

Philosophy Education for Kindergarten Children: Connotation, Path, and Development

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Abstract: Children are born philosophers. From kindergarten, they begin to think, explore the world around them, and ask philosophical questions. Philosophy education in kindergarten raises children to be "wisdom-loving" people in three ways: cultivating morality - "keep the purity and cultivate the spirit of wisdom", loving intelligence - "children are born philosophers", inquiry - "diverse practices enriching life". In pursuing children's philosophical education, educators should respect children's spiritual world, pay attention to the practical value of their philosophy, select appropriate curriculum resources, and constantly strengthen their philosophical education ability. It is necessary for educators to ensure the effective implementation of philosophical education for kindergarten children in the process of "practicing philosophy with children".

Keywords: Philosophy for children; Children's philosophy education path; Children's philosophy education development; Kindergarten education

1. Introduction

The concept of philosophy for children was first introduced by the American educator Lippmann, who introduced the term "philosophy for children" in his book Harry Stottlemeire's Discovery. In 1991, Lippmann introduced the "Children's Philosophy Program" to promote educational reform. In this program, children formed a research community to foster the education of children's philosophical inquiry and thinking. To this day, the inquiry community is still one of the educational methods advocated by contemporary children's philosophy education. After that, Matthews, a contemporary American philosopher, promoted the systematization and disciplinary construction of philosophy for children. Matthews believed adult philosophy was a mature and idealized form of children's philosophy. Adult philosophy also has its roots in children's philosophy. People think philosophically and even reason philosophically when in the child stage. The psychologist Piaget believes that the development of almost all children follows a similar path, so children's philosophy is implicit. The famous educator Karl Theodor Jaspers suggested that everyone has his philosophy and that a child's philosophy is often unintentionally reflected in his dialogues. Li Zhi is an integrator of the Chinese philosophy of childishness. He believes that "childishness" is a person's true heart and sincerity. Since it is also an inherent source of the soul and can make a person honest and complete, if a person loses his childishness, he cannot be qualified as an adult. So far, the research on philosophy for children has strongly tended to conclude a common point of view: children have their philosophies; therefore, children's philosophy education should not be about the study of philosophical knowledge and speculation skills but an education that helps children complete their thinking and expression on issues such as self-awareness, life meaning, social development, and life responsibilities.

2. The Connotation and Essence of Children's Philosophy

2.1 Connotation

In the practice of contemporary philosophy education for children, the focus has gradually shifted from the theoretical, conceptual exploration of philosophy to the practical construction of its meaning.

In applied philosophy, children's philosophy, often referred to in China, is the children's philosophy program launched by Lippmann [1]. The aim is to develop children's critical thinking and philosophical thinking skills. It has important guiding significance for teaching philosophy and creating an environment for philosophy education. In the book *Philosophy and the Young Child*, Matthews describes many children's conversations and organizes and analyzes them from a philosophical point of view. From these conversations, we can conclude that children have philosophical ideas and worldviews. Many scholars have since used real-life examples to confirm that children have philosophical thinking. And in his book *The Philosophy of Childhood*, Matthews defined "philosophy of childhood" as a branch of philosophy similar to the philosophy of science and art, and first constructed the theoretical framework of the philosophy of childhood and treated it as a discipline. Specifically, the philosophy of childhood is concerned with the following issues: the concept of childhood, the comparative cultural study of childhood, the rights and status of the child, the cognition of the child, and others. Later, the Chinese scholar Liu Xiaodong expanded the theory. He believed that "children's philosophy" refers to children's views on the universe, life, and other related issues, including their curiosity, questions, inquiries, and understanding of everything in the world. And he explained and defined children's philosophy as a discipline, including three aspects: "children's philosophy," "children's philosophy," and "children's philosophy inquiry plan" [2].

2.2 Essence

Children are "wisdom-loving". In short, children are passionate about exploring the world's ultimate mysteries. The fundamental is to protect children's original philosophical research so that they can strengthen their "wisdom-loving" for themselves and the world around them. Therefore, the essence of philosophical education for children is to "practice philosophy" with them. Kindergarten children's philosophy education advocates learning methods dominated by direct experiences, such as learning through life and plays, studying through operation and experience, gaining perspectives through observation and imitation, and so on. The content of kindergarten philosophy education comes from children's surprise at the world around them and the process of exploring the surprise itself. It is the beginning for children to explore the development and formation of the world of life. It is also an educational practice in which both adults and children grow together [3]. To sum up, philosophy education for children should be practiced and learned by doing individually and in groups.

3. The Method of Philosophy Education for Kindergarten Children

3.1 Moral Education: Protecting Childlike Innocence and Cultivating Wisdom

Philosophical education for children is a process that leads children to self-reflection, self-experience, and discussion. It is essentially a response to children's nature, inseparable from their moral nature. The Chinese philosopher Li Zhi once said, "Childlike innocence is the beginning of the heart." He believes that "childlike innocence" is a person's original intention and sincerity, born with the source's soul. With childlike innocence, there is sincerity, which can make people become a real person and complete person. Here, the "real person" can be understood as someone with high moral sentiments. According to Kant's theory of moral philosophy, people will pursue a moral law that necessarily exists from reason and freedom that comes from nature. Therefore, children also have the most initial judgment and cognition of morality. So, the purpose of moral education from the perspective of children's philosophy is to protect children's nature and promote children's basic moral emotions, moral behavior, and reasoning ability through appropriate educational means [4].

Moral education, as one of the essential contents of children's philosophy education, is to develop children's moral reasoning ability and guide them to make rational moral judgments as much as possible under certain circumstances. In addition, it actively develops children's moral feelings. In philosophy education for children, people usually use literature as a means or put children in life-related situations to carry out moral education. Before philosophical inquiry, educators used picture books as a carrier to create stimuli to guide children to list the moral behavior of the protagonists in the story. In the process of philosophical inquiry, educators use philosophical thinking tools or dramatic means to encourage children to dialogue and experience the moral behavior of the protagonist. These methods develop the child's ability to moral reasoning and conclude. After philosophical inquiry, educators encourage children to apply their personal views to practice to enhance their moral consciousness and promote their moral behavior.

3.2 Loving Wisdom: Children Are Born Philosophers

Children's philosophy education is not only a "logical" philosophy but also contains the *Loving Wisdom* in Socrates' period. *Loving Wisdom* is to explore the wisdom value of life's meaning. In the view of contemporary children's philosophy educators, the five-step teaching model of children's philosophy proposed by Lippmann and Sharp is standardized and streamlined, which is contrary to the pursuit of philosophy. Therefore, children's philosophy education should not emphasize the norms of form but should emphasize the construction of meaning. To sum up, children have a unique understanding of the world. People pay attention to the characteristic of children's love for wisdom in philosophy education, which not only exercises children's thinking ability but also realizes the pedagogical goals of children's learning to think, cooperate, and care through the philosophical path.

Children are born philosophers. Educators overemphasize the content, standards, and forms of kindergarten children's philosophy education, killing children's philosophical nature. Educators should respect and appreciate children's worldviews and outlook on life and reflect on and adjust their behaviors that violate children's subjectivity. In practice, educators use dialogue and field visits to get to know children's positions [5].

3.3 Inquiry: The Diversified Practice of Enriching Life

The philosophical education of children is always inseparable from the topics of the individual, life, nature, and the universe, which are the eternal significance of the philosophical education of children [6]. The category of children's philosophy is based on the topics of children and self, nature, and society. This educational process is a journey to explore the unknown world and enrich life experience. Children are guided in their diverse quest for the meaning of life, life, and the world. In this process, children have the following needs.

First, children need to engage in dialogue with the world. According to the kindergarten children's personal experience, educators need to pay attention to children's diverse forms of interaction, such as child-self dialogue, child-text dialogue, and child-other dialogue, to achieve diverse practice. For example, the classic picture book *My Sorrow* is like an Elephant tells a story about a child who faces the death of his grandmother alone. He initially has difficulty accepting the fact of his grandmother's death and feels pained that his parents do not understand him. Later he begins to think about whether the sadness will ever go away. Ultimately, he learns to live with sadness in a friendly way. Such drawings inspire children to think about issues such as life and death. Exploring the problem of sorrow is precisely the process of philosophical inquiry, as this child expresses his true feelings, raises confusion, solves it, and finally courageously pursues life's meaning [7].

Second, children need to explore the world independently. Children's philosophical education practice occurs in their brains and is integrated into the surrounding environment. It encourages children to participate and perceive in person and directly obtain the cognition and experience of the surroundings to think. Teachers can explore "activities" of any content or theme in philosophical education. This practice is a process of inquiry.

Children's philosophy education can guide children to have real feelings, raise thoughts about topics they are interested in, and then explore the multiple meanings of life and the world. Philosophy education for children is a diverse practice to enrich children's life.

4. Development Strategies of Philosophy Education for Children Aged 3 to 6

4.1 Respect for Children's Spiritual World

Children's minds are simple, pure, and imaginative compared to the complex minds of adults. Questions that seem simple and meaningless to adults become rich and wonderful journeys of inquiry for children, and many children's philosophical thoughts are formed in this rich spiritual world. Practicing philosophy in kindergarten can protect a child's ability to question and explore the world [8]. In other words, the principle of teaching philosophy to preschoolers is to respect the child's spiritual world and to take the child as the subject of education with core values. In daily life, adults should respect doubts raised by children, think and explore with children, solve problems together, and inspire and guide children to explore the world further.

4.2 Emphasis on the Practical Value of Children's Philosophy Education

The practical value of teaching philosophy to children is to support the independent construction of their own experiences. For a long time, philosophy struggled to enter the public eye as an obscure and esoteric subject. For young children, the practical meaning of children's philosophy should be developed, and "doing philosophy with children's philosophy" has become a contemporary trend in teaching philosophy to children. The child-centered hypothesis often appears in traditional preschool education. Adults think from the children's point of view, and their nature is always adult-oriented, suppressing children's true pursuit of the inner world to a certain extent [9]. Therefore, kindergartens should see the value of teaching philosophy to children and see children's philosophy as an important way to understand children's mental world and support their life development. In learning and exploring children's daily lives, educators encourage children to discover and ask questions, use multiple interactive formats to find answers to questions, and enable children's philosophical inquiry and philosophical creation.

4.3 Selection of Appropriate Philosophy Education Curriculum Resources

The selection of teaching materials for the philosophy curriculum for kindergarten children should focus on the children's discoveries and questions about the world. Such as literary works, scenes, or materials that children can directly perceive and manipulate. Regarding the current practice of philosophical education for kindergarten children, there is no unified philosophy textbook for children in China. However, publishers produce many philosophical picture books, and some elementary and junior high schools and kindergartens have taken the lead in philosophical education by offering school philosophy courses [10]. At present, the practice of children's philosophy education in kindergarten is more reflected in the class-based curriculum based on children's problems, interests, and experiences. In general, there are three steps to identifying curriculum resources for Kindergarten Children's Philosophy: One is to rely on the educator to observe and record children's perceptions and questions carefully and to improve children's common problems. The second is to filter the questions based on the children's interests, needs, and feasibility of exploration. The third is to determine the theme of philosophical inquiry and form an inquiry group. Since there are individual differences in children's experiences, kindergartens do not yet have a complete and unified curriculum on children's philosophy. However, more and more cases of teaching practice are being used as a reference by many educators to create a philosophical education suitable for the development of young children [11].

Children's philosophy education not only cares for children but also for adults. Educators are children's collaborators, guides, and supporters, so they should grow up together with children. Studying philosophy helps adults develop a complete view of the world, life, and children and sees the energetic children around us from a philosophical perspective. Therefore, educators should change the traditional concept of education, infuse children's spiritual world into daily education, use children's "wisdom of love" to feel children's life, and integrate into the world of children's philosophical practice as "Doing Philosophy with Children". The improvement of educators' philosophical literacy is of great benefit to both the growth of educators themselves and the overall development of young children.

5. Conclusion

Children's philosophy is the process of children's active perception, thinking, and exploration of self, nature, and society, and Children communicate and dialogue with the surrounding world and independently explore it. It is very beneficial to carry out children's philosophy education in kindergartens. On the one hand, children and adults help each other and grow up so that their spiritual world can expand freely, maintain a childlike innocence, and return to their true selves; On the other hand, children's philosophy education promotes the development of children's moral education, cultivates them to become people who love wisdom and can explore. Furthermore, teaching philosophy to children requires that educators respect the children's spiritual world, emphasize the practical value of teaching philosophy, develop appropriate curriculum resources, improve educators' own philosophical literacy, etc. Philosophy education for kindergarten children should start from the child's heart, listen to the child's philosophy, and philosophize with the child.

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