

Implementation of Values Education based on the Cultural Essence of Ancient Poems and Classics

Wenjuan Wang*

Chuiyangliu Central Primary School, Chaoyang District, Beijing 100124, China

**Corresponding author:* Wenjuan Wang, 13810559255@163.com

Abstract: During COVID-19, the entire human race is facing a major change that is rare in this century. The intricate competition between countries and the ever-changing situation at home and abroad have put forward new propositions for education in schools. As the collection of human wisdom for thousands of years, the classics of poetry and prose carry the endless spiritual strength of the Chinese nation, the spiritual support for the healthy growth of young people, and the cultural essence of morals and values education. Using ancient poems and classics as the breakthrough point, excavating cultural essence, reciting texts, interpreting meanings, and practicing them enhance students' humanistic quality and cultural self-confidence in addition to cultivating future talents with deep Chinese roots and broad modern vision.

Keywords: Classics of poetry and prose; Cultural essence; Values education

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1. Introduction

Classical poetry is the essence of Chinese culture in which the schools' education shoulders the important task of its inheritance and development. Due to the long history of traditional culture, it is vastly different from modern life and students' experiences. In the process of cultural inheritance, it is easy to read and memorize but it is difficult to understand the cultural connotations from the perspective of history. At present, there are more theoretical research than practical ones in this field which lacks effective methods, directions, and experiences. Hence, the research of this project focuses on this problem. This research selects ancient poems that are popular among children, excavates cultural elements that are easily understood by students from the creation background of ancient poems and essays, the life experiences of the authors, their contents, and link them with real life so that students are willing to read them, easy for them to remember, understand, and practice in order to fill this research gap. Action is taken on the research method, discovering, focusing, and solving the problems in practice, and finally suggesting practical methods in forming the results of "Recitation Collection," "Case Studies," "Activity Plan," and so on. It is a mission for educators to excavate the essence and core values of Chinese culture in classical Chinese ancient poetries, proses, and scriptures to help students develop a proper thinking system in understanding the world, life, and thus establish their own correct values in accordance with the characteristics of the times and the overall goal of the Chinese government to cultivate talents with both ability and political integrity. Therefore, an in-depth exploration with effective practice has been conducted.

2. Exploring the cultural elements and humanistic spirit in ancient poems and classics

2.1. Exploring the cultural elements in ancient poems and classics

As a shining pearl of Chinese excellent culture, classical poetry and prose do not only store a wealth of

Chinese knowledge but also contain profound cultural connotations that flow between the lines of the Chinese culture. The cultural elements in ancient poems and classics are diverse and rich, covering all aspects of society, ethics, and nature. For example, “the sound of firecrackers in addition to one-year-old, the spring breeze warm wine into house” is a description of the Spring Festival and New Year’s Eve. “A drizzling rain falls like tears on the Mourning Day; The mourner’s heart is going to break on his way” is a description that represents Tomb Sweeping Day. “The moon and man are looking at each other tonight, not knowing who thinks of his family” is a description of Mid-Autumn Festival. In addition, many images with unique cultural connotations are formed in specific things that have been described in ancient poems such as the moon represents family reunion, the wild goose represents homesickness, and many others which are too numerous to enumerate. These rich cultural elements are the fertile soil to inherit the excellent national culture and educate students on values.

2.2. Interpreting the spiritual pursuit of ancient sages

In addition to the profound culture, ancient poems and essays that have been passed down for thousands of years also convey the wisdom and spiritual pursuit of the ancient sages. For example, Li Bai, a great Chinese poet of the Tang dynasty once wrote, “A time will come to ride the wind and cleave the waves, I will set my cloud-like sail to cross the sea which raves” which conveys his fearless and optimistic attitude towards life. Wen Tianxiang, a Chinese poet of the Southern Song dynasty once wrote, “A death befalls all men alike, I will keep a loyal heart to make a name in history” which reveals the integrity of justice. Lu You, a prominent poet of China’s Southern Song dynasty once wrote, “When the Song dynasty army has regained the territory of the motherland, do not forget to tell me this matter when sacrificing” to show his sense of responsibility for his country and people. Zhang Zai, a Chinese poet of the Ming dynasty once wrote, “For heaven and earth, for the people, for saints of the past to continue learning, for all ages safeguard world peace” which fixes the ideals, ambitions, and responsibilities of ancient scholars on the life coordinates of Chinese intellectuals. These broad minds ambition to serve the country with a positive spirit, optimistic attitude, and calm temperament that have provided great positive energy for the Chinese to cultivate their sentiments and provide the Chinese nation with great power to overcome difficulties and survive. Therefore, there is a need to deeply interpret the spiritual pursuits of ancient talents, guide students to perceive the aesthetic appeal, ethics, as well as the spiritual qualities of ancient poetry and classics in addition to help them establish a correct outlook on life, values, and the world.

2.3. Looking for the cultural roots of national cohesion and advancement

China is a great country with extensive civilization and a long history. The fine traditional Chinese culture that is created and continued by the Chinese nation throughout thousands of years of history is the root and soul of the Chinese nation. As General Secretary Xi Jinping once pointed out, “The Chinese nation’s continuous development, setbacks, and rebirth cannot be achieved without the strong support of Chinese culture. The unique philosophy, wisdom, grace, and charm of the Chinese culture have added to the confidence and pride of the Chinese people and nation.” Classic poetry is a unique cultural symbol which shines in the light of oriental wisdom. As a cultural treasure that is inherited by the Chinese nation for thousands of years, it condenses the Chinese people’s upward and good values since ancient times. From aspirations to concerns about the country and the people as well as the rise and fall of the country, it shows the Chinese people’s indomitable and self-improvement spirit. Therefore, to a certain extent, reading classic poetry is to look for the cultural roots of national cohesion and forge ahead.

3. Looking for cultural elements in ancient poems and classics that are in line with values education

3.1. Cultural symbol

Ancient poems and classics carry the moral ideals, values, and spiritual beliefs of the Chinese nation ^[1]. They are the core values of socialism and the important sources of thought for fostering morality. They are also rich materials for schools to implement values education. There is a need to fully tap into their cultural symbols and endow them with the characteristics of the new era to shape the body and mind of the students in order to cultivate morality and talents. In various historical periods of modern classics, “benevolence” is a very unique cultural symbol. Mencius has also stated, “A gentleman’s heart is based on benevolence and propriety; benevolent people love others, courteous people respect and love others with constancy.” As an ideological advocacy, “benevolence” is regarded as a moral requirement that must be observed by all dynasties and social strata. Today, with the changes of the times and the development of society, “benevolence” as a cultural symbol has been deeply rooted in the Chinese people and it has become the driving force to promote social development and civilization, yet it still has a fresh educational value. There is a need to extract these typical cultural symbols from ancient poems and classics, endow them with the characteristics of the times and new ethical norms, guide students to discover the charm of traditional culture, and enhance cultural identity as well as cultural self-confidence. This is not only the inheritance of culture but also an effective way to guide students’ values and implement the fundamental task of “building morality and cultivating people.”

3.2. Personality traits

In the vast sea of ancient poems and classics, not only the concepts of benevolence, people-oriented, honesty, justice, harmony, and greatness exist but they also include filial piety, loyalty, trust, courtesy, integrity, shame, constant self-improvement, and professional dedication. Traditional virtues such as helping the poor, doing what is right, filial piety, and loving relatives, also contain the personality traits of the poet such as benevolence, responsibility, gratitude, courage, wisdom, and optimism. For example, in Yu Qian’s (a Chinese poet of the Ming dynasty) “Song of the Lime,” it stated, “You come out of deep mountains after hammer blows. Under fire and water tortures you are not in woes. Though broken into pieces, you will have no fright. You will purify the world by washing it ever white.” Between the lines, he permeated his noble ambition, awe-inspiring righteousness, and personality charm. Another example is in Li Bai’s poem, “Song for Drinking” where it stated, “Heaven has made us talents, we’re not made in vain. A thousand gold coins spent; more will turn up again.” Facing the frustration of official career and broken dreams, Li Bai used his heroic poems to convey positive, optimistic, and open-minded attitudes toward the world which also reflected this talented poet’s unrestrained personality traits.

Although time has passed through thousands of years, these shining personality traits still have a strong appeal. As long as the right points are found, these ancient sages, together with their works and personalities can become internet celebrities and new favorites among contemporary teenagers.

3.3. Spiritual connotation

The national spirit with patriotism as the core and the spirit of the times with reform and innovation are solid spiritual support and moral strength for the continuous growth and development of the Chinese nation. The patriotism and the sense of national responsibility are also found in many classic poems. For example, Fan Zhongyan, a prominent statesman and literary figure during the Northern Song dynasty wrote in “Yueyang Pavilion,” “Worry before all others have worried, rejoice after all others have rejoiced.” Du Fu, a Chinese poet of the Tang dynasty wrote in the “Spring View,” “On war-torn land streams flow and mountains stand. In towns unquiet grass and weeds run riot. Grieved over the years, flowers are moved to

tears. Seeing us apart, birds cry with broken heart.” and Qu Yuan, a Chinese poet who lived during the Warring States period wrote in “Li Sao,” “I sigh and wipe away my tears, oh! I’m grieved at a life full of woes.” In the many poems of the ancient sages, the patriotic feeling of worrying about the country and the people has always been the theme which flowed in the blood of the Chinese people and has become the endogenous force of Chinese civilization that has lasted for five thousand years. The idea of “change the law to become stronger” is also vividly reflected in ancient poems. For instance, Wang Anshi, a Song dynasty poet once wrote, “One should not fear the changes under the heaven. One should not blindly follow past conventions. And one should not be deterred by complaints of others” which conveyed his determination and courage to change the law. These spiritual connotations run through every stage of China’s social development and have become the source of power for generations among Chinese people to reform, innovate, and strive for strength.

4. Exploring the implementation of values education in the recitation of ancient poems and classics

4.1. Constructing the curriculum system based on “let life be splendid as sunshine” for ancient poetry recitation

In order to ensure the school’s values education involves every student and school period, the construction of ancient poetry reading curriculum system is placed first. Focusing on the education concept of “let life be splendid as sunshine,” there have been tailor-made ancient poetry reading courses for students at each schooling stage in addition to a gradual construction of a complete curriculum system to enable students to read and learn from ancient poetry so that they can become people with spiritual personality that is “healthy, upward, and responsible” with reading activities and nourishment of ancient poetry classics.

4.1.1. Formulating the curriculum standards of ancient poetry reading

Curriculum construction is inseparable from curriculum standards. To this end, the national curriculum standards are carefully interpreted, the specific goals of each section of the Chinese language subject are referred to, and the school conditions as well as the foundation of students’ recitation of ancient poems are analyzed. The curriculum standards of ancient poetry reading in junior high school, middle school, and senior high school have been formulated. The scope of content screening, the difficulty of understanding, and the specific strategies of implementation have also been clearly defined. The objectives and standards for the construction of the reading curriculum have been made clear while ensuring its precision, scientificity, and operability. This set of curriculum standards is a micro focus under the framework of the school-based national curriculum standards.

4.1.2. Tailor-made textbooks for recitation of ancient poems

After formulating the ancient poetry recitation course standards, the previous versions and specific contents of poetry recitation have been rescreened. At the same time, the three dimensions of the education goal which are “healthy, upward, and responsible” are decomposed into secondary indicators which finally form 12 humanistic elements such as cherish life, learn to live, be optimistic and open-minded, etc. that are combined into 12 units. Referring to the style and paradigm of Chinese textbooks compiled by the Ministry of Education, excellent ancient poems and essays beyond the national curriculum have been selected and compiled. Each unit has 5 articles which are divided into three volumes: namely, low, medium, and high with a total of 180 ancient poems and essays. This set of ancient poetry reading textbook is a supplement to the national textbook which is an important starting point for schools to implement values education and also a characteristic school-based textbook with distinct education orientation.

4.1.3. Recording microteachings of “Interpretation of Ancient Poetry and Prose”

In order to ensure more effective implementation of the course in addition to reducing the teaching burden and the burden of reading and studying among students, full play is given to the advantages of group teachers, decomposition of the tasks, participation of the whole staff, the writing of micro class scripts, and recording a 10-minute introductory lesson for each ancient poem. Interaction with students includes five parts: namely, the author’s life, the background of creation, the interpretation of poetry, the exchange of feelings, and the guidance of reading. In this process, the students can understand the author’s life experiences, ambitions, and emotional attitude. Students are also able to understand the history in the story, walk with the author and their works, empathize with each other, understand the content and ideological connotations of poetry with the analysis of words and emotional resonance. The contents of 180 ancient poems and the supporting 180 microteachings are effective carriers for schools to base on the recitation of ancient poems and implement values education.

4.1.4. Recording audio textbooks of “Children’s Voice of Ancient Poems and Proses”

In order to ensure that the recitation of ancient poetry is closer to the actual level of the students and their daily lives, students’ recitation videos from branch schools have been extensively recruited and student recordings with pure pronunciation, beautiful timbre, and proper rhythm for recording have been selected to build an audio resource library of ancient poetry reading ^[2].

In the process of popularizing, not only standard readings of professional announcers have been collected on the internet but also, the recordings of students’ readings. This approach increases the intimacy of ancient poems and provides students a closer imitation goal.

4.2. Constructing a curriculum implementation system of “three-dimensional and pluralistic” as well as “common reading and education”

The ancient poetry reading course carries the goal of values education whereby the implementation of the curriculum is the key. At the start of curriculum construction, the principles of “three-dimensional and pluralistic” as well as “common reading and education” have been established.

4.2.1. Full participation in recitation

In order to create a good atmosphere for the recitation of ancient poems, a program where teachers and their students read, watch the microteaching, and recite them together have been implemented. At the same time, as an interactive communication between parents and children to resolve a series of conflicts, rebellion, and disharmony between parents and children in learning, parents are also mobilized to make full use of their children’s spare time to read at home. This kind of reading where all members participate promotes equality between teachers and students, parents and children, and creates a more enjoyable learning while stimulating their interest and enthusiasm in reading. At the same time, teachers and parents can also discuss and exchange information with their students according to their own understanding which can deepen the students’ understanding and achieve the goal of educating people.

4.2.2. Tracking recitation throughout its entire process

It takes ten years to grow trees, but a hundred years to cultivate people. The ancient poetry recitation course with values education is no exception where it needs to be permeated throughout the whole process and implemented in stages. It is the process of daily reading and year after year of guidance that students gradually become what educators want them to be. Therefore, the recitation of ancient poems and prose

which bears the goal of values education is a long-term project. According to the rhythm of a poem published every week, there is a need to make full use of the fragmented time to allow students to repeatedly listen, read, and recite it unconsciously. According to the capacity and progress of 15 poems per semester and 30 poems per academic year, from the first week of enrollment until graduation in six years, a total of 180 ancient poems and essays would be completed throughout the tracking course. Every student can then read, learn, and grow in the influence of ancient poems and classics every day.

4.2.3. Promoting reading in all directions

In order to ensure the implementation effect of ancient poetry recitation course, multi-channel and all-directional promotion is needed. With one recitation per week, a monthly activity is designed to promote excellence. Mondays are set aside for speeches under the national flag so that students who have accumulated a lot of recitations with high recitation ability, and deep comprehension can perform on stage. At the end of the semester, an ancient poetry recitation examination would be held. If the students pass the exam, they will be awarded. Every student will have the opportunity to win prizes so that they would have a sense of gain and pleasure. At the end of the school year, a poetry conference should also be held in school. Students would then be able to display the gains of reading on stage in various ways which motivates and stimulates interest in students to continually read.

4.3. Specific strategies in the curriculum implementation

In order to avoid the eventual evolvement of this education into a single accumulation of recitation in addition to weakening the function of education, a series of implementation strategies have been adopted to ensure that students can recite poems, understand their meanings, and practice them.

4.3.1. Edification in reading

Recitation is a Chinese learning method that uses sound as a medium. “Sounds are used to enter emotions in seeking meaning from these sounds.” Through reading, students’ sense of language can be cultivated. It also trains their eloquence and allows them to appreciate the beauty of ancient poetry and prose so that they can fall in love with reading, draw nearer to classic ancient poetry and prose, and receive education as well as edification. For this reason, the arrangement of the bell, noon appreciation, and campus background music into the content of “ancient poems and essays with music” encourages students to read them well without increasing their learning burden. At the same time, teachers would guide the students’ chanting during the noon appreciation so that the students can understand their feelings, taste, and be intoxicated in them. When students recite poetry and classics, they do not only enrich their study life but also cultivate their sentiment and improve their aesthetic appeal as well as humanistic quality.

4.3.2. Infiltration in interpretation

To recite ancient poems, one should not only recite the text but also, understand its meaning, that is, to properly explore the content, emotion, attitude, and philosophy of the poem. However, students are unfamiliar with the historical background and in addition to its long history, it is difficult to understand, thereby weakens the students’ interest in the learning of ancient poetry. In order to extract the cultural meaning of ancient poetry and ensure students are interested in the process of reading, storytelling can be used in the introductory of microteaching to stimulate students’ interest and reduce the distance between ancient poetry and students. In microteaching, there are some reading links such as “the author’s life story,” “the story behind the poem,” and “the interpretation of the poem” to restore the era of the poet’s life, understand the author’s life experiences and mental process, as well as guide students to grasp the keywords

and understand the literal meaning of the poem. At the same time, teachers should also guide their students to connect with their own life experiences, understand the thoughts and feelings, value pursuit and spiritual connotations of the ancients, as well as arouse resonance and produce empathy so that the students can identify with the spiritual character of the ancient sages, exchange feelings and internalize in their heart, hence realizing values guidance.

4.3.3. Imitate in inspiration

Ancient poems and classics are inspiring as they enrich people's spiritual world, strengthen their spiritual power, and allow them to obtain spiritual enjoyment as well as ideological enlightenment. Therefore, in the recitation of ancient poems, one should make full use of the inspiring power of poetry classics as an educational approach, led by the examples of the spiritual qualities of the wise, awaken students' consciousness, mobilize their enthusiasm, and enable them to enhance their personalities.

At the same time, it is necessary to expand various practical channels such as recitation competition, poetry conference, and theme education activities to display the students' harvest in classical recitation of ancient poetry and prose as well as stimulate their enthusiasm for participation. In this way, students can truly internalize the cultural essence in their hearts and display it in their behaviors while reciting classical poetry and prose; hence, achieving the educational goal of cultivating morality and talents.

5. Conclusion

In a word, as spiritual treasures spanning time and space, ancient poetry and classics embody the wisdom of ancient sages, and they contain rich cultural significance of values education for students. The reading of ancient poems and classics does not only guide students to taste the charm of traditional Chinese culture, but also perceive the spiritual quality and values pursuit of these sages in addition to enhance their spiritual power in subtle ways transforming students into future-oriented talents with profound cultural accumulation and having clear spirit of the times.

Disclosure statement

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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