

Fostering Creative Problem-Solving Abilities in Chinese Language and Literature Majors

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Abstract: *This paper discusses the importance and necessity of fostering creative problem-solving abilities among Chinese language and literature majors. Traditional teaching methods such as lecturing have limitations in cultivating students' creative problem-solving abilities, lacking open-minded thinking training and interdisciplinary practices. The evolution of Chinese language and literature education from emphasizing language rhetoric to literary history is analyzed for its impact on student capability development. To effectively enhance students' creative thinking and practical problem-solving skills, the recommendation is to introduce diversified methods and interdisciplinary training in teaching, enabling students to flexibly apply literary knowledge to address real-world issues. This reform not only contributes to cultivating well-rounded professionals in the field of literature but also provides crucial support for societal and literary research advancement.*

Keywords: Chinese language and literature majors, Creative problem-solving abilities, University students, Diversified teaching methods.

1. Introduction

In 1955, Mr. Yang Hui, former director of the Chinese Department at Peking University, stated in a commencement speech, "The Chinese language and literature major does not cultivate writers" (Research Office of Literary Theory, Chinese Department, Peking University, 2001). This statement continues to spark intense debates among educators and students within the Chinese language and literature education community. The central issue under discussion is: What kind of talent should the Chinese language and literature major aim to cultivate?

2. The Importance of Chinese Language and Literature Education

Before delving into this issue, let's first discuss the importance of Chinese language and literature education. From the perspective of literary inheritance, Chinese language and literature education constitutes a core part of literary dissemination. The quality of education directly impacts the effectiveness of literary transmission. By nurturing students' literary thinking and wisdom, education can guide them to better understand and carry forward literary works, thus ensuring the continuity and development of literary activities (Huang Qingling, 2021). From the standpoint of constructing ideology, Chinese language and literature education plays a crucial role in guiding people on how to form an "imagined community." (Zheng Jiajian, 2005). This education is not just about imparting literary knowledge; it also involves shaping shared cultural values and enhancing social cohesion and identity. Moreover, as Professor Wilson Blyton from Johns Hopkins University once said, "The strength and health of a nation's language and literature are measures of its intellectual and spiritual vitality." This statement underscores the importance of language and literature education in shaping a nation's intellectual vigor and creativity, thereby driving social progress and development.

Therefore, it is evident that literary education is one of the most direct forms to manifest the educational value within the

Chinese language and literature discipline (Wang Lizhou & Li Gaochang, 2021). Henceforth, we will primarily explore from the perspective of literary education the necessity of cultivating creative problem-solving skills among Chinese language and literature majors.

3. The Importance of Cultivating Creative Problem-Solving Skills among Chinese Language and Literature Majors

The study of creative problem-solving skills initially combined research on problem-solving and creative thinking (Yuan Weixin, 2010). Therefore, let's analyze why this capability is crucial, focusing on both creative thinking and problem-solving abilities.

3.1 Aspects of Creative Thinking in Creative Problem-Solving Skills

Firstly, let's discuss creative thinking within the realm of creative problem-solving skills, which is essential for innovative talents, as emphasized by Yang Huan in 2020. In literary aesthetics, narrative plots constitute a critical component of works, allowing students to better grasp the emotional atmosphere and character traits of the entire piece through in-depth understanding of these plots. However, literary works sometimes do not directly describe plots but convey information through implications, with these gaps often containing rich content. Therefore, when teaching literary appreciation, it is crucial to guide students to discover these narrative gaps and use creative thinking to fill them (Liu Mingjing, Huang Yi, & Lu Qing, 2018). From the perspective of cultivating talents for literary research, the advancement of literary studies requires support from research-oriented talents. Researching literary history involves not only writing textbooks but also independent critical thinking that is unaffected by academic factions and interest groups (Chen Pingyuan, 2011). Scholars studying literary history must be capable of critically examining and improving traditional academic viewpoints. This demands that students majoring in Chinese language and literature possess analytical skills and

open-mindedness to break through fixed thinking patterns and propose new insights when addressing traditional or emerging social issues (Cui Shuai, 2011). Furthermore, with the development of the internet, the focus of literary criticism has shifted towards online platforms. Compared to traditional methods, online criticism is more interactive and improvisational, making it one of the most participated activities among students majoring in Chinese language and literature (Wu You, 2018). Therefore, teachers and students alike need to adapt to this new trend in literary criticism, fostering students' acute and insightful observations as well as their expressive abilities. This underscores the importance of cultivating open-mindedness among students.

Next, from the perspective of problem-solving ability, research in cognitive psychology points out that problem-solving is at the core of creativity (Ward, 1999). Literary courses should cultivate students' problem-solving abilities, which differ from ordinary problem-solving in that they require a creative spirit and innovative problem-solving capabilities (Hou Xinjie & Zhang Haizhi, 2005). A century ago, scholars from both China and the West proposed reforms in Chinese education, suggesting a reduction in the study of rhetorical language. They argued that Chinese language and literature education at the time overly emphasized rhetorical skills in writing while neglecting the practical application value of literature. Even today, the Chinese educational environment continues to prioritize STEM fields while undervaluing the humanities, primarily because humanities disciplines are seen as less capable of directly solving practical problems (Chen Pingyuan, 2011). Yang Hui's assertion that "Chinese language and literature programs do not cultivate writers" seems to emerge from this context. He emphasized the need for Chinese language and literature programs to focus on cultivating research-oriented talents. However, in recent years, literary research has increasingly leaned towards establishing its own independent scientific theories and operational systems, thereby distinguishing itself clearly from practical writing. This trend has led literary studies to gradually detach from practical applications (Dai Yan, 2002). Professor Qian Gurong from East China Normal University (1995) emphasized that knowledge accumulation, life experiences, and writing skills must manifest in the creation of excellent articles when discussing the cultivation of literary talents. Therefore, the ultimate goal of Chinese language and literature education is to enable students to apply their creative problem-solving abilities in practice. Additionally, with the development of new media, literary forms have become more diverse, giving rise to new forms such as internet literature and hypertext literature. This evolution imposes higher demands on students majoring in Chinese language and literature to fully utilize their creative problem-solving abilities in creating and critiquing new literary works (Wang Baidi, 2019).

4. Current Status of Creative Problem-Solving Abilities among Chinese Language and Literature Major Students

Currently, Chinese language and literature students show certain deficiencies in their creative problem-solving abilities.

Firstly, according to the research by Zhou Zexi (2016), students majoring in Chinese language and literature perform well in aspects such as comprehensive organization, originality, and insight. However, their performance in focusing on key points, associative thinking, compatibility, summary explanation, evaluation skills, as well as synthesizing sensory information and projecting into the future is relatively average. In some dimensions, there is even a declining trend. This indicates that overall, students' development of creative thinking abilities during their four years of university study is not significant and lacks noticeable improvement.

Secondly, students in Chinese language and literature also exhibit significant deficiencies in their problem-solving abilities. The current educational system overly emphasizes ideology or knowledge dissemination, while practical writing skills training is relatively scarce. This results in students' creative problem-solving abilities not being effectively cultivated. Research by Jiang Lan and Gao Junfeng (2018) breaks down students' problem-solving abilities into six aspects: identifying problems, defining problems, analyzing problems, solving problems, reflecting on problems, and expanding capabilities. The results show that the majority of students only possess the ability to solve basic problems, while they generally perform poorly in higher-level problem-solving capabilities.

5. Causes of Insufficient Creative Problem-Solving Ability

Traditional Chinese language and literature classrooms have consistently employed conventional teaching methods such as lecturing, which limits the cultivation of students' creative problem-solving abilities.

Firstly, traditional classrooms rarely provide students with open-mindedness training or integrate literature with other disciplines, thereby restricting students' capacity for creative problem-solving. Literature, besides adhering to its own conventions, is also influenced by societal and cultural factors, and interacts with science. For instance, Yang Jincai, editor-in-chief of "Contemporary Foreign Literature," mentioned that scientific advancements naturally become part of literary writing, and integrating Chinese language and literature with science can advance interdisciplinary studies in fields such as medicine, science fiction, and climate literature (Zhang Qingli & Wu Nan, 2023). In literature classes, students should be encouraged to discover the factual significance within literature by stimulating questions and connecting these questions with literary works, thereby fostering students' flexibility in addressing new problems.

Secondly, before 1903, Chinese language and literature education emphasized teaching rhetorical skills, focusing on practices like recitation, appreciation, emulation, and creation. However, over time, China shifted its educational focus towards teaching literary history and knowledge dissemination to align with global standards, rather than emphasizing writing training or addressing societal issues (Chen Pingyuan, 2011). This singular instructional approach does not effectively foster students' ability to solve problems.

6. Conclusion

To enhance the creative problem-solving abilities of students in Chinese language and literature programs, it is essential to introduce more open-mindedness training and interdisciplinary content into teaching. By guiding students to discover and address innovative issues within literature, they can flexibly apply their knowledge to foster creative thinking and solve practical problems. Simultaneously, emphasizing the cultivation of students' writing skills and practical application abilities is crucial. Integrating literary education with societal needs enables students not only to master literary knowledge but also to apply it flexibly in real-life contexts.

In summary, reforming the educational approach in Chinese language and literature programs hinges on adopting diverse teaching methods and interdisciplinary training to cultivate students' creative problem-solving capabilities. This stands as a pivotal task in current literary education. Through such reforms, we can nurture well-rounded individuals who possess profound literary insights and the ability to effectively tackle real-world challenges. They will provide robust support for both societal advancement and literary research.

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