

# Traceability and Reflection: Contemporary Revelations of Li Ruiqing's Art Education Thought

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**Abstract.** Li Ruiqing is an essential founder of higher art education in modern China. He advocated a new style of education for a better country. He founded the Drawing and Handicrafts Section, the first teacher-training art department in the country at that time, at the Two Rivers Normal School. It pioneered the opening of art specialties in Chinese higher education and trained a large number of art education talents for Chinese art education. Its spirit of education to develop the country, dare to be the first, and the courage to take responsibility for modern art education thought has an essential impact on the innovation of modern art education thought and the formation of the contemporary spirit of the times of courage to take responsibility for the critical impact.

**Keywords:** Li Ruiqing; Arts Education; Educational Thinking; The Modern Revelation.

## 1. Introductory

Because of Li Ruiqing's important position and influence in the history of the development of modern education in China, the current research literature mainly about Li Ruiqing primarily focuses on the following aspects. (1) Organize and study the materials and documents left behind by Li Ruiqing, such as *The Remains of Qing Dao Ren*, collected and organized by his disciples, relatives, and friends. The book records a series of manuscripts written by Li Ruiqing during his lifetime, such as poems, calligraphic notes, inscriptions, prefaces, and postscripts of paintings and calligraphy. Many of these articles reflect Li Ruiqing's concepts of art education. For example, "The Preface to the Record of Classmates of the Two Rivers Superior Teacher Training College", "The Book with Wu Zhongwen", and "The Scroll Approval of the Students' Classes". This category is a first-hand source for the study of Li Ruiqing's thoughts on higher education. (2) Analyzing Li Rui-Qing's life from the chronology of his life. Among the dissertations are the master's thesis of Wenwen Xu of Nanchang University, "The Chronicle of Li Ruiqing" (2010), and *The Chronicle of Qing dao Ren* edited by Ying-San Zeng. This type of research is in the form of writing a chronicle of his life to collect, organize, and take his words and deeds, interaction with teachers and friends, life encounters and movements, etc., for the collection of research. (3) The main study is the formation of Li Ruiqing's thoughts on art education, etc. There is a dissertation by Wang Guangwei of Nanjing University of Posts and Telecommunications, "Research on Li Ruiqing's Thought on Art Education" (2014), which mainly introduces Li Ruiqing's life events as well as the background of the formation of his educational thought and the analysis and interpretation of his thought on art education. The main concepts of education are education for the nation and putting people first. Educational practice is mainly his experience in running the Two Rivers Normal School, introducing important revelations for the reform and development of higher teacher education in art today, etc. For example, Wang Dongmin of Zhejiang University's dissertation, "Using the Ancient as the New-Li Ruiqing's Calligraphy and Painting Research, Creation, and Education in the Jinshi Tradition"(2017), analyzes and researches Li Ruiqing's calligraphy and painting art from the perspective of the Jinshi tradition. Xing Shengfeng's dissertation, "Research on Li Ruiqing's Calligraphy Creation" (2018), from Ningxia University,

focuses on a series of research and analysis of his research and creation of the art of calligraphy, among other things.

Li Ruiqing (1967-1920), the character Zhonglin, number Meian, late Qingdaoren, a native of Linchuan, Jiangxi Province, was a famous educator and artist in modern China—supervisor of the Two Rivers Superior Teacher Training College.[1] After the Xinhai Revolution, he resigned from his post as supervisor of the school and moved to Shanghai, where he was known as Qing Daoren. He died in Shanghai in 1920 and was later buried in Niushoushan, Nanjing.

All of the above studies are very important to our research of Li Ruiqing and his ideas on art education, and their relationship to the research in this paper is crucial. At present, the research on Li Ruiqing's art education thought, and his artistic attainments are also more, not yet the fully developed thesis is also more; this paper will focus on the research and analysis of his art education thought to extract its art education thought to give modern art education to enlightenment.

## **2. The ideology of art education as a means of promoting education for the nation, pioneering and taking responsibility for the future**

Education is a meaningful way to revitalize China. Li Ruiqing is a practitioner of “Education for a Better Country” and believes education is a crucial way to revitalize China. He believed that “since ancient times, there has never been a country without learning that did not perish, and a country with learning that did not flourish.”[2] It means that since ancient times, there has never been a country that did not do education and did not perish, and there has been a country that did education and did not prosper. Therefore, after he became the supervisor (i.e., the present-day principal) of the Ryanggang Superior Normal School, he set out to revitalize the country by practicing education to develop the people's wisdom through his ability to carry out education. He believed, “If education is successful, you can be rich and powerful.”[3] A good education will make the country prosperous and the people strong. He went abroad to study Japanese education because Japan's rise in modern times the road for all to see; the same was hit by the artillery of the Powers of the country after learning from Europe and the United States after a series of reforms within Japan, the government is gradually strong. Therefore, he believed that if China wanted to change its backwardness and defeat and realize the country's wealth and power like Japan, it had to start reforming education to develop education. First of all, in terms of teachers, he imported excellent teachers from Japan to change the backwardness of education teachers in China. Secondly, in terms of the content of teaching, he improved the content of teaching, led the preparation of teaching materials, improved the syllabus, and so on. Under the influence of his continuous innovation of the educational power of Liangjiang Normal School, under the auspices of Li Ruiqing, it has gradually become a famous and influential institution in Jiangnan since then.

Daring Ideas in Art Education. Li Ruiqing advocated education to develop the country and meet the social development of the new style of teaching. During his tenure of 1905-1911 period in the Two Rivers Normal School, he created the first teacher training class art section - a drawing and painting handmade section, marking the beginning of art education under the auspices of the modern government in our country, creating a The pioneer of art specialties. According to scholar Wu Shoufeng, “pictures” here mainly refers to paintings, such as in the seven-character poem “Spring Traveling in Gui Zhou” by the late Tang poet Zhang Chou, which reads, “It is desirable to look for pictures by the stream, and the sound of the warblers in the forest is like the sound of the wind and the strings.” To wit, “The scenery along the streams of Guizhou is all picturesque, and the sound of the warblers beside the woods is as beautiful as orchestral music. At the same time, it refers to the idea of scheming. For example, Xin Qiji's “He Xinlang” (贺新郎), which is about traveling to the West Lake in the rain of the three mountains, focuses on his ideals and ambitions.[4] By exploring the origin of Li Ruiqing's art education ideas, we analyze the following two main reasons why he became the pioneer of higher art education in China. On the one hand, he was influenced by his art education. Li Ruiqing grew up in the process of influence, such as his

childhood study of calligraphy, his proficiency in poetry, calligraphy, and painting and other works of art class, more research in calligraphy, he was on the ruins of the Yin, the Zhou, the Qin, the Han Dynasty to the Six Dynasties text are studied, to become a generation of calligraphy masters, and the south of Zeng Xie, the world has a “Northern Li South Zeng”. [5] He became the master of calligraphy of his generation and the southern sect of Zeng Xi. In poetry, he also occupies an essential place in the modern poetry world. His Chinese painting techniques were also highly accomplished, and he had a distinctive style among the painting schools of his time. The second aspect is the influence of Li Ruiqing’s art education ideology of educating the nation and possessing the spirit of daring to innovate. Li Ruiqing, who was born in the imperial examinations and is an inheritor of traditional culture, studied the Chinese classics since he was a child and analyzed the current situation while feeling ashamed of the country’s backwardness and beatings at that time. In order to educate the country to begin to the strongest enemy of the East Ocean of Japan with the attitude of learning, began to start from their ability, he went abroad to study, citing the Japanese Tokyo Higher Teacher’s College to set up a graphic arts and crafts section. He requested the Qing government to establish a painting and handicraft department at the Liangjiang Normal School, where he worked at the time, set up a painting room and workshop, and personally taught Chinese painting classes and added a music department. “was the founder of the establishment of art departments and sections in our colleges and universities, and trained the first generation of art teachers for our country”. [6] It pioneered the establishment of art specialties in higher teacher training schools in China.

Daring educational ideas. Li Ruiqing’s courageous spirit of education is influenced by his own study of calligraphy and painting from childhood, and he has his own unique insights into the traditional Chinese art of calligraphy and painting, which makes him have a more simple understanding and summary of learning and doing. In his “Letter with Zhang Jizhi”, he stated that “there is no other way for China's future but to run a school”. [7] He believes that the quality of nationals directly affects the development of the country's future. “It is the people of kings who know, the people of burghers who are brave, the people of weak nations who are selfish, and the people of fallen nations who are shameless.” [8] The strength of a country is directly related to education, so he did his best to start vigorously promoting education reform in higher education in order to keep pace with the times and train talents for the country. At the same time. During his six-year tenure as a school supervisor (principal), he “regarded education as his life, the school as his family, and the students as his children”, and this was his attitude towards education, the school and the students. His motto at the Liangjiang Normal School, “If you can chew the root of a vegetable, you can do great things,” was similar to Wang Xinmin’s motto in the Northern Song Dynasty, “If you can bite the root of a vegetable, you can do all things,” and he said, “If you can bite the root of a vegetable, you can do all things”. Or from this phrase, to the effect that a person who can adapt to a life of hardship and poverty, and dare to suffer and bear the burden, will be able to achieve something no matter what they do in the future. And his “chewing the cud” is the down-to-earth focus on education for a better country. To bear hardships and stand hard work to see the rich and powerful as floating clouds, willing to be poor, to sharpen its strong will, “do great things”, is to dare to be the first, dare to take on the ambitions, and expect descendants of the world as their own, the courage to take on the important task of the family and the country.

### **3. The modern revelation of Li Ruiqing’s art education thought**

The modern revelation of the revitalization of the nation through education, “When education flourishes, the nation flourishes; when education flourishes, the nation flourishes”. Higher education is an important indicator of the level of development and development potential of a country and a nation. Studying the history of the development of higher art education and analyzing and researching the process of its development is useful in shedding light on the development of contemporary art education. The imperial examination system in ancient China played different

degrees of positive effects on the social development of that time in various periods, selecting talents, stabilizing the society, etc., and had a significant impact on the political, economic and cultural development of ancient times. However, with the development of industrialization in the world, this system began to fail to adapt to the trend of the times, and gradually showed its unfavorable aspects, began to increasingly confine the thinking of the Chinese people, not conducive to the cultivation of talents needed for the development of society, and gradually became one of the important obstacles hindering the development of the Chinese society at that time. The Qing government finally issued an oracle in 1905: "At the beginning of the Cwu Section, all township examinations will be stopped, and the provincial township examinations will also be stopped." [9] Since then, China's education system as a whole has begun to learn from the West, studying and introducing Western academic disciplines and other subjects at that time, and beginning the reform of China's education system. The ancient imperial examination system of selecting talents has had a far-reaching impact on China's education system, and when society develops to a particular stage, the corresponding education system will also be reformed and changed along with the needs of society and the country. The purpose of the reform and restructuring of today's education system is to cultivate talents for socio-economic development and to lay a solid foundation of skills for the country's growth and revitalization.

Daring to be the first to reveal the spirit of innovation in education. The innovative spirit of education that dares to be the first in the world can be seen in Li Ruiqing. Innovation is the soul of a nation, dare to be the first "crab eater". After Li Ruiqing examined Japanese education, he took the lead in introducing and establishing the first higher education subject of art teacher training in China, "Drawing and Handicrafts Section", which created the precedent of modern art higher education in China. Since then, a new chapter in China's modern art higher education has begun. The Two Rivers Normal School has trained a large number of art education teachers and has promoted the development of art education in China. Later, the Qing government promulgated "the passage of a variety of superior teacher selection regulations", which stipulates that drawing and painting manual selection for the mandatory curriculum, with the Two Rivers teacher training school as a model, many schools around the country began to follow suit. By 1909, graphic arts and crafts students trained at the Two Rivers Normal School had graduated, and 69 of them, including Lv Fengzi, were distributed to various provinces. [10] Li Ruiqing was also the earliest advocate and practitioner of introducing calligraphy classes in universities in China. At the same time, as a generation of calligraphy and painting art, the back of the master of Chinese painting Zhang Daqian, the famous calligrapher Hu Xiaoshi, Li Zhongqian, Huang Hongtu, and so on were his disciples or under his influence. Contemporary art education in China has been popularized at all levels of schooling. Since primary, secondary, and university education, there have been relevant art or aesthetic education courses to cultivate students' thoughts on aesthetics, cultivate their temperament, and enrich their spiritual world. However, at the same time, with the continuous development of society, there are shortcomings in the existing arts education, which are unreasonable and unsuitable for students' artistic needs. Therefore, how to cultivate and develop students' innovative artistic spirit and change from the outer core to the inner core to promote the all-round development of human students is a direction we can think about.

A revelation of the spirit of education for the times. In the late Qing Dynasty, internal and external worries, Li Ruiqing, as a traditional education of the literati, as much as their learning, went to Japan to study and reform the domestic higher education to strengthen the people and wealth of the country, with a view to revitalizing China, to get rid of the backwardness of the situation of being beaten to live up to the responsibilities of the times. In January 1904, China's first nationwide modern school system, the "Dec. Mao School System," was promulgated, marking the establishment of China's modern education system. In September 1905, the imperial examination system, which had been practiced in China for more than 1,300 years, was abolished, and a wave of academies sprang up throughout the country to learn a new educational system from the West. Under the change of the times, Li Ruiqing bravely took on the important responsibility of education

in the times, and carried out bold innovations and positive actions in the Liangjiang Normal School, where he served as the supervisor of the school. His educational ideas and educational reforms caused the national school to follow his example at that time. His spirit of education still has far-reaching influences on contemporary higher art education. Contemporary domestic and foreign environments, in the domestic realization of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, to achieve the goal of the two hundred years, education is an important part of the people's lives in which accounted for the art education is gradually becoming a vital quality education. How to cultivate the spirit of students to take on the responsibilities of the times in today's educational environment is one of the important elements of education.

#### 4. Conclusion

As a vital founder of modern art education in China, Li Ruiqing opened the Drawing and Painting Handicrafts Section of the Liangjiang Normal School in 1906, which had a far-reaching impact on the training of a large number of art educators for art education in China. His spirit of education for a better country, pioneering and courageous has had a significant impact on modern art education thinking, marking the beginning of art teacher education in institutions of higher learning. He dared to break through the stereotypes of traditional education, emphasized the cultivation of students' practical ability, introduced teachers, and endeavored to run a new style of education. His spirit of art education is still a significant inspiration for today's education. In the rapid development of science and technology and the continuous integration and innovation of disciplines today, we should follow the times; at the same time, we should be a good source of history and reflect on the development of the course of modern art education thought of educational innovation, artistic innovation and the courage to assume the responsibility of the times.

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