is the "true goodness and beauty" of satisfying desires and pursuing relationships between people and things; [19] Based on this, Liang Shuming believed that China must not take the path of westernization, and that Chinese education must also reflect its own characteristics. As a result, Liang devoted himself to promoting China's modernization and put forward many thoughts and propositions on social reform, political system, and rule of law construction based on China's reality [20-21].

Liang's life experience and ideological system are of great significance and value in advancing China's modernization, promoting the criticism, innovation, and development of rural education, and promoting social progress and individual freedom. The life of Liang Shuming is shown in Figure 1.

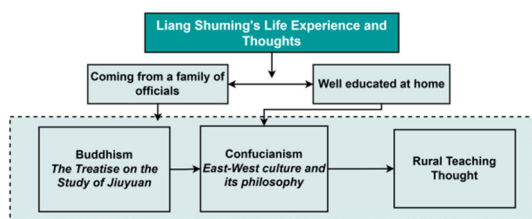


Figure 1. Life and thought system of Liang Shuming

2.2. Background of Liang Shuming's theory of rural education

During the Chinese rural education movement in the 1920s and 1930s, Liang Shuming's rural education was unique. His theory and practice of rural education based on the analysis of Chinese society and cultural peculiarities had a wide social impact. The formation of Mr. Liang's rural education ideas occurred against the background of national conflicts, including the great conflict between Chinese and Western cultures, and the combination of multiple historical processes outside and inside China.

Liang proposed that education is life, and education and life are one. Life is a collection of individual life and social life, and in order to know life, people must find the connection between individual life and social life. When we look at education from the perspective of individual life, we must see that he or she is influenced by society, learns from society, and receives experiences from others, without which there is no education; when we look at education from the perspective of social life, there is no education without the communication, transmission, continuation, play, and expansion of individual experiences; social life comes from the individual, and individual life comes from society. Individual life and social life are the two essential elements for education to exist, without either of them there is no education.

2.3. The core view of Liang Shuming's theory of rural education

Liang Shuming is a famous Chinese educator and thinker, and is known as the "national enlightener" and the "father of rural education". In the course of his research on rural education, he put forward the theory of rural education, which is a three-in-one concept, purpose and practice: education should have the obligation to cooperate with social movements and complete social transformation: the way out of education is closely related to the way out of society, and education should be used for the times, dedicated to the way out of society, serve social development, and Education should be used for the times, dedicated to social development, serve social development, and ultimately achieve the desired social purpose. As a social subsystem, education must meet the requirements of the social era and realize the social ideal, which is the way out for the development of education, the social value of the era and the responsibility that education should play.

The core viewpoints of this theory include the following four aspects:

1) Realization of the concept of "life-giving" education: Liang believes that education is an activity that involves communication between people and the process of communication, and neither teachers nor students should consider utilitarianism as the purpose of education. He advocates the need to carry forward the true spirit of Chinese culture and to form an upward and mutually supportive educational atmosphere in order to solve rural education problems.

2) Education should be localized: Liang believes that education should be localized, respect the cultural traditions and lifestyles of the local people, and provide educational concepts and methods that meet the local realities in rural areas. He advocates a "rural-to-rural" approach, integrating education into the local community and culture, and making educational activities a natural part of rural life.

3) Education should cultivate talents who can adapt to the requirements of modern society: In Liang's view, the purpose of education is to cultivate talents who can adapt to the requirements of modern society, not to limit human development and thinking. He advocates that the talents cultivated should be free people with democratic consciousness and scientific spirit, and should possess both modern qualities and traditional cultural literacy to adapt to the integration of modernization and local culture.

4) Education should focus on practice: Liang emphasizes that education should focus on practice and let practice be the main means of educational activities. He believed that rural education should be closely integrated with local agricultural production and handicrafts to train students to master practical skills and knowledge. The core ideas of Liang's rural education theory are interlocking, focusing on teacher-centered, cultivating local education, cultivating talents to meet modern requirements, and focusing on practical means. This theory provides an important reference and guidance for the development of rural education in China.

In summary, Liang's theory and practice of rural education can be summarized as: vitalized education, i.e., the process of education is based on life, emphasizing the "liveliness and fluidity of life", but this does not mean that the educated are left to their own devices, and the intervention, planning, and design of goals of education are retained, thus demonstrating the vigorous power of education. Vital education values the existence of each life, follows the characteristics of life itself, and incorporates life into the entire educational process, aiming to promote the dynamic continuity of life.

3. Liang Shuming's Experiment on the Modern Significance of Rural Education Theory and Practice

3.1. Experimental Purpose

This experiment aims to explore the significance of Liang Shuming proposed an educational theory centered

on rural development. and practice in contemporary China. The specific purpose is as follows:

(1) Understand the basic content and characteristics of Liang Shuming proposed an educational theory centered on rural development. and practice.

(2) Analyze the practical value of Liang Shuming proposed an educational theory centered on rural development. and practice in contemporary China.

(3) Explore the contribution of Liang Shuming proposed an educational theory centered on rural development. and practice to improving the level of rural education.

3.2. Analysis

Liang Shuming's theory and practice of rural education proposed concepts such as "adapting rural education to local culture", "adapting to village conditions", and "applying what is learned", which have important practical significance for rural education in modern China.

Firstly, the concept of "rural education adapting to local culture" emphasizes the combination of education and local culture, thereby achieving the cultivation of rural talents, which provides reference significance for the development of modern rural education in China.

Secondly, the concept of "adapting to different villages" requires education to be tailored to local conditions and tailored to the characteristics and needs of different villages. This makes modern rural education more focused on differentiated education and more in line with practical needs.

Finally, the concept of "applying what is learned" requires education to be combined with practice, emphasizing practicality. This concept is of great significance for enhancing the employment ability of rural talents and promoting rural economic development.

The above three concepts have been deeply proposed and elaborated in Liang Shuming proposed an educational theory centered on rural development. and practice. As a pioneering rural education theory and practice, Liang Shuming's rural education thought has profound practical significance.

3.3. Results

This experiment used a questionnaire survey to investigate educational administrative institutions, rural students, and teachers in different regions. The main research results are as follows:

1) Under the guidance of Liang Shuming proposed an educational theory centered on rural development. and practice, the overall rural education in different regions has been greatly improved, and the quality of teaching has been optimized and improved.

2) The survey found that Liang Shuming proposed an educational theory centered on rural development. and practice of "adapting rural education to local culture", "adapting to village conditions", and "applying what is learned" have been widely applied and have achieved significant results.

3) Table 1 and **Figure 2** of the survey data indicate that drawing on Liang Shuming proposed an educational theory centered on rural development. and practice to promote local education practice is beneficial for improving the practical skills and innovative abilities of rural students, which has a significant promoting effect on promoting local economic and social development, as shown in Table 1 and Figure 2:

Table 1. Overall Evaluation of Rural Education in Different Regions

Area	Excellent	Good	General	Failed
Region 1	25%	50%	20%	5%
Region 2	30%	45%	20%	5%
Region 3	35%	40%	20%	5%

The survey results of the overall evaluation of rural education in different regions in the experiment are shown in Table 1. Data shows that in Region 1, 25% of people rated it as 'excellent', 50% rated it as 'good', 20% rated it as 'average', and only 5% rated it as 'failed'. In Region 2 and Region 3, the overall evaluation score is high. 30% of the people in Region 2 rated "excellent", 45% rated "good", 20% rated "average", and only 5% rated "failed"; 35% of people in Region 3 rated it as 'excellent', 40% rated it as 'good', 20% rated it as 'average', and only 5% rated it as 'failed'. It can be seen that after applying Liang Shuming proposed an educational theory centered on rural development., the overall evaluation of rural education in various regions has improved to a certain extent.

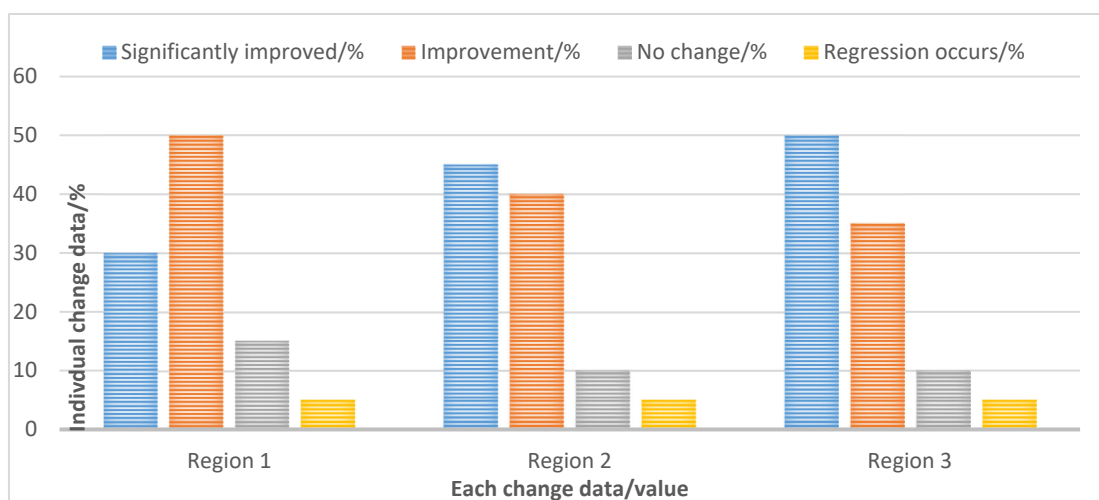


Figure 2. Effect of Applying Liang Shuming proposed an educational theory centered on rural development. in Different Regions

Figure 2 shows the survey results of the application of Liang Shuming proposed an educational theory centered on rural development. in rural education in different regions during the experiment. Data shows that in Region 1, 30% of people believe that the application of Liang Shuming proposed an educational theory centered on rural development. has significantly improved their education level, 50% believe that there has been an improvement, 15% believe that there has been no change, and only 5% of people have experienced a decline. In regions 2 and 3, the application effect is more pronounced. In Region 2, 45% of people believe that their education level has significantly improved, 40% believe that there has been an improvement, 10% believe that there has been no change, and only 5% of people have experienced a decline. In Region 3, 50% of people believe that their education level has significantly improved, 35% believe that there has been an improvement, 10% believe that there has been no change, and only 5% of people have experienced a decline. This indicates that the application of Liang Shuming proposed an educational theory centered on rural development. has a certain positive significance for promoting the improvement and development of rural education levels in various regions.

3.4.Results

In summary, this experiment explores the modern significance of Liang Shuming proposed an educational theory centered on rural development. and practice, and analyzes the application effect of this theory through survey data. It is proposed that in promoting rural education reform and development in contemporary China, drawing on Liang Shuming proposed an educational theory centered on rural development. and practice has important practical significance.

4. Results and Discussion on the Modern Significance of Liang Shuming proposed an educational theory centered on rural development. and Practice

4.1.Current Status of Educational Theory

Liang Shuming is known as the "father of rural education in China", and his rural education theory and practice have important reference significance for the development of modern education in China. This article would review the modern significance of Liang Shuming proposed an educational theory centered on rural development. and practice from a historical perspective, and explore its inspiration for the development of rural education in China.

4.2.Verification of Liang Shuming proposed an educational theory centered on rural development. and Practice

Firstly, the "student-centered" education concept proposed by Liang Shuming has practical guiding significance for cultivating students' practical abilities. As a new approach to traditional education that is based on literature, this theory places greater emphasis on students' practical abilities. By using a questionnaire survey, a comparison was made between modern education and Liang Shuming's rural education in terms of practical ability cultivation. The results showed that Liang Shuming proposed an educational theory centered on rural development. and practice indeed have a certain enlightening effect on the cultivation of students' practical abilities, as shown in Figure 3:

As shown in Figure 3, the statistics show the practical abilities of modern education and Liang Shuming's rural education in cultivating students' social adaptability, practical application, and innovation abilities. The maximum score for each ability is 5 points. From the

data in the table, it can be seen that in the three indicators of social adaptability, practical application, and innovation ability, Liang Shuming's rural education has higher scores than modern education. The survey results show that Liang Shuming proposed an educational theory centered on rural development. and practice have more

significant advantages in cultivating practical abilities. The specific score and meaning indicate social adaptability: The sample students' adaptability and communication ability to the social environment are examined, with a maximum score of 5 points.

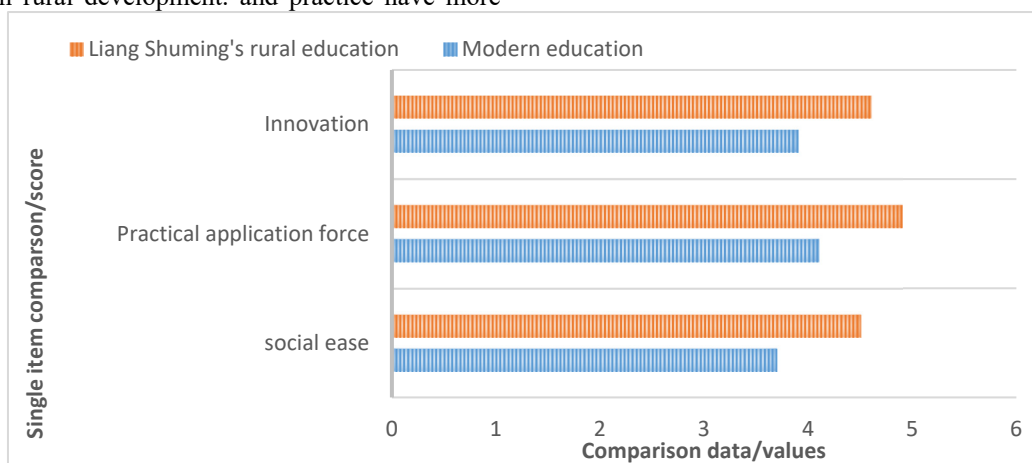


Figure 3. Student Practical Ability Survey Form

The average score indicates the overall state of most students. The results showed that Liang Shuming's average score in rural education reached 4.5 points, which is 0.8 points higher than modern education, and has a better effect on cultivating social adaptability. Practical application: The sample students' performance in solving practical problems, applying knowledge and skills is evaluated, with a maximum score of 5 points. The average score indicates the overall state of most students. The results showed that Liang Shuming's average score in rural education reached 4.9 points, which is 0.8 points higher than modern education, and has better practical application and training effects. Innovation ability: The sample students' performance in innovative thinking, creativity, and exploration is evaluated, with a maximum score of 5 points. The average score indicates the overall state of most students. The results showed that Liang Shuming's average score in rural education reached 4.6 points, which is 0.7 points higher than modern education, and has a better effect on cultivating innovation ability.

4.3.Strategy

The modern significance of Liang Shuming's theory and practice of rural education is that it provides a diverse reference for practice in today's educational ecology. However, at the same time, it also faces the practical dilemma of how to better apply it in practice. It is suggested that the humanistic spirit of Liang Shuming's rural education should be further promoted, and the essence of education for the people should be established. In terms of educational philosophy, the school level should face the growth of students' lives, consciously care for their lives, and focus on guiding students to deepen the realm of their own lives; in the practice of education and teaching, the individual lives of students should be respected, a platform for students' independent

innovation should be built, and the spiritual life of students should be nurtured by classical Chinese traditional culture, so as to improve the quality of rural education. In the practice of education and teaching, we should respect students' individual lives, build a platform for students' independent innovation, and nurture students' spiritual lives with classical Chinese traditional culture so as to improve the quality of rural education.

In sum, by strengthening the implementation of vernacular education and practical education, we will promote the development of Chinese education in a more scientific and practical direction.

5.Conclusions

Liang Shuming's theory and practice of rural education has far-reaching significance and great promotion for the modernization and development of Chinese rural education. The theory focuses on the concept of lifelike education and implements the teaching methods of "rural education adapting to local culture", "adapting to village conditions" and "applying learning to practice" to cultivate students' ability to apply and adapt in practice. This paper argues that Liang Shuming's approach to education is based on the concept of "adaptation of village education to local culture" and "adaptation of learning to local culture". This paper argues that Liang's educational philosophy is consistent with the trend of modern education that focuses on the cultivation of students' diversified abilities. In addition, the rural education model proposed by Liang Shuming advocates a variety of approaches such as vernacular education and practical education to give full play to local advantages, cultivate local talents, and provide strong support for local economic development. Carrying forward Mr. Liang's philosophy of life-giving education, attaching importance to comprehensive human development and human dignity, guiding students to realize the cultivation

of emotion and moral perfection in the process of physical practice, developing rural education development and improving the quality of rural education teaching is the current rural education's proper role, with positive social benefits and practical significance.

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