

Growth Education: A New Concept of Elementary Education based on “Education as Growth”

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Abstract: China's famous educator Mr. Ye Shengtao's “education is agriculture” and Dewey's “education is growth” metaphor both imply the common educational philosophy of respecting students' subjective status, emphasizing students' subjective initiative and attaching importance to endogenous theory. Based on “Education is agriculture” and “education is growth”, growth education against the shortcomings of traditional education, put forward the educational goals of “the learning to be”, “learning to learn”, “learning to live”, “learning to create”, its core value is “healthy growth”. in terms of curriculum modules: “build a variety of platforms to pay attention to the healthy growth of each student”, in terms of education evaluation: “focus on comprehensive performance, use appreciation to promote the healthy growth of students”, in terms of growth environmental: “based on students, attention to detail, care for the healthy growth of students”. This new educational philosophy has important practical value for the implementation of quality education and core literacy.

Keywords: “Education as Growth”; “Education as Agriculture”; Growth Education Concept.

1. The Connotation of the “Education as Agriculture” Metaphor

The metaphor of “education as agriculture” calls for education to respect the natural law of children's growth. The metaphor of “education as agriculture” calls for education that respects the natural law of children's growth and advocates personalized, “spring and rain” education based on sincere love. The metaphor of “education as agriculture” was first proposed by the famous educator Mr. Ye Shengtao, who said in his “The Collected Works of Ye Shengtao on Education” that “education is agriculture, not industry.”[1] The agriculture here is not the kind of agriculture manipulated by industrialization, but the traditional agriculture that makes crops grow naturally with natural changes, a kind of pollution-free ecological and environmental protection agriculture. There is a certain social background for Mr. Ye to make such a statement. At that time, the industrialized society was accelerating, and people in this social background also adopted the industrialized model in education, considering schools as factories and enterprises, classroom teaching as production workshops, teaching plans as production plans, teachers as workers on the production line, students as processed products, and examinations and scores as the inspection and supervision of product quality.[3] The students are the processed products, and the tests and scores are the quality of the products. Such education disregards the sequence and stage of children's growth, teachers are fond of cramming education in order to improve teaching efficiency, treating students as examination machines, and students are buried in books all day long, which seriously affects their physical and mental health and development.[4]

“Education is agriculture” requires people to abandon the method of cramming education in the context of the industrial revolution, and to respect the sequential and subjective nature of children's growth, their differences and individuality as well as to pay attention to construct the harmonious teacher-student relationship, understanding and trust. These coincide with Dewey's educational idea of “education as growth”.

2. The Connotation of the Metaphor of “Education as Growth”

“The metaphor of “education as growth” was first proposed by the American educator Dewey in his book *Democracy and Education*: “The cumulative movement of action toward later results is growth.[3]”, “Growth is not something that is added to activity from outside, but something that activity does by itself”.[5] This shows that the purpose of education should be directed to the subjective development of students. The purpose of education is to promote the growth of students' inner instincts and to meet the various needs of inner growth; from a horizontal perspective, inner growth encompasses the process of socialization. Before entering society, students should master basic social and interpersonal knowledge. From a vertical point of view, education should not end after the completion of school education, but should be carried out throughout a person's life.

Based on Ye Shengtao's “education is agriculture” and Dewey's “education is growth”, the school education concept is now condensed and sublimated into growth education. Next, we will introduce the new school education concept of growth education from the theoretical system, goals of growth education, curriculum and evaluation system.

3. The Conceptual System of Growth Education

Under the influence of Ye Shengtao's idea of “education as agriculture”, growth education applies the core values of “green, ecological and sustainable development” in agriculture to education nowadays, and its unique ecological properties have led us to think about education in a new way.[9] If we transfer the vocabulary of agriculture to the field of education, then schools are like the soil, which is the environment and carrier for children to grow and absorb knowledge and nutrients, and a variety of knowledge is the different “nutrient elements”. If we sow a healthy seed into a good soil and exclude the interference of some unfavorable factors, the seed may grow healthily and normally and

eventually bear fruit, so healthy growth is the core value of growth education.

growth education creatively absorbed the Dewey “education is growth”, and put forward some thesis, such as “attention to the growth of students’ personality, training students to learn to be; attention to the growth of students’ knowledge and experience, training students to learn to learn”; “attention to the growth of students’ social adaptability, training students to learn to live”; “attention to the growth of students’ creative ability, cultivate students to learn to create”[11] The growth of students’ creative abilities and their learning to create, among them, is the foundation, learning is the way, life is the process, and creation is the result[9] Through the combined effect of these four aspects, students are guided to become the creators of a better life in the present and in the future. These four dimensions of education follow the principle of progressive education, with internal logic, and are the concrete grasp of the implementation of core values.

3.1. Core Values

The core value of growth education is “healthy growth”.[10]. When we propose growth education, we don’t mean to confuse education with growth. Our fundamental goal is to put students first, to focus on children, to respect children, to make education and teaching appropriate to their psychological development and to meet their interests and needs.

At the same time, respect for children is never an indulgence. By “education as growth” Dewey meant growth in general rather than growth in particular; education has no purpose other than itself.[13] In fact, he placed “growth” in an extraordinary position. If we do not raise our thinking to this status, we will not understand “growth” correctly, for example, indulging students is like ignoring the seedlings in the field, allowing weeds to grow and the seedlings to fall over, which will hinder general growth, that is, what we really seek is the healthy, independent and harmonious growth of children.

3.2. Nurturing Goals

Based on the core concept of growth education, and according to the law of student growth, the school’s four-dimensional education goals are determined: in the root of growth: “to pay attention to the growth of students’ personality, and to train students to learn to be human”. Our ancient education emphasizes that “teaching children at a young age” is precisely according with this truth[11]. in terms of growth pathway: the school should pay attention to the growth of students’ knowledge and experience, cultivate students’ independent learning ability, information acquisition ability, and acquire knowledge efficiently; in terms of growth content: “pay attention to the growth of students’ social adaptability, cultivate students to learn to live” Life is the process of students’ growth, we pay attention to students’ social adaptability Therefore, teachers should consciously guide students to love life and learn to live while teaching textbook knowledge, for example, cultivating students’ awareness of compliance with rules, friendly cooperation, reasonable consumption, etc. in terms of growth results: “pay attention to the growth of students’ creative ability and Cultivate students to learn to create”. Creativity is the result of students’ growth. Students’ thinking activities do not have a fixed pattern, they are curious and have a rich

imagination, so they should be guided to combine their learning and use, and form divergent thinking on the basis of induction and summary.

On the basis of refining and enriching the concept system of growth education, the colorful educational practice of growth education can be started from three aspects: growth curriculum, growth evaluation and growth environment.[9] The students are in the main position in the practice of growth education theory, and the curriculum should be set to focus on the healthy growth of each student. The evaluation method of growth education should focus on students’ performance in many aspects, and students should be viewed with appreciation, and the environmental protection of students’ growth should be taken care of from campus construction and campus culture.

3.2.1. Curriculum of Growth Education: “Build a Variety of Platforms, Pay Attention to the Healthy Growth of Each Student”

Based on the concept of growth education and the age and psychological characteristics of elementary school students in the lower, middle and upper school levels, the growth curriculum is planned as a whole, divided horizontally into two blocks: the subject curriculum and the activity curriculum, and vertically into three age groups. The following is a brief description of the characteristics of the subject curriculum under the growth education theory.

First for language classes. Lower age groups students are encouraged to speak freely and emphasize the development of oral expression skills; middle age students develop independent reading skills through extensive reading of books outside the classroom; and upper age students develop expression skills through personalized writing. In Growth Education’s math classes, the lower-age program conducts problem-solving camps to solve real-life problems in concrete problem situations. The middle-age math program, on the other hand, emphasizes math-life connections, and at the upper ages focuses on mathematical thinking training. The English program features an emphasis on audio reading in the early grades, Western culture in the middle grades, and peer reading in the upper grades to develop students’ cooperative and interpersonal skills while learning English lessons. The arts curriculum includes artistic gymnastics in the early grades, orchestra and choir in the middle grades, and orchestral music in the upper grades, in a progressive manner that meets the interests of the students. In the science program, students in the younger age groups enter the “Nature Camp” to gain direct experiential knowledge through close contact with nature, which is in line with the basic idea of growth education, while students in the middle age groups can carry out astronomical observation and radio direction finding to stimulate students’ interest in physics.

For activity programs can also be divided into three age groups: low, middle and high. Within the school it can be divided into regular modules, seasonal modules and grade level modules[9] In-school modules can be divided into recurring, seasonal and grade level modules. Outside of school, they can be divided into family activities and social activities. The recurring module can be about voluntary activities for conservation, filial piety and other daily activities. For seasonal activities, students in the younger age groups can do fun games and painting exhibitions, while students in the middle age groups can do sericulture and mulberry farming, and students in the upper age groups can do hiking activities such as “A journey of a thousand miles

begins with a single step". Grade level activities such as "Red Story Telling", "Debate" and "Military Camp" can be conducted according to the teaching schedule to enrich students' life after school. At home, we can prepare birthday gifts for elders, organize family cleaning, and organize family meetings to improve students' organizational skills and strengthen the relationship between family members. Social activities can be carried out in libraries, museums and cultural centers, where students can learn various scientific and cultural knowledge while attending exhibitions. The two types of programs work together to create a quality curriculum for students to grow up in a healthy way that best meets their diverse developmental needs.

3.3. Evaluation System of Growth Education: "Focus on Comprehensive Performance and Promote Students' Healthy Growth with Appreciation"

The growth-based assessment approach stems from the basic philosophy of the new curriculum: "to give every student the opportunity to develop well on the basis of his or her original level, to pay attention to the students' existing experience, and to provide a variety of learning assessment methods for the development of each student. Through a variety of methods such as comprehensive assessments, value-added assessments, learning portfolios, and growth portfolios, we focus on the overall performance of all students so that each student's individual potential can be fully expressed and they can grow confidently and successfully.[9] The program is designed to help students grow with confidence and success. This is done through the use of learning corridors, teachers, and windows to showcase and publicize each student's highlights and small improvements, allowing students to experience success and using appreciation to promote the full potential of students.

Applying the concept of "value-added" to teaching evaluation[10] We have changed the traditional test evaluation method to value-added evaluation. Each semester, we select the results of four major exams for each student and form an academic chart to focus on the overall growth of the student and analyze the student's academic growth in a comprehensive manner. Special attention is given to students with learning disabilities, for whom tracking records are used for targeted instruction. These student-oriented assessment methods are conducive to promoting the formation of intrinsic motivation in students and have important practical value for the overall development of students and the implementation of quality education.

3.4. To Grow Environmental Protection: "Based on Students, Attention to Detail, Care for the Healthy Growth of Students"

The campus culture has an indirect influence on the growth of students such as the lake, the greenery, the library and the school building as well as the campus is not only a treasure house for learning knowledge, but also an important place for students' mental health education and aesthetic education.[2] The campus is not only a treasure house of learning knowledge, but also an important place for mental health education and aesthetic education. The school can be carefully constructed in terms of grass paving, flower planting, fountain design and sculpture placement. When teachers and students are in this beautiful environment, they can quickly

eliminate fatigue, cultivate their sentiments, enjoy beauty, stimulate students' learning efficiency, enhance teachers' work enthusiasm and promote students' healthy growth.[2] The campus layout should not only be designed from the perspective of the campus architecture, but also from the perspective of the students. Not only the layout of campus buildings should be done in a small way, but also the height of the commode, sink and handrails should be lowered according to the height of students, and a large number of display boards should be added in the foyer, classrooms and corridors to display students' works. The height of these panels is designed according to the height of students of different ages, so that students can experience the concept of "my world is my height" in a subtle way. Although the content on the panels varies, they all fully express each student's growth process.

4. Summary

Based on the concept of "education as agriculture" and "education as growth", the growth education attach importance to students' emotions, encourages personalized development and the cultivation of a sound personality, and comply with the law of individual development of students, emphasizing the healthy growth of students in terms of core values. In order to achieve healthy growth, we set up subject courses and activity courses in the curriculum, emphasize the comprehensive development of students in the evaluation, and pay attention to details in the campus culture, not only in the layout of the campus, but also in the transformation of the campus with the needs of students in mind. This new educational philosophy has become an inevitable trend. The downside is that there are too few examples of subject-specific aspects of the curriculum for growth education, and front-line teachers are still required to explore according to the actual situation of students and campus characteristics.

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