

**The Idea of Integrated Education:
From the point of view of Whitehead's philosophy of Education**
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This paper is going to discuss the following three questions from the view of Whitehead philosophy of education: (1) what is the idea of integrated education, (2) why should we have the integrated education, and (3) how can we achieve it? The concept of integrated education emphasizes methods which concentrate on viewing the student as a whole person. The goal is not about how to find a good job or make big money, but about how to develop a complete e human being. Every part of the individual - mind, body, emotion and spirit, should be developed at the same time and be integrated into the whole person.

What is the idea of integrated education?

What does the word "integration" mean?

In Chinese, the word "integrated" literally means putting different cultures together, based on positive moral concepts.

In order for cultures to become integrated, they must know and understand each other. In addition, they should appreciate and respect each other. Therefore, integration does not require the parties to give up their own characters, nor to focus on their differences. This is the proper form of integration.

According to the above definition, the concept of integrated education emphasizes methods which concentrate on viewing the student as a whole person. The goal is not about how to find a good job or make big money, but about how to develop a complete e human being. Every part of the individual - mind, body, emotion and spirit, should be developed at the same time and be integrated into the whole person.

Further, the idea of integrated education is not only about how to make a smart person, but to make a good person as well. It is not only about giving people knowledge, but also helping them to translate that knowledge into true wisdom. With integrated education, there is no division between school and society, study and human life, knowledge and goodness.

Where does the idea of integrated education come from?

It comes from many sources, of course. Here I would like to mention Whitehead's philosophy of education.

Whitehead's philosophy of education was built on the concepts of the organism and process thought. Thus, Whitehead always believed that appreciation of the relation of the whole to the part was central to understanding reality. Relatedness is fundamental. Whitehead stressed, "nothing is in isolation" (AE, p. 122). All things depend upon on each other. "every thing in this world is in some way connected with every other thing in this world; "¹Every thing is a part of the whole. Whitehead gave us innumerable examples that emphasize the importance of wholeness and relationship.

Whitehead applied this thought to education. He liked to use the term "nature alive" which enabled him to look at both of physical and biological science from a unique perspective. In his view, "the students are alive." The body contains both the mental and physical attributes of unified experience. "No separation of mind and body in this philosophy; the body includes the mental state. That mental state-the mind, perception, and reasoning-is our concern as educators. Students do not present to us isolated minds or bodies but themselves as integrated human beings whose relations in the world are experiences that Whitehead's philosophy of organism explains."²

Whitehead's philosophy "urges us to turn from reductionism and, instead, to think of the whole in relation to the parts and the parts in relation to the whole. A student viewed from a process perspective is a student viewed holistically. Teachers do not confront a mind, or a body, or cognition, or affect, but, a totality; learners bring their whole being to the situation."³

To be brief, the idea of integrated education is based on Whitehead's philosophy of organism.

Why should we have an integrated educational system?

Global society needs global education that should be bas on the concept of integrated education

I think one of the most important considerations is that we are presently living in a global society. The whole earth is becoming a small global village. Prof. Dwight Allen believes that our schools are obsolete by any standards for today's technological world. Western schools were built on the needs of western civilization; Chinese schools were built on the needs of Chinese civilization. But now we are no longer a western civilization or a Chinese civilization - we are now a world civilization.

Therefore, communications among different cultures and races are more important than ever before. Our school systems should teach our children to know, understand and appreciate other cultures and each other. Prof. Dwight Allen said: "Unfortunately, in our schools children are more likely to be learning about a world that no longer exists. Knowledge is power; ignorance is oppression. We are oppressed if we don't know, understand, and appreciate our neighbors around the world. We need this knowledge to understand why they act the way they do, what

¹ Malcolm D. Evans, *Whitehead and Philosophy of Education*, Amsterdam-Atlanta, 1998, P.12.

² Malcolm D. Evans, *Whitehead and Philosophy of Education*, Amsterdam-Atlanta, 1998, P.34.

³ Malcolm D. Evans, *Whitehead and Philosophy of Education* ,Amsterdam-Atlanta, 1998, P.61.

they believe in, and what they consider to be important.”⁴ “Clearly, simply studying cultures is not enough. Kids must appreciate those cultures. Teachers must become the translators of cultural differences. A child from any nation in the world may be in their classroom tomorrow, and different cultures are just down the street. We need to teach our children to celebrate diversity and the creative human spirit.”⁵ This theory can be helpful to Chinese educators in their quest for educational reform.

In actuality, every country and culture has its own educational system. These individual systems met the needs of the single culture but are not enough for today’s global society. This is one of reasons why some American educators said, “We are the richest nation in the world, but yet we have a failing school system.” (American Schools Need Reform By Pamela Jordan Lee, <http://www.sirrmax.com> February 2, 2001).

The global society of today needs a new educational system; one based on the concept of integrated education.

The modern educational system has caused a number of social problems.

Another important reason why we need educational reform and integrated education is that the modern educational systems – including both American and Chinese systems – have failed in many ways and have caused many problems in our society.

Before moving to this, I would briefly like to discuss the concept of modern education. Modern education has its roots in seventeenth and eighteenth century science and has had a significant influence on Western society. As Evans said: “Not only are we surrounded by technology developed from scientific research; we are also educated, persuaded, and required to adopt and utilize the methods of science to solve social, business, and personal problems. The notion that science and technology can solve all problems is well established in western society.”⁶ Many people, including most educators, believe that science and technology can solve all the world’s problems. Knowledge is power. The modern educational system is based on this belief and has focused giving students knowledge and equipping them to find jobs. Development of human creativity and spirituality along with translating knowledge into wisdom has been largely ignored. Thus the principal goal of education – making a whole person was lost and replaced by a system of job training. Students became passive receivers of knowledge.

A: Specialization

Whitehead was not satisfied with the modern educational system’s stress on specialization. Although sometimes necessary, “this situation has its dangers. It produces minds in a groove. Each profession makes progress, but it is progress in its own groove. Now to be mentally in a groove is to live in contemplating a given set of abstractions. This groove prevents straying

⁴ Dwight Allen and William H. Cosby, Jr. *American Schools: The 100 Billion Dollar Challenge*, P.19.

⁵ Dwight Allen and William H. Cosby, Jr. *American Schools: The 100 Billion Dollar Challenge*, P.20-21.

⁶ Malcolm D. Evans, *Whitehead and Philosophy of Education*, Amsterdam-Atlanta, 1998, p.16.

across country, and the abstraction abstracts from something to which no future attention is paid. But there is no groove of abstraction which is adequate for the comprehension of human life.”⁷

The over-reliance on science has caused an important misunderstanding Science cannot do all things. It cannot take over literae humaniores. “Surveys and tests do not describe the experience, emotions, and expectations of individuals; only their knowledge or opinion on a small matter at a given point in time.”⁸

Under the specialization that results from this belief, students are not treated as a whole person. They are not alive but become machines that merely receive knowledge from the schools.

As we have seen, modern education emphasizes separation and difference much more than integration and harmony. Students are separated into parts rather than being educated as a whole person. Disciplines such as language, mathematics and science, nurture parts of each person. Schools offer these different courses for the different facets of the individual, but they have neglected to put the different parts of the student together after having separated them. Individual parts may develop very well, but the development of the whole person is missing.

Such ultra-specialization has resulted in a bifurcation of the sciences versus the arts and humanities. Whitehead believed that this bifurcation was a major tragedy for humanity and harmful to the future of society.

The world faces the threat of alienation and separation. Alienation creates a huge obstacle for people, nations and cultures, inhibiting communication. As people become slaves of their specialization knowledge, other parts of their personalities will be obliterated. As a result, they hardly understand the meaning of life, nor do they understand each other. There is a big gap between learning and life, knowledge and wisdom. This leads to a more critical gap – that among individuals. The modern educational system being practiced in the west and in China is partially responsible for producing these “non-whole” people.

Another result of this educational system is that students are not happy anymore. According to a report, in China, “students are deeply unhappy. A survey conducted by the Education Ministry five years ago found more than 80% of students disliked school. Dropout rates have been rising in rural areas—partly for economic reasons but also because of the stultifying atmosphere of their classrooms. Exam pressures frequently lead to suicides. According to a survey last year among senior secondary-school students and university freshmen in one area, more than 50% had considered killing themselves. As another example of the seriousness of this situation; On March 14th, 2003, a 14 year old, Chinese girl, died suddenly. Her doctor said that she died because she was over-tired and under too much pressure. She was an outstanding student and got many prizes from her school and the city. Let’s see the schedule she made for herself: 4:00am, reading; 5:00am – 6:00pm studying at her school; 6:00pm – 11:00pm doing her homework. She would go to bed until 12:30 am because she wanted more time to study. As you

⁷ Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, New York: The Free Press, 1967, p. 197.

⁸ Malcolm D. Evans, *Whitehead and Philosophy of Education*, Amsterdam-Atlanta, 1998, p.17.

can see, she couldn't possibly get enough sleep. According to her diary of 2-28, 2003, she said that she had wanted to be a doctor, but now she wanted to be an educator because she really wanted to help all of parents and their kids to be happy and enjoy their leaning⁹.

Several other countries in East Asia, including Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, are grappling with similar problems.¹⁰

B. Lack of creativity.

Another negative result of our modern non-integrated educational system is the virtually complete stifling of creativity.

This lack of creativity is a very serious problem in the Chinese school system. "Students of all ages in China have had to endure the miseries of learning by rote. Teachers have stifled creativity in the pursuit of the accumulation of facts, and parents have forced children to spend mind-numbing hours cramming for exams." "China's education system is failing to produce enough innovative thinkers."¹¹

For Chinese students, as well as their teachers and parents, the final goal of education is to go to a top university. The better the university the better the job after graduation. The national entry exam produces huge pressure for the students and results in them becoming like machines. The students are the learning machines, the teachers are the machine operators and the parents are the keeper of the learning machine. The students keep busy doing endless homework. The teachers keep busy giving the students tasks. The students cannot pursue any outside interests or relax by playing or watching TV – their lives revolve around their schoolwork. As you see, Chinese students are very busy, especially by the time they reach the third year of high school. They don't have time to think about what they are learning, how to learn more wisely or why they should be learning what they are learning. They just receive information from their teachers every day. They are force-fed like the Peking ducks.

As a result of this form of education, Chinese students do not develop creativity in their adult lives. This is one of the reasons why China has failed to produce a great thinker who was well known in the world during the 20th century. This is very wrong. "An education which does not begin by evoking initiative and end by encouraging it must be wrong. For its whole aim is the production of active wisdom." (Whitehead: *The Aims Of Education*. P37, The Free Press, New York, 1957)

C. Smart but not good

Whitehead detailed another problem of modern education: "The fading of ideals is sad evidence of the defeat of human endeavor. In the schools of antiquity philosophers aspired to impart wisdom, in modern colleges our humbler aim is to teach subjects. The drop from the divine wisdom, which was the goal of the ancients, to text-book knowledge of subjects, which is

⁹ “‘我累了’! ——飘逝的‘十佳少年’浸血日记惊动人间”, 引自《知音》5月下半月版, 第8-10页。

¹⁰ *Roll over, Confucius. Jan 23rd 2003 | BEIJING From The Economist print edition.*

¹¹ *Roll over, Confucius. Jan 23rd 2003 | BEIJING From The Economist print edition*

achieved by the moderns, marks an educational failure, sustained through the ages.” (Whitehead: *The Aims Of Education*. P29, The Free Press, New York, 1957).

If the goal of our educational system is for students to find a good job, why should we care about the moral or spiritual education of young people?

What is spirituality? Briefly, it is “that combination of emotion, physical experience, and intellect that accompanies (1) a search for the unknown as in some aesthetic experiences, and (2) appreciation of the possibilities of knowing beyond that which is directly perceived.”¹²

Obviously, this facet of education has been ignored for years in the modern system. For most educators spiritual education is a waste of time; it is not useful because it does not help the student make money directly. This is also why “the historic position of the United States on religion and public schooling has caused educators to ignore this vital aspect of our humanity.”¹³

The avowed goal of the Chinese educational system is to develop every student from kindergarten to PhD program in four areas: morality, intellect, body and aesthetic ways. But Chinese government and educators now realize that they have failed this goal in the last decade. In reality, most people thought that a smart kid is also a good kid just because he or she can study well. A student who is not successful in school, is thought to be with hopeless for success in the future.

As a result of this, many young people in the society have difficulty after graduation even they are very smart and knowledgeable. Some of them have emotional problems. Some of them have no goal but to make money. Some of them even commit crimes against others or society.

Our modern educational system is based on the faith that knowledge is power – that science and technology can solve all the world’s problems. . Over-specialization, lack of creativity and being smart but not good are its results.

How to integrate?

Now, we can see, an educational system that will be based on the idea of integration is very different from the modern educational system. Integrated education would be planned to integrate the different parts of a human being for making a whole person; to integrate the different cultures for creating a culture with global view; to develop the students’ creativity so that they can translate their knowledge into real wisdom.

But, how can we achieve this goal?

According to my understanding, aesthetics will play one of the very important roles in integrated education. The reasons are the following:

¹² Malcolm D. Evans, *Whitehead and Philosophy of Education*, Amsterdam-Atlanta, 1998. p.84.

¹³ Malcolm D. Evans, *Whitehead and Philosophy of Education*, Amsterdam-Atlanta, 1998. p.84.

A. No appreciation, no creativity.

The appreciation I am thinking of is not only about appreciation of arts and beauty, but also of nature. It is human beings' feelings and experience. One of the results of it is interest. Appreciate requires interest and increases interest at the same time. Human beings' creativity cannot develop without interest.

Whitehead said: "there can be no mental development without interest. Interest is the sine qua non for attention and apprehension. You may endeavour to excite interest by means of birch rods, or you may coax it by the incitement of pleasurable activity. But without interest there will be no progress."¹⁴ The mental development always includes creativity as Whitehead said.

Interest gives people the initiative to do things. At best, people do things because they are willing and not pushed by others. This is the reason they can concentrate on their doing and can use every ability they have and every opportunity they have found to achieve it. Their creativity grows while they are doing things very actively and on their own initiative. This is an only way people can develop their creative potential. "We must foster the creative initiative towards the maintenance of objective values. You will not obtain the apprehension without the initiative, or the initiative without the apprehension."¹⁵

In a word, no appreciation, no creativity.

B. No appreciation, no integration.

Art and aesthetic appreciation is the bridge between subjects and objects, the abstract and the concrete, an individual and others or society. "For example, children and adults have access to feelings that flow through them from the world and connect them to distant events taking place in space and time. These bodily feelings at the base of all experience provide concrete ways in which human beings can appreciate the intrinsic value of the world around them." Therefore, aesthetic appreciation is the way for human beings to open themselves to a new and a bigger world and it is also a way for individuals to transcend themselves. It is a bridge between an individual and others and the whole society as well.

Aesthetic appreciation is not only a bridge between an individual and others, but also a bridge among the different parts of a human being. For convenience of discussion, we say a human being makes up of different parts as mind, soul, feelings or emotions and body, etc. These are also the different powers from the inner life of a human being. These parts want to do different things at the same time because their aims and principles are very different. That makes a human being feel he/she is split and is no longer a whole person. In fact, this is a tragedy of human beings in modern society that pays too much attention on reason and ignores other parts of a human being as feelings, emotions and spirit. "By way of contrast, the methods of 17th century science replace our concrete experience of the sunset with abstract categories that are used to measure the phenomena in question and deny the importance of that experience in

¹⁴ Alfred North Whitehead, *The Aims of Education*, New York: The Free Press, 1967, p.31.

¹⁵ Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, New York: The Free Press, 1967, p.199-200

understanding the world. Schools and universities emphasis upon this methodology produces an imbalanced education with ‘minds in a groove’.”¹⁶

Unlike this is the way of aesthetic appreciation. It awakes every ability and every power a human being has toward one main goal, not many goals at the same time. Therefore, every part of a human being contributes to be achieving the goal and developing well at the same time. A whole person can be made only in this way. In this case, aesthetic appreciation is a bridge among the different parts of a human being.

C. No appreciation, no wisdom.

What does wisdom mean? According to what Whitehead said, “ wisdom is the way in which knowledge is held. It concerns the handling of knowledge, its selection for the determination of relevant issues, its employment to add value to our immediate experience. This mastery of knowledge, which is wisdom, is the most intimate freedom obtainable.” “You cannot be wise without some basis of knowledge; but you may easily acquire knowledge and remain bare of wisdom.”¹⁷

“The importance of knowledge lies in its use, in our active mastery of it---that is to say, it lies in wisdom.It all depends on who has the knowledge and what he does with it.”¹⁸
The whole aim of education “ is the production of active wisdom.”¹⁹

According to the view of Whitehead, there are three main rhythmic cycles of human growth. They are romance, precision and generalization. “ The first is romance-the joy of discovery and the love of learning that distinguish the young child.”²⁰ It becomes the basis of the other two cycles as precision and generalization.

“If the child is not taught in this way, ideas become ‘inert’ and knowledge remains ‘dead’. As a result, the child fails to understand the relationship between everyday life and what she or he is taught in school.”²¹

We can see that aesthetic appreciation plays a very important role in these three cycles. In other words, children cannot obtain wisdom without appreciation.

D. No appreciation, no true morality.

In Whitehead’s saying, “Moral education is impossible apart from the habitual vision of greatness.”²² Yes, if morality doesn’t have support from the inner parts of human beings as the

¹⁶ Howard Woodhouse, “Towards a Process Theory of Learning: Feeling the Beauty of the World”, *Interchange*, Vol.26/4,1995. P. 347.

¹⁷ Alfred North Whitehead, *The Aim of education*, New York: The Free Press, 1967, p.30.

¹⁸ Alfred North Whitehead, *The Aim of education*, New York: The Free Press, 1967, p.32.

¹⁹ Alfred North Whitehead, *The Aim of education*, New York.; The Free Press, 1967, p.37.

²⁰ Howard Woodhouse, “Towards a Process Theory of Learning: Feeling the Beauty of the World”, *Interchange*, Vol.26/4,1995. P.348.

²¹ Howard Woodhouse, “Towards a Process Theory of Learning: Feeling the Beauty of the World.”, *Interchange*, Vol.26/4,1995. P.349.

²² Alfred North Whitehead, *The Aim of education*, New York : The Free Press, 1967, p.69.

whole, how can people keep it in their inner life forever? The reason is that human beings have mind or reason, body, will and feeling or emotions. If one's reason wants to do, and his will and emotions or even his body do not want to, how can he do it? More importantly, how can he enjoy doing this? If not only his reason, but also his will and emotions and even body love to do, he can get enough inner strength to achieve it, no matter how hard it will be. This is as Confucius said that liking to know is better than just having to know; enjoying knowing is much better than just liking to know. That means people often don't want to do it, even they know it is right. If people like it, they may do it, but they cannot keep going. If people love it, they must do it. Because the whole of mind, body and feeling want to do it. They are strong enough to do it. It's hard for them to give up. The saying of Confucius above can help us to understand why students don't do it sometimes even they have known what their teachers or parents said is absolutely right. In other words, if there are no arts and beauty in the world, ethics will become a kind of very boring knowledge.

According to this, we can understand why we have a long history of moral education in ancient China, but we have failed in it finally. A lot of people do not really follow the moral way. For them, the thing that their reason may want to do is not what their feelings or their will want to do. So they did not get strong enough strength to do it. They have to fail to it, even when saying they want to do it.

In a word, even for moral education, the aesthetic way is also necessary. "You cannot, without loss, ignore in the life of the spirit so great a factor as art. Our aesthetic emotion provide us with vivid apprehensions of value."²³ No appreciation and the power from it, morality will become very weak.

Knowledge is power. But if people are not interested in it, it is not power anymore. Only by putting knowledge, will and emotions together, it will become real power that can be translated into real wisdom.

This is a reason why Whitehead emphasized that not only sciences, but also literature and arts are very important in educational systems. This is also one of reasons for Whitehead to criticize modern education because it paid attention to only one part of the educational process and left out other parts of it, leaving them to decay and degenerate. The other parts that he meant include aesthetics. He said "What I mean is art and aesthetic education."²⁴ Aesthetics is very important. "When you understand all about the sun and all about the atmosphere and all about the rotation of the earth, you may still miss the radiance of the sunset. There is no substitute for the direct perception of the concrete achievement of a thing in its actuality. We want concrete fact with a high light thrown on what is relevant to its preciousness."²⁵ "The soul would wither without fertilization from its transient experiences."²⁶ " This fertilization of the soul is the reason for the necessity of art. A static value, however serious and important, becomes unendurable by its appalling monotony of endurance. The soul cries aloud for release into change. It suffers the agonies of claustrophobia. The transitions of humour, wit, irreverence, play, sleep, and ---above

²³ Alfred North Whitehead, *The Aim of education*, New York: The Free Press, 1967, p.40.

²⁴ Alfred .North. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, (New York: The Free Press, 1967,p. 199.

²⁵ Alfred .North. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, New York: The Free Press, 1967,p. 199.

²⁶ Alfred .North. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, New York: The Free Press, 1967, p.201.

all---of art are necessary for it. Great art is the arrangement of the environment so as to provide for the soul vivid, but transient, values, human being's require something which absorbs them for a time, something out of the routine which they can stare at."²⁷ " Accordingly, the great art is more than transient refreshment. It is something that adds to the permanent richness of the soul's self-attainment. It justifies itself both by its immediate enjoyment, and also by its discipline of the inmost being."²⁸

Conclusion

What is education for? What do human beings need today through education? Whitehead's philosophy of education may be able to answer these questions. The new schools that are based on it may occur later on. Whether you call it integrated education or a balanced education as Whitehead did, aesthetics will and must play a very important role in it because of its character of integration. In Cobb's words, "For Whitehead the purpose of education is primarily aesthetic, that is, in the language of *Adventures of Ideas*, it is primarily for increasing strength of beauty.... the overall focus is clearly on what happens in the interior life of people." "critics of education seem to ignore the aesthetic, focusing instead on the cognitive. In a Whiteheadian school, these two concepts, cognitive and aesthetic, cannot be in conflict, but must be in a dynamic tension."²⁹

Finally, I would mention that I do not think only aesthetics can save the world. I would assert that we should keep balance between aesthetics and education of science and technology. That is "one of the right mix of necessary specialization and equally important generalization."³⁰ We can avoid a narrow groove as in modern educational way. Then its fruit is wisdom, because "wisdom is achieved from consideration of knowledge, experience, emotions, and bodily feeling in a broad context."³¹

Biography

Meijun Fan, holds her Ph.D in history of Chinese thoughts from Beijing Normal University and her Master degree in Chinese traditional aesthetics from Peking University. She was a former professor and the vice-chair of philosophy department of Beijing Normal University. She is the author of six books about Chinese Aesthetics and Aesthetical education. She is the editor in chief of Culture Communication (US) and a board member of CGIE.

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²⁷ Alfred .North. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, New York: The Free Press, 1967, p.202.

²⁸ Alfred .North. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, New York: The Free Press, 1967, p.202.

²⁹ Malcolm D. Evans, *Whitehead and Philosophy of Education*, Amsterdam-Atlanta, 1998,p.103.

³⁰ Malcolm D. Evans, *Whitehead and Philosophy of Education*, Amsterdam-Atlanta, 1998, p.90.

³¹ Malcolm D. Evans, *Whitehead and Philosophy of Education*, Amsterdam-Atlanta, 1998,p.90.