

# The Revelation of Entrepreneurial Spirits on the Cultivation of College Students' Enterprise Qualities: A Case Study in Wenzhou

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## Abstract

In Socialist market economy, the characteristics of economic development tend to vary in different regions. Accordingly, enterprise education on college students has to be combined with regional economic features, particularly with a profound knowledge about the characteristics of local entrepreneurs. Insufficient resources and inconvenient geographical location set a special human environment for Wenzhou. Influenced by such an environment, the entrepreneurs in Wenzhou who initiated their business at the initial stage have developed some special spirits such as survival of the fittest, daring to outperform others, practical spirit, utility orientation, teamwork and so on. College students in Wenzhou are also expected to carry forward these spirits and absorb the essence in them to improve their enterprise qualities.

**Keywords:** Wenzhou, Entrepreneurial spirits, College students, Enterprise quality, Revelation

As is defined in *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English with Chinese Translation*, the meaning of "enterprise education" can be summarized as, firstly, education on conducting planning activities for business and enterprises and, secondly, as education on psychological characters such as carve-out, initiative, exploring spirit and adventure (Hornby, 2000). According to this definition, an entrepreneur should have all-round and extensive enterprise qualities in order to achieve his success. For a long run, Wenzhouese have fought for survival in severe natural environment, hence forming their unyielding will and tough character. Every businessman here has an extraordinarily difficult carve-out experience embodying some necessary enterprise qualities for success, which provide good reference for college students' enterprise education.

## 1. "Survival of the Fittest": Cultivating Entrepreneurs' Competition Consciousness

When dawn comes in Africa, gazelles are fully aware that they have to be faster than lions or they will be eaten by them. Lions are also clear that they have to capture slow gazelles otherwise they will starve to death. So both the lion and the gazelle have to be on the run once the sun rises (LeBoeuf, 2008). This is a vivid description for the game in forest. In market economy, similarly, enterprises are plunged into chasing each other and proving the rule of survival of the fittest once involved in market competition. In order to achieve space for survival, individuals have to be endowed with the sense of crisis, to be accustomed to their environment and to stand up to competition. In spite of their ignorance of the similar theory created by Darwin, Wenzhou businessmen have displayed this spirit to others with their practice. Regardless of different evaluation on Wenzhou Pattern and Wenzhouese, there is no objection to the fact that they are patient with hardships. From another perspective, this is also a proof to show that Wenzhouese can be adapted to any environment they live in. For example, they can bear to lie under others' seats on the train when there is no ticket available; they can stand Zanba in Tibet and hoecake in Northeast China while other southerners even cannot have steamed bread.

With its universality, the principle of "survival of the fittest" exerts the following revelations on the cultivation of college students: First, the cultivation of college students' psychological quality in starting an enterprise should be

enhanced. Socialist market economy is currently adopted in China, of which the nature is competition. In spite of its role in optimizing the allocation of resources and improving efficiency, market competition is quite fierce, leaving those who are fittest to survive finally. At the initial period of starting an undertaking, college students have to be ready for the reality. Therefore, during the enterprise education among college students, first of all, efforts should be made to cultivate the right concept of profit. At the initial stage, a majority of resources lie in the university, so do clients. As a result, through enterprise education the concept of righteousness and benefit adopted in Wenzhou should be taught to inform students of the significance of credit. Besides, students' strong confidence should be cultivated. Experiences and lessons from failures instead of failures themselves really matter since we have more enterprise opportunities. Strong will to achieve success through constant independent efforts and perseverance when faced with frustrations and strikes should be cultivated as well. Furthermore, college students' compression resistance should be enhanced. Through enterprise education, college students who may otherwise lose consciousness when confronted with frustrations are able to resist pressure in the internal and external environments, stay calm in difficulties, control their emotions and overcome difficulties eventually. Second, students' physical quality should be strengthened. The contents and teaching methods of physical education are to be reformed, in which endurance training and practice should be increased in addition to basic exercise. Meanwhile, in terms of a popular phenomenon that many students hate having PE classes regardless of their love for sports, teaching methods should be changed as well. Currently, the evaluation system for college students' physical education is set up according to the standards of competitive sports, so few students enjoy what is taught at class in their extracurricular time. However, their favorite sports such as football and basketball are left aside, with only some extracurricular interest groups to satisfy students' demands. Therefore, in addition to some competitive sports such as basketball, volleyball and football, some popular sports with physical training and appreciation value should be provided as well, such as rock climbing, hip-hop, sports dance and oriented cross-country race. Students can select courses and teachers and periods for class freely. What's more, assessment methods should also be reformed to assess students according to their participation in sports, such as the frequency to take part in morning exercises, extracurricular sports, sport meets and act as referees and so on. Only in his way will students' enthusiasm for sports be improved, students' physical quality be enhanced and they be better prepared for their undertaking in the future.

## **2. "Practical Spirit": Cultivating Entrepreneurs' Enterprise Characters to Gear Their Study to Practical Use**

Influenced by Yongjia School's thought, Wenzhounese have formed their special business characters. Originating from special geographical environment, Wenzhou's emphasis on business reflects a transfer from living demands to a psychological and cultural sedimentary deposit. As a result, practicality has been built into Wenzhou's traditional culture. Starting from utility, people here don't have empty talk, daydreaming or complaint. For instance, they turn to themselves for construction without investment from the nation; they deal with miscellaneous goods such as glasses, lighters and buttons without a large sum of capital; without high research and education, they turn to manual or half-manual factories. It is the first step on the way of success to face the reality. In their eyes, everything should be taken advantage of to survive and develop, even including making fake commodities and employing political resources. Only caring about the extension of politics, they have strong utility sense and practicality and therefore think about politics from the economic perspective in order to justify the legalization of their business or to search for "policy vacuum". With such a practical principle, keen Wenzhounese have not only survived and grown in political crevices or shadows but seized one after another opportunity from political activities and cultural exchanges.

Practical spirit reflects entrepreneurs' ability in combining theory and practice and gearing study to practical use, which can give us some revelations on college students' cultivation as follows: First, students' ability in combining theory with practice should be trained. In order to help college students to combine their specialized theory with practice, the cultivation scheme for specialized courses should be worked out and relevant plan should be constantly reformed according to changes in market demands as well as the development of new knowledge, techniques and technologies in order to make it more practical. Second, the acquisition of professional skills should be enhanced to put it across to students that their major is an enterprise capital, with which they'll have greater chance of success. Third, students' range of enterprise knowledge should be enlarged to inform them of the growth process and characteristics of successful domestic and foreign entrepreneurs and enterprises as well as relevant knowledge on how to initiate an enterprise. Fourth, policies for students' undertakings should be interpreted to inform them of some preferential policies laid down by the nation for college students' undertakings, hence enhancing their enterprise desires. Fifth, the combination of work and study should be adopted, which means that students receive trainings in relevant vocational skills and fulfill some productive tasks in enterprises of the relevant industry as well as specialized theories at school. This pattern is characterized by a combination of learning, practice and work, particularly taking students' work as one part of the specialized training plan.

### 3. “Daring to Outperform Others”: Cultivating Entrepreneurs’ Acute Observation on Business Opportunities

When deciding whether to do a thing, Wenzhounese only care about whether it is needed in practice and whether it is feasible or not. If it is, they will exert every effort to fulfill it, that is, they dare to outperform others. This spirit reflects their thought pattern of daring to break through and having a risky try. For them, not only the reality but also the spirit of daring to try is of great significance no matter what it is or what others say. In Wenzhou, Yunhe Li initiated the practice of fixing farm output quotas on a household basis; Junyao Wang started contracting with flight routes; Zhongsu Jin contracted with Yandang Mountain; Zhanmin Ji contracted with Nanxijiang to develop a scenic spot; several peasants contracted with 67000 mu’s farmland in Heilongjiang; Mingqiang Fan even contracted with the Tiananmen Rostrum for his Marxism-Leninism Bookstore; what is even more amazing was Xing Peng’s practice to invite Clinton to be the spokesman for his brand which was really a wonderful combination of Wenzhounese’s shrewdness, courage and acute political awareness. In addition to their courage, their initiative action is more worth mentioning. It is their acute observation on information and action to seize opportunities that have helped them to create one after another initiation made by Wenzhounese.

“Daring to outperform others” is a specific enterprise ability, which is a reflection of entrepreneurs’ ability in seizing opportunities and innovations, hence a dialectical combination of “courage” and “initiative”. This spirit has revelations on college students’ cultivation as follows: First, Wenzhounese’s spirit to build up enterprises with nothing should be taught to help college students to liberate their ideas, upgrade their concepts and become entrepreneurs daring to run risks. Only with such a spirit will there be a hop for success while no hope is waiting for clinging to old ideas or feeling terrified without trying. Therefore, it is quite urgent to cultivate college students’ enterprise consciousness to put it across the severe employment situation and huge pressure at the job market of China. Through this kind of education, students will realize that their success in enterprise will effectively solve China’s employment problems as well as help themselves to obtain more job opportunities. Second, Wenzhounese’s initiative spirit should be taught as well to cultivate students’ innovative concepts. Students should be aware of the significance of integrating innovation, enterprise ability, specialized knowledge and skills and market opportunities for the creation of social wealth and manifestation of individual value. In the current information-based era, college students can achieve advantages in competition by obtaining information and seize opportunities through various channels; with constant innovations, these advantages can be transferred to comparative advantages which will guarantee enterprise success. Third, students should be cultivated to be skilled in starting an enterprise. Although courage and initiative is a spirit as well as boldness, they are far from enough for the ability to start an enterprise. Therefore, students’ abilities in market investigation and prediction, enterprise management, professional technology as well as social communication should be cultivated to achieve enterprise success. Due to the direct connection between these abilities and professional education, we must offer high-quality specialized courses.

### 4. “Ant Tribe Spirit”: Cultivating Entrepreneurs’ Idea to Start from Small Beginnings

The entrepreneurs in Wenzhou are extremely industrious in everything just as ants at the initial start-up stage. It is the fundamental principle for Wenzhounese to do small things well, do difficult things successfully and have a good show on big things, so is a universal quality among a majority of successful entrepreneurs. Actually, most of the prosperous entrepreneurs in Wenzhou also display such characteristics, that is, doing things no matter it is complicated or simple, well-known or unknown, highly or poorly profitable. Someone once had a calculation about buttons. On average, every gunnysack contains approximately 500,000 buttons, bringing several thousand yuan’s profit altogether, which accounts for a tiny sum for each (Hu et al, 2002). However, it is such small buttons that have changed Qiaotou Town of Yongjia County in Wenzhou into the largest button manufacturing base in Northeast Asia and created an array of millionaires and billionaires.

“Ant tribe spirit” is a guarantee for newly-established enterprises’ sound development as well as an enterprise idea which can give us the following revelations on the cultivation of college students: First, their concept of starting from trifles should be cultivated. Generally, with insufficient capital, resources and experience at the initial start-up stage, entrepreneurs have to begin with the most basic thing to prepare for a better future. Therefore, students should be guided to form the right attitude toward their own abilities and to develop a reasonable concept based on the reality instead of daydreaming. Second, students should learn to bear hardships. Born in 1990s, present undergraduates are from carefree environment far away from serious frustrations. It is of particular significance for them to form this character. It is safe to say that human beings and our society have no advance without endurance to hardships. At the current stage of human development, with more refined social labor division, people’s labor tends to be simpler and less intense than before. However, we call for more of such a spirit instead of not needing it any longer since it can be manifested in the combination of physical and mental labor. Physical laborers are expected to learn more techniques to improve the scientific and technical content in their labor; meanwhile, mental laborers should use their hands more to enhance their practical ability. Third, students should be cultivated to have

cooperative spirit. As the only child in their family, most undergraduates have developed a self-righteous or even autocratic character, for whom teamwork spirit is particularly important. They should be taught that nobody can fulfill anything all by himself in the modern society and teamwork spirit and ability are quite basic for one's success. Statistics show that over two thirds of new enterprises are established by entrepreneur groups based on intimate teamwork. It is also shown in a survey among rapidly-developing enterprises in US in 1960s that 83% of them employ the form of teamwork enterprise, which proves the enterprises based on teamwork tend to achieve faster growth than those based on individuals (Li et al, 2006). Teamwork enterprise involves a range of abilities including innovation, planning, organization, direction, control, coordination and management, hence giving students a fuller picture of starting an enterprise.

##### **5. "Leading Goose Spirit": Cultivating Entrepreneurs' Leading and Coordinative Ability**

Wenzhounese have formed the characteristics of segregation and extension during their flow and migration. On one hand, they always assemble together but segregate themselves from the local community; on the other hand, they try to be equipped with action patterns and concepts to exceed regional boundaries by constantly enlarging their range of activities (Li et al, 2006). This is a vivid description of geese's group life in which there are some elementary social patterns laying down the basic principle of uniting and obeying the leader. It is well known that there are a lot of industrial clusters in Wenzhou, such as Leqing low-voltage electric apparatuses, Qiaotou Town's button manufacturing, auto and motorcycle parts, badges in Jin County and so on. With a general observation of these industrial clusters, we may find that most are developed with the leadership of one or more influential businessmen.

"Leading goose spirit" refers to the formation of team coordination and core leadership, which can give the following revelations on the cultivation of college students: First, students' courage to be the leader and the core taking responsibilities should be cultivated. Starting an enterprise is different from being employed since when doing the latter you just need to follow the employer's orders while in doing the former you are opening up a new frontier, establishing a new enterprise and leading a team for which the courage to be the leader is of importance. Wenzhounese provide a good example for us to follow with their strong desires to be a boss. Second, students should be trained in their leadership. At the first thought, leadership may seem quite mysterious and profound especially in the cases of some successful bosses. But actually it is your ability to make yourself obeyed by your employees with willingness which serves as the key. So why do others obey you willingly? First come strict regulations without which there will be a shortage of cooperation. Certainly the exertion of regulations is of the same importance without which others will not be willing to obey you as well. Just like traffic rules, these regulations must be followed by every person in order to guarantee the smooth operation of a team or an enterprise. Second come personal charms. In a team or an enterprise, the leader's personal charms are of particular significance with which his team members or employees will respect and obey you. Through specialized and enterprise education, students should be equipped with profound professional knowledge, keen observation on market, precise decision-making ability and extensive interpersonal relationships, which jointly form the leaders' charms. In a word, it is the key to a leader's success to have practical regulations as well as excellent personality.

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