

Research on the Outlook of Outdoor Education in China

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Abstract. As a teaching method, outdoor education plays an important role in supporting sustainable development. This paper mainly introduces the development of outdoor education in China, the difficulties encountered in the development of outdoor education in China and the corresponding suggestions and measures. The development of outdoor education in China is immature, and the institutions lack a professional system. The development of outdoor education is hindered by China family planning and the support of exam-oriented education. The lack of outdoor education leads to an increase in the number of adolescents' anxiety and obesity. Students cannot be enlightened in advance, so as to determine their favorite professional direction. Finally, Chinese outdoor education organizations can learn from mature institutions and improve the quality of Chinese outdoor education through security, professional knowledge and grants. According to the thought of Confucius, a great Chinese educator, he emphasized enlightening thoughts in the natural environment. Chinese educational organizations can draw on the experience of outdoor education in Finland and learn interdisciplinary knowledge of nature and society according to local characteristics.

Keywords: Outdoor education, China, Confucius, Finland.

1. Introduction

Modern outdoor education first appeared in Britain, Europe, Australia and other regions in the form of organized camping activities at the end of the 19th century. At the beginning of the 20th century, Robert Baden Powell, a British army officer, founded the Boy Scout movement. Subsequently, new organizations and schools continued to appear in Europe and gradually spread around the world. Outdoor sports can combine multiple disciplines such as science and sociology, and as a powerful learning method for teachers to impart knowledge and students to accept the contents of different disciplines [1]. Outdoor teaching is not only an outdoor activity, but also related to specific teaching content. The thoughtfully planned course content will take into account the feasibility of operation, and provide multiple opportunities for students to learn knowledge and skills, enhance the sense of experience and stimulate their inspiration [2]. Learning in this way can cultivate students' skills to explore future life, which is different from textbook knowledge. Through the outdoors, learners can experience phenomena brought about by nature or society through various senses and gain knowledge from them. Kent et al. believe that this is an effective learning method that makes all participants happy [3]. This paper will discuss the difficulties encountered in the development of outdoor education in China, as well as the experience of learning from successful organizations for sustainable development, in order to make up for the shortcomings of the single examination-oriented education in China.

2. The Importance of Outdoor Education

In ancient China, Confucius also mentioned the benefits of outdoor education and proximity to nature. He believed that outdoor education could solve psychological and physiological difficulties well and gain the truth of life from nature. In recent years, the health status of Chinese youth and the matching degree of employment and major after graduation are not optimistic. In recent years, the health status of Chinese youth and the matching degree of employment and major after graduation are not optimistic. These phenomena are related to the lack of outdoor education.

2.1. The Importance of Natural Education and Moral Education

Confucius' famous theory has exerted a great influence on Chinese education. Confucius' education mainly focused on improving the ideological level and cultivating talents with a gentlemanly demeanor. He also advocated thinking, opposed the behavior of only reading superficial books, and encouraged students to use the knowledge they learned in life and contribute to the country. Confucius believed that skill training was also one of the teaching contents, and the purpose was to strengthen the body and spirit. In this way, students can get good development in both body and brain. This is similar to Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. People have eight abilities: language, mathematics, sports, visual space, music, self-cognition, interpersonal relationship and natural observation [4]. Every ability is equally important. They can combine and cooperate with each other to face difficulties in life [4]. Therefore, more diversified considerations are conducive to the development of students.

Confucius spent most of his life wandering between different countries. Along the way, he would seize every opportunity to use the real scene to teach students on the spot and inspire students' thinking. When Confucius did not travel, his teaching sites were almost all in nature. It is recorded in *An Old Fisherman* that Confucius usually sat under the apricot tree to teach [5]. Confucius loved and revered nature all his life. He believes that nature is the best teacher. To survive and develop healthily, human beings must first learn to understand nature, and adapt to natural changes and laws. When Confucius led the students to see the surging river water, he also led the students to think about combining water with human character. The river water nourishes all things, and people should learn from it selflessly; the river contains all things, people should learn that it has a broad mind; the river keeps moving towards its goal, and people should learn from it and keep doing things [6]. Therefore, Confucius used nature as his classroom and everything in the world as his teaching material to inspire students to enrich themselves. This is also one of the goals of outdoor education, to cultivate people's good quality and open minds.

2.2. The Relationship between Outdoor Education and Family Planning Policy and Poor Physical Condition of Chinese Students

With the emergence of China's family planning policy, the phenomenon of parents' doting followed. In September, 1982, family planning was defined as a basic national policy of the People's Republic of China, that is, planned parenthood according to the population policy. The main content is to promote young people to enter marriage and have children later in life, and to suggest fewer children, so as to focus on Cultivating high-quality children [7]. It was not until 2021 that the policy was changed to allow a couple to have three children. After family planning, Chinese families responded to the call of the policy, so the number of children in the family declined rapidly. In the case of an extreme lack of children, the child will receive more care and become spoiled, and the child's relatives will pay more attention to and protect the child more comprehensively. They are more afraid of children being hurt in outdoor sports, so they reduce their chances of outdoor activities. And the higher the expectation of the elders on the only child, the family elders usually hope that the child can stand out and make a difference, and are more willing to give the resources and wealth of the whole family to the child, so that he can eat the food he wants and get a better education. In the minds of most Chinese parents, the fundamental purpose of education is to enter a prestigious school, find a decent job and get a good salary. The main way to achieve this goal is through traditional classroom study, and obtaining the score on the paper exam is the main factor to measure the success of education. This is also an important factor for the lack of a development environment for outdoor education. This also leads to another common problem that is easy to ignore due to the doting of parents, obesity. Even though the Chinese government and the Education Bureau have repeatedly stressed the importance of children's health, the obesity rate among adolescents is still growing.

The physical quality of Chinese adolescents has declined. Taking obesity as an example, the data of the Dietary Guidelines for Chinese Residents (2002) show that the overweight and obesity rate of children and adolescents aged 6 to 17 is as high as 19.0%, which means that about one in five children

and adolescents is overweight and obese, and the proportion was 18% in 2015 [8]. The decline in teenagers' physical quality and obesity are closely related to education methods. China's teaching methods mainly focus on classroom teaching and a series of effects caused by exam-oriented education, such as the increase of extracurricular remedial classes, the increase of homework and the limited rest time, which lead to teenagers' inability to strengthen their physique and lack of curiosity to explore nature. The outdoor education in the Chinese education mode mainly focuses on group playground running, gymnastics and physical education outside the classroom, but these activities are carried out in the school, and there is no effective contact with nature and experience of a new natural environment. It is a common phenomenon that physical education is occupied by teachers of other subjects in China. It can be seen that Chinese education does not pay attention to sports culture. The main reason behind this is the consideration standard for obtaining higher quality education and the idea of Chinese parents.

2.3. The Relationship between Psychological Pressure of Chinese Students and Outdoor Education

The report on the development of China's national mental health (2021-2022) shows that more than 80% of adults have self-rated good mental health, and the detection rate of depression risk is about 10% [9]. There were 14.8% of adolescents with different levels of depression risk, which was higher than that of adults [9]. Effective intervention and timely adjustment were needed. In the adult group, young people are at high risk of depression, and the detection rate of depression risk in the 18-24 age group is as high as 24.1%, which is significantly higher than that in other age groups [9]. The report found that exercise can help reduce the risk of depression. In the report, people who exercise 0-3 times a week within a month were investigated. With the increase in weekly exercise frequency, the detection rate of depression risk gradually decreased [9]. From a biological point of view, moderate-intensity exercise can produce a chemical substance called endorphin and dopamine in the cerebral cortex to make people feel relieved. Drugs can also achieve this effect, but it will also bring the side effects of excessive dependence and mania. Usually in daily life, Chinese students do not have a suitable way to cope with the huge pressure of schoolwork and parents' expectations. Therefore, the existence of outdoor education can make up for this problem.

Since outdoor sports can achieve such effects, on this basis, outdoor education can not only alleviate teenagers' anxiety, but also give them different kinds of education. Outdoor education plays a balanced role with indoor education, and its role is not exactly the same as that of outdoor sports. Increasing outdoor time means reducing indoor teaching time, forcing indoor education to improve, shortening time and improving efficiency. For example, to increase students' creativity and critical thinking instead of the same repetitive exercises. The thinking ability and imagination cultivated in this way, as well as the increased outdoor learning time, can also pave the way for students' future planning.

2.4. The Relationship between Major Selection and Outdoor Education

Outdoor teaching can be used as an enlightenment education, so that students can understand their interests earlier. Because outdoor education also includes learning in various workplaces, students can more clearly experience the real situation of different occupations. Different from students' learning in textbooks, outdoor learning requires the addition of multiple senses, which is more authentic and easier to leave a deep memory. Therefore, students may have the following situations, find their preferences, choose their hobbies and majors more firmly, and give up or even hate a certain occupation. This will help students choose their majors in the University in the future, and avoid the unconscious choice caused by their inexperience and failure to explore their interests in indoor learning. In the 2023 report on the employment of Chinese undergraduates, the proportion of fresh graduates engaged in work related to their major remained at 71% from 2018 to 2020, and increased to 74% in 2022 [10]. Although there was a small fluctuation, nearly 30% of students were still engaged in work unrelated to their major. With the increase of working time, graduates will

experience promotion, career change, unemployment and other situations. The report contains the career changes of students in the class of 2017 in the next five years, and finds that graduates who choose to change jobs within five years is increasing. From the specific reasons for graduates' choosing jobs unrelated to their majors, the proportion of students in the class of 2022 who are forced to find a job before choosing a preferred job has increased by 3% compared with the proportion of students in the class of 2021, which are 28% and 25% respectively [10]. In recent years, about 30% of students believe that work does not meet their career expectations [10]. One of the possible reasons is that students find that there is a difference between their knowledge and practice after graduation, and some people idealize their future work. The experience acquisition contained in outdoor education can improve this phenomenon.

3. Current Situation of Outdoor Education Development

3.1. Development of Outdoor Education in China

The development of modern outdoor education in China is relatively late, which may be related to the talent selection criteria in China. China tends to use the paper examination method and the teacher-centered teaching approach. In addition, the development of outdoor education in China is divergent, and there is no unified standard. The development of different organizations, from the Ministry of Education at the national level to local government departments to non-profit organizations, are making changes to different degrees to promote outdoor education. Nine departments including the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China have notified the primary and middle schools of the measures to reduce the burden on students. The notice emphasizes strengthening the guidance of students' practical activities, ensuring that they exercise for 1 hour every day, and trying to arrange it outdoors if conditions permit. Strengthen the education of life skills, actively organize social activities, and cultivate the consciousness of volunteer service. Different provinces in China are also investing in construction according to the features of local natural resources. For example, Guangdong Province in China invests in natural places needed for outdoor education, strengthens resource protection, and opens outdoor education areas. Without affecting the protection of the natural environment, areas are divided for educators and students. Schools, foundations and other education-related organizations are also launching outdoor education projects. For example, Tomorrow Advancing Life Foundation and Guangxi Biodiversity Research and Conservation Association have launched a five-day exploration tour of white-headed black langur. Children look for rare animals in a state of freedom and relaxation, experience plant tie-dyeing, help local residents harvest sugarcane, stimulate curiosity and thirst for knowledge, get close to nature, observe nature, and form the awareness of nature conservation.

3.2. Lack of Experience in Outdoor Education Institutions in China

There is no well-known, reliable and officially certified outdoor education institution in China. The emerging organizations lack security, systematic knowledge and mutual help between institutions. China has a large territory, and the natural landscapes in different regions have local characteristics, but there are also many potential safety hazards. Thick snow, steep cliffs and choppy rivers are excellent resources to provide outdoor education, but this also means that there are a variety of safety measures to match their existing risks. In addition, organizations need security solutions that include professional knowledge, as well as talents in the organization who know both security knowledge and interdisciplinary knowledge. The lack of cooperation between foundations and educational organizations is also an important factor hindering development. Equality is one of the goals of education. In China, where the gap between the rich and the poor still exists, many children do not have enough money to participate in outdoor education.

4. Recommendations

4.1. Providing Security

In terms of safety, Chinese outdoor education organizations can refer to the Duke of Edinburgh's award, which has a constantly updated security policy, including requirements on security policy, training process, data protection, staff responsibilities and other aspects. There are high requirements for internal staff and participants in the organization. This policy report can dispel the safety concerns of parents or caregivers, participants and partners to a certain extent. In addition, the policy stipulates that all participants, regardless of their identity, gender, race, religion and disability, are entitled to equal protection [11]. In this environment, the organizer can better listen to the accusations and complaints of the participants, and actively respond and correct mistakes. In addition to regular staff, volunteers also have to undergo regular training, and if they want to continue to work, they need to be retrained for at least three years and actively accept the supervision of the supervisor at least once in six weeks. In addition to protecting the safety and rights of participants, the rights and interests of staff and volunteers also need to be protected. Therefore, the organization has provided reporting policies and procedures to ensure that they have ways to take defensive measures if their problems are not solved during work.

4.2. Providing Expertise

In terms of professional requirements, Chinese organizations can refer to the Institute for Outdoor Learning. The Bureau of Education or enterprises with high reputations need to formulate certain standards, especially in terms of safety, such as certificates. Only qualified institutions can carry out outdoor teaching. Provide a guarantee for parents' concerns. For example, the Institute for Outdoor Learning, a British charity, discusses better ways to serve practice, provides policy requirements, and existing resources information, and recommends reliable suppliers. The organization also provides apprenticeship, professional standards, research and guidance, such as outdoor professionals to teach and solve geographical problems such as bad weather and biological attack in outdoor education. It helps other outdoor education organizations work together for outdoor teaching to help students increase knowledge, improve health, maintain happiness and protect the sustainability of the environment [12].

4.3. Increasing Payment Method and Funds

In terms of diversification of payment methods, Chinese organizations can refer to Outward Bound. Set up scholarships and financial aid, bind courses to outside education, and cultivate young leaders through education projects in the wilderness. For example, Outward Bound accepted AmeriCorps Education Awards. The significance of this award is that students use their service experience to support them to obtain a better education. This financial aid plan follows a principle: regardless of the economic level of students, they should have the opportunity to cultivate their character in adventure and challenge, and learn leadership skills and service spirit [13]. Segal AmeriCorps Education Award can be obtained after completing the service task and reaching the required length of time. The highest subsidy can even pay the school fees that meet the conditions. Outward Bound is willing to use the AmeriCorps award to pay tuition fees, so that more people have the opportunity to participate in the activities and obtain better education and growth [14]. Therefore, the cooperation between foundations and educational institutions needs to be taken into account.

4.4. Developing Outdoor Education According to Local Conditions

Chinese organizations can learn from Finland, which is rich in outdoor education, about the education mode that adapts to local conditions. Finnish education emphasizes learning from life and then applying knowledge to life. The purpose of learning is to live a better life. Experiential learning is carried out through personal practice and on-site interpretation. For example, Finnish teachers teach in the forest to let students get close to nature, realize the importance of protecting nature and learn

survival skills. Students can find that highly toxic mushrooms have bright colors in the forest and can protect themselves better in future life. Phenomenon-based learning is a kind of outdoor education method, which is usually interpreted as taking a topic and a phenomenon in real life as the theme, allowing students to discuss and analyze the theme, encouraging students to actively participate, improving students' ability to active thinking, avoiding one-way knowledge output, and usually including knowledge of multiple disciplines. The main purpose of phenomenon-based learning is to let children have a relationship with their living environment, but not all regions have forests, so the teaching content can be arranged according to the local characteristics. In addition to forests, teachers can also use nursing homes, waste recycling stations, carpentry workshops, museums, social communities and other places as learning places.

This method can also be encouraged to be applied to Chinese teaching, and outdoor teaching can be arranged according to the local characteristics of China. For example, Jilin Province is covered with snow in winter. At this time, going out for teaching can recognize the plants that survive in cold weather, understand the reasons for maintaining a constant temperature in mammals, the way of first aid after the snow slips, the reason newly fallen snow is fresh and fluffy, and the temperature of expelled air from the human body is close to human body temperature. This example already contains knowledge of biology, medicine, physics and other disciplines. Learning in this way of sensory participation is more impressive and the process is interesting, full of curiosity and desire to explore. It not only improves students' learning effect and students' comprehensive development, but also can apply the knowledge learned to future life. In this learning process, students can also find their interests more easily. If students are more interested in animals and plants in life, then in the future, this kind of students may choose biology-related disciplines in their future university majors, and students have found their interests early. After discovering their interests, students have a long time to confirm their interests in life and other outdoor education classes. In contrast, Chinese students lack this opportunity, so the occupation they choose after graduation mentioned above is not related to their major or they change their occupation within five years after joining the work. So this kind of outdoor teaching method can help students decide on the learning content in advance and help them make career choices.

5. Conclusion

Affected by the social environment in China, the development of outdoor education is not only slow, but also lacks of leaders, plans and rules, which has a lot to do with the China family planning and paper examination culture. Moreover, the lack of outdoor education has led to the psychological and physical discomfort of teenagers, and the job matching of majors is not ideal. For the sake of students' health, happiness and future development, China's outdoor education organizations need to improve their ability to give Chinese parents reassurance, and provide a safe environment, professional capacity and financial support. According to the ancient Chinese culture, China should learn from Finland's successful teaching experience, and formulate outdoor education plans with local characteristics for different regions of China under the requirements of a unified high standard. Although outdoor education started late in China, it has the opportunity to develop rapidly after the improvement of the outdoor education system and quality.

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