Journal of Moral Education

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cjme20

Moral Education in the People's Republic of China

Li Maosen

Available online: 07 Jul 2006

To cite this article: Li Maosen (1990): Moral Education in the People's Republic of China, Journal of Moral Education, 19:3, 159-171

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0305724900190302

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae, and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand, or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.
Moral Education in the People's Republic of China

Li Maosen

Abstract
This paper attempts an analysis of moral education in the People's Republic of China from 1949 to 1989. It reveals that moral education in China is basically the expressed thoughts of political leaders, which intrude into other branches of education. As such, it is a means of political indoctrination. Unchanging in purpose, it varies in degree and content, as political leaders and/or policies change. The conclusion reached is that, divorced from personal and everyday life, moral education in China succumbs to confusion in personal and social life, as demonstrated during the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976. Moral education is clearly for the benefit of the government rather than for the individual person.

Introduction
This paper attempts to chronicle and analyse the changing approaches in moral education in the People's Republic of China from 1949 to the present. It is no more than a preliminary attempt since there is hardly any study of this in English. Of course there are many papers on the subject in Chinese, but with quite a different perspective from that taken here. Indeed arguably, there are risks involved in expressing the views in this paper, especially if they are perceived in a political rather than an intellectual sense.

The concept of moral education in ancient China
Historical records show that personal virtue was held in high esteem by the Chinese from early times. It is said that elections for official positions during the Xizhou Dynasty (c. eleventh century – 771 BC) mainly depended on:
  six virtues: knowledge, benevolence, saintliness, justice, loyalty and gentleness;
  six moralities: filial piety, friendliness, tranquility of mind, kinship, tolerance and sympathy; and
  six skills: rituals, music, shooting, defence, reading and calculating.
All these virtues, moralities and skills were highly respected during the dynasties. Officials in high positions were frequently examined on the three aspects of morality, their skills, ability and conduct.

Li Maosen is a Graduate Student in the Department of Education, Shandong Teachers' University, Jinan, 250014, People's Republic of China.
Confucius (551–479 BC), regarded as the greatest thinker and educator in China's history, had taught humanities and moral behaviour. In his opinion, moral education was more important and effective than government by law. This Chinese Master said 'He who rules by moral force is like the pole-star, which remains in its place while the other stars surround it' (Luo Chenglie, et al., 1988, p.2). His thoughts were adopted by most of the later emperors as guidelines in governing the state because he advocated integrating politics into the individual's behaviour through the process of education. So morality was politicized and politics 'moralized', and school became the institution where this was achieved. The system was referred to as the rule of ethics.

Great Studies, one of the works by a Confucian disciple, begins with 'The aims of Great Studies are to develop human virtues, to purify the people, and to reach supreme excellence.' The eight steps to reach these aims are: reason, understanding, trustworthiness, uprightness, the cultivation of one's nature, a good family life, a good country, and living under the peaceful heavens (Mao Lirui and Shen Guanqun, 1985). But the cultivation of one's nature was the most essential of all. In order to do that, one must know the right relations between father and son, monarch and subject, man and woman, senior and junior, and between friends. One should try to devote oneself to the Emperor and seek 'truth' rather than fame and benefits. The achievement of these objects became, more or less, the basic aim of the school curriculum, on which the loyal examinations were based, from the Han Dynasty (206 BC–AD 220) to the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911).

**General background to moral education in the People's Republic of China**

The People's Republic of China was founded on 1 October 1949 (so named instead of the Republic of China which was founded by the Guomintung) when the People's Liberation Army (PLA), led by the Communist Party of China (CPC), drove the Guomintung to Taiwan Island. According to its Constitution (1982), the People's Republic of China is a socialist country of the people's democratic dictatorship led by the working class on the basis of the union of workers and farmers (The Constitution of China, 1982, Article One).

**The society**

China has the third largest territory and the largest population (1.1 billion in 1989) in the world, and as many as 56 nationalities. All these people, except those in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao, are under the leadership of the CPC. China is a centralized country. Its political system is like a pyramid. The State Council (the central people's government) and the Central Committee of the CPC are at the top. These are extended to every province, city, county, factory and village. 'All powers belong to the people' is a statement in the Constitution (1982); people exercise their power through the National People's Congress at every step of the administrative hierarchy.

As a socialist country, China's economic structure is based on the public ownership of the means of production. In the present state of political and economic reform, private enterprise and Chinese-foreign joint ventures are growing rapidly.

The CPC is claimed to be the vanguard of the working people, and the honest representative of all Chinese nationalities. Its ultimate goal is the realization of communist society. (Communist society may include both a primary stage and an advanced stage. The primary stage is a socialist society, and the advanced stage is communist society.) The CPC is the leading power in China, though there are eight other political parties which form the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. The CPC has 42 million members (1985), and has a Party
Secretary and an office in every formal organization with which to supervise the performance of the Party’s policies.

The family
Both nuclear families and extended families exist in China, but extended families are prevalent. Parents usually go to work and their babies are looked after by the grandparents or a home nurse, or are sent to the kindergarten. Family education is traditionally stressed. Well-educated parents may teach their children poems and sums in the hope that they will in turn be well-educated. Family planning is advocated, and a couple should only have one child.

School children usually live with their parents. Some secondary school students may live in a school dormitory because their homes are far away or they want to concentrate on their lessons. Community life is rather poor; children spend most of their time at school.

The school
There used to be a Ministry of Education, but its functions were taken over by the State Education Commission in June, 1985. Formal schools in China are public, administered by the government and the Education Commission at all levels. The informal schools are in fact those private temporary classes (for a month or half a year) for certain skills like making clothes and painting furniture.

The Chinese school system changes very much and frequently. The present system is as follows: six years of primary school, three years of junior secondary school, three years of senior secondary school, and two-four years of college or university. A school year has two terms. The first nine years (six + three) are supposed to be compulsory (1986, Government of China, 1988).

There are 43.978 million students in general secondary schools, 2.369 million students in specialized secondary schools, and 135.78 million students in primary schools (1983, Ministry of Education, 1985, p.22). The primary and secondary schools usually have 50–60 students in a class; a head teacher is in charge of general affairs, as well as teaching his/her own subjects. The students attend school from Monday to Saturday. A morning is divided into four 45-minute periods and/or a 30-minute free reading period; an afternoon into four or three such periods. Nowadays going to good schools and colleges is very competitive.

The ideology
The ideal society that the Communist Party is striving for is the communist society in which, it is believed, everyone works according to his ability and obtains his needs. The guide of the CPC and the people in socialist China is Marxist theory, which is composed of Marxist philosophy (i.e. dialectical materialism and historical materialism), Marxist political economy, and scientific socialism. According to this theory human development from primitive, through slavery, feudal, and capitalist societies to socialist and ultimately to communist societies is a fixed pattern. Marxists believe that in a capitalist society there are only two major antagonists, i.e. the bourgeoisie or capitalist class (a small group that owns and manages the means of production for private profits), and the proletariat or working class (a large group that is exploited or forced to sell its labour for less than the value of its output). They also believe that, though in the struggle between these two classes the bourgeoisie possess all of the tactical advantages except numbers, the proletariat will win in the end and create a new society of their own—the socialist society. Their popular concept of politics is that the economy is the basis and politics is the concentrated expression of economics. Thus politics is the struggle in which more interests are to be gained for one’s own class. So the
Chinese people must be aware that socialism at present includes fighting against capitalism in order to change the world and emancipate all human beings.

The moral principle
The communist moral system, a part of Marxism and Mao Tsetung's thoughts, is strongly considered to be the basis of the most lofty of all societies. Marxists believe that the economic basis of society determines man's ideology and behaviour. Since public means of production is the economic basis in China, people should work in solidarity. So the socialist moral principle is collectivism which requires the people to work in any condition for the collective first, so that they may have a powerful shelter where they may have their needs securely met (Luo Guojie, 1982, p.26). The enemy is the individualism of the capitalist class. The nature of collectivism as the basic moral principle demands that individuals contribute all they can to the country and the collective, which is held as the necessary means of individual development. As Marx and Engels (1976, p.8) advocated, 'Only within the community has each individual the means of his gifts in all directions; hence personal freedom becomes possible only within the community.'

The first seventeen years of the People's Republic of China
At the foundation of the People's Republic of China, Chairman Mao Tsetung declared that his government would accept a Common Programme, submitted by the People's Political Consultative Conference (1949), as its political guideline. The Common Programme was actually adopted as the state's Constitution. Its 42nd article states: 'Loving the country, loving the people, loving work, loving science, and loving public property (otherwise called the Five Lovings) are advocated as the social morality for the citizens of the People's Republic of China.' This has become the core of moral education in primary and secondary schools. The communist ideology was considered to be the guiding principle of the student's life because only the CPC has total control over educational activities in China. In addition, some of the Party's policies were made the direct responsibility of school teachers and students. In order to change the people's old ideas and make it easy for the Party to manage a new and large country, moral education was, in fact, carried out in the name of 'ideological-political education'. Perhaps this could be said to be politicized 'moral education' even at the very outset.

In order to establish a new educational system, the new government first suspended the Guomintung's military training and courses such as Citizen, Party Constitution, and Boy Scouts, and tried to inculcate determination to follow the Party and serve the people. They offered Marxist courses, set up a commission on political teaching in colleges, and organized ideological-political work in accordance with political campaigns. For example, when there was a nationwide movement to defend the country by supporting Korea and fighting the United States of America in 1950, patriotism was strongly emphasized in ideological-political education at higher learning institutes (Government of China, 1983 and 1984).

Patriotism was also emphasized in the secondary schools. In March 1951, the aim and purpose of the primary and secondary schools were defined as the all-round development of the younger generation in the areas of morality, intelligence, physical well-being and aesthetic understanding, so as to make them conscious and active members of the new-democratic society (Government of China, 1984). By March 1952 the aims of Moral Education (the new terminology) in secondary schools were determined by the Ministry of Education as the moulding of character, pledging loyalty to the country, serving the people,
the Five Lovings, displaying both fortitude and bravery and the conscientious maintenance of discipline. Similarly, in primary schools and kindergartens the aims were to develop patriotic citizens who were honest and brave; to be united, disciplines, friendly and polite (Government of China, 1984).

In the circumstances it was imperative to fortify socialist ideas against capitalist and feudal thoughts. Thus both political ideology and scientific knowledge were given marked importance. The ideological-political education stressed patriotism, a positive attitude to labour, and conscious discipline. The government gave directions (1954) that secondary schools should educate the students with socialist thoughts and train them to be fully-developed members of the socialist society (Government of China, 1984).

The other two political focuses were on productive labour and class struggle.

There is no doubt that the forces of production were in urgent need of development after the successive years of war in China. On the occasion of the first session of the First National People’s Congress in September 1954, Premier Chou En-lai presented a Report on Government Activities, in which he said that primary and secondary school education should stress both academic and vocational education so that the students could play various roles in factories and farms after their graduation (Government of China, 1984). The Directions on Educational Activities circulated by the Party’s Central Committee and the State Council in 1958 stated that ‘Education must serve the purpose of proletarian politics, and education should be related to productive labour’ (Government of China, 1983 and 1984). Certainly some vocational education is necessary in schools, but it should not replace general knowledge courses, which it did later owing to the powerful mandate it received. Gradually school education began to take on a political tone in its every domain.

From 1957 two tenets were to dominate the minds of Chinese for the next 20 years. The first was, ‘Not having the right political viewpoints means that you have no soul at all.’ The second was, ‘Our educational aim is that we should have our students develop morally, intellectually and physically, and become the cultivated workers with socialist consciousness’ (Mao Tsetung, 1957/1977, p.415). Once more school education was dyed with a political colour. A few months after
Mao's speech, the Ministry of Education demanded that all secondary schools and normal schools offer political courses. The attempt, however, became only a struggle against the bourgeois Rightists. By May 1963, a reform of political courses in secondary schools began. Textbooks, such as General Knowledge of Politics, A Brief History of Social Development, and General Knowledge of Dialectical Materialism, were published and used in full-time six-year secondary schools. Educational courses on current policies were allotted a quarter of the time given to political courses (Government of China, 1983 and 1984). The three tests fixed for admitting secondary students into higher learning institutes in 1965 revealed the importance of politics in Chinese education. Listed in order of importance, they were: political consciousness (open-book test plus daily work), academic quality (in professional subjects only) and health (Government of China, 1983 and 1984).

The ten years of the Great Cultural Revolution
The Great Cultural Revolution (May 1966–October 1976) was not a revolution but a great social turmoil which was caused by the Party and the factions in it moving in the wrong direction. This is a confession of the Party itself (Central Committee of the CPC, 1981, p.82). During this period of retrogression, political intervention in education gained an abnormal ascendancy, not to mention moral education as a pursuit in its own right.

The aim of the Revolution was the denunciation of the bourgeoisie who were believed to exist menacingly in every domain. School became the main battlefield because there was a determination to overthrow the domination of the bourgeois intellectuals in the schools first. Chairman Mao's words, including his three articles – 'The Foolish Old Man who removed the Mountains', 'In Memory of Dr. Bethune' and 'Serve The People' – became the teaching material in primary schools. In secondary schools the subjects of Politics and Chinese Language were combined as one course with Chairman Mao's works as the basic text. Thus although the students went to school, they spent much time reciting Chairman Mao's words, shouting slogans, and vowing to guard Chairman Mao with their lives. People even learned to dance in the diagram of a Chinese character meaning 'faithfulness'. They interspersed slogans with ordinary greetings and remarks, for example, 'Fight selfishness and repudiate revisionism! Have you eaten?' – 'Serve the people! Yes, I have.' The intellectuals were suspected of being bourgeoisie, and students at all levels were to learn from soldiers, workers and peasants. Educated youth were called to receive re-education in the countryside.

'Rebel against and seize power from superiors who are taking the capitalist road' was the main slogan of the Revolution. Students responded accordingly. In 1973 one of these, Zhang Tiesheng, recognizing he could not meet the academic expectations of the examination, wrote critically of current intellectual preoccupations, on the back of the exam paper, hoping to be enrolled as a politically qualified applicant. This earned for him the title 'blank-paper hero' against bourgeois academic authority.

Traditional thoughts advocated by Confucius were completely denied, being regarded as feudal. Since Confucius was regarded as the first teacher in China, teachers were implicated by association and became the next to be criticized. They had to join the students as comrades-in-arms in the same trench. There were no tests in primary and secondary schools but 'democratic' peer evaluation. 'Democratic' here means that a meeting of peers was needed to evaluate an individual's work and character, but this meeting was usually dominated by a certain political or authoritative atmosphere. Formal entrance examinations were cancelled.
The new period, 1977–89

China remained in a state of inertia for more than two years after the Cultural Revolution. By 1978, a new policy stressed the construction of the two socialist civilizations instead of class struggle (Central Committee of the CPC, December 1978). The two civilizations were the material civilization and the spiritual civilization comprising intelligence and ideology. Intelligence included science, literature, art and sports. Ideology meant communist ideology, morality, spiritual qualities and habits of mind. Hereafter schools would become the popular cultivation centres for spiritual civilization. Moral education would still be identified with ideological-political education.

Even ideological-political education itself had to be reconstructed on the ruins of the Great Cultural Revolution. Political courses were separated from the study of current political situations, and daily ideological-political instruction. Four courses were offered in secondary schools in 1977: A Brief History of Social Development, General Knowledge of Scientific Socialism, General Knowledge of Dialectical Materialism, and General Knowledge of Political Economy. By March 1980 it was demanded that certain courses replace the old ones in the secondary school from Junior Grade (I) to Senior Grade (II). They were Teenagers' Self-cultivation, General Knowledge of Politics (replaced in 1981 by General Knowledge of Law), A Brief History of Social Development, General Knowledge of Political Economy, and General Knowledge of Dialectical Materialism (Government of China, 1983 and 1984). It must be mentioned here that the Five Lovings of the 1982 Constitution, which the previous Constitutions had adopted from the Common Programme, were changed into loving the country, loving the people, loving work, loving science, and loving socialism.

The aims of ideological-political education in this period were as follows (Government of China, 1984 and 1986):

1. To preserve four principles — the socialist road, the people's democratic dictatorship, the leadership of the Communist Party, and Marxism and Mao Tsetung thoughts. These principles are considered to be the ground rules for the development of socialist China.

2. To maintain the theories of Marxism and Mao Tsetung thoughts about a world outlook, philosophical methodology, political consciousness, socialist service, and so on.

3. To support communist moralities. The communist ideal is the ultimate goal of the Party and the people. The relevant moral duties are to love the motherland, the Communist Party, the people, work, science and socialism; to be law-abiding; to be concerned with the collective and public property; to be ready to help others; to be modest and honest; to respect the old and protect the young; to sacrifice one's life to save others; to show esteem for teachers; to have good manners; to be hard working and thrifty; to face the enemy bravely ...

4. To have the right attitude to work, that is, to love the working people and treasure their products, and acquire the habit of working.

But it was well understood that the students were not satisfied with this kind of education. Political courses were given a lesser status than mathematics, physics, chemistry, foreign languages, Chinese language, music, physical training and arts, and were even discontinued in some schools (Ding Wen and Fang Tiezheng, 1980). The text was like 'dry hardtack' and difficult for the students to digest (Peng Peiyun, 1983). Students who wanted to qualify for college education concentrated on their academic courses, and simply churned out answers to questions in the political examinations.

It was in this period, 1977–89, that the term 'Moral Education' began to be used
Moral Education in the People's Republic of China

to denote a branch of school education. It was of equal rank with Intellectual Education and Physical Education, but it was mixed with ideological-political education or propaganda which is still carried out within and outside schools. In other words, as a pedagogic term, it is large enough to include ideological education, political education and moral education (Lin Peilin, 1980, p.190; Ban Hua, 1984, p.230; He Dongchang, 1988), despite the alternative view that moral education was included in ideological-political education.

Current performance of moral education in China

As argued above, moral education in China is related to ideology, politics and morality. These three are thought to be cognate. The non-communist often finds it difficult to accept them as moral judgement, unless he understands the communist ideology, and works for the collective. Only then can he be considered moral. But there are many problems associated with this. For instance, both state leaders and educators have noticed and admitted that the task of cultivating communist successors, advocated since the 1950s, cannot be realized and that the only task which is reasonable for such a large population is cultivating qualified socialist citizens, among which a minority will be communist successors.

At present primary schools have ideology-morality lessons; secondary schools have ideological-political courses, and colleges have courses of Marxist theory and Communist morality. These courses have the same purpose, but their content is quite different. For example an outline of the organization and curriculum of moral education in secondary schools, which emphasizes teaching methods and channels, is given below.

With regard to the teachers, the head of the school and the Party Secretary (who may be the same person) are overall in charge of moral education in all its dimensions in the school. Teachers of political education and the form teacher are specifically responsible for the students, though other teachers have the same duty in respect of the students' behaviour as required by the state.

Political teachers are usually from the department of political education, politics or philosophy in a teachers' college. The political teacher–students ratio is required to be 1:250–300 (1980, Government of China, 1983). Political teachers are thought to be moral, gentle, learned, eloquent Marxists themselves. The following equation has been suggested: A teacher's level in political theory teaching = ideological, political and moral level + knowledge level + teaching art (Wu Teqing, 1984).

Teaching principles (Wu Xiangzhen, 1986, pp.149–67; Xiao Xianxu, 1985, pp.92–113) include:

1. socialist reality connected with Communist orientation;
2. application of moral knowledge to practice;
3. loving and respecting the students, as well as keeping them in strict discipline;
4. examining students for their both strong and weak points;
5. creating a supportive class as well as instructing the individual separately;
6. harmony and continuity of the influence of school, family and society;
7. immediate solution of problems.

The recommended aims of the art of teaching (Tu Guanghui, 1985, pp.114–38; Shi Mingxuan, 1986, pp.168–202) are to:

1. have students understand by instruction and persuasion;
2. make students empathic by the teacher's care for them and good surroundings;
3. take practical exercises in forming good habits, doing good deeds, keeping rules;
4. set students good examples;
5. direct students in self-education; and
6. judge students' behaviour.

The head teacher is usually required to give his/her students' evaluation of morality and conduct at the end of each term. There are five key elements involved:

1. **Cognition**: general knowledge of Marxism and Mao Tsetung thoughts is the guide and basis for the students' socialist and scientific outlook;
2. **Emotion**, which drives the students to seek truth and morality. It includes the proletarian feelings of patriotism, internationalism and collectivism, and the sense of ambition, responsibility, obligation and pride;
3. **Will power**, which helps to overcome any difficulty or obstacles so as to be as good as one's word;
4. **Belief**, the ally of cognition and emotion. It is the lever for knowledge to be applied to reality;
5. **Action**, which is the final outcome of education and the important symbol of successful teaching. Habits are the best forms of action.

These elements appear worthwhile, but few teachers would be aware of them in their practical work. Most of them merely read the texts to the students, and the students try to remember them in order to cope with the examinations.

The channels advocated include:

1. **Political courses for two periods a week**. These are about general knowledge of Marxism, and, at least theoretically, are the main sources of the students' 'moral' knowledge. Reform of political courses has been taking place since 1985. New textbooks were published in 1987, and were adopted by Junior Grade One and Senior Grade One at a few experimental schools. They were also used in other schools in 1988. So, in 1990 or 1991, the new textbooks will completely take the place of the old ones. The new courses are as follows:
   - The Citizen (Junior Grade One);
   - A Brief History of Social Development (Junior Grade Two);
   - General Knowledge about Socialist Construction in China (Junior Grade Three);
   - The Scientific Viewpoint of Life (first called as The Communist Viewpoint of Life), (Senior Grade One);
   - General Knowledge of Economy (Senior Grade Two);
   - General Knowledge of Politics, (Senior Grade Three).

There are seven sets of the new textbooks based on the same educational plan. A political lesson may follow this pattern:

(a) Laws are objective; as a law, the establishment of communist society is the inevitable outcome.
(b) Since irregularity, infinitude and ascension are the laws in development, there are unavoidably some faults in the practice of communism, but they are correctable.
(c) The establishment of the communist social system undergoes quantitative change and then qualitative change.
(d) Newly emerging things are undefeatable, so the communist ideal can surely come to reality (Lin Xingliang, 1984).
2. **Other courses.** School is considered to be the place where the teacher passes on knowledge to the students, develops their intelligence and physique, and improves their morality, so courses other than the political courses also play an important part in forming the students' morality. The literature in Chinese language courses may show the students what is right or wrong, what is good or bad, what is virtuous or vicious. The Chinese culture in history courses may encourage the students to be respectful to their country; the labouring people's struggle may show them the revolutionaries' lofty character and mind; and history may help to form their viewpoints and methods of historical materialism. Knowledge of geography may help them to be aware of the country's beautiful land, rich resources and ancient civilization so as to make them study hard for the construction of socialist China. Readings in foreign language study may reveal to the students the poor living conditions of the working class in capitalist countries, and arouse their love for their mother tongue (the first English sentence taught in the Revolutionary period was 'Long live Chairman Mao').

Although subjects like mathematics, physics and chemistry have no direct bearing on political, ideological or moral problems in a society, the natural laws described in these subjects are significantly instructive. Scientific knowledge can strengthen the students' viewpoint of dialectic materialism. Meanwhile, the scientist's personal stories can encourage the students to love science, learn science and use science, and in so doing become more useful in the society.

Physical education is the process of training the student's body and mind. The character produced by physical education, such as courage, persistence, cooperation and a challenging spirit, are shown as positive factors in building the students' patriotism, collectivism and national self-respect.

Aesthetic education includes arts and music. Beauty and melody can, it is believed, mould the students' mind and temperament, and enrich their spiritual life.

The revision of courses also extends to the Chinese language, history, art and extra-curricular classes (in science, art, sports, recreation). These are being specifically coordinated with the ideological-political courses.

3. **The class.** The class is considered the first collective for the students, having its own management system. It has a class commission which usually comprises a monitor, monitor assistants, persons in charge of class activities like cleaning, aiding the teachers of various subjects, and head of small groups. In a senior secondary school class there may be a small branch of the Communist Youth League which is also a leading group. So here begins the development of collectivism in the student's mind.

A class is the basic school unit where the students learn and play together. The students must have the same aim and interests in order to form the collective. A collective has the right to judge and criticize its members.

4. **Study of current political situations.** One period per week is reserved for this. It requires both the teachers and the students to keep up with political questions. It may be given to the students by the head of the school at a general meeting, and by the head teacher on any occasion. It may take more time if the situation warrants it. For example, because of the Beijing turmoil of late April to early June 1989, it was mandatory for college students to study related documents for ten full days in September, at the beginning of the 1989–90 school year. At the end, it was obligatory for them to give a summary of their opinions.

5. **Daily ideological-political instruction.** This is mainly carried out by the head
teacher. Thus the students are constantly given directions. It may be suggested that the teacher take advantage of some festivals, such as the International Women’s day on 8 March, International Labour Day on 1 May, the CPC’s birthday on 1 July, Army Day on 1 August, National Day on 1 October, to explain their significance.

6. Evaluation of morality and conduct. The aim of this is to strengthen good behaviour and overcome bad behaviour by means of praise and encouragement, criticism and punishment, or competition in the areas of study, discipline, good deeds, health and sports. A written evaluation of character and conduct may be given every term for parents’ reference.

7. School management. The rules and regulations of the school are the basic directions for the students. There are also specific rules for secondary school students. These rules were made or revised many times (in 1955, 1963, 1978, 1981, 1988) (Government of China, 1983 and 1988).

8. Physical work. Work and technical training is an important part of the educational plan. It is regarded as an inalienable way of moral education because ordinary people must work in order to live in a socialist country. Four weeks a term for senior students, and two weeks a term for junior students in a secondary school are given over to work.

The right attitude to work can only be formed in practice. The work the students are expected to do is cleaning the classroom daily, the schoolyard weekly, and planting trees in spring. Productive practice may be undertaken for a few days if conditions permit.

9. Military training. This is now only conducted in some selected secondary schools. Its aim is to promote a sense of patriotism, discipline and national defence. Its content is military drills, some theories and skills. The students may go to the army for the training. In most cases army officers are invited to the school to give the training.

10. Organizations. The Communist Youth League of China, the Chinese Young Pioneers, and the Student Union are the three legal organizations in Chinese schools. Those who want to join the Communist Youth League must be ideologically qualified Chinese people between the age of 14 and 28. The League members are supposed to be models for other young people. They are the assistants and reserve force of the Communist Party of China. The Chinese Young Pioneers, led by the Communist Youth League with a mandate from the CPC, is in fact a Chinese children’s school where they learn Communism. Its members are all children from 7 to 14 years of age. Thus it is mainly found in primary schools. A Student Union exists in secondary schools and colleges and all the students are members. It has two levels at colleges: college level and class level. A secondary school has, instead, a class commission whose members should be good at study, morally sound, trusted and able to organize.

It is true that family and other social circumstances have an influence on the students’ development. The school, however, is believed to play the leading role in this development.

Conclusion
Socrates claims that ‘Virtue is knowledge’. We can impart knowledge, but it is doubtful if we teach virtue. Nevertheless, we can at least teach the students to know what is virtuous.
However one-sided it may seem, moral education in Chinese schools is intended to make obedient citizens. Its aims are always in accordance with current political policies. Education itself is at the service of government instead of the development of the individual and society. So it is not surprising that a political leader’s words frequently become the assigned study material and thus the content of moral education. In other words, moral education in China is the weapon of ideological-political indoctrination.

The tragedy is that the behaviour and opinions of students and people in general tend to become confused once they lose confidence in political institutions or the government currently in power. What is more, this kind of education tends to change with every new wave in the troubled political sea. History has already shown that when the aims and content of moral education are divorced from everyday life, the outcome is apt to be a crisis or even chaos in personal or social life. Consequently, some people simply deny there is moral education in China. Others argue that its only positive significance, if any, is that failure is the mother of success. Yet moral education does exist in China, though influenced by state ruling.

The discussion above shows that the historical introduction to this paper is not irrelevant. The Chinese emperors sought to rule by ethics, and consciously or unconsciously the pattern is being repeated in the country today. In the past, as at present, moral education could and can be described as institution-centred rather than person-centred, and for the advantage of government rather than for individual development. Whether this phenomenon is related to the psychology of the nation or the system of centralized state power is difficult to ascertain. Perhaps it is related to both. But the state certainly plays a most significant role in the development of moral education.

References

The following publications are in Chinese:


WU TEQING (1984). 'How to organize a course in the methodology of political theory teaching', *Shaanxi Teachers University Journal (Philosophy and Social Science)*, 1,105.
