Writing Chinese Characters: Right or Left?

– The Chinese Discriminatory Policy of Left-Handedness Correction in Terms of Handwriting

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Abstract

Chinese left-handed are found to be very few, especially in terms of handwriting. The Chinese educational policy that fully entitles teachers in primary school to change the left-handed students to write with their right-hand, by nudging and even force, is found to be mainly blamed as the main cause.

The thesis is to raise the ethical discussion and define this policy as being discriminatory against the left-handed by checking the features, definition and identification of discrimination, and reasons forming and supporting such a discriminatory policy will be taken into the major consideration as the source of discrimination.

Therefore, the thesis is to propose solutions to help with the abolishment of the policy and the elimination of the prejudicial attitudes toward the left-handed, especially in terms of writing.

The thesis itself, due to the limit of previous research and scientific support, has its own blindness or disadvantage, however, such a work could be helpful with the later discussion.

Key Words: Discriminatory Policy, Discrimination, the left-handed writing, prejudicial attitude, solutions
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Chapter I. Introduction

According to a survey released in 1980’s, Chinese left-handed proportionate less than 1%(Kushner,2013:1) of Chinese population, and compared with the proportion generally accepted around 10% to 12%(Kushner,2013:2), this number is extremely low. What is the cause behind it?

As Faurie, Schiefenhvel, Lebomin, Billiard and Raymond argued, “The best way to assess handedness is to observe individuals spontaneously performing a task”(Faurie, Schiefenhvel, Lebomin, Billiard & Raymond,2005:143 ), it is found that Chinese left-handed are not that less in terms of other activities, instead, their character¹ of left-handedness in terms of writing is not conspicuous, because they are forced to change, especially in terms of writing. In primary schools in China, teachers are fully entitled to force the left-handed students to alter their hand to write. In this thesis, I will discuss this policy, and argue it is discriminatory against left-handed. Finally I will propose solutions helping to abolish such discrimination and stop the prejudice against the left-handedness and left-handed.

The thesis will be divided into five chapters.

The first chapter is the introduction. In this chapter, after introducing the Chinese policy, I will give a brief outline of the whole thesis and shortcut to each chapter separately.

The second chapter is aimed at discussing the concept of discrimination from three aspects. It firstly falls on features on discrimination. Three features of discriminations, i.e. consequentially harmful, being aimed at persons and being comparative, will be viewed in order and a definition of discrimination will be proposed accordingly. The second aspect resides in the reason why discrimination is wrong. Reasons are fourfold---violation against the principle of equality, treating people only by disadvantages, being derived form the ignorance and curtailing the

¹ Character, biologically, is an observable feature. According to Encyclopedia Britannica, “Character, in biology, any observable feature, or trait, of an organism, whether acquired or inherited. An acquired character is a response to the environment; an inherited character is produced by genes transmitted from parent to offspring (their expressions are often modified by environmental conditions).(Encyclopedia Britannica, last edited in 2016) http://global.britannica.com/science/character-biology
productivity. The last aspects is its identification. I suggest indentifying discrimination through motives and consequences. In light of such an idea, an ethical checklist will be formulated to help with the explanation on the Chinese policy in the third chapter.

In the third chapter, the Chinese policy of correcting the left-handedness in terms of writing is to be defined as discrimination. The identification will be processed via the reasons for forming such a policy. Firstly, the explanation of why reasons behind are crucial will be given. Secondly, reasons behind will be categorized into two aspects---traditional values and practical considerations\(^2\).

Traditional values consist of traditional views on left and left-handedness and respect to calligraphy, while the practical consequences consist of the hierarchical relationship between teachers and students, consequence of industrialization and the competitive job-hunting environment.

In the fourth chapter, it will be firstly proposed that the discriminatory policy should be abolished and to eliminate the prejudicial attitudes toward the left-handedness, three solutions could be carried out, i.e. writing with high\(^0\)technological aid, setting calligraphy into optional curriculum and developing a writing habit in favour of the left-handedness. These three solutions are not only carried out to help eliminate the prejudice, but also to rectify each other.

The last chapter is the conclusion. In this chapter, the whole thesis will be summarized and some undone work will be mentioned.

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\(^2\) Both traditional values and practical considerations are Kushner notion. See *Why are there (almost) no left-handers in China?* By Howard. I. Kushner, P1
Chapter II. What Is Discrimination?

In this chapter, I will try to give an explanation on discrimination in three steps, in order to prepare a theoretical basis for the illustration on discriminatory reasons behind The Chinese discriminatory policy against the left-handed in terms of handwriting.

Firstly, a definition of discrimination will be given. I will review overall some definitions of discrimination from different perspectives and propose a definition which could be used to support my later arguments against Chinese discriminatory policy of the left-handedness correction.

Secondly, I will give three reasons why discrimination is wrong. The first point is it violates against equality not only by violating the principle of equality, but also curtailing the equal opportunities of individuals’. The second point falls on the irrational way it treats persons. Discrimination is derived from the ignorance, i.e. the lack of sufficient knowledge of the discriminators’ and it treats individuals rather for arbitrary reasons; discrimination also fails to appreciate individuals’ merits, instead, it focus on their disadvantages and shows no sufficient respect to them. The last point but not the least is out of an economic concern. Discrimination could shrink the chance to select the most merited applicant, thus influencing the productivity negatively.

The third part is to illustrate how to identify discrimination. Discrimination could be either an idea or an act, and it could bring disadvantageous consequences to individuals. Therefore, in this part, the relation between a discriminatory motive and discriminatory consequence will be explained. First, only through discriminatory consequences can discrimination be identified, therefore, such a discriminatory consequence is both sufficient and necessary to discrimination, notwithstanding the motive. Second, motives are also crucial, though it does not influence the identification of discrimination if the consequences are discriminatory, since they discriminatory motives and non-discriminatory ones might lead to different categories of discrimination.
2.1 Features and A Definition of Discrimination

In this part, I will suggest a definition of discrimination could be formed through common features it has, such as harmful treatments and consequences, being directed to persons and comparative to related social group, though discrimination itself could be a vague concept.

It is difficult to define discrimination, since it is a vague concept which could be associated with a variety of personal perceptions and acceptance to the same treatment. As Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy suggests, there is not a definition of discrimination which is universally accepted.(Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,2011:2) And according to the claim of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, “the law shall prohibit any discrimination guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”( Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,2011:2), discrimination is not defined straightforwardly, instead, it is defined through a reverse way that prohibits discrimination as such. These claim all leave the question to answer, i.e. what is discrimination?

I suggest, discrimination could be defined through three common features of its. As Moreau argued that an account of discrimination could be approached from what it involves.(Moreau,2010:145)

Firs of all, discrimination, no matter it is merely an idea or a performed act, it brings disadvantageous or harmful treatments and consequences to individuals. Discrimination is not any fruit of meditation, instead, it is rather factual, making differences on individuals. Take the racist discriminators as an example. They refuse to provide proper or equal education for the black children to the white ones. It is discrimination, as it brings a very harmful educational treatment to the black children, thus put them into a disadvantageous environment by hurting their dignity.

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3 The suggestion is originally given by Vandenhole. Wouter Vandenhole points out, “there is no universally accepted definition of discrimination.” See Non-Discrimination and Equality in the View of the UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies. P33

4 Originally Seen in International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 26
Secondly, discrimination should be directed to and only to a person or group of persons. That is to say, discrimination is an idea or act towards human beings. Some might argue that discrimination could be directed to certain culture or industries, however, I would like to argue that disadvantageous perceptions on culture or industries are merely a resistance to it, if it is not imposed to persons who live or serve in it. For example, a person who thinks modern vehicles are evil is not discriminatory against vehicles. However, if he made a speech humiliating workers working at the manufacturing line in a car factory, his behaviour would be discrimination.

Thirdly, according to Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, discrimination should be associated and comparative with certain persons or social groups. (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2011:2) That is also made clear by Gardner that duties of non-discrimination are also “duties to treat people in certain ways defined by reference to the way that others are treated.” (Gardner, 1998:335) Only when only men are accepted to a certain position that women are also capable of can it be defined as discrimination, otherwise, if both men and women are rejected simultaneously, there is no discrimination imposed on women, though they are still facing a disadvantageous treatment.

In light of the three features of discrimination, I suggest discrimination could be defined as an idea or act which drives ideas, acts, practices, or policies to treat a person or group of persons disadvantageously and bring such consequences to them, thus hurting their dignity or curtailing their access to certain social resources.

2.2 Why Discrimination Is Wrong

In this part, I will review three wrongness of discrimination---hurting equality, treating individuals in an irrational way and curtailing productivity.

First of all, discrimination violates equality with two performances. It challenges the principle of equality (Petrova, 2008:52) which promotes the equality amongst persons, that is to say, it hurts basic human right of being equal. Challenging a moral principle is not necessarily doing harming to individuals, however, it is still wrong because such a challenge could shake the very core of morality, thus twisting moral

5 This item could also be approached on website: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Declaration_of_Principles_on_Equality
values and doing harm to persons indirectly. For example, it is universally accepted that racism is harmful and wrong, therefore, it is banned by laws and regulations. However, if it were not defined as being wrong, it would result to a free view of being racist which would lead harmful treatments to the black.

And another performance with which discrimination violates equality is curtailing equal opportunities in real world(Segall Notion)\(^6\). Individuals should have equal access to certain social resources, notwithstanding their nationality or sex, and when such equal accesses are closed to certain groups out of discriminatory reasons, it could decrease their welfare and happiness. Consider the female. If they are refused to enter the work world, it will decrease their financial support, thus shrinking their choices in real life.

Second, discrimination treats persons in an irrational way. This is also twofold. It is derived from the ignorance, i.e. the lack of sufficient knowledge of discriminators’ in the first place. Discriminators who lack of knowledge about certain persons or groups of persons are inclined to treat persons in their own preference even though it could be harmful. Any judgment against certain persons or group of persons should be made upon objective and right knowledge about it, otherwise, any negative judgment made upon subjectively incorrect information against certain persons or groups of persons should be thought unjust. Such a wrongness of discrimination usually is found in treatments to the female. Female is a natural sex by born, which has its own features and even advantages, however, discriminators who reject women to a job are judging upon their own ignorance instead of objective assessment over female employees. Furthermore, as Olah argued with scientific proof, “the brains of left-handed people process information in a slightly different way: ‘wider scope of thinking’; ‘more visual’; ‘more complex reasoning’”(Olah,2014:11) the left-handedness has its own advantages, while the right-handedness also has its own disadvantages.

Discrimination drives discriminators only focus on disadvantages(even they are certain advantages indeed) instead of merits, thus treating persons without sufficient respect which is crucial to social relations. Persons have sense of dignity, thus requiring to be treated with respect. Irrespective treatments will hurt their dignity,

\(^6\) See *What’s so Bad about Discrimination?* By Shlomi Segall. P1
even if such treatments are driven by objective situation. Moreau called it the “injury to dignity, feelings and self-respect” (Moreau, 2010: 146) Discrimination fails to respect persons and hurts the sense of dignity, therefore, it is harmful. For example, senior citizens’ dignity will be hurt, if they are refused to play sports, especially when it is out of the concern of their physical condition.

The third reason falls on the economy. Discrimination does harm to the productivity by shrinking the chance for employing suitable employees. Take the social productivity as a whole. Every single individual is considered a unit of its and thus the way to increase the productivity is to find individuals of better competence and performance. A company will make more profits with more suitable employees, and if its discriminatory policy rejects the female, it will shrink the chance to find more suitable employees, thus doing harm to their profit.

Furthermore, there are definitely more ways that discrimination harms, such as “corrupting the moral character of the discriminators” (Segall, 2012: 84), as suggested by Segall. However, in the later discussion in the thesis, I will leave discriminators and give all attention on those who are discriminated.  

2.3 Identification of Discrimination

Discrimination could be presented in a number of ways, such as direct discrimination vs. indirect discrimination and positive discrimination and negative discrimination. In this part, it is suggested that an idea or act could be identified as

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7 In the context of the Chinese left-handedness discrimination policy, discriminators are vague to define. As a matter of fact, discriminators could be teachers, the right-handed, or even the whole social norm.

8 Direct discrimination is when you’re treated differently and worse than someone else for certain reasons; Indirect discrimination is when there’s a practice, policy or rule which applies to everyone in the same way, but it has a worse effect on some people than others. See Equality Act 2010 on website: https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/discrimination/what-are-the-different-types-of-discrimination/indirect-discrimination/

9 Positive discrimination (UK terminology), is the policy of favoring members of a disadvantaged group who currently suffer or historically have suffered from discrimination within a culture; negative discrimination is the common sense of discrimination. See Oxford Dictionaries http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/positive-discrimination
being discrimination by its motives behind and consequences it brought and discriminatory consequences are sufficient to lead to discrimination. There are four categories in light of such a method—discriminatory motives and discriminatory consequences, discriminatory motives and non-discriminatory consequences, non-discriminatory motives and discriminatory consequences and non-discriminatory motives and non-discriminatory consequences—and amongst these four categories, three except for the non-discriminatory motives and non-discriminatory consequences pair are discrimination. It will be formulated with an ethical checklist and illustrated by examples accordingly.

First of all, I will suggested that consequences are of a greater importance to define discrimination. Motives, i.e. an idea or thinking are important, since they drive persons to act, however, such an idea or thinking cannot be traced down or even known by others, as no one can reveal an idea by doing nothing. Consequences, instead, are objective that it can be noticed, thus being able to used as proof to define discrimination. If racists bear merely an discriminatory idea, no one can define it as discrimination or not even find it out if they do not act it out upon such an idea; and when they act out upon the idea, it turns noticeable.

Acts themselves are also important, however, this thesis is aimed at illustrating the discriminatory policy which involves only discriminatory acts, so the explain on non-discriminatory acts could be missing.

Secondly, I will suggest formulating an ethical checklist patterned by four elements, i.e. discriminatory motives, discriminatory consequences, non-discriminatory motives and non-discriminatory consequences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discriminatory Motives</th>
<th>Discriminatory Consequences</th>
<th>Non-Discriminatory Consequences</th>
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Table. 01---The Ethical Checklist of Discrimination


As Box One shows, discriminatory motives and discriminatory consequences lead to discrimination, because it does harm to persons when they are directed to them. When patients of AIDS are perceived as being unclean and forbidden entering the restaurant, they are discriminated. Such a discriminatory motive results to a series of discriminatory consequences that curtail both their dignity and opportunities.

Box Two shows discrimination resulted by discriminatory motives and non-discriminatory consequences. This situation is also defined as discrimination, since consequences could be traced back to the discriminatory motives as their standpoint. For example, when the female are allowed easier access to a job out of a concern that they cannot compete with the male, they are still discriminated, even in this situation they are allowed with better welfare and more opportunities, because such a motive leads to distinctly unequal treatments to them.

In Box Three, it shows that non-discriminatory motives and discriminatory consequences also lead to discrimination. As claimed above, discriminatory consequences are factually harmful to persons who are discriminated, notwithstanding the motives. Take Indonesian culture against the use of the left hand as an example. The left hand is forbidden using to greet or eat food, as it is the one used to clean after the elimination of the waste. It is a good reason to forbid using the left hand doing such activities, however, the left-handed who feel more convenient to use their left hand to eat are put into a disadvantageous environment, since they have to spend more time on adapting to use their right hand.

The Box Four shows non-discriminatory motives and non-discriminatory consequences do not lead to discrimination, even it creates disadvantageous environment for persons. The policy denies a pilot license to the blind is not discriminatory, since allowing the blind to fly a plane is dangerous to both themselves and others.
In Chapter Two, discrimination is viewed overall from its features to the
definition, and it is also illustrated how it violates ethical principles and doing harm to
persons. Therefore, an ethical checklist is formulated to be used to check the reasons
behind the Chinese discriminatory policy against the left-handed in terms of
handwriting, and I will explain it in the next chapter.
Chapter III. Reasons behind the Chinese Discriminatory Policy against the Left-handed

Chapter Three will be taken to try to suggest the Chinese left-handed handwriting correction policy is discriminatory against the left-handed, and such a suggestion will be explained by reason behind it. Reasons for such a policy are categorized into two aspects, i.e. the traditional values which consist of historical prejudice against the left and left-handedness and the respect to Chinese calligraphy, and the practical considerations which consist of the hierarchical relationship between teachers and students, consequences of industrialization and the competitive job-hunting environment.

In this chapter, reasons mentioned above will be viewed by order and the argument that these reasons are not sufficient to support such a policy will be given accordingly. The ethical checklist formulated in the Chapter Two will be used as a tool for analysis.

Before moving to the explanation on such reasons, I suggest checking why reasons, instead of the policy itself, are important to charge the policy of being discriminatory.

3.1 Why Are Reasons Crucial to the Discrimination of the Policy

As explained in the last chapter, any act is driven by certain motives and to bring its consequences, and to indentify discrimination, consequences are of the greater importance, since they are noticeable and do the factual harm to persons.

The policy also has its own consequences upon the left-handed, however, they are not necessarily harmful ones. For example, the policy will cause the left-handed students in school using more time than the right-handed do to “correct”. It does burden them in a short run, however, in the long run, when the left-handed gain the ability to write with their right hand, they will benefit from it, having more handsome handwriting.(characters are developed only in favour of the right-handed habit, and I will explain this later in this chapter) That is to say, identifying discrimination of the policy from its consequences is difficult.
Therefore, the only way to make it clear is to approach from the motive. If the motive is discriminatory, it will be considered as being discriminatory, as the Box Two in the ethical checklist shows, otherwise, the policy will not be discriminatory.

3.2 Traditional Values

In China, “left-handedness was historically considered a social disability and stigma,”(Tchantchaleishvili & Myers,2010:233) as Tachantchaleishvili and Myers argued. Traditional values are threefold, consisting of the traditional prejudice against the left, Chinese historical discrimination against the left-handedness and the respect to Chinese calligraphy. None of them could be reasonable to justify the policy, since they are all discriminatory against the left-handed along with left-handedness in terms of handwriting.

3.2.1 Chinese and Foreign Traditional Prejudices against the Left

Prejudice against the left is not only found in Chinese history, but also in the whole human history.

In the Holy Bible---the most influential religious classic---such a prejudice is found in its Gospel Matthew, “Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world…Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”(Bible, KJV, Matthew, 34-41) In this verse, the position of being left and right is considered as an equivalence of being bad and good.

Examples are also found linguistic. According to Kushner, negative connotations of left are found in French “gauche” and Italian and Latin “sinistra”; as the Father of English, German “linkisch” is associated with awkwardness; while even in English, “lyft”---the original vocabulary for left---is semantically for being broken.(Kushner,2013:2)

Practically, in certain cultures such as Zulu tribes in East Africa, perceive the position of left as being evil and the left-handedness as a handicap which should be cured.(Wieschoff,1938:216-217)

In Chinese history, attitudes toward the left is rather found of a diversity.
Linguistically, “左” (Zuo, left) the Chinese character for “left” is originated from “badness” and “immoral”. Think alike. Philosophical schools led by Confucianism perceive the left as being unorthodoxy and evil. Since the foundation of the first Chinese feudalistic dynasty---“秦”(Qin, BC221---BC207)---“秦始皇”(Qin Shi Huang, the Prime Emperor, BC259---BC210) named the relegation of the officials as “左遷”(zuo qian, move to left) which semantically means “moving left-towards”.

On the other hand, there also a number of positive attitudes toward the left. The most influential one is from Taoism. Taoism perceives the left as the position of “benefit” (“利”, li, Tao Te Tsing).

3.2.2 Chinese Historical Attitudes toward the Left-handedness

In Chinese history, the attitude toward the left-handedness has been mainly led by Confucianism, thus forming a negative perception on it and creating a disadvantageous environment for the left-handed. However, such a historical reason is not sufficient to support the present left-handedness correction policy in terms of handwriting, since there are also a number of theories preferring the left-handedness but ignored in the history.

First, I suggest checking Confucian view toward the left-handedness. On one hand, Confucianism considers the left hand as unorthodox and holds the point that the use of the left hand violates “禮”(li, riteness and ceremonial formality)\(^{10}\)--the very core of Confucian view on social order. Thus, Confucianism forbids using the left hand to greet, eat or do any ceremonial worship. Persons who use their left-hand to do so will be perceived as being rebellious and offensive. On the other hand, Confucianism perceives the right hand as the normal and orthodox. According to Confucianism, the right hand is the most frequently used hand, thus using the right hand means to obey the rule and show respect.

Second, Confucian theory on handedness came into its power by an undemocratic order from “漢武帝”(Han Wu Di, the Emperor of Power, BC156-BC87) in Han Dynasty(漢, BC202---220), which abolished all philosophies but Confucianism(罷黜)

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\(^{10}\) See *The Analects.*
百家，獨尊儒術\textsuperscript{11}. Since then, positive attitudes led by Taoism has been perished to the non-mainstream.

I will suggest such a Confucian traditional value is not sufficient to support the present Chinese discriminatory policy against the left-handed out of three reasons.

The first reason is that Confucian views on handedness is wrong because of lack of knowledge. On one hand, left-handedness is not either rebellious or handicap, instead, speaking of biologics, it is a character decided by gene. Left-handedness has its own disadvantages, however, it has also a number of advantages over the right-handedness. On the other hand, right-handedness is perceived as being normal and orthodox, however, it is only because the right-handed happen to outnumber the left ones.

The second reason falls on the arbitrary reason of Confucian theory’s domination. Confucian negative views on the left-handedness came into its domination over others because of an order from the emperor, which is rather arbitrary and out of the brutal luck. Consider Taoist views\textsuperscript{12}. If they were selected by the emperor, an advantageous environment would be created for the left-handed.

The third but not least point is about the views held by the minor ethnic groups. China hold a great diversity of ethnic groups, and amongst these ethnic groups, some prefer the left-handedness over the right one. For example, Chinese Mongolian write from the right to the left on a paper. It is not just to keep the tradition of suppressing the left-handedness at present, though at that age, there were considered as a part of Chinese reign.

3.2.3 The Feature of Chinese Characters and Respect to Chinese Calligraphy

This part will explain how Chinese characters---or more widely known as Kanji(Wang, Liao, Hagihara&Maekawa,2015:1)---are written and introduce a Chinese attitude toward calligraphy. Therefore, the argument that such a feature and respect are not sufficient to support the policy.

I would like to introduce a basic feature of Chinese characters in the first place. Strokes of five basic categories(Sung&Zeng,2015:2), which can form more than twenty-six(Su,1994:25) combinations are the basic element of Chinese characters.

\textsuperscript{11} See 漢書.董仲舒傳, The Tale of Zhongshu Dong, The Tale of Han

\textsuperscript{12} See Tao Te Tsing, 道德经
Only one stroke should and could be done at one break. According to statistics, Chinese characters consist of from one stroke, such as “一” (yi, one) to eighty-four strokes, such as “龘” (to fly, a soaring dragon). Any subtle mistaken might lead to the thorough change of the meaning. For example, “人” (person, human beings, individuals, etc.) consists of only two strokes of “撇” (撇, pie) and “捺” (捺, na), while “入” (entre, entrance) also consists of such a combination. The only difference falls on the length of the “捺”. Therefore, every single stroke is required to be written from the left to the right and from the top to the bottom, that is to say, it is developed in favour of the right-handed writing.

Second, there is a common respect on calligraphy in Chinese culture. A Chinese saying---“handsome handwritings render a personality decent” (字正則人正13, Zi Zheng Ze Ren Zheng)---could pinpoint this traditional value that is still in its influence today. Such a saying drives Chinese to practice handwriting as a way to principle a decent personality and embarrasses those who do not write handsomely to be too timid to show their handwriting. As Hue argued, handwriting is connected to one’s self-esteem, academic and emotional integrity. (Hue, 2008:64)

Chinese calligraphy is also of a great diversity. For example, each of Zhuan(篆), Li(隸), Kai(楷), Cao(草)14---known as the major four schools of Chinese calligraphy---has its own distinct style to write. Each of the calligraphic schools has its own philosophical method behind and Chinese people are inclined to judge a person’s value and attitude towards life from their handwriting. Furthermore, as many argued, “different works of the calligraphist may have diverse styles” (Xia, Wu, Gao, Lin & Mao, 2013:11)

Such a respect or even worship to calligraphy was formed by a historical reason---the national exam for civil servant selection. The exam has only one content that

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13 A Chinese folk saying.

14 These are four major Chinese calligraphy schools, and they are the major styles Chinese write with today. Furthermore, there also other schools, however, most of them are not influential any longer nowadays.
candidates are required to write an article with a given topic. There are two criterions for the selection---the statement on the topic and the quality of the handwriting.

To gain handsome handwriting, the left-handed needs more practice, since the characters, as revealed above, are in favour of the right-handed writing. Therefore, the left-handed would choose to practice to write with their right hand in the beginning of calligraphy learning. Furthermore, the exam---known as The University Entrance Examination(Compbell&Hu,2010:236)\(^{15}\)---is remained till today and still active, playing a crucial role in education.

I would suggest the right-handed preference feature of Chinese characters does not suffice to support the present discriminatory policy, as the necessary care on the left-handedness and the left-handed is missing. The respect to calligraphy does not, either, because such an aesthetic view creates a disadvantageous environment for the left-handed to compete and lacks of sufficient rectifactory remedies for them. Therefore, although the left-handed might benefit from the “left-handedness correction”, gaining handsome handwriting, they are still discriminated, since the motive that urges them to do so is discriminatory.

### 3.3 Practical Considerations

Discrimination against the left-handedness in terms of handwriting is not only bred by traditional values, but also strengthened in practice. There are three practical reasons to contribute to such a situation, i.e. the hierarchical relationship between teachers and students, the consequence of industrialization and the competitive job-hunting environment.

To make it clear, practical considerations are three practices to enforce the prejudicial and discriminatory attitudes towards the left-handed, instead of direct reasons which form the discrimination.

#### 3.3.1 Hierarchical Relationship between Teachers and Students

Chinese educational relationship between teachers and students is found to be hierarchical. Students are educated to be obedient to their teachers under all circumstance. This part will lead to a brief introduction to such a relationship and explain how such a relationship could be discriminatory to the left-handed. Thus the

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\(^{15}\)高等院校入學考試, known as 高考. It is held annually on 7\(^{th}\) and 8\(^{th}\), June.
argument that it is a discriminatory contributing element to the present policy.

Before moving to the introduction, I would like to express that this part does not conclude that the relationship itself is wrong, however, what is to be elaborated is this relationship helps breed discriminatory environment against the left-handed.

In a Chinese educational culture, especially in primary schools (from Grade One to Grade Six\textsuperscript{16}), students are educated to follow teachers’ instruction and obey the rules stringently. It is even very often that students who break the rules are even allowed to be punished physically. In such a circumstance, when teachers are fully entitled to force their the left-handed students to “correct” the handedness in term of writing, students have to follow.

Definitely, there must be also a number of the left-handed amongst teachers. Consider how these teachers learn to write. It is not difficult to imagine that they have also been altered by their teachers. Nowadays, even some of Chinese teachers themselves voice that “forbidding left-handed writing is a minor problem. We are actually suppressing characteristics and personality.” (Xue, 2016:2)\textsuperscript{17} Think alike, Li and Wang argued that such a suppression even curtails the right-brain development, thus curtailing the development of the whole human beings. (Wang&Zhang,2011:79)

Such a practice wrongs the left-handed in two ways. Firstly, it violates the right of free choice of the left-handed. The left-handed are not informed of the disadvantages to write with the left-hand, instead, they are forced to alter. That is to say, they are not offered with options. They do not have chance to keep the left-handedness, even if they would like to face the difficulties to write with the left-hand. Secondly, during their “correction” of the handedness, the left-handed are not provided with sufficient aid, instead, they are simply left alone to manage it. Thus, the only way for them to do is use more time to practice and it burdens them by imposing evitable pressure.

3.3.2 The Consequence of Industrialization

In this part, I will try to suggest that industrialization could urge to form a

\textsuperscript{16} Chinese primary school education takes six years from Grade One to Grade Six, and the students are usually around seven to twelve.

\textsuperscript{17} It is originally in Chinese:從表面上看是小問題，而實質是壓抑個性，抑制人格發展的問題。See 

*Something about the Left-handed Writing* 關於左手寫字的聯想
discriminatory environment against the left-handed in two ways, i.e. promoting standardization in manufacture and the economic drive.

First, industrialization promotes standardization by introducing machinery manufacturing. On one hand, machines that require workers to handle are designed for the preference and convenience of the right-handed, since they outnumber the left ones. On the other hand, the productions are also standardized. For example, the scissors designed for the preference and convenience of the right-handed are difficult for the left-handed to use, even if they reverse the way to hold it, since the two parts only hinge well in one way.

Economic drive is the other factor urges industrialization to create disadvantageous environment for the left-handed. To control the cost, manufacture is designed to produce productions that can cover the market to the largest degree. Out of such a concern, minor market would go ignored. It is not difficult to find kitchen utensils, scissors and many other productions are designed for the right-handed, however, the left-handed face the difficulty to find productions for their own convenience. The reason behind is simply they are outnumbered, which means they possess a smaller market. Specializing at the left-handed market means a humble total profit.

As many scholars argued, “[D]iscrimination against left-handers was amplified during the industrial revolution, as increasing demands of modern machinery exposed left-handers as ‘clumsy’ and less capable of operating complex machinery and tools designed to suit right-handers.(Dragovic, Badcock, Sanja, Gregrovic & Sram, 2013:719)

Industrialization wrongs the left-handed, not by directing discrimination to them, but rather by creating disadvantageous environment for them to live in. Even though all manufacturing machines are designed for the right-handed to handle, it is still not difficult for the left-handed to gain the skill by practicing; kitchen utensils designed for the convenience of the right-handed could also held by the left-handed and used to cook delicious cuisine by them. However, it is problematic because it ignores the left-handed. Needs of theirs are not aimed to met, and they have to try to adapt to the right-handed manner. Thus, a disadvantageous environment which curtails their dignity is created.
3.3.3 Competitive Job-Hunting Environment

Holding a huge population to digest, Chinese job-hunting market usually requires a fierce competition for a position, and it leads tens of thousands of applicants to compete for only one seat. Under such a circumstance, redundant requirements are set by companies to select employee, since only in such a way can they select the better ones amongst the best. Otherwise, companies can find no criterion to conduct upon for the employee selection.

Chinese civil service system requires candidates to entre a writing exam which also takes candidates’ handwriting into consideration. Each apparently or vaguely miswritten character leads to one point off. Under such a circumstance, handwriting is a crucial skill for the candidates to improve.

It helps creates a disadvantageous environment for the left-handed to compete, considering the feature of Chinese characters mentioned above. I suggest it wrongs the left-handed by burdening them with unnecessary pressure for a very arbitrary reason. Without such an arbitrary reason, companies would face the difficulty to select employees, however, it is a fact that it creates the disadvantageous environment for the left-handed.
Chapter IV. Solutions to Prejudices against the Left-handed handwriting

The discriminatory policy against the left-handed handwriting should be banned by certain regulations or even laws, however, such regulations or laws are not efficient to eliminate the prejudice—as Alkahtani mentioned, the prejudice that the left-handedness inevitably leads to the weakness in handwriting (Alkahtani, 2012: 159) against the left-handed handwriting. Therefore, in this chapter, I suggest helping eliminate the prejudice by three supporting solutions, i.e. writing with high-technological products, setting calligraphy as an option curriculum and developing a new writing habit. For each solution, it will be illustrated by its practice, advantages and disadvantages.

4.1 Writing with High-Technological Products in Education

In this part, the solution will be viewed from three aspects—what is writing with high-technological products, why is it helpful with the elimination of the prejudice and what are its disadvantages.

Firstly, writing with high-technological products, such as writing with keyboard on computers, writing with pads or even mobile phones, as a matter of fact, is not anything new to education, instead, it is already been widely used in China, especially at the university level. However, it is applied out of the concern of efficiency in writing and convenience in reading. The present technological support is sufficient to carry out this solution.

It is crucial to use these equipments at the primary school level, because students at such a stage are new to the handwriting skill and it takes more time at this phase for the left-handed to learn, thus creating disadvantageous environment for them.

Secondly, such a solution is helpful in three ways.

The first point is that typing with keyboards requires the cooperation of both hands. For example, to type a Chinese character 学 (xue, to study; to learn), it

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18 All Chinese characters quoted in this thesis are from Kangxi Dictionary.
involves three letters, “x”, “u” and “e”, which requires to use both left hand and the right one. In such a way, it eliminates the disadvantages of the left-handed in one way, and does not impose new disadvantages on the right-handed, thus balancing the environment in which they learn handwriting.

The second way it helps is that it promotes the efficiency, because typing at a normal speed saves more time than writing. High efficiency allows more free time for both students and teachers. As many argued, “Traditional method to learn Chinese calligraphy needs long hour’s practice and the practice process often makes learners feel boring.”(Wu, Yuan, Zhou&Cai,2013:200) Thus, saving time from writing is also a method to free students from the unnecessary burden.

However, there are also to prominent disadvantages in this solution.

The first one falls on economy. Being equipped with high-technological products costs largely in finance, and it could be problematic to burden the schools. However, on another hand, I would like to suggest that spending a large amount of money on electronic products could also stimulate companies’ profits, and these companies could offer discount to the schools as return.

The second disadvantage is about the lack of sufficient care on calligraphy. Applying typing in education could lead to the lack of care on handwriting, however, Chinese calligraphy is an important element of Chinese art, therefore, it is problematic to cause a loss on it. I would suggest it could be rectified with the second proposed solution, i.e. setting calligraphy into optional curriculum.

4.2 Setting Calligraphy into Optional Curriculum

In this part, I suggest setting calligraphy into optional curriculum to rectify the lack of sufficient care on calligraphy cause by using typing skill , and I will try to illustrate why it is helpful and why it should be set into the optional curriculum.

First of all, students should have their freedom to choose. If they appreciate to write instead of typing, they should have their chance to learn calligraphy and their interest in such a subject could be helpful with the development of calligraphy as an art.
Secondly, I will try to explain why it is important to set it into the optional curriculum instead of the compulsory one. This solution is carried out to rectify the development potentially harmed by the first solution, however, if it is set into the compulsory curriculum, it will bring the disadvantageous environment for the left-handed back, thus breeding the discrimination. Furthermore, it is also to respect the right of being free to choose. As Moreau argued, “each person is entitled to decide for herself what she values and how she is going to live in light of these values.” (Moreau, 2010: 147)

Specializing calligraphic study in such a way amongst students is helpful with carrying out the comprehensive education by promoting students’ spiritual, emotional, social and moral development. (Hue, 2008: 64)

The second solution also has its own disadvantage. Once it is set into the optional curriculum, it could involves both the right-handed students and the left ones, and within those who register the class, it is still disadvantageous for the left-handed and inclined to breed prejudice and discrimination. To solve this problem, I suggest the third solution---developing a new writing habit in favour of the left-handedness.

4.3 The Development of A Handwriting Habit in Favour of the Left-handedness

A new handwriting habit in favour of the left-handedness could be approached in two ways.

First, in light of the preference and convenience of the left-handed, they should be allowed to write from the right to the left on a page. When the left-handed write in a common way from the left to the right, it could be inconvenient, since the ink could often dirty their hands. To write in such a way, the left-handed could keep their hands clean and the paperwork neat.

This habit would not burden the right-handed, either, since in Chinese history the main writing habit is as so.

Second, I suggest a development of new characters could be started. Chinese characters, as revealed above, lacks sufficient care on the left-handed in the first place, and to rectify it, new characters that consist of reversed strokes written from the right to left could be developed. However, this is in fact a huge project which will cost
hugely and will not be finished in short term, so I suggest it remains merely a possible option.

In this chapter, three solution are proposed in order to help eliminate the prejudice against the left-handedness in terms of handwriting. These three solutions all have their own advantages and disadvantages, therefore, they must be applied together as a supplement to each other.
Chapter V. Conclusion

In this thesis, I have introduced the Chinese policy of correcting left-handedness. Therefore, the wrongness, definition and identification of discrimination are also discussed. The reasons behind the Chinese policy and practices that help to enforce the policy to the left-handed are taken into discussion are checked with the wrongness and identification of discrimination. Finally it concludes that the policy is discriminatory against the left-handed.

I have argued that the Chinese policy of correcting the left-handedness in terms of writing is discriminatory. Therefore, the policy needs to be abolished, however, the prejudicial attitudes toward the left-handedness will not be eliminated immediately. In order to help to eliminate the prejudicial attitudes toward the left-handedness, it is proposed that three solutions should be carried out.

There are still some missing or undone work in this thesis. Firstly, the features and the definition in light of these features of discrimination could be not representative enough. For example, as mentioned in the second chapter, discrimination could also be approached from other combinations, such as direct discrimination vs. indirect discrimination and positive discrimination vs. negative discrimination.

Secondly, in the Chapter Four, the proposal of developing a new writing habit in favour of the left-handedness could be considered to be too idealistic and utopian. The development of a writing system might take very long time and cost hugely.

Thirdly, on one hand, the left-handed who change their handedness in terms of writing do benefit from it, gaining more handsome handwriting, therefore, they could lack motivation to stop the alteration or even do not perceive the policy as being discrimination. This concern is ultimately connected to the concern of Chinese aesthetic view on calligraphy. To stop the policy in favour of the right-handed writing might lead to the drawback of the quality of handwriting, and it could curtail the development calligraphy’s development as an art. As Wang, Liao, Hagihara and Maekawa argued, “Calligraphy is an art in China, which is incorporated with Chinese traditional culture.”(Wang, Liao, Hagihara & Maekawa, 2015:8), thus curtailing the
development of such an important art would shake the core of Chinese traditional culture, which would be problematic without sufficient rectificatory solutions.

On the other hand, it will be perceived as being alarmist, if the left-handed consider it as a chance to develop a new skill and enjoy it. For many, changing handedness is rather an achievement, if it is driven by some good reasons. According to Brooks, Bussiere, Jennions and Hunt, right-handed cricket players would change to strike with their left-hand, because it provides them with more strategies and renders it easier to cooperate with teammates. (Brooks, Bussiere, Jennions & Hunt, 2003: 65-66)

Problems mentioned above should and could be solved through a series of comprehensive solution, and I would like to ask for a humble chance to develop it in the later work.
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