

# Teacher-Student Dialogue: Constructing the Basic Dimension of Colleges and Universities' Public Life

Wenmin Liu<sup>1,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Marxism, Shanghai University, Shanghai 200444, China

\*Corresponding author. Email: maggie\_liu@shu.edu.cn

## ABSTRACT

**Dialogue opens the imagination space and communication method of public life, and the expansion of school public life is inseparable from the effective teacher-student dialogue. At present, the teacher-student dialogue in public life in colleges and universities faces many problems: under the influence of instrumental rationality, the "banking" education concept that emphasizes the transfer and instillation of knowledge has not been broken; the classroom dialogue between teachers and students is only an educational method, not an educational purpose; the teacher-student dialogue full of public significance is still lacking. For this purpose, colleges and universities should build a dialogue relationship of "the fusion of horizons" between teachers and students, expand the discourse theme of public life, and optimize the dialogue carrier of classroom public life.**

*Keywords: teacher-student dialogue, public life, colleges and universities*

## I. INTRODUCTION

School education has a public character. Through school education, it guides students to live in a community formed by individuals and others, to be involved in the complex relationship between individuals and others to understand the position of the self in the world, to avoid personal self-closure, and to gain a way to enter public life rationally and gradually. Dialogue opens up the imagination space and communication method of public life. The public space of colleges and universities is not only a physical or entity space, but also a discourse space opened by language and communication. In this discourse space, grasping the basic form and characteristics of the teacher-student dialogue is of fundamental significance to the expansion of public life in colleges and universities. Understanding the basic characteristics, problems, and construction methods of teacher-student dialogue in college public life is the purpose of this article.

## II. DIALOGUE IS A BASIC FEATURE OF PUBLIC LIFE

### A. *The internal logic of public life and dialogue*

Public life is a common life in which people interact with each other in public spaces. The connotation of public life is rich, which contains various dimensions such as public spirit, public consciousness and public rules. Public life is an important standard for national modernization, social civilization and the degree of

enlightenment of people. It is the core issue for the philosophers of China and foreign countries to pursue the ideal public life. From the ancient Greek city-state public life thought, the public life in Kant's enlightenment thought, to the public life thoughts of Arendt, Habermas, etc., dialogue is taken as the forms and basic characteristics of public life.

Dialogue refers to a basic form of human existence in connection and interaction, communication and cooperation, which penetrates into any field of daily life, official communication, science, literature and art and so on. Dialogue is a basic feature of public life. The ancient Greek philosopher Socrates used dialogue to guide students to understand and discuss public issues. Later generations called it "art of midwifery". Socrates's disciple, Plato, followed the teacher's method and regarded dialogue as an important method for academic discussion and research. His book "The Republic" and others all achieved the purpose of proving the argument in the form of dialogue. Aristotle's so-called "political life" refers only to actions and words. The words here refer to the dialogue of people with citizenship gathered in public spaces for public issues. In Arendt's view, discourse itself constitutes the basic form of public life, and finding the right words at the right moment is itself action. To a certain extent, speaking is more important than thinking. Through speaking and acting, people distinguish themselves from others, not just look different. A life without words and deeds is actually death in the world; it is no longer a human life, so it is not living among people.[1] "Dialogue" in Habermas's view of communication is a communicative action,

using dialogue to present the relationship between subject and subject, that is, interactive subjectivity.

In public life, dialogue is not aimed at possession. Dialogue is not only the transmission and understanding of information between people, but also the value experience and value sharing of people as subjects. Bakhtin believes that in the dialogue, people enter the dialogue as a complete voice, not only participating in the dialogue with their own thoughts, but also with their own destiny and all their personalities.[2] The process of dialogue is not a process in which one party imposes its own inherent ideas on others and gains recognition accordingly, but a process of opening up and promoting each other. Dialogue doesn't simply label individuals and draw conclusions, but recognizes the independence and development of the person as the subject. Dialogue enables individuals to overcome one-sidedness and oneness in the process of independent development. The individual's way of thinking is improved, the way of existence is enriched, and life is expanded.[3] Therefore, dialogue has an independent value, which itself is the purpose and principle. The construction of the integrity of the individual needs to obtain the rational knowledge and value judgment of the self, the other and the world through dialogue.

#### *B. Dialogue in school public life*

School public life is the main form and basic way for college students to participate in public life. The characteristics of publicity, ethics and education of school organization determine the special public life formed by the communicative practice of teachers and students, students and students. The public life of the school contains people's care for the "common world" and the aesthetics of the ethical world.[4] The verbal nature of education determines the breadth and richness of dialogue in the public life of the school. These discourses affect the knowledge acquisition, moral practice and value shaping of college students. The development of college students' language expression ability and dialogue ability are closely related to their value shaping. Rich language and dialogue not only help individuals acquire rational analysis capabilities, but more importantly, they gain the spiritual perception ability of life, understand the uniqueness of life individuals, the diversity of human civilization and the complexity of world development, and form ethical actions.

Teacher-student dialogue is an important form of dialogue in school public life. The teacher and student in the dialogue are equal subjects; the teacher and student are the inter-subject relationship of "me-you", not the objectified relationship of "me-him"; the dialogue is not only used as a teaching method, but also a teaching purpose. The significance of dialogue is not

only to realize the imparting of knowledge and the enhancement of the subject's cognitive ability. Dialogue is a basic way of communication between teachers and students. Dialogue is open and innovative, which is open to the future world and unknown fields. Dialogue itself is creation and production. The result of the dialogue is to stimulate more and better dialogue from the dialogue experience itself.[5] The public nature of the teacher-student dialogue is reflected in the dialogue taking place in a public space, centering on teaching topics or social issues and other universal themes. As a form of teaching, "dialogue" refers to teachers and students as the main body of education, sharing experience, creating knowledge, and infusing value through speech, understanding, experience, reflection and other methods. Zheng Jinzhou proposed three levels of dialogue in teaching: one is to use dialogue as a means, the second is to use dialogue as the principle, and the third is to use dialogue as the purpose.[6] The purpose of dialogue is a higher level of teaching form and teacher-student communication.

In the teaching process, although using dialogue as a means can stimulate students' initiative and enthusiasm and improve the teaching effect, it is only a means for teachers to obtain the ideal answer. It is usually based on learning materials or text content, adopting the "asking and answering interchangeably" mode of teachers and students. While the subjective status of students' teaching has not yet been fully determined. Strictly speaking, when dialogue becomes a means, it is difficult to fully present the meaning of "dialogue", and the content of the dialogue is often far away from the students' real life, which is stuck to the a priori judgment of the text. Taking dialogue as the teaching principle is to endow the value of dialogue independence. Dialogue is the basic form of classroom teaching and the inherent requirement of teaching. Students need to be valued as a unique personality and internal communication expression, which reflects the humanistic care of education and the subjectivity of learners. For the purpose of dialogue, teachers and students can be demonstrated as a dual subject. Both the beginning and the end of the dialogue are concerned with the formation of "inter-subjectivity": in the dialogue relationship and communication, students become individuals who adapt to survival, construct meaning, create knowledge and continue to develop.[7] Only when "dialogue" becomes the goal can the real meaning of public life in university education be truly presented, and teachers can break through the frame of transcendental knowledge and text, and pay attention to the corporeality of students as a free life. Students can realize the development from a unidirectional cognitive subject to a comprehensive, rich and free value subject.

### **III. THE LACK OF DIALOGUE BETWEEN TEACHERS AND STUDENTS IN THE PUBLIC LIFE OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

Classroom public life is the basic form and main field of teacher-student dialogue. Teachers and students, as equal subjects, carry out dialogues and exchanges around various topics in classrooms and other public spaces. In the current practical practice of classroom public life, knowledge transfer and instillation still become the main method and goal of the classroom. Some knowledge that contains civilized order, moral norms, value rationality, etc., is fed to students efficiently by means of compressed cookies. Students' individual life experience and thinking are neglected, and the school's multidimensional life is invaded and colonized by rigid knowledge. The original rich and colorful cultural values of human beings are obliterated in static knowledge and ABCD options. At the same time, when there is a lack of dialogue and communication and life experience, knowledge is alienated into a kind of "thing" or "property" and externalized into all quantitative indicators such as "scores and achievements", which are chased by university students. This also loses the public value of education and fundamentally negates the possibility of teachers' public practice in school public life.

At present, the school classroom public space often presents such a scene: in a large classroom which often accommodates nearly 200 people, teachers are dash along at a distance of 10 meters away from the students; the scrolling speed of the PPT is like knowledge running against time; some students speed their pens to record various key points of the teacher in their respective seats, lest they should not miss them the exam; some bow their heads to play cell phones, doze off, etc., and their thoughts are completely out of class. Undoubtedly, compared with the latter situation, the former one demonstrates the patience and responsibility of teachers, the diligent efforts of students and the extremely high teaching efficiency. Paul Freire called it "bank savings" education based on this knowledge transfer behavior; it focuses on the students' mechanical memory and the teacher's irresponsible inculcation and knowledge dumping, and the students who are "custodians" become the storage objects of teachers who are "savers".[8] In this situation, the classroom loses the meaning of public life due to the loss of the practice of communication and dialogue. The student is a lone learner in a public space, and the classroom becomes a teacher's one-man show.

This kind of classroom is a static and isolated process, which makes learning a static and isolated process, rather than a dynamic, cooperative and vibrant process. Although it can improve the teaching efficiency, it also splits the classroom life into "fragments" and makes students live in "fragments".

Almost all practical activities not related to knowledge learning are expelled from the classroom. American scholar David C. Bricker once divided the classroom learning methods into two types: "Collaborative Learning" and "Studying Alone". He believes that studying alone is a learning method under the control of individualism. "Studying alone will give children a wrong suggestion that learning is a personal matter and has nothing to do with others." [9] The idea of "cooperative learning" is precisely the reflection and criticism of isolated and closed learning methods. Cooperative learning advocates cooperation between people, and through mutual cooperation to communicate and share knowledge and values, form a closer public living space, and cultivate the spirit of cooperation among citizens.

From the perspective of school public life, teachers should form a relationship of fate and complete equality through the dialogue and openness of the two friends "me" and "you" in the "existential communication" with students.[10] Freire refers to this teacher-student relationship that promotes equal dialogue and mutual trust as the "teacher-student" and "student-teacher" relationship, which essence is to affirm that students as teachers of education enjoy equal status with teachers, and dialogue is the basic way to achieve equality. The cognitive bias that treats students as objects of education is difficult to stimulate the internal driving force of education reform, and it is difficult to cure the shortcomings of test-oriented education. It is more difficult to cultivate substantive public life and the development of college student citizenship.

### **IV. RECONSTRUCTING THE TEACHER-STUDENT DIALOGUE IN THE PUBLIC LIFE OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

#### *A. Building a dialogue relationship of "the fusion of horizons" between teachers and students*

The dialogue in school public life is mainly reflected in the dialogue between teachers and students, and the dialogue between students and students. Inheriting knowledge, answering questions, and teaching benefits teachers as well as students can be regarded as the external function and effectiveness of the teacher-student dialogue. The fundamental purpose of the dialogue is to build a dialogue relationship of "the fusion of horizons" between teachers and students. "The fusion of horizons" refers to the equal treatment of teachers and students, respect for differences, the establishment of links in multiple aspects such as thinking, cognition, experience, and feeling, as well as the stimulation of teacher-student dialogue for deeper development. Dialogue is fluid and generative. In order to build a dialogue relationship of "the fusion of horizons" between teachers and students, it is necessary

to abandon the awareness of identity hierarchy in communication as well as the hegemony of discourse, and truly make the education moves from "text-centered" and "matter-centered" to "human-centered".

The premise of building a dialogue relationship of "the fusion of horizons" between teachers and students is a rational dialogue between equal subjects. As Habermas said: the subject of the dialogue must be independent and free individuals. Sincerity and authentic expression are the primary factors of the dialogue, which is essentially different from the social expression based on the identity role of the subject.[11] This is just as Kant has always insisted that, the basic sign of human enlightenment and human subjectivity is the rational public application.[12] In private life, the individual's self can be presented spontaneously or instinctively, but in public life, the individual's self is an autonomous and rational embodiment that precisely reflects the individual's subjective development. Dialogues based on individual identities seem to be individuals adapting to social rules, but in fact mask the autonomous formation of individual moral subjectivity. Although the identity of students and teachers as a dual subject is basically established from the perspective of educational theory, in the dialogue practice of teachers and students, they are limited to the ethical customs of traditional differential personality. The bureaucratization and administration of education management have not achieved the teacher-student dialogue with equal subjects. The teacher-student dialogue and teacher's dignity based on equal status don't come from teacher positions and rank empowerment, but necessarily from the teacher's own knowledge, wisdom and personality charm. Students dialogue with teachers with the mentality of "I love my teacher but I love truth more", which is also the teacher-student relationship and ideal education method expected.

Liu Tiefang proposed that in the dialogue between teachers and students, "Teachers and students are equal, and teachers are the 'chief' in equality". Teachers and students have equal status. Teachers should not take advantage of their knowledge structure to be in a leading position and keep students at a respectful distance, daring not ask questions or doubt. The dialogue between teachers and students is not an indoctrination and evaluation communication, but a dialogue based on the equal subject of teachers and students. Only in this way can students express sincerely and truly, actively participate in the teaching process, and give play to their initiative and creativity. Freire also pointed out that the dialogue between teachers and students is not the teacher's control of the students, nor that the students wait for indoctrination like a "container", but on the basis of equality.[13]

### *B. Expanding the discourse theme of campus public life*

Affected by the publicity of the private sphere, the entertainment of popular topics, and the consumerism of popular culture during the period of social transformation, the public discourse of the current university campuses shows a tendency to be private. The "student-centered" refined education is equivalent to paying attention to and satisfying the direct, specific and short-term needs of local students; the public quality beyond the individuality contained in education is obscured, which is reflected that the topics and contents of the teacher-student dialogue and the student-student dialogue are more focused on students' practical issues or utilitarian goals. How to obtain the best academic performance and the best development resources for individual development has become the main content of the teacher-student dialogue, and even the sole purpose. Some public topics that are related to the development of human civilization and have general social benefits are difficult to become the subject of conscious dialogue between teachers and students. Academic and social topics in campus culture are becoming less and less involved. College students are addicted to private topics and individual advanced discourse communication, and it is difficult to obtain a broad life style and achieve excellent development.

Colleges and universities should actively expand the theme of dialogue in public life. The school should create a multi-level and multi-faceted dialogue theme around public life from the aspects of people and nature, people and society, and people and self, and integrate it into the curriculum, campus culture as well as student practice. At the level of people and nature, schools should expand a series of public topics around the ecological environment, energy resources, environmental protection and the relationship between people and nature; at the level of people and society, schools expand public topics around the development of the times, social transformation and people's livelihood; at the level of people and self, schools should expand public topics around self-awareness, campus culture and community life. By expanding public topics, college students are guided to surpass the "ego" of "possessive individualism", integrate individual development into the environment of symbiosis and form a "greater self" pattern.

Colleges and universities should deepen the connotation of public life discourse, clarify the differences in endogenous public discourse and explanted public discourse in the way of production and communication, and pay attention to how public discourse is closer to the individual student's spiritual world instead of proclaiming and instilling from top to bottom. Endogenous public discourse refers to the public discourse formed naturally by the students' living

world and the collective environment. As long as there is a public living space, there will be a public discourse, such as class elections, community activities, community life, etc. Explanted public discourse generally has a certain distance from the individual life of students. It needs to be acquired through learning, dialogue, communication, etc., and generally through forms of classroom learning, lecture exchange, and discussion of topics. It is necessary to deeply explore two different public discourses, pay attention to the explicit expression and rich value of endogenous public discourse, and pay attention to the conversion of explanted public discourse into a discourse system that is close to the student's spiritual world and identity level.

### *C. Optimizing the dialogue carrier of classroom public life*

The teacher-student dialogue is mobile, open and generative, but the teacher-student dialogue is not naturally formed. It is necessary to optimize the classroom dialogue carrier by enhancing the public connotation of the general education class, forming a classroom discussion mode for in-depth communication, and adding dialogue to the course evaluation mechanism. One is to enhance the public connotation of general education. With the rapid development of modern society and people's own development needs, the limitations of the professional education model of undergraduate education disciplines that are too fine and the knowledge is fragmented are becoming increasingly prominent. The value of general education is becoming more and more obvious, which has been incorporated into specific teaching plans by many universities. General education focuses on the harmonious development of human life, morality, reason and emotion, and it pays attention to the integration of college students' independent thinking ability and knowledge, and guides college students to understand different cultures and values in a modern and diverse society and think about their rich and profound public values. In the actual educational practice, the publicity of general education has not been fully highlighted. The general education method is still dominated by possessing knowledge. Without public care and critical thinking, it is difficult to form a rational dialogue between teachers and students, students and students. Colleges and universities need to reorganize the content sections and value objectives of the general education curriculum, and deeply explore the publicity of the general education curriculum.

The second is to form a classroom discussion model for in-depth communication. Small class discussion teaching has become an inevitable part of higher education curriculum reform. Discussion-based teaching has become the basic form of teacher-student dialogue. Discussion-based teaching refers to an

interactive teaching method that aims at improving students' ability to analyze and solve problems, and to cooperate in communication around a teaching theme, with students as the main body, teachers as the mainstay and discussion and communication as the main form.[14] "Discussion" includes "research" and "debate". Research requires a large amount of pre-reading, self-directed learning and group cooperation of college students, so as to stimulate students' problem awareness and teamwork ability. While the "debate" fully embodies the nature of dialogue. Teachers create a good atmosphere and environment, inspiring students to express their opinions, free discussion and collision of ideas. Discussion-based teaching is conducive to breaking the situation of "education as a banking behavior" and students as "containers" waiting for indoctrination. The subjective consciousness of teachers and students can be enhanced, and deep communication and dialogue between teachers and students can be formed. Harvard University in the United States opened discussion courses for freshmen in 1959, and 90% of research universities currently offer discussion courses for freshmen. In China, Tsinghua University first opened discussion courses for freshmen in 2003, and Nanjing University and Shanghai University have set up discussion courses for freshmen, but they are still in their infancy.

The third is to increase the dialogicality of the course evaluation mechanism. Curriculum evaluation is essentially a dialogue between subjects. The subjects of the dialogue are students, teachers and teaching management departments. The main content of the dialogue is the educational methods and effectiveness. Evaluation of student satisfaction is an important dimension of teaching evaluation in colleges and universities. Emphasizing student satisfaction underscores the status of students as the main body of teaching, but over-reliance on student satisfaction with students' subjective experience as the core can easily lead to unidirectional teacher-student discourse. When curriculum assessment is dominated by student discourse, teachers are forced by the pressure of assessment to meet the needs and habits of students and reduce some challenging teaching requirements and methods. When this one-way course evaluation is applied on a large scale and at a high frequency and the feedback and improvement of relevant course evaluation is not timely, it will cause the loss of the sincerity of the teacher-student dialogue and the formation of mistrust among students, teachers and schools. Enhancing the dialogue of course assessment is to change the oneness of evaluation. In curriculum setting, the education management department should actively engage in dialogue with teachers; in curriculum evaluation, it is necessary to implement open evaluation, strengthen the dialogue between teachers and students and focus on the problem-oriented and the

process-oriented; teachers should obtain specific information on curriculum evaluation instead of evaluation results and students should get timely feedback from teachers and education management departments on the evaluation. Teachers and students need to conduct open discussions and exchanges on how to improve the curriculum, not just in the form of closed and anonymous questionnaires. The curriculum evaluation system should present an open dialogue mechanism with questions and answers and unobstructed information.

## V. CONCLUSION

The teacher-student dialogue is the basic feature and present appearance of public life in colleges and universities. The excellent public life contains an equal and open teacher-student dialogue. The value of the teacher-student dialogue for modern education is by no means a trade-off between educational strategies and method selection; it has the essence and purpose implication of education itself, and is the basic logic of modern education to keep away from the matter-centered and text-centered and return to the human-centered.

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