



University Soft Power: Meaning and Strategy of Construction from the Perspective of “Harmony” Culture

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Abstract

University management contains the construction and promotion of soft power, which needs the support of excellent culture. The study of Chinese universities' soft power should be placed under the vision of Chinese traditional culture. As the quintessence of Chinese traditional culture, the “harmony” culture- the ideological origin of the modern management, bears the characteristics of inclusiveness in spiritual realm, morality in judging the right and the wrong, development in value-orientation, and the balance in achieving methods, etc.. The construction of university soft power under the vision of “harmony” culture meets the demand to unify the overall characteristics of the Chinese traditional culture and the integrated layout of soft power construction, and also meets the requirement to fulfill the value of Chinese traditional culture with cultural consciousness, thus can realize the combination of cultural value of “harmony” with university value's rebuilding, helps to exert university's function. On the strategy of university soft power construction, it needs to answer the fundamental questions such as “meanings of university”, “functions of university”, “aims of university” by rebuilding university spirit, inheriting and guiding advanced culture, elaborating “tsuneyo and full utility” in present circumstances under the guidance of “harmony” culture.

Key words: University; Soft power; “Harmony” culture; Significance; Strategy

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INTRODUCTION

“Harmony” is the spiritual essence and core proposition of Chinese traditional culture, the basic belief of state administration, and the reflection of spiritual features of China. As quintessence of Chinese traditional culture, “harmony” culture functions as ideological orientation, value guidance and virtual standard. “Harmony” means concordance, peace, coordination and cooperation.

As the ideological origin of modern society management, “harmony” culture has its unique cultural features, thus it becomes the ideological resource in guiding the harmonious society construction, which includes modern university building.

1. STATUS AND FEATURES OF “HARMONY” CULTURE

1.1 Inclusiveness of Spiritual Realm

As the world is pluralistic, culture and thinking should be diversified, which determines difference to be the basis and premise of world existence. “Inclusiveness is the most distinctive characteristic of Chinese culture and would-be mature world culture”. The inclusiveness of “harmony” culture lies in respecting different and opposite factors, believing “Streams with different resources merge into one sea; different categories of management contribute

to well governance". The inclusiveness and magnanimity that "harmony" culture advocates, reflect the fundamental purpose and spiritual realm of "harmony", and contribute to animation and improvement of social development.

1.2 Morality in Distinguishing Right and Wrong

One of the social functions of culture is its standardization and practicality, "harmony" culture contains the essence of regulation and morality. "The greatest virtue confront to morality"(*The Tao Te Ching*), "Etiquette is based on harmony, which was applied successfully by former kings. The key lies in that harmony is not the purpose itself, but should be guided by manners"(*The Analects of Confucius*). Both of them emphasize the joint efforts of systematized "etiquette" and spiritual "harmony". "Etiquette" is based on "harmony" which reflects the cultural value and function of judgment, which relates to requirement of "morality". Of course, whether "etiquette" can reflect the spirit of "harmony" depends on the principle of justice it contains.

1.3 Development in Value-Orientation

The core of culture lies in value, the choice of cultural value conveys the tendency and goal of a certain society. "Harmony" not means harmonious stagnancy or disharmonious development, but means "no development without harmony"(*Guan Zi*). The law of "Harmony" reflects the development and regeneration of world existence. Just as Book of Rites advocates that renew everyday leads to every new day. "Renew everyday means greatest virtue". "Change is endless succession". "The grand virtue is rebirth"(*The Book of Changes*). Among them, "rebirth, change" signifies the development and change of the world. Development is the simple hope and eternal pursuit of mankind. Advocating development implies the inner request and value orientation of "harmony" culture, makes different things cooperate and unite to an ideal state, and let their vigor being sustained and released.

1.4 The Balance of Achieving Methods

The "harmony" culture regards balance as an ideal state. "Harmony" is both the process and the result of "movement". Moreover, it is a dynamic balance, which is opposed to rigidity and imbalance of Yin and Yang. "Harmony" requires grasping the fundamental meaning of balance and dialectics of balance and imbalance correctively, to regard balance as relative, and to achieve balance through imbalance, to promote development in a dynamic and relative balance state, thus bring eternal power to develop and create inexhaustible vitality and wisdom of life.

2. UNIVERSITY SOFT POWER

University soft power is an extended concept constructed by researchers who put "soft power" into specific

organization - university. The problems about university are gradually becoming the main topic, or even the focus of government and common people. With the development of economy, the construction of harmonious society and international competition of higher education, there is an urgent demand for college education's quality and intention. Consequently, more researchers' focus on studying university naturally changes to soft power.

2.1 Concept of University Soft Power

"Soft power" was put forward in 1980s by Joseph.S.Nye, former dean of Harvard Kennedy School, in *Soft Power: The Means To Success In World Politics*, Nye holds that soft power is composed of the attraction of culture and political value, and the ability to determine the international rules and shape political topics. The core is to let soft power perform depends on its own magnetism and attractiveness, not compelling power. Accordingly, it is safe to hold that university soft power is the spiritual strength such as guiding ideas, developing strategies, reflected in the attractiveness and influence that university exert on the society. It is a concept made up of various aspects. It is also believed that university soft power, which depends on the all-round power of a university, manifests the advanced ideas, scientific positioning, abundant investment, powerful human resources, first-class discipline, perfect management, and sound operating mechanism.

At the same time, university soft power can be recognized in comparison with "solid power". They are two aspects of one thing, having a relationship of unity of opposites. Solid power is the tangible carrier and materialization of spirits, while soft power is the intangible extension of solid power. In the process of competition, the two aspects depend on each other, and can transform into each other under certain conditions.

2.2 Key Elements Analysis of University Soft Power

Different researching angles lead to different results in elements analysis of university soft power. Generally speaking, university soft power includes university idea, university brand, university image, university culture, university soft surroundings, university tradition and style, etc. So, university soft power is a systematic structure with dominant and supporting elements. The dominant elements, such as university spirit and culture, play decisive role in the formation and consolidation of university soft power, correspondingly, university institution, university image, and university features belong to the supporting elements.

2.3 Property Analysis of University Soft Power

University soft power is a question of theory as well as practice. The integration of these two makes the power not only intangible and unpredictable, but tangible and perceivable. It is latent but also concrete. From the

analysis of its culture and spirit to its motto wording, the university soft power forms a rather strong ability of expansion and transmission, which can go beyond region and time, providing an enormous impact. At the same time, university soft power can be transformed into visible management model and practicably cultural pattern, playing its practicable and concrete functions. Otherwise, the competitive property of soft power determines that university soft power is the core competitiveness, influencing the effects of other competitive factors. Like other kind of soft power, university soft power needs long-term formation, and gives long time influence.

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF UNIVERSITY SOFT POWER CONSTRUCTION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF “HARMONY” CULTURE

3.1 The Need to Unite the Holism of Chinese Traditional Culture and Soft Power’s Overall Construction

Systematization and holism is increasingly becoming the features of modern times, with the natural separation between countries and regions not vivid any more, the intensification of global communications, and the modernization of information technology, which clearly present more holistic coherence of the world. So, it is urgent to hold the viewpoint of holism to understand cultural development and application. During the process of observation and analysis of different cultures, it is important to put cultures into total cultural practice of mankind to highlight its humanistic value, so as to grasp the whole value of human culture and improve consciousness of cultural practice.

As the composition of consistent cultural spirit, cultural practice and ideal pursuit of Chinese nations, “harmony” culture emphasizes the unity of diversity, bearing the property of entirety. “Etiquette is based on harmony” from *The Analects of Confucius* connects harmonious world view with harmony-oriented thinking style, having deep influence on Chinese traditional culture. “Moderation promotes the proper position of the world, and generation of all things”(*The Doctrine of Mean*), “The sages look the world as one family, and the whole country as one person”(*The Book of Rites*), “Insist morality though poor, care the world if rich”(*Mencius*) all are devoted to create harmonious realm of equality. Also, the holistic view of “harmony” culture lies in its unique view of the world.

Under the viewpoint of holism, university soft power also has the characteristic of systematization. From element analysis, university soft power is integrated reflection of university spirit, idea of value and inner characteristics. From the point of external relationships, university soft power contains the spirits of freedom,

independence, humanism, innovation, criticism, forms spiritual support for university’s existence and development. As university’s resource of vitality, university soft power exists inherently and externally, and holistically promotes social development. From the point of constitution system, university soft power contains three layers of institution, namely, fundamental institution form, general institution system and concrete institution article, all promote the socialization of universities, and helps to build a functional system of institutions, whose main topic is to build more intimate and stable relations between universities and government, universities and society and university themselves.

3.2 The Need to Fulfill the Value of Chinese Traditional Culture with Cultural Consciousness

“Cultural consciousness” means self-awareness of established culture, includes the origin, forming process, features and its developing trends. With five thousand years’ suffering and verification, Chinese traditional culture accumulates abundant experiences and theories. However, in recent period, with the deliberate consolidation of western culture, the simple wisdom of traditional Chinese culture seems not that brighter. Yet, “cultural consciousness” reflects cultural subject consciousness in cultural practice, creation and rethinking.

In the overall setup of economic globalization and cultural diversification, the conception and behavior based upon “cultural consciousness” will bring solid foundation and reliable spirit guarantee for the renewal of traditional culture. As the bases of cultural practice, creation and rethinking, Chinese traditional culture either acts as “primitive scope” to be physical and spiritual existence, or acts as “realistic scope” to reveal the excellent components and valuable factors, thus promoting traditional value’s modernization. That is to say, the wisdom and inner value of Chinese traditional culture provides premise for value recurrence, while “cultural consciousness” offers cognitive basis for value representation.

University should be an important carrier of cultural transmission, and resource of cultural innovation. This determines the responsibility in “cultural consciousness” for universities that act as academic and cultural organizations. As an organic component of social culture, university culture accumulates academic tradition, cultural spirit, education ideals and pursuit, plays an important role in fulfilling the function of the university as a spiritual support for its scientific development. University culture is a significant part of advanced socialist culture, playing the guiding role. In performing Chinese traditional culture, university has many advantages, such as enormous space, prominent significance, and easy to integrate, that makes university an ideal place for Chinese traditional culture’s resurgence. That is the essence of cultural consciousness, namely, “building a wide accepted order and common principle for cooperation and development of all types of

cultures, through proper positioning and positive adaption in diversified world”.

3.3 The Need to Rationally Combine Cultural Value of “Harmony” with University Value’s Rebuilding

The value of culture consists in its usability and its positive influence on people. The process of culture creation is the process of value practice; and the process of choosing culture is the process of establishing values. The result of creation and choice is the realization of value. The values decide the choice of present cultural achievements, and the direction of new cultural creation, value system determines the property and development of cultural system. Value system of a certain culture comes after long and repeated practice; cultural consciousness and ideal patterns too, can be gradually stabilized, accumulated and optimized.

There always exists dominant cultural recognition in cultural perception of each period. In cultural system, the dominant part will control and constrain cultural creation. Especially in spiritual culture, the dominant function is more obvious. So, clarifying the dominant value system and its value points is important for cultural and overall development of our nation and country; and it will influence the value choice of university.

“Harmony” is the essence of nature and various phenomena of human society, which was summarized by Chinese ancient philosophers. As the supreme principle of Chinese traditional culture, “harmony” doesn’t deny the existence of contradiction and conflicts; it admits the difference of existing things, like the differences between “Yin” and “Yang”, “Heaven” and “Human”, etc. And it emphasizes the combination of different things into an organic whole. At the same time, “harmony” culture insists that excessive contradiction and conflict will destroy the basic surroundings for mutual dependence and co-existence of different things.

“Harmony” emphasizes that different cultures should commonly promote human civilization through mutual contact, absorption and combination. In the process of China’s stepping into the world, advocating the idea of “harmonious world” through “etiquette is based on harmony” and “harmonious but different”, has been promoting the joint development of different countries all over the world, and it also has been the spiritual resource in rebuilding university values.

Conducting scientific research, cultivating talents, serving the society and leading the trend of culture are functions of universities. To carry out these functions needs the guidance of right values and the construction of scientific value system, which respect to concept choosing and system construction, “harmony”, as a kind of spiritual culture, has an innate advantage in optimizing and reconstructing the values of universities.

3.4 The Need for Rational Spirit and Pragmatic Attitude Returning to the Layer of Competition

Soft power generally stems from cultural attraction, political assimilation, and the influence of foreign policy and virtues. Although soft power is the gentle part of the comprehensive power, it affects the function of hard power and determines the belongings of advantageous position in competition. For this reason, the definition of soft power has some element of competition attributes.

All universities pursue superior status and core competence, which is the ability system ensuring a university’s sustainable existence and development; the core competence is unique to a university and it maintains the university’s competitive advantages with a long term of formation and integration. Competitive power and position are questions that a university must face. For this reason, to study the soft power of a university especially its construction contains the natural pursuit of competitive advantages.

Culture possesses ultimate competitive power. With thousands of years’ continuous development, Chinese traditional culture is knowledge about “human” in essence. “Harmony” culture thinks highly of realistic society and life, contains abundant ideal factors and guides personal improvement and social administration. The humanism, spirit of self-strengthening, spirit of engaging into reality, spirit of advocating etiquette, all belong to “harmony” culture and they direct the consummation of people, organization and society in morality and ability, obviously possessing rational spirit and pragmatic attitude.

Rational spirit denies blind worship of super God and nirvana, affirms the unity between human and nature, individual and society, advocates personal feelings and desire comply to rational require of society. It opposes conflict and separation. Pragmatic attitude upholds “know what one really understands”, opposes “born wise or learned” and “swift apprehension”, emphasizes clear estimation of oneself and others, analysis of the truth of all things to show practical attitude and concrete ability.

Rational spirit and pragmatic attitude lead to fulfillment of personality, and consolidation of competitive status. At present, higher education goes more international; universities immersed in traditional culture must go across the apparent composure to face the competition from home and abroad; let rational spirit and pragmatic attitude be the ideological resource and spiritual guide.

3.5 The Need to Unite “Tsuneyo and Full Utility” of “Harmony” Culture with University’s Functional Role

“Harmony” culture comes from social reality and vivid life, it stresses “The biggest morality is aimed for the mass” (*Book of Rites*), emphasizes devoting oneself to the world, through setting moral ethic and right direction for the people. Besides this, “harmony” culture believe “use sincere heart and honest mind to know all the things, rely

on self-cultivation to stabilize the world” and “learning for action”, “care for the world”, “help others independent and flourishing”. All these classic sayings and mottos convey unconventional attitude and attendance spirit, which highlight the significance and value of “harmony” culture.

In defining its functions, “university is a place to study profound learning”, this indicates that university should provide good conditions and atmosphere for teachers and students’ study, that is what “the tenet of great learning lies in the promotion of great virtue, the renewal of people and the pursuit of perfection” interprets the fundamental purpose of universities. In analyzing the social attribute, as a product of certain social and historical conditions, university responds to social requirements and changes its function to echo with social development.

Vigor comes from associative action; value comes from service behavior; significance comes from win-win effect. There will be no vigor, motivation or pressure for universities if isolated from society and reluctant to serve the mass. The hypothesis of the so-called “sheer university” and “unconditional university” has never become a reality. It is just an unrealistic “utopian dream”.

Whether as academic organizations or as cultural organizations, universities clearly show the characteristic of “tsuneyo and full utility”, which indicates that universities should be dedicated to profound knowledge and keep away from the “ivory tower”; university should also contact with society but not fall into utilitarianism. At the same time, universities should educate the young people to understand the meaning and aim of life, to find their own places and life styles in society. Therefore, universities are organizations for profound learning, platforms for young generation’s growing up, and centers for advanced culture. A university’s social responsibility is embodied in the mission of cultural inheritance, especially from the relationship between university and society. University ought to be bases of new knowledge and bases of new ideas, new value, leading the development and progress of society in culture. They should not be reduced to become the “adherents and vassals of social vulgarity”.

There is inner unity between “harmony” culture and university in the aspect of “tsuneyo and full utility”. It is necessary to find a common point under common cultural principle in resolving the problem of university soft power construction and interactive nexus between university and society. The principle of “tsuneyo and full utility” just can make up the loophole.

4. UNIVERSITY SOFT POWER’S CONSTRUCTION STRATEGY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF “HARMONY” CULTURE

Because of its spiritual feature, “harmony” culture has the guiding role in social, cultural and economic

organization’s management with its spirit, idea and orientation. At the same time, soft power also answers the basic and fundamental questions positioned on spirit, culture and values. Connecting “harmony” culture with soft power theory helps to answer some fundamental problems, such as “why to set up university”? “What is university”? “to run university of what kind”, etc. Just as “metaphysics leads to morality, while physics brings about utility” (*The Book of Changes*), studying the problem of soft power under the vision of “harmony” culture, honors the internal logic between “morality” and “utility”.

However, culture doesn’t play its role spontaneously, it needs dialectical thinking, rational interactivity, especially macroscopic leading and down-to-earth construction. This determines that in university’s soft power construction, the status and function of “harmony” culture lay the prerequisite, while the crux is strategy.

4.1 “Meaning of University”: The Intention of Spiritual Rebuilding of University

Every era or nation has its own spirit, university should also has its unique spirit. University spirit is the highest and most penetrating ideological summary of policy, objective, value, etc, forming the spiritual motivation and essence for development, playing a crucial and long-lasting role. In history, university presidents such as CAI Yuanpei, JIANG Menglin, MEI Yiqi, ZHANG Boling and ZHE Kezhen connected western universities’ ideas with Chinese educational tradition. By doing so, they built unique ideas of their own university with their makings of Chinese educators. In recent years, China’s higher education endured adjustment and political movements several times, and didn’t shape an independent spirit of university reflecting the law of education. Since the new century, the continuing trends of merging, upgrading and renaming have greatly destroyed the atmosphere of “seek truth from facts”. When the scale is getting larger, the spirit is getting more vacuous; and the spirit of university with Chinese style has not been shaped yet. Superficially, the loss of university spirit attributes to the excess of instrumentality or technical side, and the lack of humanism, academics and sociality, but in essence, the loss of university spirit attributes to the want of self-reflection on university idea and purpose. What’s more, some universities even neglecting or rejecting the self-restraint of Chinese traditional culture and their discarding the spiritual resources and cultural motivation of “harmony” culture are also some of the main reasons.

To the university spirit, the mechanism of formation and inheritance lies in accumulation and recognition, among which, recognition is the premise and foundation, while accumulation is improvement and revision. In term of China’s universities, their spirits should not be water without a source or a tree without roots. Chinese five thousand years of civilization forms their solid and firm foundation.

"The tenet of great learning lies in the promotion of great virtue, the renewal of people and the pursuit of perfection"(*The Great Learning*), whether it is "promotion of great virtue" or "renewal of people", they all stress the spirit of university. As a cultural organization related to social economy and political institutions, the university has its own independent and unique functions. To inherit, study, combine and innovate profound learning, universities should have extraordinary cultural tastes, characters of independence and pursue value for the realization of lofty ideals of mankind. This includes humanistic spirit of "humanism", scientific spirit of "realistic and pragmatic approach", transcending spirit of "focus on the future", and struggling spirit of "constantly striving for improvement". The realization and recognition of "harmony" culture reflect the university's cultural consciousness; and they are the spiritual rebuilding with the orientation of "harmony" culture when resolving the problems existed on the spiritual side.

4.2 "Function of University": The Inheritance and Guidance of Advanced Civilization

Human society is developing continuously, the historical status in social development and responsibility of university is also constantly improving and changing. The education duty is not the solely social obligation for university. For university is now taking an overall responsibility in education, academic, serving and guiding the society and international responsibility. Therefore, the essence of university can't be simply generalized as colleges, but should be viewed as institution of higher learning. This should be the basic starting point for observing and analyzing every phenomenon in universities, it is also the viewpoint toward the essence of university that we should establish.

The higher education is the important carrier for cultural inheritance and significant resource for ideological and cultural innovation. The essence of university is a cultural organization with unique function. At present, university not only should meet the cultural demands of society, what's more, it should tell the society what kind of culture is needed. The cultural inheritance innovation and guidance will be the natural demand when develops to a new phrase and layer.

To universities, "cultural guidance" means conscientiously guiding the society with advanced ideas, excellent culture, civilized behavior, advanced technology and scientific knowledge. "Cultural guidance" also means serving the society with cultural innovation, knowledge creation, technological and managerial innovation. All make the university the mental homeland deserving society's yearning, respect, worship, and even imitation through serving for the economy and society.

"Harmony" contains the meaning of concordance, peace, coordination and cooperation and etc, almost thoroughly illustrating the spiritual characteristics

of Chinese civilizations. "Harmonious but different" interprets "harmony" and "difference", "Moderation" attained thorough "promotes the proper position of the world, and generation of all things", "Etiquette is based on harmony" devotes to the connection of systematized "etiquette" and spiritual "harmony", what is more, "Everybody comes from nature, the atmosphere constitutes human body; Human nature is the true dominance of the world, all the mankind live in one family and share the common physical world". All above definitely demonstrate university's responsibility in guiding culture as well as provide abundant ideas and resource for guiding cultural practice.

4.3 "Aims of University": Current Deduction of "Tsuneyo and Full Utility"

"Harmony" culture emphasizes "the biggest morality is aimed for the mass". But, purely "university should be adapted to society actively" and single-faceted idea of "university should go from the edge of the society to the centre of it", makes university the more close to society, but the more remote from its original intention. The attack to university from business society and the hurt to educational system because of "infatuatedly pursuing for profit", make university gradually loses its extraordinary moral trait and calm value judgment. All these mean the degeneration of university spirit and deletion of university mission, in the end, those cause "nightmare of accumulating wealth and losing morality".

As the social basis of "tsuneyo and full utility" of university keeps changing, the university seems hard to shoulder the burden of guiding society to further development on the aspects of theoretical idea and moral spirit, but this should not be the excuse of avoiding social duty. At present, the spiritual wealth grows more slowly than the physical wealth, hedonism and utilitarianism prevail. University should be calm, deep, extraordinary, and immune to vulgar society mode, and must take on the heavy task for nations, county and mankind's future and fate, and thus make itself the spiritual palace of commitment to cultural tradition, historical inheritance, and of devotion to ideal, but not the mere place for imparting knowledge and training skills, which would be only shallow and vulgar.

Excessive emphasis on "coming into society", "serving society" and "actively adapting to society" will drag university's ideology and moral ethics equal in line with social reality, and impair the main function of universities. To combat that declining trend, it is necessary to find solutions from "harmony" in Chinese traditional culture. The university culture guided by "harmony" culture is the generalization of spirit culture, physical culture, regulatory culture and environment culture, as a high level culture, bearing the basic characteristics of being prospective, diversified, critical and advanced. The above characteristics reflect the understanding and practice

of “tsuneyo and full utility”, which aims at “permanent learning and forever peace”.

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