

Inspiration of Comenius Moral Education to Moral Education in Primary and Secondary Schools*

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Comenius absorbed the essence of ancient Greek Plato and Aristotle's moral cultivation, and proposed that moral education should achieve good virtues of wisdom, moderation, perseverance, and integrity, and regarded these virtues as the yardstick to measure a person's moral cultivation. Taking this as a reference, contemporary teachers should shape good morality by early education and practice, solidify good morality with moral education environment, and warn bad morality with admonition and discipline. Comenius' moral education enlightens today's children's education: taking caring for children as the foothold; optimizing teachers' moral education; creating a collective atmosphere of moral learning; and improving the frequency and quality of moral practice activities.

Keywords: Comenius, moral education thought, moral practice

Introduction

The Czech educator Comenius pointed out that our real work is the learning of wisdom, which is moral. Moral learning can improve self, stabilize self, and make our mind noble. Primary and secondary school students are in the initial stage of life, but also in the stage of psychological development and gradually finalization. Moral education is an essential educational content for primary and secondary school teachers to shape students' beautiful mind. In recent years, under the influence of western educational thoughts, most teachers highly praise "appreciation education" and avoid "punishment education." Facing students' moral behavior, teachers "dare not punish and do not know how to punish." The majority of teachers draw lessons from Comenius' moral education thought and method, can more clearly understand the implementation significance of moral education work, and at the same time, obtain practical enlightenment from Comenius' moral education (Comenius, 1984, p. 179).

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The Connotation of Moral Education

Comenius widely absorbed the essence of ancient Greek Plato and Aristotle's moral cultivation and proposed that the good virtues to be achieved in moral education should include wisdom, temperance, perseverance, and integrity, and regarded these virtues as the yardstick to measure a person's moral cultivation. "Wisdom" put forward by Comenius is not a narrow sense of "intelligence level," but a sound basis for judging facts and problems. School moral education is to guide children through education, so that the correct value judgment becomes the "second nature" of children and is used in life. To cultivate children's "wisdom" is to teach children to judge whether things are correct and valuable. Only by cultivating the moral character of "wisdom," can children judge and choose to do right and valuable things. Therefore, "wisdom" is the real foundation of forming good morality. Abstinence is the moral requirement of limiting excess. "Abstinence" is the essence of Comenius' moral education, and "restriction does not make excessive" is the meaning of temperance. Comenius put forward the idea of "moderating" daily behavior and "moderating" the use of secular things, such as children's drinking and eating, learning and playing, conversation, and silence. Teachers should teach children "everything" while they are being taught (Comenius, 1984, p. 179).

The golden rule of "not to be excessive". The cultivation of children's "abstinence" morality is conducive to the formation of children's good habits of self-discipline. Perseverance is the moral condition of rational thinking. Constancy is regarded by Comenius as the morality of self-control and desire restraint by reason. When restraining improper or excessive behaviors, children will inevitably have psychological struggles. The cultivation of "perseverance" character helps students to restrain their impulsive behaviors and train them to learn rational thinking. For example, controlling children's play time will make children's inner anxiety, "perseverance" allows children to choose appropriate behavior rationally and let rationality dominate themselves. Integrity is the moral guarantee of moral conduct. "Integrity" is the opposite of "hypocrisy" and "deception," that is, the moral consciousness and behavior of children to society and others to be achieved in school moral education. For example, helping others, being impartial, contributing to society, protecting the weak, and not cheating others. The cultivation of "integrity" morality is conducive to the growth of children to contribute to the society and the social consciousness of "everyone for me, I for everyone" (Comenius, 1984, pp. 180-181).

The connotation of Comenius' moral education thought has been cleaned up for a long time and has been full of vitality in contemporary moral education. On the 19 major themes of education, general secretary Xi Jinping stressed the importance of building a powerful country in education and implementing the fundamental task of education. Moral education in schools has once again become an important topic, and Comenius' moral education thoughts give enlightenment to the majority of teachers—to cultivate students' virtue of "wisdom, moderation, perseverance, and integrity." Teachers should seize every opportunity to combine Comenius' moral education thought with the requirements of the times, and comprehensively strengthen the cultivation of students' basic moral quality.

The Implementation Method of Moral Education

In the implementation of moral education, primary and secondary school teachers should learn from Comenius' moral education methods, grasp the basic principles of moral education, and apply them to primary and secondary school moral education in the new era.

Shaping Good Morality by Early Education and Practice

Comenius believes that people and trees have similar circumstances. A person's growth is similar to the growth of trees, just as watering and correcting the growth of seedlings can make the seedlings grow upright and luxuriant when they are still young. People can better grow into intelligent and moral people by accepting the influence of good morality when they are young. The early stage of students' growth is the golden stage of moral cultivation. At this time, they receive the most solid foreign knowledge. Once, the good morality is taught to them, their mind will always be full of good morality. Primary and secondary school teachers should carry out moral education work as soon as possible, so as to provide children with good moral growth nutrients. In addition, Comenius also proposed that moral learning should eventually be applied to life practice, so learning morality depends not only on words but also on action. "Learning for application" is a practical achievement that children need to achieve after receiving theoretical education. The important way to test teachers' moral education and refine children's morality is to participate in moral practice. In moral practice, children will further learn morality and learn to show morality. Children's good virtues, such as wisdom, perseverance, temperance, and integrity will be further developed in practice. When there is a violation of moral behavior in practice, teachers can give targeted advice. In addition, through continuous moral practice, children can overcome laziness and selfishness, overcome various temptations, and develop the habit of hard work. Therefore, educators should carry out moral training as soon as possible and refine children's morality through moral practice repeatedly, so that they can develop towards a better direction and finally bear good moral fruits (Comenius, 1984, p. 44 & 181).

Solidifying Good Morality With Moral Education Environment

The construction of good moral education environment includes setting up excellent moral examples and keeping away from bad social intercourse. Comenius' model is a model in books and in life. Compared with the two, the role model in life can make children leave a deep impression and improve their awareness of moral learning. Comenius also believes that children are like apes, like to imitate things around them, and this imitation happens unconsciously, no one to teach them. The model law is very effective in the group, and the influence of moral example on children is far greater than that directly imparted to children. Therefore, excellent teachers, parents, and classmates, as role models in life, should be constantly placed beside children, imperceptibly edifying children's moral soul and behavior. While accepting the influence of excellent moral models, Comenius also proposed that young people should be careful to guard against the root causes and evil models of all evils, because seeing or hearing these evils will poison the will of morality and erode a heart toward morality. Primary school children are in a period of weak will, with a curious and ignorant heart, they cannot distinguish the harm and essence of evil. Therefore, we should warn children to stay away from all bad books and bad social intercourse, and create a pure and beautiful moral education environment to consolidate morality (Comenius, 1984, p. 181).

Admonition and Discipline to Warn Bad Morals

When children accept and learn morality, but because of lack of self-control to destroy morality, teachers should timely admonish and use discipline to warn children of immoral behavior. Comenius pointed out that before the beginning of moral education, students should be taught in the form of moral precepts, so that children can understand the value of moral behavior theoretically. According to the age difference of students, moral educators should explain some moral principles to them. For example, "Why should we oppose jealousy"

and “How should we rule out illegal love.” In addition to moral admonition, Comenius also believes that when the evil tendency appears, strict discipline needs to be used to curb evil. In children’s heart, there is not only a good soil for morality, but also a breeding ground for evil. Therefore, when children’s behavior and thought tend to be evil, moral educators must implement strict discipline to curb the development of evil. They can prevent evil invasion or eradicate evil by means of punishment and reprimand. However, discipline should be kept in children’s heart rather than forced to do so, which requires teachers to adopt proper and reasonable methods to stimulate children’s desire to learn morality independently, to understand the moral significance of moral precepts and to abide by discipline to maintain moral clarification (Comenius, 1984, pp. 183-184).

Enlightenment of Comenius’ Moral Education

Comenius’ natural development principle of cultivating children’s morality and its connotation and methods of moral education enlighten the moral education work of contemporary primary and secondary school teachers.

Taking Caring for Children as a Foothold to Optimize Teachers’ Moral Education

Comenius (1984) thinks: “The development of nature, everything is from the beginning, although the beginning seems insignificant, but has a huge latent power.” Chinese psychological research regards childhood as the best stage of life for learning and shaping moral character. When primary school teachers seize every opportunity to carry out moral education, their primary work is to care for children. In the 1970s, Peter Macpherson, a British school moral educator, founded the moral education mode of learning to care or understand. He believes that the basic need of human beings is to care, that is, to get along well with others, to love or to be loved. Therefore, the primary duty of education is to meet the need of caring among people. Caring for students is an emotional process in which teachers gradually put care into practice by using moral wisdom on the basis of understanding students’ basic situation and based on students’ personality characteristics. In this process, teachers and students establish a caring relationship and use caring orientation to establish moral connection, which is the call of the development of the times for moral education (Comenius, 1984, p. 109; Feng, 1997, p. 110).

To innovate the teaching form of moral education. As one of the moral models of students, teachers should improve their moral quality and moral education level by studying moral education theory and participating in moral practice. Moral education is different from “teaching and learning” in exam oriented education. Teachers need to optimize the form of moral education and innovate the traditional teaching form of moral education. For example, the introduction of Internet information technology, the development of digital teaching, the use of multimedia equipment to innovate the traditional moral education teaching form and content, to stimulate students’ interest in learning, so that students can actively participate in the learning of moral education courses. Primary school moral education teachers can use the teaching mode of group learning to improve students’ moral learning interest in the form of moral education practice group. Moral education teachers in primary schools should encourage students to actively seek the help of teachers and conduct moral and psychological dialogue.

To expand the field of moral education. Primary school teachers are important role models for students in school, while parents are important role models for children at home. When carrying out moral education, teachers should expand the field of moral education, such as strengthening home school cooperation and

combining school moral education with family moral education. Teachers should strengthen the communication with parents; transfer the awareness of cultivating children's morality to parents through family visits, parents' meetings and other forms, so as to improve parents' attention to children's moral education. The moral training mode of "family school integration" will promote the moral development of primary school children (Yang & Yuan, 2019, p. 72).

Creating a Collective Atmosphere of Moral Learning

Bacon (2006) believes that the power of collective habits is far greater than that of individuals. When the collective has an excellent characteristic, the individual's advantage can be maintained or strengthened. There must be strict discipline. This also shows that moral learning needs to create a collective atmosphere, which is an important means to improve children's moral learning awareness (Bacon, 2006, p. 128).

First, improve the arrangement of moral education environment. Class and even the whole school moral atmosphere construction have an important impact on students' moral education. For example, starting from the arrangement of the class and campus, teachers add moral calligraphy works to the classroom layout, which will increase the environment atmosphere for students to learn morality, which will virtually improve the moral learning awareness of primary and secondary school students.

Second, as the collective morality will greatly affect the individuals in the collective, teachers should become the key person in the construction of collective moral atmosphere, and timely use discipline to curb the spread of bad atmosphere. "No rules, no square." Strict discipline is the booster of moral training. Children can restrain their own behavior by accepting discipline and develop good conduct of restraint and self-discipline from childhood. In daily life, students are prone to moral corruption, such as laziness, waste, and so on. Discipline has become a yardstick to promote students to complete moral training better. Discipline is like a passing line. Those who violate discipline are those who fail in moral cultivation. Teachers should be strict in discipline and morally admonish those who violate morality to make them correct. Teachers can even use the way of punishment to regulate students' morality when the students' moral damage is serious. But teachers should correctly use discipline and discipline, let students know that discipline is the basic line of morality and treat punishment as a bitter medicine.

Third, it is an important measure for teachers to set up moral example for the class. Comenius' model law inspires teachers to be good at finding moral examples in class, and calls on students to follow them with words and actions. Under these moral examples and teachers' words and deeds, students will "imperceptibly" learn morality. At the same time, the competitive psychology of peers will make students compete to make good moral behavior (Comenius, 1984, p. 215).

Improve the Frequency and Quality of Moral Practice

Faced with the phenomenon that the knowledge and practice of moral education in primary schools are out of touch, teachers should appropriately improve the frequency and quality of moral practice activities.

As an effective way to refine moral theory, activities should become an important form of moral education in primary schools. We should refuse to instill moral thoughts by cramming and do not do oral moral conduct. In his paper "based on the characteristics of the times, solidly carry out moral practice activities for primary school students," Su Zhenzhen, a teacher of Xiamen Experimental Primary School, once described the basic way of ideological and moral education in Xiamen Experimental Primary School. From the four aspects of promoting the serialization, thematization, socialization, and subjectivity of moral activities, the serialization of

moral practice activities is mainly reflected in the series of national defense summer camp activities carried out by Xiamen Experimental Primary School, such as “110 Summer Camp,” “120 Summer Camp,” and “Psychological Quality Development Camp,” so that children and 110 police uncles can patrol the police and go to the seaside to learn first aid at sea. The theme of moral practice activities is mainly reflected in festival activities. For example, on the national day of 2007, Xiamen primary school held a singing activity with the theme of “do not forget national shame, love China” to celebrate the 62nd Anniversary of the Victory of the National Day and the Anti Japanese War, so as to carry out patriotic education. The socialization of moral practice activities is mainly reflected in the organic combination of moral practice activities and students’ real life.

After the May 12, 2008, Wenchuan Earthquake, Xiamen Experimental Primary School held donation activities and “love in Ludao, hope for the whole hall” to convey love. The students designed and produced hundreds of “love handshake cards” to send messages to children in distress. The subjectivity of moral practice activities is reflected in taking students as the main body of activities. Xiamen Experimental Primary School has carefully carried out activities, such as “students running the family for a week” and “campus traffic police” to let students self-education and self-management. The essence of the diversified moral practice activities carried out by Xiamen Experimental Primary School is to temper the internalized morality through moral practice activities, so that students can feel the good influence of morality independently, and then promote the development of their own morality (Su, 2010, p. 74).

Conclusion

Based on the current dilemma of moral education in primary and secondary schools, the school and society should attach great importance to the solid development of moral education. Moral education should be carried out as an important part of primary and secondary education. Secondly, primary and secondary school teachers should widely learn from Comenius’ moral education ideas and methods, establish moral ties between teachers and students with care, and actively optimize moral education. Finally, moral practice activities as an important way to refine morality, moral educators should improve the quality and frequency of moral practice activities, in order to prevent primary and secondary school students from being divorced from moral learning.

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