

Introduction: Life-Practice School of Educology: Coming into Being through Recurrence and Breakthroughs

Another decade is coming to an end, since I published the paper entitled “Efforts for the Construction of the ‘Life-Practice’ School of Educology”¹ (hereafter referred to as “Life-Practice” School) in the journal of *Educational Research* (Education Studies, 2004). The reason why I call it “another decade” is that our team had worked on it over a decade from 1994 to 2004. As the key advocate and organizer of the School, I can trace the start of the journey back one decade earlier, during which time the idea came into shape. These 30 years have been long and hard, and the School still has far to go. However, the School has completed its mission at the establishment stage. The three sets of book series on the study of the “Life-Practice” School have been published since 2014. A network of “Life-Practice” Educology collaboration schools and “New Basic Education” research base schools has been developed. The team has grown over years of collaborative research activities. We have walked a path of mutual complements and nourishment of theory and practice, with a specific focus on educology. All these show that after many years of hard work, the academic school has developed unique content, structure and observable external features. The School now has scholarship, published books, research practice, an academic path, a research team, and an organization.

The School was established as a manifestation to the world that we were and still are willing to contribute towards construction of the academic enterprise. It takes years for something like this to grow, develop, and flourish. There are gains and losses, breakthroughs and weaknesses. A quick retrospective meets the calling of the school to cultivate self-consciousness and develop progressively. It is also a prerequisite for us to seek in-depth insight from people in the field and make meaningful conversation with critics.

1 Correspondence of this journal, Efforts for the Construction of the ‘Life-Practice’ School of Educology: Interview with Professor Ye Lan, *Educational Research*, 2 (2004).

1 The Social Background and Timing for the Establishment of the School

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, disputes and controversies over various issues are often seen in the field of educology. Nevertheless, advocates, aiming to "initiate a school" for the purpose of academic endeavor, are rarely seen. However, arguments and confrontations among academic schools and changes of certain schools have constantly occurred in the long history of academic development in China since ancient times. It is particularly true that when a society is at a turning point, this tends to be the most flourishing time for scholarship. The contention of The Hundred Schools of Thought² in the Spring and Autumn Period³ (771–476 BC) and Warring States Period⁴ (475–221 BC) is a historical fact that scholars all know and are eager to talk about.

1.1 Brief Analysis of the Traditional "School" and Modern "Discipline"

In his book, *From the Study of the Four Classics to the Study of Seven Disciplines*,⁵ Zuo Yuhe pointed out that, both Zhuangzi and Xunzi tried to categorize the scholarship of the Spring and Autumn Period (771–476 BC) and Warring States Period (475–221 BC) into different branches or schools. Zhuangzi divided the hundred studies into six branches and 11 schools, whilst Xunzi divided them into six branches and 12 schools. During the reign of Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty (206 BC–220 AD), Sima Tan, in his work, *On the Gist of the Six Schools*, summarized the different groups into six big schools, namely, Confucianism, Mohism, Taoism, Yin-Yang School, School of Names, and Legalism (Zuo, 2004, pp. 12–19). Based on this general categorization, Zuo Yuhe further proposed that the criteria to categorizing scholarship in China is based on the people

2 The Hundred Schools of Thought were philosophies and schools that flourished from the 6th century to 221 BC during the Spring and Autumn period and the Warring States period of ancient China. From https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hundred_Schools_of_Thought.

3 The Spring and Autumn period was a period in Chinese history from approximately 771 to 476 BC (or according to some authorities until 403 BC) which corresponds roughly to the first half of the Eastern Zhou Period. From https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spring_and_Autumn_period.

4 The Warring States period was an era in ancient Chinese history characterized by warfare, as well as bureaucratic and military reforms and consolidation. It followed the Spring and Autumn period and concluded with the Qin wars of conquest that saw the annexation of all other contender states, which ultimately led to the Qin state's victory in 221 BC as the first unified Chinese empire, known as the Qin dynasty. From https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warring_States_period.

5 Zuo Yuhe (2004), *From the Study of the Four Classics to the Study of Seven Disciplines*, Shanghai: Shanghai Bookstore Publishing House.