

Exploring Marine Literature in University Curriculum Development from the Perspective of a Maritime Power*

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As a nation with an extensive coastline, China has regions that have flourished and prospered due to the sea, and marine culture has developed vigorously, with marine literature being an indispensable component. In the new era, the youth in higher education institutions should focus on the ocean, listen to, inherit, and promote marine literature, aligning with policies to establish confidence in marine culture. Research indicates that the integration of marine literature offers numerous benefits to students' learning and future development, playing a crucial role in education. This paper will analyze the significance of marine literature in education, its current development status, and explore the application value of Chinese marine literature in educational settings.

Keywords: marine literature, education, university curriculum

Defining Marine Literature

Marine literature refers to literary works set against the backdrop of the sea, incorporating elements such as the ocean, sailors, islands, and ships. These works explore themes related to the relationships between humans and the sea, individuals and themselves, people and society, and interpersonal connections. The history of marine culture is ancient, accompanying humanity almost since the inception of literature. From China's "Shanghaijing" to the Western "Othello," and from ancient reflections on the sea to contemporary island poetry, these literary currents collectively form the grand edifice of marine literature.

Current Status of Marine Literature Research

The 21st century is widely regarded as the era of the ocean. With continuous advancements in marine science, technology, and economics, the global significance of the ocean has become increasingly prominent. As China implements its strategy to become a maritime power, marine literature has gradually emerged as a focal point in academic research.

In recent years, marine education has garnered growing attention within the domestic education sector. It is broadly recognized that marine education is a crucial foundation for the development of national marine affairs. The current trend is to transform marine education from a purely practical activity into a comprehensive field that

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integrates both practice and research, and to develop a distinctive discipline known as “Marine Education.” However, despite the growing recognition of the importance of marine literature, the number of scholars dedicated to this field remains relatively small, and the body of related research is still insufficiently developed. Given that Chinese civilization has long been characterized by an agrarian culture, its literary works have predominantly reflected continental cultural influences, with relatively limited representation of marine culture. As a result, marine literature has not become a part of mainstream literature and lacks prominent works.

Currently, research on marine literature in China tends to focus more on ancient texts and Western literature, with relatively weak coverage of contemporary Chinese marine literature. Additionally, research is primarily centered on marine literary works, with inadequate attention to marine literary theory, discipline development, and literature organization. There is also a lack of exchange with international marine literature research. The history of marine literature holds significant importance within the marine education system, as it can provide humanistic and social knowledge relevant to contemporary marine education. However, research on the history of marine literature in China is still in its early stages and requires foundational development to advance towards its educational goals.

As the strategic importance of the ocean in China’s overall national strategy continues to rise, public awareness of the ocean has reached unprecedented levels. Simultaneously, research outcomes in Chinese marine literature are becoming increasingly rich, and the research community is expanding. Marine literature plays a vital role in responding to the central government’s call to “accelerate the construction of a maritime power,” enhancing national marine awareness, and inheriting and developing China’s excellent marine cultural traditions. Therefore, there is a need to further strengthen theoretical research, promote the development and dissemination of marine literature, and enhance China’s marine cultural soft power.

Exploring the Significance of Marine Literature in University Curriculum Development

In alignment with General Secretary Xi Jinping’s strategies for a maritime power and a cultural powerhouse, university students in the new era should focus on the marine realm by listening to, inheriting, and promoting marine literature. This approach follows policy guidelines to establish maritime cultural confidence and underscores the importance of researching the application of Chinese marine literature in education.

Firstly, China, with its vast marine resources and extensive maritime territory, relies on the ocean for its economic, cultural, and national security interests. Marine literature is an indispensable means for young people to understand and engage with the ocean.

Secondly, as a form of cultural expression, marine literature possesses unique artistic appeal and educational value. Studying marine literature allows us to delve into the ocean’s mysteries and beauty, experience its power and vastness, and particularly, the maritime spirit in the works can inspire bravery and exploration.

Additionally, marine literature, as a cultural resource, provides rich material and case studies for education. It helps students grasp the importance of the ocean, the diversity of marine life, and the development and conservation of marine resources. Engaging with marine literature cultivates students’ critical thinking, interdisciplinary skills, and comprehensive competencies.

Therefore, integrating marine literature into higher education is crucial for advancing its development, preserving maritime culture, and deepening marine education. We hope this research will offer references for

marine education in universities, support the sustainable development of maritime endeavors, and enhance public awareness and participation in marine environmental protection.

On-site Investigation of the Integration of Marine Literature Education in Universities

On the long journey towards national rejuvenation, we are encountering a new historical juncture. The contemporary international landscape is characterized by volatility and complexity, with competition extending beyond economic and political spheres to encompass cultural dimensions. Against this backdrop, leveraging marine literature as an educational stepping stone to develop marine cultural education with Chinese characteristics, and to foster confidence in marine culture in response to the call for the flourishing of Chinese culture, remains an area requiring continued exploration and research.

From a strategic perspective, cultivating a marine consciousness among people is a prerequisite and foundation for building a maritime power. From the standpoint of talent development, universities, as crucial bases for higher education, must play a leading role in the construction of the educational system. It is their unassailable duty to enhance students' awareness of marine issues through the implementation of relevant courses. As the primary subjects of education—teachers and students—both parties need to engage in corresponding reforms and innovations for the advancement of marine literature education. Teachers should not be coerced into expanding their expertise into unfamiliar areas, nor should the learning priorities and normal class experiences of students be compromised.

Perspective of Schools, Teachers, and Teaching Practices

Taking Zhejiang Ocean University, a university near the ocean, as an example, this institution, characterized by its focus on “marine” studies, has long been a pioneer in promoting marine culture. The university offers marine-related elective courses, including offline courses on island languages and Zhoushan fishermen's paintings, and online general education courses such as the Maritime Silk Road and island survival. These courses allow students to explore various facets of marine literature and contribute to the promotion of marine culture, supporting the goal of building a strong maritime nation.

The university not only promotes the beauty of the ocean within the classroom but also sets sail in real marine environments. Since 2014, the university has introduced marine-related sports courses, such as dragon boating and maritime lifesaving. The teaching team, drawing on years of experience, compiled the nation's first “Island Wilderness Survival Training Manual,” which received national recognition in 2014 as part of the “12th Five-Year Plan” textbooks, was awarded as an excellent textbook by Zhejiang Province in 2017, and garnered nationwide attention in 2021 with a viral news story on “hardcore water-based military training,” amassing over a hundred million views and extensive media coverage. This has significantly enhanced the university's national profile while providing students with practical marine knowledge and experiences, thus enriching their understanding of marine literature.

However, the course setup reveals the challenges in popularizing marine literature, with elective courses having less impact than mandatory ones, leading to lower student engagement and weaker educational outcomes. While making such courses mandatory might not be practical, the university has integrated more marine literature works into core courses and developed the “Selected Works of Chinese Marine Literature” textbook to further disseminate marine literature and integrate marine culture.

Zhejiang Ocean University's unique conditions for marine literature education are difficult to replicate elsewhere, thanks to its excellent faculty and robust educational platform. Other institutions lacking such conditions should devise feasible plans based on their circumstances. They could actively seek collaboration with marine institutions or research organizations, inviting experts for lectures and training to enhance marine awareness among faculty and students and improve their marine education standards.

Student Perspective

The focus here is on university students, who typically have a higher level of knowledge and established worldviews and cognitive frameworks, making them less susceptible to external influences. University environments are relatively relaxed and offer ample opportunities for students to seek guidance from various elite teachers, with abundant resources available to stimulate innovative thinking and enhance learning capabilities. Additionally, the lower pressure of further education allows students to delve deeply into their areas of interest, fully realizing their potential.

Benefits of Promoting Marine Literature Education

Promoting the Development of Marine Literature

Marine literature, with a long history in both domestic and international contexts, remains a relatively new research field with limited modern studies, resulting in a lag in educational implementation. Many universities lack specialized teachers for marine literature, leading to a delay in the field's development. Exploring the deep connections between marine literature and contemporary marine education can drive more scholars and researchers to invest in marine literature research, thus advancing its modern development.

Improving Marine Ecological Environment

To advance marine industries, measures such as land reclamation and marine aquaculture have significantly reduced crucial marine ecosystems like mangroves and coral reefs, severely disrupting natural habitats. Therefore, promoting marine literature and enhancing marine education are crucial. These efforts help raise public marine awareness and foster marine ecological literacy, enabling a better understanding of marine challenges and the necessity of sustainable development to ensure effective resource management and environmental protection.

Advancing Marine Economic Development

Marine literature represents the intersection of the ocean, literature, and culture, encompassing material production and customs related to the ocean, and closely tied to human activities. Marine culture has historically influenced human behavior, with literary reflections of maritime achievements inspiring adventurous and entrepreneurial spirits in coastal populations, laying a strong foundation for marine economic development. Thus, research on marine literature and education is essential for supporting the advancement of the marine economy.

Since the new century, China has proposed the "Maritime Power" strategy to build a strong maritime nation, making marine literature research and education urgent, especially in marine-focused universities. Marine literature covers various aspects, yet most people have limited knowledge, lacking education and progress. Researching marine literature within university courses and exploring its educational significance is crucial for advancing marine literature education, accelerating textbook development, and optimizing teaching systems to nurture future talent in marine literature.

Conclusion

Marine literature holds significant importance in China's educational landscape. As a nation with extensive coastlines and a growing focus on becoming a maritime power, integrating marine literature into higher education is essential. It not only helps students understand the ocean's significance for economic, cultural, and national security interests but also offers unique artistic appeal and educational value.

The research on marine literature is still in its early stages, but with the increasing strategic importance of the ocean, efforts are being made to strengthen theoretical research and promote its development and dissemination. Universities play a crucial role in this regard, as demonstrated by institutions like Zhejiang Ocean University. While challenges exist in popularizing marine literature education, feasible plans can be devised based on individual circumstances, such as collaborating with marine institutions and inviting experts for lectures and training.

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