

Book Review

WHOLE PERSON EDUCATION IN EAST ASIAN UNIVERSITIES

Haiyu Zhan ♦

Benedict S. B. Chan, Victor C. M. Chan (eds.) *Whole Person Education in East Asian Universities: Perspectives from Philosophy and Beyond*. United Kingdom, Taylor & Francis, 2022, 306 pp. ISBN: 9780367683795

Abstract: *Whole Person Education in East Asian Universities: Perspectives from Philosophy and Beyond* edited by Benedict S. B. Chan and Victor C. M. Chan, stands as a significant contribution addressing current educational challenges. This volume contains the collective contribution of numerous scholars who participated in the 2019 Conference at Hong Kong Baptist University. Their research aims to integrate contexts for future development through holistic education and philosophy, distinguishing it as a scholarly work rather than a mere textbook. Universities across the world are reconciling differences to enrich higher education by integrating diverse disciplinary perspectives. The book is structured into three Sections. The first Section explores Confucianism, Buddhism, and Chinese perspectives; the second delves into Western philosophy and Asian religions; and the final section examines multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches in philosophy and beyond. Supported by the Tin Ka Ping Foundation and the Centre for Sino-Christian Studies at Hong Kong Baptist University, this research initiative bridges

*Haiyu Zhan is from School of Literature and Journalism, Sichuan University, Chengdu 610064, Sichuan, China. Her research focuses on literature and journalism. This work is supported by National Social Science Foundation of China (grant number: 19BYY070). Email: scdxzhy@126.com

gaps by combining studies on Whole Person Education, East-West Traditions, and Philosophy, aiming to foster comprehensive educational frameworks.

Keywords: Whole Person Education and Philosophy, Western Philosophy, Asian Religion, East-West Traditions.

Whole Person Education in East Asian Universities: Perspectives from Philosophy and Beyond" edited by Benedict S. B. Chan, and Victor C. M. Chan explores the integration of Eastern and Western thoughts and practices towards holistic education. It emphasizes the importance of understanding diverse cultural values to achieve personal and cultural wholeness. The General Introduction sets the stage for this volume's exploration focusing on cultivating the foundational elements of whole person education and philosophy. It challenges the notion of exclusively studying Western thought or confining oneself to cultural elements or specialized subjects. Instead, it argues that whole person education thrives on embracing a diversity of subjects. Enriching ethical, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional development necessitates mutual learning between Eastern and Western perspectives. It fosters an interdisciplinary dialogue between philosophy and other academic disciplines, notably the social sciences.

Section I explores Confucian, Buddhist, and Chinese perspectives on integrating Eastern and Western thoughts and practices towards becoming holistic individuals. Pan-chiu Lai and Ping-cheung Lo offer distinct viewpoints in their studies. Lai emphasizes the role of traditional values in holistic education, critiquing the emphasis on intellectual reasoning alone, which fails to cultivate individuals capable of fulfilling relational roles. He advocates for integrating Confucian principles with Western Christian thoughts to foster whole person education. Conversely, Lo takes a historical approach, highlighting how scholastic methodologies in medieval universities promoted critical thinking across disciplines, emphasizing moral praxis and self-cultivation over mere intellectual knowledge. He critiques the

later rationalistic approaches that undermined this holistic understanding of education. Tsz Wan Andrew Hung further explores the significance of Confucian traditions and rituals, particularly in ritual propriety and benevolence, critiquing Neo-Confucian practices that overly prioritize rationalism and individualism.

Section II delineates the findings of Zhaohui Hong and Ziqiang Bai, which offer distinct perspectives on Adam Smith's theory of moral sentiments and Thomas Aquinas' metaphysical vision of whole person education, respectively. Zhaohui Hong argues that, akin to Confucian principles of self-cultivation leading to moral perfection, Adam Smith's philosophical system of moral development can enrich students' capabilities toward holistic education. This perspective emphasizes the alignment of Eastern and Western philosophical frameworks to enhance educational outcomes. In contrast, Ziqiang Bai explores Thomas Aquinas' metaphysical vision of the whole person, rooted in the Triune God's framework of incarnation. Bai emphasizes the individuality and sincere role of each human being within the universe, grounded in Christ's humanity. This perspective highlights the uniqueness and identity of individuals and their relational responsibilities in the world. Further, Kai Man Kwan addresses the complex issues of creationism and evolutionism in education, questioning how these concepts should be taught in classrooms – whether through controversy, equality, or both. This study provides a creative approach to navigating sensitive and contentious topics in education. Together, these studies offer valuable East-West philosophical insights into integrating thoughts and practices for whole person education in East Asian students, fostering moral perfection and addressing contemporary educational challenges

The final Section of this book explores interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary models for future development in education. Sin Yee Calista Lam, Man Sing Wong, and Benedict S. B. Chan provide perspectives from Hong Kong, focusing on the integration of technological advancements in teaching ethics

within whole person education. They highlight how technological innovations, such as iBeacon technology, present both opportunities and ethical challenges in data collection for enhancing students' and teachers' learning experiences. This approach moves beyond traditional educational methods by not only promoting holistic student development but also fostering awareness of diverse perspectives from China and around the world. Rather than solely emphasizing professional skills in specific subjects, this educational approach broadens the scope to encompass broader ethical considerations, particularly regarding privacy issues. Furthermore, the authors argue that classrooms can serve as microcosms for addressing these ethical challenges collectively. The volume concludes with discussions on emotional resilience and phronetic social sciences teaching, emphasizing their roles in promoting societal, communal, and global prosperity through whole person education. Finally, Yoshihiro Tanigawa adopts a pragmatic approach within the Japanese context, advocating for Faculty Development (FD) that goes beyond teaching skills alone. Tanigawa integrates John Dewey's framework to enhance the holistic view of FD, emphasizing reflective attention and the cultivation of moral and ethical values alongside educational practices. This approach aims to enrich the educational experience by aligning with a broader, holistic perspective rather than focusing solely on technical proficiency.

The volume also discusses technological advancements in teaching ethics, emphasizing both opportunities and ethical challenges. However, it overlooks the potential of artifacts for cultural literacy and lacks discussion on COVID-19's impact on education. It also fails to address the educational needs of special children and youth or the impact of differing marital practices in Eastern and Western cultures. Despite these gaps, the book remains essential for those interested in holistic education and cultural understanding, promoting harmony at local and global level.