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MORAL EDUCATION IN CHINA – CULTURAL CONTEXT, HISTORY, AND CONTEMPORARY PRACTICE

The vast majority of researchers, classical thinkers (Aristotle, Confucius), educational practitioners and parents agree with the thesis that children are born helpless and require protection and guidance from infancy up to early adulthood. What I mean is not only physical care, but also the introduction of moral norms of conduct and the transfer of socio-cultural values. It is necessary for successive generations to learn how to live in accordance with the applicable rules and principles. As for societies, it is not only family and environment that constitute the creators of the aforementioned process, but also school, along with a planned citizens' education strategy. In the era of the global flow of culture, the issue of shaping morality becomes more significant than ever before in a number of countries. In China, which the present paper is devoted to, there have been particular ways of shaping the citizens for decades, and the school system has played an important role in this process. Moreover, developing morality extends over a lifetime, and its contemporary form is referred to as the social credit system in China, also known as "ranking

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of citizens" in Poland. The aim of the paper is to introduce the problem of moral education in the Chinese reality. This topic seems to be intriguing for at least several significant reasons.

First of all, the Chinese educational system has a long tradition of shaping moral attitudes. Mingyuan Gu (2014) explains that in the Chinese context, education literally means: shaping the character. The process of schooling in the educational system is tantamount to shaping a person's character, which constitutes a kind of planned, intentional "mind programming" (through the system). Not only is the tradition over 70 years old, but also it has been put in the cultural and political framework in which it has been functioning up until today. Secondly, the Chinese education is in a rather unusual social situation. For China belongs to the countries in which ethnic conditions are particularly complicated. It should be reminded that there are about 56 ethnic minorities, referred to as a minzu, all subject to a single state apparatus. Moreover, according to John N. Hawkins and other researchers (2001), China conducts a nationalist state policy. There is one state apparatus with a strong social, political and cultural vision in the country. In such a complex multicultural reality, the education, according to Gerard Postiglione (1998), constitutes a tool to maintain national unity (in both social and cultural aspects). The educational institutions have been entrusted with the responsible role to sustain citizens' moral education. Nowadays, the schools are also expected to reproduce the national culture (the official Chinese culture) and constitute a kind of a "national brand" (Mańkowska, 2017). Thirdly, China belongs to the group of countries developing at an unprecedented pace. Opening the market to the global economy and creating a new market with Chinese features contributed to the acquisition of new values by the Chinese (Zhang, 2008). According the existing literature on the subject (see Lee, Ho, 2005), it can be found out that for the first time in history the Chinese society has experienced a conflict of values between the "Western values" - in this case, the values related to economic liberalization, and the "Eastern values" – the Confucian, socialist ones. The economic and legal transformations that have taken place in China, for example the one-child policy introduced in the 1970s, have caused irreversible changes, including those concerning the structure of Chinese families. The traditional family model (four children, two parents and one grandparent) turned into a nuclear family, oriented most frequently towards having an only child who is supposed to meet the expectations of both parents and grandparents (Mańkowska, 2016). What has also changed is the family ethics, the individual personality traits of subsequent generations. In the present-day China there are social groups that have grown up in different economic, social and cultural circumstances and represent different values. The vast majority of the Chinese support the idea of moral education of individuals, the society supports the idea of shaping the character (Zhang, 2008).

As a preliminary remark, the issue of "moral education" will be briefly elaborated on. It was already the classical thinkers, like Aristotle or Confucius, who posed such fundamental questions about upbringing and education of subsequent generations

as: what kind of person should the child we created be, and what we can do (how we can educate and bring them up) so that they become the person we would like them to stay? Such questions were asked by both Eastern and Western philosophers. Wolfgang Althof and Marvin W. Berkowitz (2006) emphasize that the answers were different in different parts of the world, but at the heart of each of them there was always the issue of morality, the meaning of which was understood in accordance with the local, cultural interpretation. According to the above-mentioned authors, every society strives to create moral units and organizes particular tools and measures of moral education, as the "moralization of individuals" is indeed in the social interest. There are numerous approaches to shaping the morality of citizens, whereas the two dominant ones are: moral education and character shaping. The explanation of the differences between these methods of developing morality can be found, for example, in Althof and Berkowitz' (2006), Jasmine B.-Y. Sima' and Ee Ling Lowa' (2012) publications. Hoffman Stuart' (1999, p. 96) definition says that moral education is "[...] an educational policy aimed at spreading the faith in the spiritual unity of the nation in order to promote the economic and political interests of the country." Moral education in China (Chinese: deyu*) is associated with political education and perceived as a means of the ideological indoctrination (Lu, Gao, 2004). Elaborating on moral education, the researchers Wing On Lee and Chi Hang Ho (2005) explain that in China it is sometimes referred to as the ideological or political education. Such a relation also suggests that moral education is of directive character, which means that the central government perceives it as a means of transmitting ideological and political values (Lee, Ho, 2005). The Chinese moral education is purposefully oriented towards disseminating political socialization and transferring particular socio-cultural values. While analyzing the phenomenon, I have noticed that nowadays it takes two forms: (1) planned educational activities through the school system – as a school subject with its core curriculum and morning school assembly calls; (2) extra-curricular activities: special moral education camps and courses, participation in political parties (for children and adolescents). A separate form is constituted by the social credit system (for adults). The examples of activities are elaborated on further in the article.

THE HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORAL EDUCATION IN CHINA

In order to obtain a full picture of shaping the Middle Kingdom's citizens' morality, it is worth taking a closer look at what stages of development the institutional form of moral education has undergone. Essentially, as many as five major periods can

^{*} Deyu is the name of a school subject – Moral Education. The names will be used interchangeably in the text.

be distinguished, plus the modern times. The aim of the historical analysis presented below is to show the change in both the content of moral education and the teaching methods. Further in the article, the contemporary content of textbooks and the current core curriculum for teaching moral education will be elaborated on in more detail, as over the years moral education has gained the status of a school subject in China.

At this point, it is worth mentioning that since 1949 till now the educational decision-makers have been struggling to establish the educational priorities in such a way that the pupils are "red and professional" (Lu, Gao, 2004). The aforementioned phrase is commonly used in China, as it has both a historical and ideological character. Being "red" stands for promoting the Chinese political sensitivity, the socialist and communist values, whereas being "professional" means representing the Chinese values and being creative in solutions.

The first period in the history of moral education in China is the years 1949-1966, when education followed the Soviet model and the political ideologies were emphasized. Considering the specific context of socialism, the purpose of moral education was to promote the revolutionary socialist ideas and the socialist society. Individuals were to develop their professional skills, the socialist awareness and an appropriate cultural "sensitivity." During that time, the idea of "five loves" was promoted: the love for homeland, the love for people, the love for work, the love for learning and the love for public ownership (Li, 1990). Specific goals were defined, such as: the love for the homeland and the Communist Party, as well as more general ones: being disciplined, honest, reliable, responsible, trustworthy. Political skills and socialist foundations were introduced into the curriculum, and schools were required to support the socialist ideology and follow Mao Zedong's thought (Ho, 2010). According to Lee and Ho (2005, p. 419), the moral education in the aforementioned period "destroyed the feudal, bourgeois and fascist ideologies and implemented patriotism, a positive attitude to work, social responsibility and the duty of discipline."

The second period was marked by the ten-year disastrous time of the Cultural Revolution (1967-1977), when the middle class was "cleaned up" in order to ensure the political stability of the new regime. The radical measures taken by Mao Zedong aimed at a total transformation of the country. Confucianism was officially condemned, the scholars were involved in a bourgeois conspiracy against people, and millions of students were sent from cities to the countryside to be taught by workers and soldiers in the name of re-education. In this social context, education was practically suspended due to the "revolution" and teachers were persecuted. In many schools, the teacher's function was abandoned and children learned from their older schoolmates. Moral education has moved the farthest from the basic principles of personal development. The same applied to the unofficial approach to moral education – the students were expected to learn moral standards through participation in peasant life (Mao, Shen, 1989).

The third period – lasting from 1978 to 1991 – was characterized by the efforts of the country to transform the economic system from a closed and centrally planned state into an open socialist market economy. The year 1978 was a turning point in the political life of the country, which had a far-reaching influence on the moral educational scheme. The party and the central government introduced a code of conduct for primary and secondary school students. The implemented directives defined the objectives, basic requirements, principles and methods of moral education. Students were to develop their feelings towards the "socialist homeland; devote themselves to the development of the country; express readiness to think and acquire new knowledge; have the courage to be creative" (Lee, Ho, 2005, p. 419). In 1988 there was a radical review of the moral and political curriculum, in which the behavior of students became an object of moral education. In the same year, scripts for teaching moral education in secondary schools were published, which contained detailed instructions on the content and pedagogical methods, as well as values and behaviors to be trained in students. It was required that secondary schools should include the topics of socialism, collectivism, patriotism, ideological standards and ethical moral behavior, critical self-esteem and self-control (Lee, Ho, 2005). It is worth emphasizing, however, that the economic reform and the "open door" policy led to the historical transformation of the country from a highly centralized and planned state into a socialist market economy. At the same time, the combination of traditional values and ideologies and the sudden influx of Western culture have created a rapidly changing society. The effect was the creation of moral education with a complex, trichotomous structure: a) a combination of the so-called four modernizations (i.e. the modernization of industry, agriculture, national defense, as well as science and technology); b) the Marxist and communist ideology; and c) the traditional Chinese ethical principles (Meyer, 1990). The ideology tailored in such a way constituted a part of the curriculum and was supposed to be a guarantee of stability and the social order. Special didactic methods were developed for teaching values, but the literature devoted to the methods of shaping particular attitudes in the indicated period is scarce.

The fourth period (1992-2000) marked a new economic movement. New liberalization of the economy coordinated the principles of the socialist society through a more open market policy. The state became more and more involved in education, the moral education in particular, which was to prepare the youngest to live in an open and modern society. The aftermath of these changes was the preparation and implementation of the projects of educational reforms that were to change the image of education in China. The objective was to move away from a strict school testing system and go towards the education that would serve the good of the pupils, shaping their moral attitudes, promoting culture, applied sciences, loving for work and promoting psychological and physical balance. In 1994, the so-called "two lessons" were proposed in the school system. It was a symbolic term standing for separating the ideological education from moral education, the so-called character

shaping (Lee, Ho, 2004). In 1998, detailed guidelines concerning the methods and content of teaching were implemented. The fundamental change consisted in the fact that moral education gained the formal status of a school subject. As Lee and Ho's research (2004) showed, neither the teaching practice nor the content of the subject changed significantly. Teaching was still in the form of giving – lectures and repetition of the content, and the pupils remained passive.

The fifth period, from the year 2001 to 2010, was characterized by changes in the core curriculum and numerous attempts to adapt to the changing country. Citizenship education was included in the curriculum for the first time (Zhan, Ning, 2004). The main objective of moral education was to free it from the political and ideological frameworks and to shift from the values supported by the state to establishing social norms necessary for the functioning of the market economy. In 2000 and 2001, codes of conduct for primary and secondary schools were created, which a clearly defined ideal of a graduate – citizen (Zhan, Ning, 2004). The new core curriculum was distinguished by a personalistic approach to teaching and learning and focusing on shaping the individual character of a student accompanied by the patriotic and collectivist attitudes. It was also mentioned for the first time that it was necessary to ensure the psychological well-being of pupils.

In the modern educational system (since 2011), the people responsible for conducting moral education classes are the teachers of moral education and form teacher. The above-mentioned professional groups teach children using two approaches. The first can be referred to as a school approach, where learning morality takes place in the same way as learning mathematics or history. There is a qualified teaching staff, with a prepared plan of classes and a curriculum. It is possible to become a teacher of moral education in two ways: (1) graduating from university, doing a teacher training with additional courses, depending on what level of teaching a student wants to achieve; or (2) as a form teacher, and the competences are gained through postgraduate studies or supplementary courses.

There is a so-called Office for Moral Education at almost every school. It is a unit responsible for developing and approving curricula for teaching moral education. Moreover, the office delegates form teachers to supplementary courses in the field of moral education. It should be added that every province in China has a special Moral Education Department that coordinates the work of teachers (Lee, Misco, 2016).

The content of textbooks is selected according to the level of children's development, so that they can understand the context. According to a study by Wen Grace Shu (2016), the topics for children aged from 7 to 8 concern mainly the moral traits of character. In the case of children aged 9 to 12, the topics still relate to morality and are additionally complemented with social issues. In the core curriculum of Moral Education valid from 2011 to 2020, which was analyzed by Lena Lee and Thomas Misco (2016) in their study, it can be found that learning morality is based on developing the sense of belonging, cultivating the collectivist values and learning to obey the rules.

As the age of students increases, political ideology is gradually introduced into the textbooks. For pupils aged 13 to 15, the ideological topics are already introduced. When students attend secondary and tertiary high school, moral education is complemented with the Chinese political ideology. By comparison, in his research on the content of school education up to the 90s, Jeffrey Meyer (1990) drew attention to the fact that the most of the teaching content was devoted to patriotism and respecting principles, the least to building a positive attitude towards education and knowledge.

The main method of teaching morality is: learning through repetition, where there is no place for moral judgments. It is the teachers' obligation to teach the official position adopted by the party leaders. Similarly, the students can only accept and learn the officially accepted positions and views. The Chinese moral curriculum emphasizes ideologies and social conventions, while neglecting moral and personal issues. In Chinese secondary schools, little space is devoted to learning how to assess social issues, and the students focus only on memorizing certain values (Lu, Gao, 2004; Zhan, Ning, 2004). Some Moral Education teachers claim that a number of high school students are not prepared for conflicts that occur in real life.

Moral education at the level of higher education acquires a slightly different dimension. Students of all faculties scrutinize works written by famous socialists and former Chinese leaders such as Marx, Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. After the last Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in October 2017, President Xi Jinping's thoughts were obligatorily introduced into the curricula at schools and universities. I would like to add that students constitute the main group of participants in the popular TV game (a type of a TV show) called *Studying Xi in the New Era*, in which questions regarding the president's life and the national ideology are answered in front of cameras. The TV show has been broadcast since October 2018 by TV Hunan and since then has been enjoying enormous popularity. It constitutes a chance to dazzle with one's active citizenship and patriotic attitude.

TEACHING MORALITY THROUGH EXTRA-CURRICULAR CLASSES AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

The second approach to teaching morality is of an extracurricular character and combines three areas of activities: morning assembly calls and class meetings, the activities of the Young Pioneers of China league and summer camps. Monday assembly calls are conducted from the earliest years of education, including pre-school. The meetings start with singing the national anthem and raising the flag. On that day, the best students in a group are publicly distinguished and given the honor of performing the activity. The pupils are presented and their behavior is given as an instance

of exemplary behavior. Pupils listen to a patriotic speech given by the headteacher and the distinguished students. The aim of the class meetings, on the other hand, is to sum up the week and distinguish the behavior of the best students in the class. The meetings are extracurricular activities, but every student treats the attendance as compulsory. Positive attitudes are praised and privileges granted to the exemplary students. During the meetings, the patriotic activities of the class are planned, too, the speeches and costumes for public holidays are discussed, etc.

The membership in the Young Pioneers of China is a privilege reserved for the best. The League operates under the auspices of the Communist Party of China, coordinates patriotic celebrations in schools and controls the patriotic communication. The League can be joined by students from the age of 8 (up to 14) who represent impeccable social and patriotic attitudes and also achieve high results at school. After reaching the age of 14, it is possible to apply for a membership in the Communist Youth League of China. Only the members of the League may join the Communist Party of China in the future. The tasks to be performed include supporting the members of the Young Pioneers to achieve their goals, and patriotic activities in general. In order to become a member of the League, one must prove the love for the country, the people, work, public ownership and knowledge.

The objective of summer camps, in turn, is to improve the morals of some students. It is most frequently the students who have not acquired the knowledge on the subject of moral education sufficiently, or those whose moral attitude appears to be inappropriate. The camps last from two to three weeks and they are organized by the Offices of Moral Education. The costs of the participation in the camps are partly borne by the student's parents.

ADULT MORALITY EDUCATION

The Chinese look closely at the moral profile of their citizens, and developing morality does not end at the stage of school education. What also affects the citizens' social attitudes is the common evaluation scale or the social credit system, commented widely, both internationally and locally. It is a kind of a paternalistic moralizing system which acts as an amplifier of the already existing rules and regulations. Its goal is to reinforce the citizens' positive attitudes and act as an disincentive to the undesirable ones. The so called "moralization of citizens" through scoring points constitutes a part of social policy and has been present in Chinese discourse for thousands of years – it is only the working methods that change, but the aforementioned practices are not a novelty. They seem shocking to many commentators as modern technology creates opportunities that might seem terrifying. The social credit system is assumed to be positive. For it is not only about the assessment of complying or not complying with the law, or the categorization of citizens into groups (A, B, C or D); it is about doing the right things and encouraging such positive attitudes. The purpose of the

social credit system is also to maintain the Chinese version of social good and order in the country, a universal scale of values that will be common and which is clearly defined. The press articles that relate the system only to controlling and exercising power over citizens, or compare it to the Orwellian animal farm, constitute only one of the viewpoints concerning the case. I would like to emphasize that shaping the morality of the Chinese has strong local meanings and should only be interpreted from such a perspective.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis presented in the paper shows that moral education has been adapting educational goals and methods in accordance with the changing political, economic and social situation. It has undergone a long transformation from ideological indoctrination to moral education (which still remains within a strong cultural and political framework), adopting a lifelong perspective. It turns out that the Chinese have a coherent vision of what is significant from the society's point of view, and implement the principles of the moral education consequently. I should be emphasized that China belongs to a group of countries that could be referred to as highly culturally oriented. I am referring to the centuries-old efforts and transferring the Confucian national and local traditions to subsequent generations through the school system and beyond it. As it has been observed, in the globalization processes, relating mainly to the flow of values and norms, the Chinese make sure that what is Chinese survives - they keep a watchful eye on foreign patterns, but do not necessarily take them over. I would risk a statement about an active reception of global culture in the Chinese version – I will transform and adopt what I see to the Chinese conditions and strengthen my belief in the value of the national culture. The phenomenon can be observed not only in the area of technology (in the case of a number of companies, the Chinese technology is already better than the original prototype!), but also in the field of broadly understood education (this topic is considered in another article of mine).

The Chinese observe carefully but do not copy without thinking. As I mentioned above, they are an example of a highly culturally oriented country, which does not change the fact that the citizens also face a Hobson's choice between accepting foreign values or staying true to their own oriental Asian values. The broadly understood system – both school and out-of-school – is constructed in such a way as to strengthen China in its power, including the cultural one. One could risk a statement that China will continue to care for shaping the moral attitudes of its citizens and that it will be intensified. The tools and methods created for this purpose, which have had a long-standing tradition in the country, will certainly be developed, and, as the social credit system shows, China will take advantage of the modern information technology for the sake of the good (control?) of the society.

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MORAL EDUCATION IN CHINA – CULTURAL CONTEXT, HISTORY, AND CONTEMPORARY PRACTICE

Keywords: China, moral education, values, citizen, school

Abstract: The article presents the ways of shaping the morality of Chinese citizens and social attitudes from the beginning of school education to late adulthood. The ways of learning morality are presented: (1) through the school system – through the subject called "moral education" from primary school to high school and ideological education at higher education, (2) through additional activities, such as participation at political organizations, and (3) through the social credit system (adults only). The observations were based on the analysis of research on the core curriculum for teaching the school subject called moral education (primary and secondary school) and my own observations. Analyzes have shown that China has been implementing a moral education plan since the early 1950s, adapting its context to the existing political context. Moralization of citizens is planned and purposeful, and it's a lifelong process. From the youngest school years to adulthood, the State controls the moral attitudes of citizens, and the "moral" person it is a patriot citizen.

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EDUKACJA MORALNA W PAŃSTWIE ŚRODKA – KONTEKST KULTUROWY, ROZWÓJ HISTORYCZNY ORAZ PRAKTYKA WSPÓŁCZESNA

Słowa kluczowe: Chiny, edukacja moralna, wartości, obywatel, szkoła

Streszczenie: W artykule przedstawiono sposoby kształtowania moralności chińskich obywateli oraz postaw społecznych od momentu rozpoczęcia edukacji szkolnej (wejścia w system szkolny) aż do późnej dorosłości. Omówione zostały drogi nauki «chińskiej" moralności: (1) za pośrednictwem systemu szkolnego – poprzez przedmiot o nazwie edukacja moralna, od szkoły podstawowej aż po szkołę średnią, oraz edukację ideologiczną na poziomie studiów wyższych; (2) za pośrednictwem dodatkowych zajęć i podejmowania innych aktywności, np. przynależności dzieci i młodzieży do partii politycznych; oraz (3) poprzez system kredytów społecznych (dotyczy tylko osób dorosłych). Przedstawione spostrzeżenia zostały oparte na analizie badań nad podstawą programową do nauczania przedmiotu szkolnego – edukacja moralna (szkoła podstawowa i średnia) oraz obserwacji własnych. Analizy pokazały, że Chiny od wczesnych lat 50. konsekwentnie realizują plan edukacji moralnej, dostosowując kontekst do obowiązujących nastrojów politycznych. Umoralnianie obywateli ma charakter zaplanowany i celowy, a w chińskim wydaniu jest procesem całożyciowym. Państwo od najmłodszych lat szkolnych aż po dorosłość kontroluje postawy moralne obywateli, a człowiek "moralny" to obywatel-patriota.