

Dignity: Human identity and need

Badeng Nima, Liu Chong. *Study on the Rebuilding of Culture and Construction of a Harmonious Society*. Beijing: People Press. 2016. ISBN 978-7-01-016214-0
(book review)

Reviewed by Bu Qiong

The volume *On Dignity – Study on the Culture Rebuilding and Harmonious Society Construction in Earthquake-stricken Wenchuan* is an academic monograph which is expanded and improved on the basis of the general report of the project *Study on the Culture Rebuilding and Harmonious Society Construction in Earthquake-stricken Wenchuan*, a major bid subject of the National Social Sciences Fund led by Professor Badeng Nima. As the author of the book, who is a nationally renowned teacher, educator who is of Tibetan nationality, and doctoral supervisor on pedagogy, Professor Badeng Nima has been dedicated to research into such fields as multicultural and national education, the theory of multicultural education, and a comparison between educational and social development regions. By applying the Stratification Theory to the exploration of the nature of education, he has engaged himself in studies of anthropology, sociology, and pedagogy for cultural and educational development in ethnic minority areas. In the aftermath of the severe earthquake in Wenchuan, he flew immediately to the disaster-hit area during the earthquake relief period for dozens of days. He experienced the critical period of disaster response and temporary settlement together with the earthquake victims. During the recovery, reconstruction, and development of the disaster area, he led his research team in several in-depth investigations to collect large amounts of first-hand data.

The book is divided into eight parts. The preface provides an overview of the basic issues concerned and defines such key words as identity, need, dignity, and status as basic explanatory points of the present study. It states that: “the several issues in question are not intended to give close-ended answers but to bring more attention to the issues concerned and engage more people in the exploration of the roots of these issues, and in the pursuit and construction of the dignity of Chinese ethnic peoples and national harmony and civilization.” In the Introduction, the rationale, methodology, results, benefits, and academic value of the present study are described

in detail, and issues to be studied further are proposed; in the first chapter, through investigation and review of the current situation and existing problems in the disaster area during different periods of the disaster response and temporary settlement, recovery and reconstruction, and development, major problems during reconstruction are analyzed; the second chapter mainly discusses references to international experience and implications regarding the post-quake cultural and social rebuilding; the third chapter discusses the “culture-society” base for the reconstruction of the disaster area, analyzes the relationship between culture and society, and proposes that cultural construction is the most fundamental element of the construction of a common cultural psychology for social development; the fourth chapter addresses the reflections on the post-disaster construction as a life process of nations and humans from the perspective that “people first” is the objective of cultural construction, its core is human dignity, and it is the central axis of the construction of a harmonious society; the fifth chapter discusses the implications for the pathways to China’s education after a disaster through explorations of the origin of educational problems and educational dignity, and in the sixth chapter, specific suggestions are put forward from eight aspects, such as “‘people first’ as the reason to be followed during relief efforts” and “involvement of residents in the disaster area in all relief efforts associated with post-disaster life”.

After the submission and publication of the project results as the basis for the book, they were widely recognized in educational circles and were published and recommended in *China Science and Technology Achievements* (No. 13, 2016). This article describes four aspects of innovative academic achievements. They are: (1) the study of dignity, which is included in cultural studies. Culture is human behaviour and all of its consequences. It can be de-structured into four levels of belief, value, behaviour, and system. Understanding life defines who we are and then how much we are worth and what we need physically and psychologically. Dignity is a combination of human identity and need. Human dignity gained from equal status is the core of cultural construction and also the starting point of the construction of a harmonious society; (2) interpretation of the connotation of society and its relationship with culture. Individual behaviour and interpersonal interaction are the foundation for social construction and also the starting point of social structure and the social system. Society exists to ensure human survival and reproduction, whereas culture is the result of human behaviours. With an outlook on life and values imbued by culture, a human faces various conditions in real society and chooses and reflects on his way of existing. Society is humanity’s group structure mode, while culture is the result of group acts. Both are subject to selection and filtration through education and remain to be shared by all humans and affect the future; (3) dignity is the basis of social equity and justice. Social equity is targeted at the homogeneous and homologous lives of humankind. Every human enters society as an equal being and

enjoys natural resources and opportunities in an equal way. Justice is a principle recognized by everyone and the basis for the construction of social institutions and systems. The relationship of justice to equal dignity determines that people are equal, enjoy the same rights under the protection of their countries, and have the same obligations and bear the same responsibility despite their background, qualifications, environment, and nationality; (4) a new interpretation of the connotation of education. Education is a process of gaining wisdom to process and use knowledge for humanity as a whole and for individuals to obtain the dignity that they deserve. It is intended for people to win their dignity as humanity. "Wisdom" is the sum of the concept, strategy, and ability to process and use knowledge, while "knowledge" is the result of humanity discovering and creating culture as a result of its desires. School education is a cause of people consciously and purposefully promoting the benefits of education outlined above.

These academic achievements are the main reason I recommend readers to carefully read, think about, and digest the book. I believe readers will be itching to find the book and will not put it down until they finish it.

The book provides research experience with basic theory, applied theory, and practical recommendations for multidisciplinary, cross-cultural and cross-regional comprehensive research in the field of research in the social sciences; it gives a new understanding and interpretation of theoretical issues such as cultural connotation, social structure, and the role of education in the construction of a harmonious society; it enriches and completes the understanding of the relationship among culture, society, and education for such subjects as cultural studies, sociology, and pedagogy, and provides new theory and methodology for similar studies. Therefore, the book is a very valuable source for readers interested in studies of society, culture, and education.

I am very excited to recommend the book to those who work in and do research on culture and education. I also refer it to the administrative staff involved in culture and education, and would like students undergoing education and every reader capable of reading to have it. It is to be hoped that every reader experiences a happy and dignified reading trip and has a dignified life.

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