What Can We Do for the Advancement of Democracy in Preschool?

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ABSTRACT

The education of children's democratic consciousness is not only conducive to children's ability to acquire, to cultivate their core literacy, but also to promote the process of national democratic construction. From the perspective of social development and children's physical and mental development level, the education of preschool children's democratic consciousness is both possible and necessary. On the basis of the research on the theory and practice of democratic consciousness education, this paper puts forward a democratic consciousness education model of "one core, two environments and six contents".  

INTRODUCTION

Democracy is the core of political civilization, and democratic consciousness is not only the spiritual foundation of democracy but also a kind of political consciousness. It is a reflection of people's economic, political system and their social status. Democracy education mainly includes three aspects: equality consciousness, public consciousness, and participation consciousness. The cultivation of democratic consciousness and the value of democracy are rooted in children's attitude towards life instead of the sudden transfer of power in adulthood[1]. Through the active participation of democratic experience, children realize that human rights involve reciprocity and mutual respect, rather than a way to meet individual needs and potentials. This is a more effective democratic foundation for children to become a qualified citizen in the future.

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THE VALUE OF DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION IN PRESCHOOL

It will help children to better participate in social civic life in the future to have concrete experience of democratic participation[2]. Crick pointed out that the education of children's democracy was related to the level of social democracy closely and the acquisition of democracy are beneficial to the democratic behavior of social participation behavior after children's adulthood[3]. School studies many countries have shown that early childhood participation in children, families, communities, schools, countries and democratic progress has a wide and positive impact on, both in developed and developing countries, in developing countries and in the early stage of democratic awareness[4-5]. People who receive specific democratic experience in childhood, are more likely to translate this experience into an adult rather than those who do not have such experience.

At the same time, Zafer pointed out that although children were favored in daily life, people's love was not rational, and love can’t be converted into respect such as democratic behavior[6]. In a word, the education of early democratic consciousness is not only conducive to the children to learn how to enjoy the right, to express their opinions, to participate in the decision, but also to the formation of the independent personality of the children. The cultivation of preschool children's early democratic consciousness is conducive to undertaking responsibility and social participation, and further promoting the cultivation of core literacy of pre-school children.

POSSIBILITY

The development of children's democratic consciousness should base on children's physical and mental maturity. The research of brain science showed that the development of in the early brain of children is gradually improved, which makes the preschool children period the most easily accepted and most sensitive period[7-9]. It has been found that preschool children not only can feel the emotional experiences related to democratic significance such as differences and fairness, but also can judge, empathize, understand, transposition thinking and so on, and then make democratic behavior (such as participation and negotiation)[10-13].

SELECTION OF CONTENT

The school should be responsible for all aspects of the students' access to tools and development attitudes, ensuring the necessary guidance and support for the students in their social life, so that they can understand and consolidate the values of democratic life and respect for human rights. The proper democratic education and the participation of children's democracy in school are conducive to the formation of the democratic campus environment and help children to have better political participation in the future[14]. Democracy depends on education, and the democratic
education for pre-school children is not only conducive to children's better commitment to civic responsibility, but also to the building of socialist democracy.

Schools should provide a relaxed democratic environment for children where they can express and choose behavior freely. Secondly, the selection of the content for the education of democratic consciousness in preschool education should conform to the developmental physical and mental of preschool children, and should be in line with the value orientation of modern democratic society. Content of children's democratic consciousness is different in all countries. The Council of Europe requires schools to educate students' democracy by consolidating democratic values and respecting human rights[15]. Rindsjö summed up the democratic content of Swedish preschool education as follows: democracy, solidarity, fairness, equality[16]. Generally speaking, the content of democratic consciousness education is generally focused on equality, listening, recognition of differences, dialogue and consultation, and resolving contradictions. A mode is put forward with a core, two environment and six contents around the preschool children's democratic education in the following picture.

A CORE: RESPECT CHILDREN'S BASIC RIGHTS

In children's daily life, the relationship between power and obligation always exists. The cultivation of children's democratic consciousness requires the participation of individuals in democratic affairs. For the right subjects, the premise of participating in democratic affairs is the acquisition of rights. The Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulates that the most basic rights of children are the right to life, the right to protection, the right to development and the right to participate. Parents and educators should make clear the basic rights of children and ensure the rights of children. The right to participate is that children have the right to participate in social life and have the right to express their opinions on all matters affecting them[17]. The recognition of the basic rights of children is to give the freedom and space for children's opinions in all decisions related to the interests of children and to pay attention to the publication of children's opinions according to their age and psychological maturity.

THE TWO ENVIRONMENTS: CLASSROOM AND FAMILY

Children have the ability to express their views and communicate with others, while adults' responsibilities and obligations are to create a supportive democratic environment for children. The creation of a democratic environment should first establish a sense of belonging and a sense of security for children. Sense of security is the basic state of individual existence. The development of individual spirit starts with seeking and satisfying the sense of security. Preschool children have not yet gained the power to achieve self-security in self-reliance, and the acquisition of
sense of security is the psychological basis for children to explore the world and participate in affairs. Therefore, educators should provide a sense of security environment instead of high pressure, high control and non-democratic environment.

THE SELECTION OF THE CONTENT

1. Let children recognize of differences. Differences constitute among human beings and make the objective world rich and various, and educational practice is always related to differences. Differences exist in children's families, nationalities, cultures, and so on, embodying the uniqueness of every child. For preschool children, recognition of differences is a two-way process. First of all, preschool children should admit that they are different from others, regardless of their height, language, appearance, etc., to form a correct self-cognition; then, on this basis, accept the difference between others and their own and accept the existence of diversity.

2. Listen to others. Language is the way to get information. Children learn to listen and to express, which helps to better communicate with others and understand the ideas and practices of others. The development of empathy enables children to have listening ability. Democratic listening is not just about getting the meaning of others’, it is the, the choice of the core ideas, the understanding of others' views which based on emotional basis and logic of others. In addition, adults should give children the right and opportunity to listen. The recognition of rights is that adults give children space and time to express, listen actively to children's ideas, and attach importance to them.

3. Exchange of views. Exchange of opinions is based on good listening. Choose the core views of others and find out the differences between their views and others' views, and further try to understand the reasons for the differences of views. Empathy and transposition thinking could adjust their ideas, understand the desirability of others' views, and further correct and improve their views. Children are more active in speech communication and expressing social intentions. Therefore, in the process of democratic consciousness education, teachers should actively play the role of communication, through which strengthen the understanding and feelings of the social behavior of preschool children's democratic consciousness.

4. Participate in decision making. Children's participation is not only the basic power of children, but also an important ability to develop. At present, there are still problems and difficulties in the participation of children, including the restrictions or interference of adults. For a long time, kindergartens take the as the core where there are few opportunities to truly implement children's participation. Children's ability to acquire is directly related to the extent to which they can take advantage of their own lives. The most effective preparation for self-confidence is to achieve a goal for themselves[18], not just observing others to achieve goals. Through participation,
children acquire skills, build up their abilities, expand their aspirations, and gain confidence.

5. For mutual rules. In interpersonal relationships, there are not only conflicting desires for success and other needs, but also rules to promote mutual respect and joint action. The rules help to point out the confine with others, which in turn promote interaction with others. The rules which children may not be clear about the specific meaning of are often drawn up and implemented by adults and children are passive executors. The education of democracy consciousness requires not only freedom of expression, behavior, but also the execution of rules. Children are more willing to abide by the rules and norms that they participate in.

6. Solve contradictions by dialogue and consultation. Children are at the stage of "self-centered" development. In the study, the non-cooperative method (aggression, withdrawal and help seeking) accounted for 64.3%[19]. When the conflict occurs, teachers should use the situation, actively guide children to listen and understand the feelings of others, in order to solve contradictions through the communication among peers. Actually, teachers often use authority to evaluate, reward and punish to resolve contradictions which deprives the children of right to communicate on an equal footing and to express personal opinions. Piaget pointed out that disputes and disagreements among children are essential for promoting the process of decentralization and enabling people to understand others.

CONCLUSIONS

The cultivation of democratic consciousness needs the common efforts of the society, the family and the school. In order to respect and recognition of the basic rights of children, in all aspects of school life and family life, we should seize the opportunity of education, guide the occurrence of children's democratic significance, and improve children's democratic consciousness. This model is proposed to help kindergarten teacher’s better deal with children's daily life.

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