

# Educational Values of Primary and Secondary School Principals: A Qualitative Study of the Text "My Educational Thought"

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## ABSTRACT

Educational values, as the organic integration and condensation of educational philosophy, directly influence the motivation, behaviour, and effect in educational management. In the less developed regions of the country, although the primary conditions of schooling are rapidly improving with increasing investment of state funds, the transformation of educational values is lagging, resulting in a big gap with the developed regions. The problem is thought to be the deviation of the educational values of many schools and parents from the core educational values. Utilitarian, economic and individualistic educational values still prevail, directly affecting educational practice. Thus, the key to primary education reform is the change of educational values. A group of primary and secondary school principals with excellent educational values were chosen to be cultivated to lead the formation of a pluralistic and balanced value system in education. Taking the "Ten Thousand Principals Training Program" in Yunnan Province, China, as an example, this paper systematically analyses the educational values of 1,015 principals. The research design combines qualitative and quantitative approaches, starting with a qualitative analysis based on the Chinese Value Survey (CVS) to develop a framework, followed by word frequency statistics in Python, and finally, a generalisation and summary. The results show that the principals' cognition of excellent educational values converges strongly despite several limitations. Combined with expert consultation and in-depth interviews, the core elements of excellent educational values are further summarised and condensed from education's basic, time, and space dimensions. It is necessary to implement the main responsibility, adhere to certain principles, and conduct long-term follow-up cultivation along the internal logic of the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural paths. Results have valuable implications for developing educational values research frameworks and principal value education practices.

**Keywords:** Primary and secondary school principals; Educational values; Training

### Article Info:

Received 30 Sept 2022

Accepted 22 Nov 2022

Published 30 Nov 2022

## INTRODUCTION

Values are people's fundamental views on what value is, how to judge value, how to create value and other issues. They are the principles and standards which promote and guide individual practice (Gao Guoxi, 2017). Educational values are based on general values and play a leading role in educational management. However, different societies and groups have different educational values, and how to unify them into the ontology of education is a complex issue that needs to balance under the core values (Gu Mingyuan, 2018). Specifically, in primary education, educational values, as the organic integration and condensation of educational philosophy, directly influence motivation, behaviour, and effectiveness in educational management.

With the continuous promotion of education reform in China, primary education has undergone unprecedented leaps and bounds in recent years. However, compared to the dramatic improvement in educational conditions, the transformation of educational concepts needs to catch up. As leaders of schools, principals of primary and secondary schools need to think more about educational values, and their value-leading role has not been given

full play. Especially in the less developed regions, as the state continues to increase financial investment and vigorously implement the transformation of weak compulsory education schools, the school running conditions in relatively poor regions have improved significantly. However, their educational values are still far from those in developed regions. The problem is that the educational values of many schools and parents have deviated from the core educational values and that utilitarian, economic and individualistic educational values still prevail (Gu Mingyuan, 2018).

Deviations in educational values directly affect all aspects of educational practice, such as development planning, curriculum, teaching evaluation, and teacher management. For example, with state investment, multimedia equipment, sports facilities, and aesthetic education facilities in some less developed areas have become as good as, or even more advanced than, those in developed areas. Some rural areas have an ecological environment that is unmatched by urban areas. However, most schools in less developed areas still put marks first, and the curriculum revolves only around intellectual education. In contrast, physical education, aesthetic education, moral education, and labour education are neglected, leaving a large gap with a comprehensive education in developed areas. If educational values are not improved, the Matthew effect (de Graaf, 2019) in education will become more apparent.

Therefore, the key to primary education reform is the change of educational values. Principals must first establish advanced educational values and truly understand what good education is, what a good school is, what a good teacher is, what a good student is, and what a good society corresponds to a good education is. By cultivating a group of primary and secondary school principals with advanced educational values, a pluralistic and balanced value system is formed in the education field so that education can rush in the right direction. It is necessary to analyse the educational values of primary and secondary school principals based on local realities and to clarify the essential path for cultivating excellent educational values.

## **BACKGROUND OF STUDY**

In recent years, educational values and values education has received significant attention from researchers worldwide. In terms of theoretical exploration, Gu Mingyuan (2018) points out that for a long time, people have understood education in terms of instrumental rationality, emphasising the functionality of education and neglecting its ontology. The ontology of education cannot be separated from its functionality. This brings us to another theoretical issue: the question of educational values. Different societies and groups have different educational values, but balancing and unifying them with the ontology of education is a very complex issue. The current problem is that the educational values of many schools and parents deviate from the core values of education, and there are conflicts between individualism and statism, utilitarianism and humanism, democratism and meritocracy, intellectualism and ableism.

Different orientations on education values should be balanced under the premise of core education values with local characteristics. Gu Mingyuan's theory on educational values is the basis of this study. Besides, Gatley (2021) explored the relationship between educational value and intrinsic value, that is, whether the educational value is determined by intrinsic value. It concluded that intrinsic value generally has little impact on educational value. This study indicates that educational values are specific and that we can only effectively guide educational practice if we deeply understand them. Prendeville & Kinsella (2022) examined the theoretical foundations of educational psychology with a focus on values and ethics. This framework has specific applicability in the application of work by educators.

In terms of empirical research, River Forest (2018) studied how New York City Department of Education (DOE) middle school principals view the value of arts instruction and what factors they consider when making instructional decisions. The findings suggest that principals who value the arts can overcome the obstacles of limited budgets, lack of resources, insufficient faculty, and tight schedules because they believe the arts are beneficial to their students. Kuo & Aniezue (2018) explored how value-creating education can best utilise the U.S. National Teacher Education Standards. The study points out that anyone, who has yet to meet good teachers, will not achieve greatness. Teachers with the educational philosophy of creating value can accelerate the development of the whole society. It is essential to recognise that the role of teachers is not only to impart knowledge but also to develop new generations with good values.

How to study the educational values of principals? Quantitative research through questionnaires is the main method. Typical representatives are: Ülaver & Veisson (2018) assessed the educational values of Estonian kindergartens using a questionnaire, the one hand identifying cooperation as their core value, followed by safety,

care, openness, child orientation, health, trust, friendliness, tradition, professionalism, honesty, and tolerance. On the other hand, the assessment of principals, teachers, and parents on the performance of values education in Estonian kindergartens was analysed, and relevant surveys were carried out in six areas of values education. Sjöqvist et al. (2021) investigated the educational values of the principals of Swedish compulsory schools for students with intellectual disabilities (CSID) regarding the arts through a questionnaire. It included how teachers' qualifications are prioritised when organising arts education, the values of arts education in CSID, and how they organise arts education in cooperation between CSID pupils and compulsory regular schools (CRS). Meanwhile, some scholars have tried to adopt a qualitative approach to research. For instance, River Forest (2018) believed that qualitative research methods were the obvious choice to understand the unique situation of each principal's art instruction decision-making process. He used interviews to conduct the study.

From the above studies, educational values have unique research value. Scholars on this subject have carried out a great deal of helpful research. However, there needs to be more research on principals' values, a particular key group in the field of education, and research on different geographical areas needs to be expanded. The existing studies are still relatively simple in their methods and need to be more systematic and in-depth. In this regard, mixed research is rare. Content analysis methods that combine the merits of both qualitative and quantitative approaches have more scope for exploration in educational value research.

Therefore, this project systematically analysed the educational values of elementary and secondary school principals through a content analysis method, using the "Ten Thousand Principals Training Program" as an example. The "Ten Thousand Principals Training Program" is a significant strategic measure taken by the Yunnan Provincial Party Committee, the Provincial Government, and the Provincial Department of Education to earnestly implement the spirit of the National Education Conference and strengthen the reform and construction of the teaching force in Yunnan Province, China. The project focuses on helping elementary and middle school principals enhance their educational values and develop their educational thoughts through classical reading. It is planned to complete the training of 10,000 young and middle-aged principals, vice principals, and key teachers in primary and middle schools in the province within five years from 2018 to 2022, helping to cultivate a group of future local educators in Yunnan. As of October 2022, the project has completed seven training sessions (Deng et al., 2022).

## **METHOD**

The research method is mainly content analysis. Content analysis is one of the common qualitative methods. By nature, it is a non-invasive technique that helps researchers analyse relatively unstructured data from a meaningful, symbolic perspective (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This research takes the text of "My Educational Thought," written by the principals of primary and secondary schools participating in the training, as the main object of analysis. The main content of "My Educational Thought" revolves around five questions: "What is a good student; what is a good teacher; what is a good school; what is a good education; What is a good society." They fully reflect the principals' educational values.

Alongside the text analysis, five experts in education were invited to conduct expert consultations in areas such as research design and research findings. Some trainees were given in-depth narrative interviews of about 1 hour to compare educational thought through stories and to observe whether there was a consistency to ensure the reliability and validity of the study.

## **RESEARCH SITE**

The research site for this study was Yunnan Province, China. Yunnan Province is located on the border of southwest China, a multi-ethnic province and a relatively socio-economically disadvantaged province in China. The principals of the primary and secondary schools taking part in this project come from many different parts of Yunnan Province, including 16 states (cities) and 141 counties (districts).

## **SAMPLING**

The target population of this study is primary and secondary school principals who have participated in the Ten Thousand Principals Training Program in Yunnan Province, China. The training design of the program, like that of provincial principal training programs in other provinces across the country, was based on the Opinions on Comprehensively Deepening the Reform of Teacher Team Construction in the New Era issued by the State Council of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in 2018 (State Council 国务院, 2018). Furthermore, in terms of specific training content and approach, the program emphasises reading to promote the

formation of principals' educational ideas rather than specific teaching skills. It follows the latest national requirements on principal training and the future development trend of principal training (Ministry of Education 教育部, 2022), and is forward-looking, typical, replicable, and has begun to be promoted nationwide. Hence, this sample can ensure internal validity and external validity.

## DATA COLLECTION

To conduct content analysis, the researcher systematically collects data from texts called "My Educational Thought". This training is designed around the educational thinking of principals. The design team includes government leaders and education experts and invites top education experts and renowned principals from across the country to deliver the course. The core question is to help participants think about what good education is. This culminates in "My Educational Thought." Each piece of educational thinking is written with one-to-one guidance from a university education teacher. From the overall design of the training to the individual guidance, the aim is to help principals develop advanced educational values. Such values are not simply instilled but help principals to improve their value systems. The principal's emic perspective is the main focus.

Before training, the trainees were given a clear task of thinking about and condensing "My Educational Thought" over three months and submitting the text to the project office at the end of each term. 5,000 "My Educational Thought" texts were collected in the first five terms. The texts were used in this study with the approval of the project office. After a preliminary screening by five project office staff and selection and recommendation by five experts, 1015 excellent representatives were finally identified as research texts. The specific screening process is as follows: (1) Initial screening by the staff of the Project Office according to specific criteria: a. The body of the text must be no more than 300 words. The content must be original. The repetition rate should be at most 20%; b. No biased opinion; c. No excessive typos or grammatical errors (2) The experts conduct further screening according to certain principles: a. Logical and clear; b. Structural integrity; c. Content combined with practicality, avoiding empty theoretical exposition; d. Views are transparent and representative; e. Language expression is precise and accurate.

## DATA ANALYSIS

This study mainly uses the method of content analysis. Essentially, it is the analysis of textual information and its variations, the process of inferring the exact meaning from the represented meaningful words and phrases. The process of content analysis is a process of layered reasoning. It allows for the effective integration of qualitative and quantitative research.

In the first step, from the qualitative analysis, the Chinese Value Survey (CVS) (The Chinese Culture Connection, 1987 scale was used as the basic framework. The CVS was developed by several international and Chinese scholars based on Eastern culture. The researchers first asked Chinese sociologists to list the "core and foundational Chinese cultural values" and then measured 40 value items in 22 countries to obtain four value dimensions on a self-reported scale: integration, such as harmony, consistency, and filial piety; moral principles, such as self-control; humanistic concerns, such as patience, propriety, and a sense of justice; and Confucian dynamics, such as thrift and respect for tradition, such as self-control; humanistic concerns, such as patience, courtesy and a sense of justice; and Confucian dynamic views, such as frugality and respect for tradition. These entries are important references, but some are not representative of the field of education. The entries have therefore been amended by referring to the content of 1015 texts. Themes were refined and categorised, items closely related to education were added, items with little relevance were reduced, the independent codes of the two researchers were compared, and 96 items were initially identified as the basic framework for the study of educational values.

In the second step, word extraction was done using Python software specially programmed for this purpose. By counting the frequency of words, high-frequency words were obtained for quantitative research. This deepens the connotation of qualitative analysis based on quantification to refine the excellent educational values of primary and secondary school principals.

In the third step, according to the Python word extraction results, the analysis is again based on expert consultation. The entries were merged at the concept level to form dimensional categories of concepts. This resulted in 3 dimensions and 56 entries.

For reliability and validity, narrative interviews and observations were used alongside the content analysis to form an evidence triangle. The narrative interviewing method involved asking trainees to tell "My Education Story,"

which reflects educational thought well. The observation method was used throughout the training and continued after returning to work, including classroom observations, group discussion observations, and WeChat (China's number one social networking platform, similar to Twitter and Facebook).

**ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

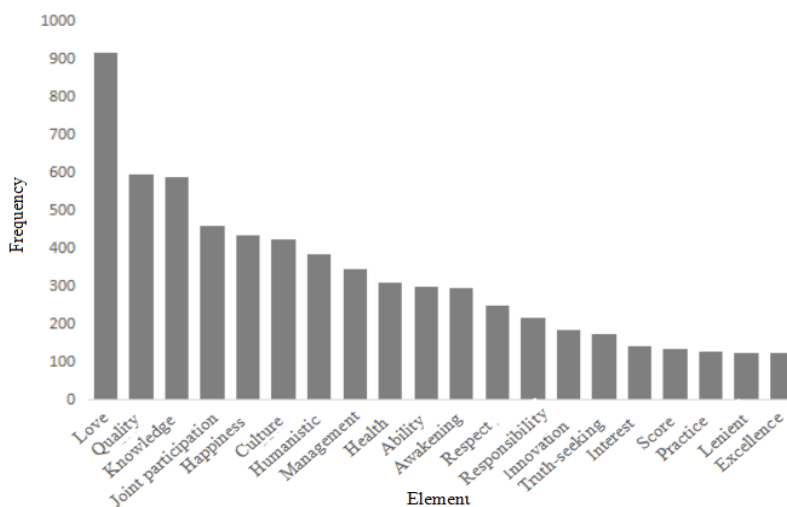
Due to ethical considerations, all research materials were handled anonymously since this study may involve sensitive issues. The 1015 principals involved are numbered anonymously by T1, T2, T3...T1015. The project implementers respect individual opinions, encourage innovative ideas, and strictly prohibit plagiarism during the writing process. The final assessment is done by randomly inviting principals to present their educational ideas, encouraging freedom of expression without any right or wrong judgment. Therefore, principals can be assured that they are sincere in their writing.

This study involves a large amount of internal information, and access to the information and confidentiality issues need to be considered. Before the study, the researcher requested in strict accordance with the data management regulations of the project office and received strong support from the project office of the Ten Thousand Principals Training Programme.

**RESULTS**

**Basic dimensions of education in educational values**

From the content analysis results, the educational values of primary and secondary school principals are guided by socialist core values. The content of the socialist core values is reflected in each element (including class words) of the basic dimension of education. In education, the values of primary and secondary school principals show more distinctive characteristics, and there are specific differences in the frequency of each element of the basic dimensions of education (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Frequency distribution of each element of the basic dimension of education (top 20)**

First, primary and secondary school principals generally believe that "love" is the most basic value of education, with a frequency as high as 917 (90.3%).

**Theme 1: Love**

What Amicus taught us in his book "The Education of Love" can be summarised in one sentence: "Love is the source of education." A good teacher should love, care for, and respect children, let them feel the joy of learning, experience success, gain self-confidence, and help them build self-esteem and self-confidence. ("Love Nurtures Growth," T624)

Secondly, the most significant change in the educational values of primary and secondary school principals before and after participating in the project training is from focusing on examination-oriented education to focusing on quality education. The frequency of "Quality" reached 596 (58.7%), and its value ranking has surpassed that of

"Knowledge". At the same time, many primary and secondary school principals criticised score-oriented education, and the frequency of "Score" reached 135 (13.3%).

### **Theme 2: Quality**

In the era of quality education, what is a good student? First and foremost, character is the foundation of the person; good students should learn to understand themselves correctly, improve their personalities, and establish the correct values; secondly, good students should be in the correct evaluation of themselves and the world based on how to learn and comprehensive development of self, in order to better adapt to society. Finally, good students should take advantage of their potential. ("Like a Bud Blossoming, Be the Best You Can Be," T46)

Tao Xiping said in "Immersion in the Search" that "education that is suitable for the development of each student is good education.".... In order to achieve a good education, schools must first work to change the concept of the one-sided pursuit of achievement and be the first to promote quality education. ("Let Students Be Their Best Selves," T636)

### **Theme 3: Against score orientation**

What kind of student is a good student? This is like a complex math problem with multiple answers. In reality, the critical criterion for student evaluation is the score. Good learning means good students. However, I think "good students" are not only based on scores. As long as a student has a bright spot, he or she is a good student in this area.... In short, a good student may not be a genius, but he can make a difference! ("One Flaw Cannot Mar a Piece of Good Jade—My View of Students," T29)

Third, the "Joint Participation" of teachers, students, schools, parents, and the general public has become the consensus, and the importance of a "good society" to education has become more prominent.

### **Theme 4: Joint Participation**

A good school has a high-quality campus environment, efficient school systems, high standards of behaviour culture, open classrooms, collaborative, collegial relationships, and a "learning community" environment for growth. A good school has an ecological curriculum that follows the laws of education and offers an active, collaborative, and reflective learning curriculum. ("A Good School is the Soil of the Soul-My Idea of a Good School", T534)

A good society makes a good education, which can also bring about a good society.... Modern education is based on cultivating builders and successors for society, with the fundamental task of establishing moral education and cultivating talents with overall moral, intellectual, physical, and aesthetic development. A good social environment, excellent principals, refined management models, and practical incentive systems make good teachers; good teachers make good education; good education promotes a good society. ("Society is Education," T832)

Fourth, values such as "Happiness," "Health," "Ability," "Truth-Seeking," "Interest," and "Practice" have been emphasised, and many primary and secondary school principals' evaluation criteria for "good students" have become more diverse.

### **Theme 5: Happiness**

I believe that good education should return to the child's nature and nurture the child as a child. By cultivating a healthy body and a good personality, education lays the foundation for a child's lifelong happiness. The criteria for a good child can be summarised as truthful, kind, healthy, and happy.... Happiness means to be happy in learning, living, and growing up. (Let Children Grow Up Healthy, Free, and Happy, T4)

### **Theme 6: Health**

If someone had asked me before the training what a good student was, I would have told them without hesitation: "A student with excellent moral and academic performance." After the training, I have a new answer to this question: a good student should be physically and mentally healthy, with a wide range of interests and good study and living habits. Schools should treat students' physical and mental health as the most basic and essential task. ("Making More Children Good Students," T6)

**Theme 7: Truth-Seeking**

Interest is the best tutor for learning. The basis for school education is to find the common interests of teachers and students and to develop harmoniously in the pursuit of goodness, truth, and people orientation. ("Chanting Goodness and Seeking Truth, Putting People First," T576)

**Theme 8: Interest**

In *School and Society*, Dewey talks about interest. He combines interest, will, effort, and training. I believe that the fundamental motivation for sustained learning is interest. Children's learning is characterised by being short, quickly shifted, and quickly replaced by new things. Curiosity is needed to keep a child-focused and learning about something. ("Interest-the Fundamental Motivator for Sustained Learning," T634)

**Theme 9: Practice**

Practice is the method. A good school should establish an innovative education system, reform the talent training model, let students feel and understand the process of knowledge generation and development, and cultivate their scientific spirit, innovative thinking ability, and practical ability to apply what they have learnt. ("Love Turns to Spring Rain, Growing in Practice", T701)

However, under the influence of local culture, value tendencies such as emphasising human relations, egalitarianism, and inaction still exist. Although excellent educational values such as "Democracy", "Science", "Research", "Justice", And "Competition" are all involved in the training, the word frequency in the content analysis results is relatively low. These values need to be further cultivated.

**The spatio-temporal dimension of educational values**

The "Ancient" orientation is obvious from the time dimension, with a frequency of 445 (44.8%). This is mainly influenced by the traditional educational values in ancient China. For example, teachers' professional values in Han Yu's *Teacher's Theory* show a higher frequency. In contrast, primary and secondary school principals still have insufficient attention to "modern" and "future", and the value concept of keeping pace with the times needs to be further deepened.

**Theme 10: Ancient orientation**

In *Teacher's Theory*, Han Yu said, " In ancient times, those who wanted to learn would seek out a teacher who could propagate the doctrine, impart professional knowledge, and resolve doubts." Dao, or the cultivation of morality, emphasises moral education as the first priority.... (" Being a Teacher with a Living Temperature", T302)

The ancient Chinese sage Confucius said, " The way of great learning lies in the enlightenment of brilliant virtues, the remoulding of people, and the pursuit of ultimate goodness.".... Children are like blank sheets of paper. If they are taught to be friendly, they will be friendly; if they are taught to be filial, they will be filial. (" Ultimate Goodness", T15)

My educational philosophy: good learning, good teaching, good thinking, good action. Tracing back to its roots and using history as a basis, the phrase "the highest good is like water" comes from Laozi's *Laws Divine and Human*, Chapter 8: " The highest good is like water. Water benefits everything by giving without taking or contending. It likes the place others dislike, so it follows the divine law closely". The Dai people are the main ethnic group in Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture, and all of them believe in Southern Theravada Buddhism, so there is a strong atmosphere of goodness. ("The Highest Good is Like Water; To Do Good is the Most Joyful", T146)

From the spatial dimension, educational values mainly focus on the national and local scales, with frequencies of 222 (21.9%) and 571 (56.3%), respectively, and words with Chinese characteristics appear the most frequently. In contrast, only 44 (4.3%) of them have an international perspective, and the internationalisation of education has not received the attention it deserves.

**Theme 11: Local**

At the moment, Yunnan education needs a group of principals with passion.... Ms Zhang Lianzhen has persevered for forty years for the continuation of education in her hometown; Mr Bi Shoujin has continued to explore and innovate so that rural children can enjoy education in the city; Ms Zhang Guimei has incorporated education into her life, using her beliefs to hold on to her original heart and try to stop poverty and ignorance....

A headmaster with feelings should have ideals and beliefs; make school education serve society; contribute to poverty reduction and poverty eradication; and build beautiful villages! ("Being a passionate headmaster", T567) Born in the countryside, I was once a shepherd boy on the back of an old cow.... To allow students to experience the beauty of the countryside beyond their studies, to feel the joy of working and harvesting so that some of them will return home in the future and build a beautiful countryside. ("Students find childhood joy; teachers are happy and fulfilled", T782)

Native: traditional, national, hometown land. All things: everything natural and social, known and unknown, around and far away. "Self: the unique individual of life. Better: constantly growing and transcending. Both the educated and the educator are the living elements of education. Let each native life be deeply rooted, receive the nourishment and experience of all things, stimulate the inner light and power, and keep growing in its own vein. ("Rooted in the Native, Embracing All Things, Meeting a Better Self", T882)

### **Other relevant elements of educational values**

From the perspective of other related elements, the educational values expressed by the principals of primary and secondary schools in "My Educational Thought" correlate highly with the training content. It shows that educational values have strong plasticity and inheritance, and training plays an important role in forming educational values.

## **DISCUSSION**

The research findings show that primary and secondary school principals have formed a strong value consensus on excellent educational values. These value consensuses are led by Chinese core values and converge with Chinese core values. This supports Gu Mingyuan's (2018) argument that socialist education values with Chinese characteristics should be aligned with socialist core values.

However, the study also found some limitations from the subjective perspective of principals alone. First, from the basic dimension, although good educational values such as "Science," "Research," "Justice," and "Competition" are covered in training, the frequency of words in the content analysis results is relatively low and needs to be further localised. This is related to the fact that traditional Chinese values have long lacked the spirit of science, democracy, and competition and have focused more on human relationships (Zhu, 2013). Second, there needs to be more future vision in the temporal dimension and a lack of global thinking in the spatial dimension. As Gu Mingyuan, a leading figure in contemporary Chinese education, says, values construction requires a balance in a complex system, but by balance, he means mainly a balance between statism and individualism, economicism and humanism, elitism and democracy, and universalism and particularism (Gu Mingyuan, 2018), without mentioning the balance of the spatial and temporal dimensions. In the temporal dimension, Kunqing & Yaling (2016) focused on educational values in the context of different eras. However, they emphasised a return to classical educational values while critiquing science and practicality in modern educational values, overly dismissing modern educational values and lacking attention and outlook on future educational values.

On the other hand, this paper argues that education is the cultivation of future talents. Education that lacks attention to the future is bound to lag in the future. Excellent educational values cannot ignore the future context. At the same time, in the process of economic globalisation, international education is also an inevitable trend. Local education should be internationally oriented, constantly learn from the educational concepts and educational experiences of advanced countries, give students knowledge, attitudes and values about global issues, and cultivate a large number of international talents who have an international perspective, are well-versed in international rules, and can participate in international affairs and international competition.

This paper attempts to integrate emic and etic perspectives to construct an educational value system with scientific criteria. The excellent educational values that primary and secondary school principals should possess in the new era include three dimensions. First, the basic dimension, which includes "Love", "Quality", "Knowledge", "Participation", "Happiness", "Health", "Interest", "Ability", "Practice", "Awakening", "Truth-seeking", "Responsibility", "Lenient", "People-oriented", "Management", "Culture", "Innovation", "Excellence", "Democracy," "Science" Of "Fairness", "Justice", "Competition", "Cooperation", and so forth; Second, the time dimension, which includes "Inheriting traditions", "Based on the present" and "Focusing on the long-term". That is, we must not only attach importance to the inheritance of tradition but also have a sense of the present and the future, especially the education of the future; Third, the spatial dimension, which includes "Global thinking" and



"Local roots". "Global thinking" means thinking about globalisation based on the trend of internationalisation. "Local rooting" is mainly rooted in the local reality and adapts to the local geology and culture.

To help principals develop the above values, according to the laws of human psychological structure and the process of values formation, values education for primary and secondary school principals can be divided into three directions: cognitive, affective, and behavioural. The integration of these three paths depends on systematic training. A combination of intensive training and post-training guidance should be used for long-term cultivation. Firstly, a semester of intensive training is needed to educate principals at a plateau bottleneck regarding values. Secondly, post-training guidance needs to be carried out consistently. That is, based on establishing a database on the growth of principals, flexible and varied long-term follow-up guidance should be given according to the individual circumstances, including dynamic expert guidance, pairing support between schools, extended training and regular experience sharing and exchange sessions.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Principals of primary and secondary schools are central figures in school education. Their educational values are the most crucial part of their educational thinking and directly influence the educational practices of principals at both personal and school levels. In the value system of education, "Love" is always the foundation of education. Based on "Love," educational values vary around the world. In less developed areas of China, changes in educational values, particularly the shift from grade orientation to quality orientation, are leading to a leap forward in local education. However, some excellent elements still need to be given sufficient attention. The values education of primary and secondary school principals should be continuously strengthened from the perspective of long-term cultivation.

Overall, there are several implications: (1) In terms of theoretical application, this study combines the characteristics of education. It attempts to build a basic framework of educational values based on Chinese values, combining emic and etic, qualitative and quantitative, which provides a reference for subsequent studies on educational values based on local culture. (2) In terms of practical application, the excellent educational value system proposed in this study is relevant to the local reality. It is conducive to better guiding the school principals to continuously form excellent educational values, which in turn can effectively guide educational practice and solve real-life problems in basic education.

However, the study has some limitations: (1) Educational values are a complex and extensive system, and with the richness and diversity of Chinese language expressions, any attempt at interpretation cannot be perfect. The dimensions of values distilled and summarised in this study are limited in terms of completeness and precision. Future researchers can conduct a more comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the educational value system to paint a complete picture of good educational values among principals. (2) Values themselves are objective, while perceptions of values are subjective, and although researchers have attempted to study them from different perspectives, both emic and etic, they are inevitably somewhat subjective. Further refinements should be made in line with the requirements of the times and cultural changes.

Note: This paper is the research result of the key project of the research project of the "Ten Thousand Principals Training Program" in Yunnan Province, China. The research title of the project is "Follow-up study of trainees returning to work from the Ten Thousand Principals Training Program Project" (project number: 2020WMXZ02).

## TRANSPARENCY STATEMENT

The lead author Deng Alan affirms that this manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study being reported; that no important aspects of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned (and, if relevant, registered) have been explained.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Special thanks to the Project Office of the Ten Thousand Principals Training Programme in Yunnan Province for their support in the research of this paper.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author hereby declares that there is no conflict of interest in this study.

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