

Preface: A Heart Song for Children

From contextualized teaching to contextualized education, and then to contextualized curriculum, there were three steps of my thirty years exploration and research. Some experts and teachers called that ‘trilogy of contextualized education’ and suggested to publish a series of books entitled to that. When looking back the long journey, I had lots of thoughts and feelings. There were enough thoughts to express through a series of books, and the poetic and artistic title made me have the mind to try.

What was reflected in the ‘trilogy’ was my journey of constantly approaching children, listening to their voices, and watching their growth with vitality and energy. I had a chance to record wonderful musical notes from the child’s heart, feeling the child’s emotional waves and sprays as a musician touching the beloved strings, and I made efforts to get the rhythm and guess the child’s dream and longing. The colorful pictures, graceful songs, and sounds of laughter intoxicated me, making me meditate alone for long time and carefully feel the beauty and pureness. Many times, I drew nourishment of life and intelligence and finally saw ‘Flowers in the Field’ germinating, heard ‘the Song of the Lark’ sung, and looked forward to ‘the Paradise of Beauty.’

Day after day and year after year, I was never tired or slack. The Trilogy of Contextualized Education was a record of my emotional and intelligent interactions with children that I immersed in, and the memories of my inner feelings, reflections, and harvests of crossing the three steps. When taking up the pen, I often felt that children were in my heart and even had a literary impulse.

Professor Gao Wen from East China Normal University made warm praise of contextualized education in my book *The Poem of Situation Education*:

Rooted in the context of Chinese cultural tradition,

Focus on THE CHILD.

For more than twenty years, completed the trilogy of situation education,

With the mark of ‘Constructed in China,’ go to the world.

Right, contextualized education did focus on THE CHILD. For many years, I kept pursuing to let children fly higher and further, and be able to fly and sing. Contextualized education was the song of the lark in my heart.

In the course of development of contextualized education, I could not forget researchers from the National Institute of Education Sciences who had given me advice and support. By the end of 2000, at the project summary meeting for the 'Experimental Study on Promoting Child Development through Situational Education' of which I was the primary investigator, after visiting the classroom, observing children's activities, and listening to my report, they praised, 'It is better to see than to hear about it a hundred times.' Their full affirmation and high appraisal made me exciting.

At the meeting, the director Zhuo Qingjun solemnly read the expert opinion:

'The project Ms. Li Jilin hosted actively adapted to the development trend of basic education and persistently explored a model of quality education with Chinese characteristics and rich flavor of the times. It was a prospective study with great theoretic and practical significance.'

'The project with theoretic and practical system of situational education made a lot of pioneering and unique researches, enriching and developing contemporary educational theories and reforms. It made great contribution and impact to implementation of quality education in Jiangsu Province and even across the country, and to exploration of a general way to promote harmonious and active development of the child's capacity. The fruitful outcomes of Ms. Li Jilin's innovative research became a valuable treasure of socialist education with Chinese characteristic.'

It was the highest award to my exploration of twenty years and the hardships and success of the undertaking made tears run down my face.

The experts' appraisal indicated that contextualized education was the way for children to grow up happily and learn with high effects. I wished more teachers could make use of it to benefit more children and made them enjoy education. That was the higher goal that I have pursued for half century as well as 'the Paradise of Beauty' in my heart.

In order to avoid disappoint people's expectations, to find more like-minded teachers, and to furtherly develop contextualized education, with passions I wrote down critical events of exploration of contextualized teaching, education, and curriculum, my thoughts and feelings about it in more than ten years, and the theoretic generalization. Today, I sincerely presented it to readers, and here I tried to draw the outline of the journey that the school of contextualized pedagogy was formed.

The series of books as Trilogy of Contextualized Education was composed by listening to the child's voice and played for the child. The 'trilogy' would not be produced if children were not in my heart. Children provided me the driving force and wisdom to create. I deeply felt that contextualized teaching belonged to children and was for children, so that it was full of vitality of life and performed the music of true sentiment.

I will continue to persistently and passionately work with more other teachers to move forward for children's development.

Nantong, China

Li Jilin



Let children's thoughts take wings



Combining observation and imagination in far-sighted state of mind



Using beautiful images to arouse student emotions (in Li Jilin's class)



Li Jilin uses a short break to work



Warmly greeted by foreign experts at the International Forum



Contextualized class engages students in joyful learning



Li Jilin in Hong kong academic event



Giving a lecture on contextualized education for the third time in Hong kong



Li Jilin's Collected Works won first prize from China Education Society



In the 7th National People's Congress, Li Jilin sat with gymnastics world champion Li Ning



Li Jilin dressed as Pine Lady to celebrate Fairy Tale Festival with children



Li Jilin cheering for children in school sports meeting

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Li, J.

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