

SWOT Analysis on the Sinicization of Montessori's Children Education

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Abstract: The ideology teaching of Montessori education is a scientific view for children due to the comprehensive education contents and operational teaching methods. There are similarities of educational thoughts between Montessori and ancient Chinese. These are the conducive results of the further spreading of Montessori education in China. However, Montessori education overemphasized in freedom of thoughts and ignored the limitations of the game which neglected the role of educators. There are still many challenges in the process of combining Montessori education with China's national conditions due to the deviation of understanding and the impact of other educational thoughts. In the grasping needs of time for development, through the SWOT analysis on the sinicization of Montessori education combining with the national conditions in China, it is necessary to play the role of game actively by selecting appropriate educational content and strengthening the cultivation of Montessori educator in teaching Montessori education to further develop the children education industry in China.

Keywords: *Montessori; Ideology of Education; Sinicization*

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1 Introduction

Maria Montessori is a great Italian educator in the 19th century. Through her many observations in children's behavior in spontaneous learning, she summed up the characteristic of children as "absorptive mind" and

"sensitive period". Therefore, she advocated that adults should be responsible for preparing a suitable learning environment for children. Many of her books, such as "The Secret of Childhood" and the "Montessori Children's Handbook", have been translated into dozens of languages and spread to more than 100 countries. The ideology of Montessori children's education has been introduced to China since the beginning of 20th century. In recent years, the idea of running a school focusing on Montessori education has also caused a learning boom in Chinese kindergartens. People are accustomed to link Montessori education with high tuition fees. Moreover, in these kindergartens, only a small community of people are truly devoted to the study of Montessori education in China as well as the combination of Montessori education with China's teaching method. There are still many problems faced in the integration of Montessori education with China's national conditions. Therefore, by analyzing the positive and negative factors of using Montessori education in kindergartens and exerting positive factors to overcome negative factors as well as combining the specific factors of modern Chinese education, ideology of Montessori can be integrated into Chinese's children education practice. As result, it can further promote and enrich the development of China's early childhood education.

2 SWOT analysis

2.1 S: advantages

2.1.1 Advanced view of children

Montessori believes that children are not adults' accessories but individuals with a complete personality and independent existence. Therefore, in Montessori

education practice, she emphasized on importance of the rights of children and contribution to appeal to children's rights. Children have an "absorbent psychology" whose growth is driven by their internal potential^[1]. She believes that the growth of children is not the result of adult's teaching but discovery, creation and self-experience from children themselves. Nature will guide the development of children, and children can learn new experiences naturally from the surrounding^[2]. This requires not only educators to respect the interests of children, but also to provide children with a prepared material and spiritual environment to promote the physical and mental development of children. These children's views have important implications for guiding China's early childhood education.

2.1.2 Overall content of education

The content of Montessori preschool education is divided into six parts as sensory, life, science, mathematics, language and art. Sensory education are considered as the "first step in the development of intelligence". Therefore, it is demanded to grasp on the period where children are at a sensitive and growing stage in order to ensure adequate development in them. Besides, at critical period of children's different sensory development, adults are demanded to strengthen their children's education correspondingly through the intuitive form of teaching and the sensory stimulation of children. At the same time, Montessori also emphasizes on the cultivation of children's life experience and trains children's life skills through "work", which is the same as the requirement of comprehensive development of students in a quality education in China.

2.1.3 Operational teaching methods

In 1909, Montessori published a book named "Scientific Methods of Early Childhood Education Applicable to Children's Homes". Montessori observed the actual teaching method and experience of preschool teachers to produce a summary of appropriate teaching methods^[3]. Training courses are offered in many countries to spread their early childhood education ideas to the world. The Montessori Method regulates that the teaching process has standard requirements for the selection of activities, points of interest, operation and delivery. Compared with other educational thoughts, Montessori teaching method has both a complete educational ideology as a support and a lot of practical experiences, which has direct guiding significance for cultivating kindergarten front-line teachers.

2.2 W: disadvantages

2.2.1 Overemphasizing on freedom and neglecting the role of teachers

In dealing with discipline and free relations, Montessori education over-emphasizes on the freedom of young children and overestimates a child's ability to self-control. She believes that young children can consciously develop a sense of discipline as long as they are focused at their current activities. However, children have the nature of being active and playful and their concentration time is limited. Therefore, the way of self-exploring for children are not suitable. At the same time, Montessori education weakens the roles of teachers in teaching because Montessori believes that teachers are just observers, introducers, demonstrators, supporters but not a guide for early childhood activities. Therefore, teachers are not encouraged to participate and interfere in any activities of young children. However in reality, adult's supervision are often required in certain stages in order to help children to develop a good sense of discipline due to the limited awareness in children's mind.

2.2.2 Opposing playfulness will affect children's physical and mental development

Montessori mistakenly opposed the importance of the real world and the cultivation of imagination. She took games as an unnecessary entertainment activity and classified toys as something that a child will not like but chose "materials" and teaching aid instead. Although Montessori teaching process is standardized with use of tools and work rugs, this teaching method is considered dull, boring and cumbersome. The teachings aids are not a motivation for young children to learn as they are separated from the reality of life^[3]. Therefore, this teaching method ignores the children's interest and needs as well as affects their thinking orientation and function fixation, which is not conducive in children's creativity growth.

2.2.3 Splitting sensory education is not conducive to the all-round development of children

At different stages of a child development, the sensitivity of various senses is different and the responses to stimulation are also different^[4]. According to the different stages of a child development, Montessori's sensory training includes five major types of exercises such as sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell. However, the training of each senses is independent. Although

such training has a positive effect on grasping the critical period of children's sensory development, it separates the overall development of children's development, which neglected the relationship between the five senses and is not conducive to the overall development of children.

2.3 Opportunity

2.3.1 National policy supports the development of preschool education

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, the government has begun to regulate kindergartens. It has successively promulgated the "Provisional Regulations for Kindergartens" and the "Provisional Outline of Kindergartens" as well as other regulations to strengthen the supervision of kindergartens and regulate the operation and teaching of children. In 2010, the Outline of the National Medium- and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan clearly stated the development goal of "basic popularization of pre-school education" for the first time. This means that the country pays unprecedented attention to the development of early childhood education, encourages the cultivation of pre-school education professionals and efforts to improve the quality of kindergarten teachers. Therefore, this provides a platform for Montessori education to further develop in China.

2.3.2 The trend of curriculum reform

Montessori's education as an excellent early childhood education theory has many references for the development of preschool education in the new curriculum reform in China. This is also the reason why Montessori education and Montessori Kindergarten are popular in kindergartens in China. In a 2010 survey, the results showed that among the eight majors cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen and Chengdu, the numbers in percentage of kindergartens that knew about Montessori education consist about 97.8% while 82.8% of them introduced Montessori education. Therefore, in order to achieve sinicization of Montessori education, it is necessary to further realize the comprehensive and differential in the teaching objectives of early childhood education in the new curriculum reform to expand and update the content as well as develop a flexible and diverse forms of organization^[5].

2.3.3 Similarity of ideology with ancient Chinese educators

The ideology of Montessori education has many

similarities with the ancient Chinese educators. As an example, Confucius and Mencius' quote of "do your best, know its nature. Know its nature, then to know God" means to do your own kindness, is to realize your own nature and to realize one's own nature is to know the destiny. Human nature has a profound influence on the development of a person's life, therefore people should pay attention to human talents. This is very similar to Montessori's concept of natural education. She believes that there is a strong potential in children that regulates and restricts the growth and development of children. Looking at the profession of teachers, Confucius's thought of "insatiable of learning, indefatigable of people", Montessori believes that the profession of teachers is a low to a high level of work. Serving children is a service of the spirit of those who must be liberated where both is a noble career. As a conclude, it was proven that Montessori's educational thought has a similarity with Chinese traditional culture and it is easily accepted by people in the process of communication. In addition, Ma Shizi also believes that any advanced Western educational concepts and teaching methods that are accepted by Chinese education are bound to be integrated with Confucianism education, mutual learning and mutual influence^[6].

2.4 T: threat

2.4.1 Different types of early childhood education teaching modes

After the "May 4th" Movement, people of insight in the education sector in China introduced foreign educational ideas one after another such as Rousseau, Herbart, Pestalozzi and Dewey^[7].

Although China has been actively studying the theoretical results of international early childhood education, the representative concepts of early childhood education in different countries in the world are different. As examples, the educations are such as of the welfare of the British Frobel, the forest education in Germany, the Japanese winter naked running education and summer freedom education of the United States. Plus, different kindergartens also have different characteristics domestically such as bilingual education, Montessori education, regional activities or thematic series of special kindergartens. In addition, under the premises that the state does not explicitly require education methods and educational ideas, all kinds of young children's thoughts are like hundreds of flowers to study and compete. Therefore, Montessori education

needs to further conform to China's national conditions and meet the needs of children and society more in order to stand out from the entanglement of early childhood education in China.

2.4.2 Bias in understanding the ideology of montessori education

Although the ideology of Montessori education is widely spread around the world, many countries have introduced different way to learn about Montessori. However, if the ideology of Montessori education is introduced in exact while ignoring the differences between countries' economic politics and traditional cultures, this will lead into an ambitious metaphor that has no achievement. In addition, many kindergartens only formally imitate the Montessori teaching method to attract enrollment, but they do not absorb the true connotation of Montessori children's educational thoughts. Therefore, it is difficult to achieve the expected results in the teaching process. On the other hand, the professionalism in teaching was not enough and the theoretical foundation was not solid because the kindergarten teachers did not pass the systematic Montessori training. As an example, the creation of a playground environment classroom did not apply any Montessori materials, nor did it the concept of implementing of Montessori education in early childhood education.

3 SWTO strategic combination analysis of montessori education in China

3.1 SO: combination of advantages and opportunities

3.1.1 Combining the current situation of early childhood education in China and adjusting the montessori teaching method

Firstly, by seeking truth from facts, starting from the actual situation, correctly combining the ideology of Montessori education with China's actual national conditions and development needs.

Secondly, breaking boundaries between classes and ages by implementing mixed-age and mixed-school education is a major feature of Montessori education. Besides, mixed-age education can not only help children learn to be tolerant, but also develop children's social interaction ability^[8]. In mixed-age classes, children of different ages can learn from each other because of the imitation nature of young children. However, under the policy restriction of family

planning, the core family formed by parents and a child makes the children do not understand the peers at the same age, and the children often get more conflicts than cooperation. Therefore, most parents are worried that their children will be bullied and thus opposing mixed age teaching. In China, kindergartens cannot directly adapt to Montessori's "vertical" mixed-age classes but can be progressively carried out in small passengers by means of placement, partial mixed-age teaching and full-age teaching. Therefore, a child's habitual transition period also gives parents a psychological adaptation period.

3.1.2 Improve the teaching content in the curriculum reform

In the five major areas of kindergartens in China, the main courses are organized in different ages. Therefore, in the sinicization of Montessori education, it is required for kindergartens in China to adapt the current curriculum reform with a Montessori teaching. In the sinicization of Montessori education, it is necessary to combine Chinese's kindergarten curriculum with Montessori education by integrating six modules of Montessori teaching into the five major areas of kindergarten teaching content in China such as art and languages. Montessori's life teaching should relate to the social field to avoid duplication of courses and waste of resources. The Chinese version of Montessori education teaching content also needs to supplement modern scientific knowledge and education of China's excellent traditional culture.

3.2 WO: combination of disadvantages and opportunities

3.2.1 Professional training for montessori teachers

China is facing low threshold of career entry as kindergarten teachers and the difficulties in cultivating Montessori teachers^[9]. As a qualified Montessori teacher, it is not just the learning of using Montessori teaching aids such awareness in arranging the teaching environment to cultivate children's discipline and living habits but also the implementation of Montessori education into teaching practice. As an example, teachers should be able to grasp the interest and needs of children accurately. Therefore, investigating the learning background and professional accomplishment of Montessori teachers is a necessary way to improve the training and certification system for Montessori education teachers. Besides, it is also compulsory

to encourage front-line teachers to learn more about Montessori teaching and further strengthen the teaching methods of Montessori teachers. As a conclusion, training and learning are important ways to introduce Montessori children's educational thoughts.

3.2.2 Pay attention to the role of games and cultivate children's creativity

Games are tools for young children to understand nature, to know the world and have freedom to develop^[10]. In kindergarten, games are not only the main form of activity for young children, but also an important learning method for young children. Besides, due of its various forms, it is interesting and interactive, which is consistent with the age characteristics of young children, therefore it is easy to attract children's attention. The implemented of game activities in education can make children's impressions more profound. Teachers can enable young children to achieve their teaching goals in a pleasant activity. Montessori education should improve the teaching "tools", enrich the variety, increase the interest and enable young children to receive more learning experiences.

3.3 ST: combination of advantages and threats

3.3.1 Learnt from the ideology of montessori education

It is necessary to prevent the complete copying, formalism and neglect of the introduction of Chinese and foreign differences to learn the theoretical results of international excellent education. While studying the ideology of Montessori education, we should look at the problem faced from a dialectical perspective and critically inherit the relevant early childhood education thoughts. In addition, learners need to "absorb the best, abandon the bad" from the Montessori education such as rejecting not suitable contents related to religion, historical and political issues. As a conclusion, the sinicization of Montessori education is not a discrimination, nor is it a form with no content. It should be chosen in a form where it can be suitable and implemented in China.

3.3.2 Highlight the advantages of montessori teaching

The Montessori teaching method is based on the ideology of Montessori education. Teachers use teaching aids to train young children and complete set

of methods for the development of young children. Montessori teaching is scientific and systematic. Therefore, using scientific mathematics teaching aids as a carrier, based on sensory education, can help young children learn in repeated operations^[11]. Its curriculum has the advantages of comprehensive content, orderly and standardized teaching process, and it is a very practical teaching system. Although its curriculum is not fixed, but it combines knowledge and experience as well as free training of sensory perception and sports such as outdoor games. Lastly, Montessori teaching's operating conditions are not only simple, but also able to achieve the purpose of consolidating learning also through repeated reinforcement.

3.4 WT: combination of disadvantages and threats

3.4.1 Play the role of teachers actively

Teachers should create an environment conducive to the growth of children. Secondly, selecting relevant materials that has an impact on children's life experience should be presented in the environment to avoid bad influences on the children. At the same time, teachers should carefully observe the students in the activities and be able to grasp the needs of the students in accordance with the individual differences of the students accurately as well as provide support. In addition, in the recent development zone, teaching should be in front of development and the guidance of teachers plays a leading role in the development of children. Lastly, educators should pay attention to the guidance of students by following the law of physical and mental development of young children.

3.4.2 Absorb excellent theoretical results and enrich the teaching system

Firstly, it is necessary to combine Montessori teaching with China's current national conditions and take the current preschool education situation in China into consideration as well as continue to integrate them with various educational ideas. As a Chinese idiom saying, "a ruler is longer than the inch, but the inch is shorter than the ruler" which explained as although the ruler is longer than the inch, but there will be its shortcoming; although the inch is shorter than the ruler, but also has its advantages. This means that everything has their own strengths, there is no education in the world that can be completely suitable for every child. Montessori teaching method can only achieve better development

by absorbing the essence of other educational thoughts, learning from each other's strengths, and constantly improving their own education methods to meet the development needs of different children. Lastly, it is necessary to adhere to their own characteristics and to clarify their own deficiencies to mutually integrate different ideas.

4 Conclusion

Montessori education thought has many enlightenment effects on China's early childhood education. However, due to its own limitations and the background of the times, we should consider the actual situation when we study its ideology and teaching methods while rejecting the inappropriate educational content. Then, use the experience methods and integrate them into early childhood education in our country. Montessori education have their own advantages and opportunities to grow but disadvantages and external threats. Therefore, we need to highlight the advantages, weaken the disadvantages and grasp the opportunities in the threats to further improve. Then, the sinicization of Montessori education can be conducive in guiding the improvement of China's early childhood education.

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