

Relive the Living Education Theory: the Optimal Path of Early Childhood Labor Education

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Abstract. Under the background of the new era, strengthening labor education has a strong practical significance. This paper reviews the labor education in the theory of “Living education”, affirms the significance of preschool labor education, and puts forward some optimal path of early childhood labor education. Establish the home community, enrich the forms of labor practice in the kindergarten, carry out teacher education and labor training would be appropriate path of early childhood labor education.

Keywords: Living education; young children; Labor education; Chen Heqin

1. Introduction

In September 2018, Xi Jinping pointed out at the National Education Conference that “efforts should be made to build an education system that fully cultivates morality, intelligence, body, beauty and labor”. Xi also emphasized “carry forward the spirit of labor and guide to build a value system that advocates and respects labor” [1]. Marx pointed out that “The combination of education and production labor is the fundamental principle of socialist education”. [2] Chen Heqin, a famous children’s educator in China, advocates that in teaching activities, teachers should “teach live books, teaching lively, teaching”. And children should “read live books, live and live”. His theory is called Living Education Theory by the academic circle. Chen Heqin also advocates students to learn in practice, make progress in practice, and obtain textbooks from society and nature. Therefore, we can find that Labor Education is similar to Living Education in the connotation and extension. which is also a component of “implementation of cultivating people by virtue”. This paper based on Chen Heqin’s Living education theory, exploring the internal connection with the new era of preschool labor education, trying to find ways to break the bottlenecks and obstacles encountered in kindergarten labor education, seeking the optimization path of developing preschool labor education in the new era. It is of great significance to improve the quality of kindergarten talent training.

2. Connections of “Living Education” and Labor Education in the New Era

Chen Heqin is one of the founders of China's new education after the May 4th Movement”[3], and is known as the “father of preschool education in China”. In the background of the Boxer indemnity, he was deeply honored to study in the United States. He was in sadness when he saw the difficult situation in China at that time. So he had an ambition to revitalize China. In order to achieve his goal, he devoted his lifelong efforts and energy to the cause of early childhood education in China.

Chen Heqin was very disappointed in the education at that time. After deeply reflecting on the traditional education, he found that the traditional education was influenced by the ancient social background, was out of reality. He proposed to turn “dead education” into “living education” and “forward lively, angry education” [4] . Thus, “living education” was born, which emphasizes that children interact with the outside world by “doing” and then construct their own experience. Of particular note is Mr. Chen’s concern about family labor education, pointing out that we forget the responsibility of being parents. “The responsibility of you (parents) is to help children live, is to help children stand on their own.” It can be seen that Chen Heqin affirmed the intrinsic value of

early childhood labor education, which is the foundation children's lifelong development. It is coupled with the value of early childhood labor education in the new era.

The theoretical system of Living Education consists of the three goals, educational principles, five-finger activities and the four steps of implementing teaching. One of the goal is to "teaching in doing, learning in doing, and progressing in doing". And the first teaching principle of living education is "What a child can do by himself, he should be left to do". [5] He advocated that all learning, whether muscular, sensory or neural, depends on doing.[6] Guide proposes that young children gain experience through direct perception, practice and hands-on experience. The purpose of children's labor education in the Guide is to make children experience, feel and reflect in doing. It emphasizes that children take the initiative to build their own spiritual world, which is highly consistent with the interpretation of Chen Heqin's Living Education Theory on labor education.

3. Reexamine the Problems Existing in Labor Education in the New Era

3.1 Kindergartens: the Contents of Labor Education are Simple and Superficial

The contents of labor education in kindergarten are mainly based on the cultivation of children's self-care ability, such as wearing clothes, taking off shoes, folding the quilt. It is obvious that due to the prejudice of children's physical and mental development, the teaching contents of kindergarten cannot get rid of simple labors. What's worse, these labor doesn't touch the cultivation of children's labor values and labor emotion. According to the study, the teaching contents of kindergarten mostly focus on daily life. According to some researches, the content of early childhood labor education is obviously not systematic and superficial. Labor education is a long-term process, with the characteristics of uninterrupted. And the unsystematic content of labor education makes the cultivation of children's labor key competence cannot be realized.

3.2 Families: Lack of Scientific Concept of Labor Education

Family is the main battlefield for children to receive labor education. However, parents are lack of a correct view of labor education, knowing nothing about cultivating children's labor ability, labor emotion and labor values. In traditional parents' opinion, labor education is the same as corporal punishment. And the younger generation in the new era generally believes that corporal punishment is a bad educational behavior. Therefore, they never let children carry out appropriate labor, missing the physical and psychological values brought by labor education. On the contrary, there are also some parents hold the view that it is necessary for children to accept labor education. So they offer some tasks in order to develop children's labor key competence. What they ignored is that too many tasks may cause irreversible harm to children's physical and mental development.

3.3 Teachers: the Alienation of Labor Values, the Lack of Labor Knowledge and Skills

Nowadays, more and more people devote themselves to education. According to the research, new teachers generally do not have the consciousness of labor, for the understanding of labor is also one-sided. In the process of labor education, we are easy to find that teachers' labor knowledge is insufficient, and their labor skills are lacking. The core quality of teachers in labor education is under the standard, therefore, it is difficult for them to finish the task of labor education. For instance, in a crops planting course, teachers know nothing about the use of farm tools and the characteristics about crops.

4. The Optimization Path of Kindergarten Labor Education under the Perspective of Living Education Theory

On October 9, 2012, the Ministry of Education officially promulgated the Learning and Development Guide for Children aged 3-6, which suggested that kindergartens should lead children

to take care of themselves or help to do housework, developing their hand movements. Such as eat with chopsticks, button up clothes, help parents trim vegetables and make wheaten food. The policy also emphasizes that kindergartens should guide children to learn and master the basic skills of independent living, such as take off clothes, shoes and socks, washing, blow nose and brush buttocks. What's more, children who at the age of five or six should master the skills of using simple labor tools. Last but not least, the Guide pointed out some appropriate paths for child labor education. "Efforts should be made to build an education system that comprehensively cultivates morality, intelligence, physique, beauty and labor," Xi said at the National Education Conference in 2018.[1] Therefore, various places have strengthened the development of kindergarten labor practice curriculum.

Based on Chen Heqin's Living Education Theory, we try to explore the optimization paths of labor education in kindergarten, including establishing home coeducation community, building labor practice bases, strengthening normal university labor education and reviewing local labor education masters' research outputs .

4.1 Enrich the Contents of Kindergarten Labor Education Courses

Chen Heqin pointed out that cultivate children's habits of service is also a part of education. Kindergarten is the epitome of a society. Due to its special nature, kindergarten is the main platform to carry out collective services such as theme activities of "labor is the most glorious", "I love planting trees", the beautification of classes, school public places and the campus. Qualified kindergartens can also take the fields and woods as agricultural practice bases, and carry out the activities like breeding, plantations, manual labor workshops. Though labor education in the kindergarten is the main practice base, we can not ignore the resources outside the kindergarten. Social resources out of the school gate are supplements for children to carry out labor education. Carry out labor education outside the school gate requires the strong supports from all walks of life, creating a good atmosphere of labor first for children, providing a place for labor practice, helping children establish the emotion of love for labor are also of great concern. To begin with, we should provide children with the opportunity to get close to model workers and ordinary workers, so that they can understand the most glorious meaning of labor from workers and experience the happiness brought by labor. Two to provide children with the real environment of production and service labor, let students walk into workshops, farms. In this way, teachers can not only strengthen children's sense of social responsibility but also cultivate their patriotic feelings.

4.2 Establish a Community of Home Co-education and Parents' Awareness of Labor Education

Parents are lack of right parenting concept. However, Chen Heqin clearly put forward in his book Our Proposition that both kindergartens and families are responsible for children's education. Children's education is a whole, continuous process. Teachers should know all the circumstances of children at home, including what they eat, what they do, what they play and what they learn. Parents should also know what their children are doing and learning in the kindergarten, so that there is no conflict between the two sides of the education, and the education effect is sure to be great. [5] Mr. Chen especially emphasized the importance of co-education between parents and kindergartens. At the same time, he also pointed out that parents are important partners of kindergartens. Both of them should make full use of the natural environment and community educational resources, to expand children's life and learning space [7]. It can be seen that, first of all, kindergartens and parents should establish a community of home co-education, developing children's labor key competence in two ways. And at the same time, the kindergarten should give parents certain rights, and respect the parents' opinions. What's more, establish an effective communication mechanism for home co-education like parent-teacher meetings, parent-child activities, in which the home communication should be comprehensive, timely and effective. Remember to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings. Finally, in the process of contact between

teachers and parents, Chen Heqin's knowledge about labor education should be introduced to parents to establish the awareness of labor education.

4.3 Carry out Teacher Education and Labor Training, and Give Full Play to the Role of Teachers as Role Models

As early as in 1940, labor course was the required course for those students who major in preschool education. At that time, students who can only get high grade were unpopular among people. Nowadays, on the contrary, the lack of labor education in the curriculum of our current preschool teachers makes most preschool teachers do not master the basic labor knowledge. They can not be familiar with using labor skills, and then have no awareness of labor education. Therefore, we should start from the source, setting up labor education-related courses in normal colleges, so that the future normal university students engaged in the teacher industry can master the basic labor knowledge and skills, so as to establish the correct labor values. Secondly, newly enrolled teachers also need to carry out labor education and training, improving labor literacy. Finally, kindergartens can make use of winter and summer vacation time to carry out regular labor education for in-service teachers, so that preschool teachers have a good professional background and working background of labor education. It plays an important role in developing children's labor ability. Mr. Chen from the psychological point of view, summed up that children have the characteristics of active and good imitation, so they are opt to follow teachers. In the daily labor education, no matter in class or after class, teachers should set a good example for children.

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