CHAPTER ELEVEN

CONCLUSION: EXPLORE MODERNIZATION OF CHINESE EDUCATION

In the preceding chapters, we have analyzed various factors affecting the traditions of Chinese education and its complex and varied foundation. The core foundation of Chinese education is traditional Chinese culture; however, modern Chinese education was introduced from the West, so it inevitably has Western characteristics. While Chinese and Western culture are both heterogeneous, China was forced to accept Western cultural practices during some historical periods, therefore the process of integration of the two cultural traditions has produced conflict and has been painful and drawn out.

In his article “Wakefulness of My Fellow Compatriots” Chen Duxiu contends that the importation of Western culture contributed to many changes in Chinese people's practices and created an emerging awareness. At times, Western culture has been hostile to the nature of Chinese culture; hence, several centuries of cultural conflict have produced some societal instability. In order to resolve the conflict, Chinese people have achieved a proper awareness and appreciation of the value of cultural exchange.

Before the May Fourth Movement in 1919, the Chinese people had experienced six stages of awareness: the first stage was in the middle of Ming Dynasty when Western education and goods were initially introduced to China. At that time, few people were even aware of the new cultural imports. The second stage was in early Qing Dynasty when firearms and the solar calendar were introduced to China, even though these things were criticized by conservative Confucian scholars. This stage was the beginning of argument between new and traditional forces. The third stage occurred after the Opium War in the middle of Qing Dynasty. The Chinese people were shocked by Western military power and the Westernization Movement and Western learning came into being. Scholars and officials had many debates, for instance, about whether a railway should be built or over the correctness of the round-earth theory. The fourth stage came in the last stage of Qing Dynasty, after the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 when China was defeated and had to cede territory. As a result, the 1898 Reform Movement was launched, new ideas were expanded and
the Movement turned from reform of the administrative system towards more critical political issues. The fifth stage occurred after the Revolution of 1911 founded the Republic of China. The sixth stage occurred during the restoration and anti-restoration of a dethroned monarch.

Chen Duxiu said, “Wise men of China broke out to defend the Republic since they detested and opposed dictatorial system” but he also concedes by adding: “Has the Republic been consolidated from this time forth? Can constitutional politics be implemented without hindrance? In my opinion, such essential political issues rely on ultimate wakefulness of my fellow compatriots. That is the seventh stage, namely constitutional era in Republic of China.”1 Duxiu believed that it was difficult to achieve wakefulness because at that time, few people understood constitutionalism. Most of people thought constitutionalism had nothing to do with their benefits.2

Chen Duxiu hoped for ultimate wakefulness in young people and put forward three points for them:

1. Political consciousness. Firstly, young people should be aware that the country is public property, and a human being is an innate political animal. Secondly, if China wishes to survive in the world, the country must abandon the dictatorial political system which had lasted for thousands of years and replace it with free and autonomous civil politics. Thirdly, a constitutional republic must build on the consciousness and will of majorities; otherwise it is a façade of a republic and constitutionalism is simply political decoration.

2. Ethical consciousness. The caste system of Three Cardinal Guides and the Five Constant Virtues as specified in the feudal ethical code is irreconcilable with the ideology of freedom, equality and independence in the West. Ethical consciousness requires its abolishment. Duxui believed that ethical consciousness is the ultimate wakefulness of ultimate wakefulness.

3. Western countries are governed by law and based on actual benefits, Eastern countries are based on affection and dead letters.3

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1 No. 6 Volume 1 New Youth.
2 No. 6 Volume 1 New Youth.
3 No. 6 Volume 1 New Youth.