

The Historical Background, Cultural Foundation and Educational Characteristics of Singapore's Patriotism —Text analysis Based on Singapore Primary School Moral Education Textbooks

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ABSTRACT

Patriotism education has become one of the major issues concerned by all countries in the world. From the understanding of the historical background and cultural foundation of the formation of Patriotism in Singapore to the text analysis of its moral education textbooks in primary schools, we can find that the patriotism education in Singapore has the following characteristics: in the overall arrangement, highlight the important position of patriotism education in the textbook; in the educational content, reflect the diversity and hierarchy around the "national" level; in the organizational structure, reflect the comprehensive role of the three dimensions of knowledge, skills, and values; on the relationship between group and self, emphasis is placed on achieving the harmonious unity of national identity and individual development in activities. An in-depth analysis of the thought and practice of compiling moral education textbooks in primary schools in Singapore is of reference significance to the compilation of moral education textbooks in our country.

Keywords: Singapore, Patriotism education, The teaching material

1. INTRODUCTION

With the development of information network, economic globalization and cultural diversity, countries all over the world are facing the crisis of national identity. Therefore, national identity education has been paid more and more attention by all countries. Patriotism is the core element of national identity. Based on its national conditions, Singapore has formed unique experience in patriotism education. The exploration of the characteristics of its patriotism education can provide some theoretical reference and experience enlightenment for the national patriotism education in other countries in the world.

2. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE FORMATION OF SINGAPORE PATRIOTISM

2.1. The Immigrant Population is Large and the Ethnic Structure is Complex

Before independence, Singapore had been a colony of Britain for a long time and was once occupied by Japan. After exercising autonomy in 1959, it was also under the

Malaysian Federation until the republic of Singapore was established in 1965. According to statistics, there are more than 20 ethnic groups in Singapore, mainly Chinese, Malay and Indian, among which the Chinese are the largest.

2.2. The Ethnic Groups Live in Blocks and are Deeply Estranged

The long history of being colonized has made the development of Singapore extremely unbalanced, with a large gap in population and political and economic development among various ethnic groups. From the beginning of the British colonists' rule of Singapore, they asked all ethnic groups to live in different places and adopt the strategy of division and rule, which led to different ethnic groups mainly moving in their respective living areas and maintained their distinctive cultural characteristics. The lack of communication between ethnic fusion, therefore make a huge gap between ethnic groups, and the whole society shows the characteristics of distinct heterogeneity.

2.3. The Tension between National Identity and Ethnic Groups' Identities is Obvious

After Japan was defeated in 1945, British forces returned to Singapore, hoping to restore their colonial rule. However, after the war, Singapore suffered from economic depression

and internal conflicts. In addition, during the Second World War, the British army abandoned Singapore and surrendered. In 1963, in order to reverse the difficult situation, the autonomous state of Singapore was merged into the Federation of Malaysia. Resulting in Singapore being forced to withdraw from the Federation of Malaysia. The independence and founding of Singapore is not the result of the unity, but the struggle of all ethnic groups in the region, making a choice forced by necessity. Chinese, Malays and Indians are the three major races of Singapore residents. There are great differences among these three races in history, culture, religious belief and other aspects. Moreover, these immigrants have close cultural ties with their original country of residence, and even have a strong sense of national and ethnic identity.

3. THE CULTURAL FOUNDATION FOR THE FORMATION OF SINGAPORE PATRIOTISM IS CONFUCIAN ETHICS WITH INNOVATION OF TRADITIONAL VALUES

Confucian culture, as one element of Singapore's diverse culture, has received special attention from the leaders. Its characteristics are as follows: First, The Singaporeization of Confucianism. Confucian culture, as one element of Singapore's multiculturalism, has been paid special attention by leaders. Its characteristics are as follows: first, the Singaporeanization of Confucianism. Singapore has specially set up the Institute of Confucian education and Oriental philosophy to identify and screen Confucianism in line with Singapore's national conditions from the complex Confucian ideological and ethical system, transform and innovate it, and give it a new meaning in line with the characteristics of the times. The second is the modernization of Confucianism. One of the most famous is the "eight virtues" of Singapore: Confucius's "wisdom, benevolence and courage," Mencius's "Benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and faithfulness". Singapore reinterprets it and puts forward the "eight virtues" in line with Singapore's national conditions and modern values "loyalty, filial piety, benevolence, love, propriety, righteousness, integrity, shame". It requests the student to loyal to the country, ethnic consciousness; Filial piety elders, gratitude; Be kind and caring to others; Be polite, honest and trustworthy; Honest officials, have a sense of shame.^[1]

4. SINGAPORE'S PATRIOTIC EDUCATION GOAL: NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS, STANDARD IDENTITY IN MULTICULTURAL IS "I'M SINGAPOREAN"

- Singapore's government and scholars often refer to patriotism as "national consciousness". The so-called

"national consciousness" is people's sense of belonging and identity to their country. Singapore's founding program stated that "to build a multi-ethnic and multicultural country, we advocate national equality, freedom of religious belief and equal emphasis on multilingualism", and put forward the slogan of "one country, one nation and multiculturalism". Multicultural education in Singapore should be rooted in the multi-racial social background of Singapore, the reality of multi-racial coexistence creates multi-culture.

- The goal of the first level of patriotism education is to identify with one's own national and cultural traditions. This is the most basic level and the starting point of the patriotism training goal of Singapore schools. It requires immigrants and their descendants to not only identify with their own national and cultural traditions, but also look at the national characteristics and cultural traditions of other ethnic groups in the same land with a sense of identity. The goal of the second level is to establish the concept of Asians. This is to maintain independence in the introduction of Western technology and not make Singapore a colony of western culture; The goal of the third level is to cultivate "Singaporeans" who identify with "one country, one nation". This is the ultimate goal, which is based on the previous two levels.

5. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF PATRIOTISM EDUCATION IN SINGAPORE BASED ON MORAL EDUCATION TEXTBOOKS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

From the perspective of function, moral education textbooks are not only a tool to convey information to students, but also an "active factor" to stimulate students' self-development, self-improvement and self-construction. Therefore, moral education textbooks should become the text of dialogue and the platform for students to explore the life world and cultural world.^[2] Value education should not be a closed system, but an open system.^[3] From the perspective of concept, moral education textbooks reflect the values followed by the state. The characteristics of Singapore textbooks are as follows.

5.1. In the Overall Arrangement, It Highlights the Important Position of Patriotism Education in Textbooks

- The arrangement of the textbook *Good Morality and Good Citizen* follows the overall requirements of the six levels emphasized in the *The New Curriculum Standard*. The six levels refer to individuals, families, schools, communities, countries and the world. *The New Curriculum Standard* clearly requires that "the

physical and mental development of children and adolescents is constructed in the ecosystem of interpersonal relations. Teachers will encourage students to put their values into action in real life, including family, school, society, country and the world.”^[4]

- The textbooks of each grade are set with 5-6 themes. The themes of each grade are different, but their internal themes are consistent. Different texts are arranged under the same theme. Table 1 shows the statistics of teaching themes of each grade.

Table 1. The Theme of the Textbook Good Morality and Good Citizen for Grades 1-6 of Primary School

	Grade 1&2	Grade 3&4	Grade 5&6
Topic 1	My new world	New starting point	We are leaders
Topic 2	I can be independent	I can do it	Our home
Topic 3	Be happy together	Precious friendship	Let's care for each other
Topic 4	A vibrant island country	Care for the motherland	Under the same roof
Topic 5	Let's care together	Let's do our part	Going global
Topic 6		I am a good student	I can do it

In terms of quantity, there are 21 texts in patriotism education, accounting for 21.4% of the 98 texts in the whole grade. What is more important is the content and organizational form of patriotism education, and how to deal with the relationship between the state and individuals in the process of education.

5.2. In Terms of Educational Content, It Reflects Diversity and Hierarchy Around the “National” Level

“State” is a comprehensive concept, which can be interpreted from different angles. Around the different understanding of the meaning of “state”, Singapore’s patriotism education reflects diversity and stratification in educational content. The textbook interprets the concept of state from the perspectives of nature, society, history, culture, religion and politics. On this basis, according to the cognitive characteristics of students in different grades, it deeply promotes patriotism education layer by layer in a certain order. Table 2 lists the statistics of the number of patriotic education texts from different “national” perspectives.

Table 2. Statistics on the Number of Patriotic Education Texts in Different “State” Contexts

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Total
Natural	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Society	0	0	0	1	3	0	4
History	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
Culture	2	3	1	0	0	0	6
Religion	0	0	0	1	1	2	4
Politics	1	0	0	0	0	2	3
Total	3	4	3	3	4	4	21

Specifically, we can analyze the content of patriotism education from different “national” perspectives, so as to find the diversity of national meaning and the hierarchy reflected in the process of patriotism education.

- First, a state as a natural environment. Here the schools mainly introduce the beautiful scenic spots and delicious food of Singapore, such as “Singapore is really special. There are all kinds of food here. I’m very happy to live here” (topic 4, lesson 4, grade 2); There are many interesting places in Singapore, such as going to Sentosa for fun and going to the Singapore botanical garden to enjoy the beautiful flowers and trees; There are many delicious foods in Singapore. Therefore, “I appreciate the uniqueness of Singapore and work with you to create a harmonious Singapore” (topic 4, lesson 2, grade 2, Here is Singapore).
- Second, a state as a society. Through a fairy tale, let students realize that everyone is a member of the national society and needs to do their best to be a national. This is a way to show love for the country (lesson 4, topic 5, grade 4, Little Ants Have Great Power).
- Third, a state as a history. Let students be proud of Singapore’s cultural heritage by introducing monuments such as the presidential palace (topic 4, lesson 2, grade 4, Good Memories).
- Fourth, a state as a culture. The content of this aspect is mainly concentrated in grades 1-3. The keyword of grade 1 is “Festival” (introducing the lunar new year, Christmas, etc.), the keyword of grade 2 is “culture” (introducing cultural customs, cultural festivals, etc.), and the keyword of grade 3 is “custom”

(introducing the cultural traditions and customs of people of all ethnic groups). The setting of keywords in the three grades reflects the progressive relationship at all levels.

- Fifth, a state as a religion. This content is mainly concentrated in grades 4-6. The key words in grade 4 are “Customs” (introducing the precautions for entering different religious places), the key words in Grade 5 are “festivals” (introducing the major religious festivals in Singapore), and the key words in Grade 6 are “faith” (enabling students to understand the teachings of different religions and learn to respect the beliefs of others, Promote racial harmony in Singapore). This also reflects a progressive relationship.
- Sixth, a state as a politics. Teach students to respect their country — Singapore, “when singing the national anthem and reading the letter agreement, I stand at attention” (topic 4, lesson 1, grade 1, I am Singaporean); Through a fairy tale, students are taught to realize the importance of order and learn me to abide by laws and rules (topic 2, lesson 2, grade 6 , Bubu’s Planet).

5.3. In Terms of Contents Structure, It Reflects the Comprehensive Role of Knowledge, Skills and Values

In the face of educational objects, the standard of educational significance is not to refer to the elements of things themselves, but to see whether it “contributes to the continuous growth of (individual) experience, helps the individual to participate in community affairs, rationally understand all his social relations and participate in the maintenance of these relations.”^[5] Patriotism education is a structurally complete system, which covers the contents from knowledge (including emotion) to skills and then to values. Specifically, it can be analyzed from three aspects: knowledge, skills and values.

- First, in the dimension of knowledge, it focuses on national identity and national defense construction. In terms of national identity, let students know Singapore’s cultural heritage and current culture, and how they affect the unique lifestyle of Singaporeans. Let students know that national identity and culture can be shaped by respecting multiculturalism, appreciating and embracing other cultures. In terms of national defense construction, let students know the five pillars of Singapore’s comprehensive defense, understand how primary school students contribute to Singapore’s comprehensive defense, and have an understanding of the problems faced by Singapore and the impact.
- Second, in terms of skills, teach students to recall and learn from national experience, build a sense of belonging to Singapore through reflecting on their personal experience, and feel proud and honored for it. *The New Curriculum Standard* points out that

character and civic education is the core of the skill framework and students’ learning achievements in the 21st century. It emphasizes three aspects: “core values”, “social and emotional management skills” and “skills related to civic morality”. Skills related to civic morality include four aspects: active community life, national and cultural identity, global consciousness, sensitivity and cognition to social culture.^[6]

- Third, in the dimension of values, highlight the key points in the six core values (respect, responsibility, perseverance, integrity, care and harmony), supplemented by other values. On the one hand, from the overall goal, it comprehensively reflects the six core values in the process of patriotism education. The specific manifestations are as follows: show love for Singapore, be loyal to Singapore, have a sense of responsibility for Singapore, respect Singapore’s national identity, have civic responsibility, understand national affairs, and show a resolute and unyielding spirit in strengthening Singapore’s comprehensive defense. On the other hand, the distribution of the six values is phased, and the focus of different grades is different.

5.4. In Terms of Group-self Relationship, It Emphasizes the Unity of National Identity and Individual Development in Activities

On the one hand, Singapore emphasizes the “harmonious” relationship between the individual and the country. As an idea, the harmonious relationship between the individual and the state permeates the textbook all the time. If we take “harmony” as a core value, it also occupies a heavy weight in patriotism education. This is mainly reflected in the eight texts focusing on the core value of “harmony”. These texts involve the meaning of “state” in nature, society, culture, religion and so on. On the other hand, in the process of education, it emphasizes individual subjectivity and initiative, and realizes the harmonious unity of national identity and personality development by organizing and participating in various activities.

6. CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this paper is to examine the characteristics and unique presentation of moral education textbooks in primary schools in Singapore from the perspective of moral education elements and through the research method of text analysis. In the whole primary education stage, primary school students have experienced the change of age from children to teenagers, the change of contact environment and the law of physical and mental development of personal growth, which requires teaching students in accordance with their aptitude in the process of moral education. The Enlightenment from the analysis of moral education textbooks in primary schools in Singapore is as follows: First, in terms of material selection, it is

advocated that the content of textbooks should be in accordance with students' life, based on life, starting from students' surroundings, and gradually expanding to the wider society with the progress of students' life. At the same time, we should pay attention to patriotism education from the national identity, the affirmation of political system, the acceptance of history and culture. Second, the arrangement of teaching materials should adhere to "student-oriented" and "scientific". The unit arrangement system with moral education cognition and skill training as the core should accord with students' cognitive law. Third, the structure of the textbook points to the multi-dimensional goal from the construction of cognition, the formation of values and the practice of reality.

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