

The Role of Teachers' Apperception in Herbart's Theory for Chinese Teaching in Shenzhen Primary Schools of China

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Abstract: This paper deeply analyzes the practical application of Herbart's educational concept in contemporary education and teaching, especially its guiding significance to the primary school Chinese classroom in Shenzhen area. Herbart proposed that teachers should play a key role in students' cognitive process, that is, help students better understand and master new knowledge by combining it with existing knowledge. The survey results show that although teachers have some understanding of Herbart's educational philosophy, it is not widely used in the concrete teaching process. However, the study also shows that there is a positive relationship between Herbart's theory and students' academic performance, indicating that it plays an important role in improving students' interest and engagement in learning. The research also reveals the differences between educational concepts and practices, as well as the uneven distribution of educational resources, and puts forward measures to alleviate these contradictions, such as strengthening teacher training, improving teaching methods, and emphasizing moral education. At the same time, the study also highlights the critical role of teachers in promoting knowledge integration, arousing learning enthusiasm, shaping students' moral character, and promoting personal and professional growth.

Keywords: Herbart's educational theory; Teacher apperception role; Teaching method optimization; Educational resource allocation

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1. Introduction

Herbart is a well-known German educational scholar and philosopher, whose theory still plays an important role in the field of modern education. He emphasized the key role played by teachers in teaching activities, especially the importance of apperception. Apperception is the process of understanding and absorbing new knowledge by combining it with old knowledge ^[1]. The purpose of this study is to analyze Herbart's theory about the role of teacher apperception and to explore how it brings new thinking to primary school Chinese teaching in Shenzhen. Herbart's educational philosophy covers four- and five-stage teaching methods,

emphasizing clarity, association, systematism, and methodology in the teaching process ^[2]. He believed that the goal of education should be to cultivate students' diversified interests and take moral education as its ultimate pursuit. Relevant studies have confirmed that Herbart's teaching methods have significant application potential in practical educational activities, especially in improving students' comprehensive quality and learning enthusiasm.

2. The application of Herbart's theory analysis

The research was carried out by filling out questionnaires. In order to have a deep understanding of the application of Herbart's theory in Chinese primary education, a questionnaire survey was specially designed and implemented. After careful planning by the research team, we aimed to make a comprehensive investigation of teachers' mastery of Herbart's theory, its application in the classroom, and its impact on students' learning results. The target audience of this questionnaire was 300 primary school teachers in 30 schools in Shenzhen. Such selection aimed to ensure the diversity and typicality of the sample. By analyzing the feedback from these teachers, the research team obtained direct data on the current application of Herbart's theory.

2.1. Teachers' cognitive level of Herbart's theory

According to the data of the questionnaire survey, about 24.6% of the teachers have a relatively deep or very deep understanding of the educational philosophy of Herbart. This part of the teacher can clearly express the basic points of Herbart's theory, such as apperception, interest, etc., and realize the important role of these points in teaching. Nevertheless, 61% of teachers still have some knowledge of Herbart's theory, but the degree is uneven. These teachers may have a certain understanding of the theory, but there are still shortcomings in practical application and in-depth understanding. In addition, there are some teachers who know little or nothing about Herbart's theory, which indicates that the promotion and popularization of Herbart's theory in China's educational circle still needs to be strengthened.

2.2. The application of Herbart's theory in classroom teaching

In the practical implementation of classroom teaching, only a small number of teachers (about 17.7%) frequently integrate Herbart's theory into their teaching activities. These teachers can combine theory with teaching practice, and effectively improve students' learning results by constructing problem situations and stimulating students' learning interest and sense of participation. However, 43.4% of teachers reported little or no willingness to incorporate Herbart's theories into regular teaching. These teachers may think that the theory is too theoretical or difficult to operate or worry that applying the theory will increase the difficulty of teaching. The rest of the teachers hold a neutral attitude or occasionally try to apply it, and their attitude and application of Herbart's theory show a certain ambiguity and uncertainty.

2.3. The influence of Herbart's theory on students' learning results

Although there are differences in the practical application of Herbart's theory in teaching activities, the research results show that there is a positive correlation between this theory and students' academic performance. Teachers who often use Herbart's theory to teach consistently report that under the guidance of the theory, students' learning enthusiasm and interaction have been significantly enhanced. They believe that Herbart's theory plays a positive role in stimulating students' critical thinking and innovative consciousness,

and encourages students to participate more actively in class interaction and conduct in-depth exploration of what they have learned. At the same time, the teachers also mentioned that the Herbart doctrine has had a significant impact on improving the quality and effectiveness of teaching, and has helped students achieve academic progress. This conclusion further highlights the far-reaching value and key role of Herbart's theory in education and teaching.

3. Conflict of interest and balance analysis

3.1. Conflict between educational concept and practice

Herbart's view of education focuses on the critical role of thinking, feeling, and teaching strategies in learning and development. He proposed that the true meaning of education is not only the simple transfer of knowledge but also the cultivation of students' thinking, emotion, and moral character. However, in the concrete implementation of primary education in our country, Herbart's theory has encountered many problems ^[3]. For a long time, China's educational concept has been deeply influenced by exam-oriented education, attaching importance to the hard input of knowledge and the exercise of exam-oriented skills, but ignoring the development of personality and the improvement of overall quality. This is in sharp contrast to Herbart's student-oriented educational concept, which emphasizes emotional and moral development ^[4].

In daily teaching activities, many teachers still adhere to the traditional teaching paradigm, overemphasize the rote memorization of knowledge and the exercise of test-taking skills, but neglect the cultivation of students' thinking, emotion, and moral character. This kind of teaching paradigm runs counter to Herbart's educational concept and causes a contradiction between educational concepts and operations ^[5]. Teachers may think that in the current educational context, the test is still the most important criterion of evaluation, so they prefer to adopt the traditional teaching model to cope with the pressure of testing. However, this practice neglects the consideration of students' all-round development and individual differences, which is not conducive to the cultivation of students' innovative ability and comprehensive quality.

In addition, in view of the short history of the dissemination and application of Herbart's educational concept in our country, many teachers do not have a deep understanding of it, and it is difficult to integrate it into teaching practice effectively. This further intensifies the contradiction between educational concepts and operations. Some teachers may find Herbart's theories too esoteric or difficult to implement, and therefore choose to avoid or ignore them in practical teaching ^[6]. This practice not only limits the influence and application of Herbart's educational concept in our country but also affects the quality and effectiveness of primary education.

3.2. Conflict in the allocation of educational resources

The imbalance in the allocation of educational resources has become one of the main obstacles to the popularization and deepening of Herbart's educational thought in China's primary education ^[7]. In China, the distribution of educational resources shows obvious regional differences due to the large geographical span and different economic levels. In economically prosperous areas, schools are often able to obtain generous subsidies from the government and all sectors of society, equipped with cutting-edge teaching facilities and abundant teaching resources. These schools are not only equipped with first-class hardware but also have a strong team of teachers, which can provide students with higher-quality education. In this context, it is easier for teachers to accept and implement Herbart's educational ideas, pay attention to students' all-round growth,

and cultivate their innovative consciousness and practical skills ^[8].

However, in economically backward or geographically remote areas, the educational resources obtained by schools appear to be limited. These schools may suffer from outdated teaching equipment, a shortage of book resources, a lack of teachers, and other difficulties. Under these conditions, it is difficult for teachers to effectively implement Herbart's theory due to a lack of teaching resources and support for implementation. They may rely more on traditional teaching methods, attaching importance to the transfer of knowledge and the cultivation of examination skills, while neglecting the cultivation of students' thinking, emotion, and moral quality. This imbalance in the distribution of educational resources not only intensifies the inequality of education but also limits the spread and application of Herbart's theory in these places ^[9].

In addition, the uneven distribution of educational resources may also cause the uneven quality of education. Schools with rich resources can provide students with more comprehensive and in-depth educational services, which helps to improve students' comprehensive literacy and innovation. Schools with poor resources struggle to meet students' basic learning needs, leading to a decline in the quality of education. This gap in the quality of education not only affects the personal growth of students but also limits the improvement of the overall educational level of society ^[10]. Therefore, solving the problem of uneven allocation of educational resources is the key to promoting Herbart's educational concept and realizing educational equity and progress.

3.3. Strategic analysis of balancing conflict of interest

In order to effectively reconcile the conflict of interest encountered in the application of Herbart's educational concept in China's primary education, the primary strategy is to strengthen the cultivation of teachers. As a key channel to improve the quality of education and spread cutting-edge educational ideas, teacher training is of great importance to the understanding and application of Herbart's educational ideas. We should plan targeted professional training programs, invite education authorities in the field to give in-depth explanations and teaching demonstrations, and help teachers master their educational essence and operational skills in an all-round and systematic manner ^[11]. Through such training, teachers can become more proficient in using the core aspects of Herbart's teaching concepts such as perception and thinking construction, and learn how to integrate these concepts into daily teaching activities, so as to improve the quality of teaching and stimulate students' enthusiasm and interest in learning.

Other than that, improving the teaching strategy and balancing the distribution of educational resources become the key means of reconciling the conflict of interests. In daily teaching activities, teachers should adopt different teaching methods and strategies flexibly according to Herbart's theory, considering the actual needs of students and the specific conditions of the school. For example, the use of multimedia technology, interactive teaching methods, and other modern teaching methods to stimulate students' interest in learning and participation ^[12]. In view of the uneven distribution of educational resources, the government and education authorities need to increase education investment, optimize resource allocation, and ensure that all schools are equipped with the necessary teaching facilities and resources. At the same time, an inter-school cooperation system should be established to promote resource sharing and mutual assistance and improve the efficiency of the use of educational resources.

Ultimately, reconciling the conflict of interests requires concerted efforts and joint support from all sectors of society. Parents, schools, governments, and all sectors of society need to agree to focus on and support the progress of education. Parents should take the initiative to participate in their children's learning

process and establish a positive communication and cooperation relationship with the school. Schools should adhere to the principle of student-oriented education and constantly improve the quality of education and service level ^[13]. The government should increase the investment and supervision of education to provide strong backing for the sustainable development of education. All sectors of society should pay attention to and support education public welfare activities, and contribute their own strength to the long-term development of education. Through these joint efforts, we are expected to jointly promote the application of the Herbart education concept in primary education in China and make positive contributions to training more outstanding talents.

4. Analysis of the role of teacher apperception

4.1. Promoting the link between old and new knowledge

Herbart's view of education emphasizes that teachers should play the role of a bridge in teaching activities, using structured explanations to encourage students to connect new and old knowledge closely. In the primary school Chinese class in Shenzhen, this teaching idea is embodied. Through carefully arranged teaching steps, such as preview, review, extension, and other activities, teachers effectively guide students to review old knowledge, and then introduce new knowledge, so that students can better accept and understand new content based on the existing knowledge system. For example, when teaching new texts, teachers can lead students to review previously learned articles on related topics or styles ^[14]. Through comparison and analysis, students can find the internal links between knowledge, thus enhancing their understanding of new knowledge points and improving their learning efficiency. This method not only helps students to consolidate their knowledge base but also helps to exercise their logical thinking and knowledge application ability.

4.2. Stimulating students' interest in learning

Herbart proposed that attention should be paid to arousing and maintaining students' learning interest in the teaching process, which is the core of improving teaching effectiveness. In the Chinese class of Shenzhen primary schools, teachers follow this idea and pay attention to the use of diversified teaching methods and interesting teaching content. Through storytelling, role play, scene reproduction, and other means, they transform the original boring Chinese knowledge into lively teaching interaction, thus igniting students' desire to learn. For example, when teaching ancient poetry, teachers can engage students in role-playing, allowing them to personally experience the situations and emotions in the poem, and deepen their understanding of the poem through this immersive experience ^[15]. Such teaching means can not only effectively attract students' attention but also stimulate their imagination and creativity, so that they can learn knowledge in a pleasant atmosphere.

4.3. Cultivating students' moral development

Herbart regarded moral education as the fundamental pursuit of education and advocated that education should be devoted to shaping students' excellent character and social responsibility. In the Chinese teaching of Shenzhen primary schools, this educational concept has been deeply carried out. Through the appreciation and discussion of literary works, teachers guide students to dig deeper into the moral concepts and socialist core values in the works, so as to cultivate their moral awareness and responsibility. For example, when analyzing fables, teachers can guide students to explore the characters' behaviors and deep meanings in the

stories, extract moral lessons and life philosophy from them, and let students receive correct moral education unconsciously ^[16]. At the same time, teachers also encourage students to think and discuss based on their personal experiences and convert the moral knowledge they have learned into practical actions, so as to realize the combination of theory and practice.

4.4. Promoting teacher professional development

From the perspective of teacher apperception, teachers need to hold a high level of professional quality and educational academic attains, and be good at using a variety of teaching strategies and tools to comprehensively promote students' progress. To this end, educational institutions should continue to provide teachers with in-depth professional training and development channels, so that they can more deeply grasp and apply the educational concept of Herbart. This includes various forms such as seminars, teaching forums, and practical workshops, inviting authoritative figures in the education sector to provide guidance and experience exchange, and providing online learning resources ^[17]. With the help of these training and learning resources, teachers can continuously update their educational concepts and teaching skills, and improve their personal and professional quality and teaching effectiveness. In addition, schools also need to encourage teachers to devote themselves to the research and practical exploration of educational theory and practice, to achieve the integration of theory and practice, and to constantly lead educational reform and innovation progress.

5. Revelations and suggestions

5.1. Strengthening teacher training

Facing the current educational situation, strengthening the professional training of teachers has become the core step to improving teaching quality. In view of Herbart's educational philosophy, which has a long history and wide influence, schools should organize regular teacher study activities to enhance teachers' understanding and mastery of Herbart's theories. The study content should not only include the key points of Herbart's theory, such as its educational philosophy, teaching criteria, and methodology, but also combine with actual teaching cases to realize the organic combination of theory and practice ^[18]. This kind of learning mode helps teachers translate theory into practical teaching actions and guide students' learning process more effectively. Through systematic study, teachers can gradually learn how to integrate the essence of Herbart's theory into daily teaching, so as to enhance teaching effectiveness and promote the all-round growth of students.

5.2. Optimizing teaching methods

Improving teaching means is an important means to stimulate students' learning enthusiasm and sense of participation. According to Herbart's theory, teachers should focus on cultivating students' diverse interests and learning skills, rather than merely transferring knowledge. In teaching practice, teachers should design appropriate teaching steps and use diversified teaching skills, such as situation creation, project exploration, teamwork, etc., in order to arouse students' learning interest and enthusiasm. With these innovative teaching techniques, students can be more actively involved in the learning process, learning knowledge and improving their abilities in a relaxed and enjoyable environment. At the same time, teachers also need to adjust teaching strategies according to the specific situation and learning needs of students to ensure that the teaching is both targeted and efficient.

5.3. Emphasizing moral education

The importance of integrating moral education into Chinese teaching cannot be ignored. In particular, Herbart's educational philosophy puts forward the key role of education in shaping students' moral demeanor. Therefore, in teaching practice, teachers should pay attention to cultivating students' moral values and understanding of social responsibilities. Through the analysis and discussion of literary works rich in educational connotations, teachers can encourage students to deeply reflect on major issues such as the meaning of life and social responsibility, and then help students establish correct values and life concepts ^[19]. At the same time, teachers can also combine moral examples in real life, so that students can feel and understand the connotation of morality in concrete practice, so as to enhance their moral cognition level and moral behavior ability. This mode of moral education not only helps to improve students' personal quality but also provides a positive force for building a harmonious society.

5.4. Enhancing home-school cooperation

Home-school association is a key link to ensure the all-round development of students. Schools should strengthen communication and cooperation with parents, and jointly pay attention to students' academic progress and growth. As the children's "first teachers," parents' educational concepts and methods have a crucial impact on children. Therefore, the school should actively invite parents to participate in the school's educational activities, so that parents can understand the teachers' teaching methods and educational concepts, and jointly provide support for their children's future planning. At the same time, parents should also take the initiative to participate in the child's learning process, pay attention to the child's learning progress and psychological changes, and establish a positive communication and collaboration relationship with teachers ^[20]. The joint efforts of both the family and the school can create a more harmonious and beneficial learning atmosphere for the child, and then promote the overall progress of the child.

6. Conclusion

Herbart's concept of education has contributed extremely important guiding principles to the field of modern teaching, especially in the deep insight and application of the teacher's role as a guide. Although we may encounter many difficulties in the specific teaching process, such as the contradiction between educational concept and practice and the unequal distribution of educational resources, we can effectively alleviate these contradictions by enhancing teachers' professional quality, improving teaching methods, focusing on moral education, and promoting the interaction between families and schools. The extensive application of Herbart's theories in primary school Chinese teaching needs to be promoted. These measures not only help to improve teaching efficiency but also promote the improvement of students' comprehensive quality, including knowledge learning, interest stimulation, moral character shaping, and innovative thinking training. It can be seen that Herbart's educational concept still has far-reaching guiding significance and practical application potential in today's educational practice.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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