

*Trilogy of Situational Education*, Volume I, II. by Jilin Li., Peking: Educational Science Press, 2012.

*Trilogy of Situational Education*, written by Jilin Li, the Chinese prominent educator, as well as the founder of situational education, has been published by Chinese Educational Science Press. Bin Liu, Zhan Wang and Mingyuan Gu, three famous Chinese educators, wrote preface for this book and spoke highly of it. By extracting the essence from many works she previously published, this book reviews and concludes the theory of situational education comprehensively, to perfect its theoretical rationale. The value of this book is that the new progress, thoughts and insights she has achieved in recent years is manifested in affectionate and magnificent words; which makes situational education, born in Nantong, a small city in Jiangsu Province spread to China, and then to the whole world; the track of situational education school is clearly outlined, and highlighted the more profound “Chinese mark”.

Just as Chinese former vice-minister of Ministry of Education, Zhan Wang said, Li chose a topic based on her over twenty years’ educational practice, then studied and explored this topic diligently for more than 30 years. During this process, she never gave up, never alter her interest, and what she did was studying profoundly and improving continuously, which finally made her reach a peerless height. There are 1.45 million words in *The Trilogy of Situational Education*, and totally three volumes. The first volume *Flowers on the field: A Dialogue about the Germination of Situational Instruction* deeply analyzes the background and theoretical origination of situational instruction; sincerely answers various questions that the academic circle and front-line teachers have for many years, including why situation need to be create, how to create situation, how situational instruction promotes children’s development and how to optimize the situational instruction. Meanwhile, combined with the concept of Chinese New National Curriculum (2011 version), it discusses the children’s language development, thinking ability and aesthetic ability; interprets situational literacy, situational reading and situational writing instruction from a new perspective; and selects and comments on 12 typical teaching cases to make readers experience the essence of situational instruction.

Li advocates that we must learn expansively by viewing others’ strong points with an open mind. Besides repeatedly reading *The Literary Mind and Carving Dragons [Wen Xin Diao Long]*, written by Chinese ancient literature theoretician Xie Liu, and *On Poetry*, written by a famous specialist in modern China, Guowei Wang, she extensively covers the thought of contemporary masters in Chinese education, such as Shengtao Ye, Mianzun Xia, Shuxiang Lv, and Xia Si. Li emphasizes that only when we researching and recognize the root within the national culture classics, can we really explore the educational road of Chinese characteristics. She writes with deep emotion that situational instruction, like the flowers of the field, is native born; while Chinese national culture is the fertile land, which supplies situational instruction to the local field flower with nutrition to sprout and flourish. It is just these educational ideas and ideological standpoint which identify Li among the first group of educational reformers after the reform and opening up policy.

The second volume *The Song of the Lark: A Document of The Expansion of Situational Education* is Li's self-reflection on the creating process of situational education with a poetic narrative style. After lengthy observation and reflection, Li realizes that situational instruction has another sacred mission, that is, to give wings to the children's soul. Fanning these imaginative wings with emotions to help children's imagination fly higher and higher, farther and farther in the vast blue sky is the essence of *The Song of Lark*. Nonetheless, to complete this mission, Chinese language instruction class alone is not enough. She begins to expand situational instruction from Chinese discipline into all disciplines, from discipline teaching to moral education, from in-class teaching to out-of-class activities. In these ways she outlines the construct of situational education from three dimensions. She also concludes the four principles of situational education— "emotional drive", "hint guiding", "role transformation," and "psychological field integration," to establish the unique concept spectrum, theoretical framework and operating system of situational education. She profoundly reveals the five elements that promotes children's development, rationally sums up the basic principles and modes of situational education, and vividly reproduces an authentic constructive process of native original educational theory. All these have valuable significance on creating a discourse system with Chinese characteristics and styles. Nourished by national culture, the theoretical rationales of situational education become more and more perfect. As such it is highly regarded and widely acclaimed by many leaders, experts and scholars and attracts the earnest attention of international educators. Kangning Wu, the vice president of Nanjing Normal University, summarizes the basic characteristics of Li's educational thoughts, that is, "genuine expression," "combining theory with practice," "immersion and integration," and "reflection and transcendence." It is these characteristics which make situational education "a bright flag of quality education" and also include Li among the list of Chinese famous contemporary educators.

Li claims herself as "the walker" on an exploratory road, and her true love for children and academic awareness inspires her to constantly move forward. Just as what she wrote in her book, "I'm not a high jump athlete, who can jump over the bar all of a sudden with a run-up, but I'm a race walking athlete, with the new goal ahead, I can walk fast and ceaselessly to reach that goal." The continuous exploration of this situational education experiment is bound to bring about curriculum reform, which generated the situational curriculum, containing oriental wisdom as well as a response to modern world educational reform.

The third volume *Beautiful Shore: Interpretation of the Construction of Situational Curriculum* interprets three dimensions, four areas and five key points of situational curriculum from the perspective of curriculum theories. It describes how situational curriculum developed to a new stage, including situational comprehensive practical course. It also prescribes a thematic culture course, the course of application in schools for blind kids and in kindergartens, the cross-class interactive situational course, and the course of the interaction with community and family. All of these comprise the latest trends in situational curriculum development. Looking back to the long-term through meticulous research experience, Li more than once says: "I long for the Pentium of the sea because the other side is clear to me." In her mind, "[the]

Beautiful other side of shore” is the ideal world where children’s aptitudes have all-embracing, active and greatest development. She concludes a series of learning strategies such as “children first,” “wisdom provoked by emotion,” “beauty nurtured by beauty,” “learning combined with application,” and “learning linked with life.” In addition Li stretches situational curriculum research to the construction of children’s situational learning naturally and smoothly. She has devoted her research to this topic in the last five or six years and, as such, the core of situational education research moves quietly forward, showing great vitality and broad developmental application.

*Trilogy of Situational Education* has the following three characteristics. First is its richness. This epic work authentically describes the constant development of situational education from its germination as exploration to system formation. There are many forms of presentation; such as scene description, case analysis, theory generalization and rule revelation, poetic retrospective narrative, and her intimate dialogues with young teachers. What Li has done in her work is incomparable for modern general educators in its profound academic accumulation, insightful coverage and long duration. It should be emphasized that Li’s narrative follows the research progress of Jiangsu Provincial educational science “7<sup>th</sup> five-year plan” project, the national educational science “8<sup>th</sup> five-year plans” project, the “9<sup>th</sup> five-year plans” project”, the “10<sup>th</sup> five-year plans” project, and “11<sup>th</sup> five-year plans” project. By doing so she illustrates a review of all the experts who have attended the national seminar for situational education, the seminar for Jilin Li’s educational thoughts, namely the first release of Jilin Li’s collections, and the international forum for Jilin Li’s situational education and so on. This narrative helps the readers personally experience the academic mode of situational education as well as provide precious data for situational education research. Second is aboriginality. With extraordinary research courage, she summarizes experiences by absorbing Chinese vocabulary and theory within a Chinese context, constantly simplifies new ideas, viewpoints and thoughts with Chinese thinking styles, values and speech styles. She ultimately brings situational education to a theoretical height which is sufficient enough to respond to the whole world of educational reform. She applies the “Theory of Context, a traditional Chinese literary theory, to primary school teaching, breaking through the space and time limit of traditional teaching, to link the classroom with the real world. She regards “construction by teachers and students” as the essence of the situational education process and revealing the basic characteristics of “situation” as being “real in presentation,” “sincere in feeling,” “artistic in conception,” and “infiltrative in education.” She summarizes that the basic model of situational education is widening educational space, shortening psychological distance, strengthening subject consciousness and implementing innovative practices. She undertakes a network construction of situational course from the four areas of comprehensiveness, core, cohesion and source. She proposes the operational elements with “beauty” as the context, “thinking” as the core, “emotion” as the link, “children’s activity” as the way and “surrounding world” as the source.

Xingwei Li comments that her situational education theory is “unprecedented and valuable, and cannot be seen in the traditional educational books, curriculum and pedagogical books.” The last element is authenticity. Li once said, “During the long

process of exploration, I pay special attention to the word ‘real,’ that is, real love, real doing, real words, and real writing.” As in the flowers of the field analogy: her writing grows from her own field and flows out from the bottom of her heart, filled with genuine feelings. In her words, you can see her joy and happiness, troubles and struggling, and more of the gratitude and insight for her mentors, such as Funian Liu and Diankun Du. Through these words, we can genuinely feel her deep thought and can touch her intellectual life. Therefore, it is a good work by “Telling good Chinese story, and spreading sweet voice of China”.

From the germination of situational teaching to the exploration of situational education to the construction of situational course and learning, her situational education discourse system has a distinctive national style and reveals strong local essences. Li devoted her whole life, wisdom and love to *Trilogy of Situational Education* which is the most powerful and valuable work among all her works, reflecting her most profound and exquisite theoretical achievement. The book has reached a brilliant height and become the most important work of situational education research. It is excellent enough to be used as a model work to improve the international discourse of situational education and constructs a discourse system of Chinese education theory. It is worth reading for educational theoreticians and primary and secondary school teachers.

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