

The Development and Influence of Montessori in the United States and China

Ruochen Liao

*School information: Syracuse University, College of Arts and Science Corresponding author's e-mail:
 Vivian.wang@cas-harbour.org*

ABSTRACT

As an influential educational system all over the world, Montessori education method provides a feasible choice for traditional education. When it enters different countries, it should be changed to adapt to local conditions. Montessori's adaptation method and situation in American society as a reference to compare and describe the difficulties it needs to face if it wants to carry out long-term development in China. One of the most direct difficulties is the lack of a large number of elite teachers in preschool education industry, and the lack of enough space. The solution is to cooperate with colleges and universities, and improve education welfare, so that the elite are willing to enter the industry. The solution to the problem is to let parents participate in the process of education and face the Montessori education method to the parents.

Keywords: *Montessori, China, the United States, early childhood education, globalization*

1. INTRODUCTION

Globalization brings not only economic prosperity, wealth expansion and personnel flow, but also cultural integration. Among them, education is a very important part of cultural integration. The collision of numerous ideas will push the development of education to the whole world. There are a lot of education policies, such as Reggio, Waldorf and DAP, which have moved to more countries in the process. Montessori, as an important part of early childhood enlightenment, also has a great impact on global education. Montessori is a kind of educational method named after Maria Montessori, a child educator. She wrote a book "scientific education methods applied to children's home"[6]. It was published in the United States in 1912, and it was quickly translated into more than 20 languages and spread all over the world[6]. This is a child-centered education method against cramming, which aims to respect children's internal needs and cultivate their perfect personality. The emergence of Montessori education method has caused a revolution of early childhood education in the world. When this educational method is implemented in different countries, it is faced with a variety of national conditions. Some education methods may be difficult to be real-time in some countries, so they have made appropriate adjustments when they are integrated into each country. In this study, the changes that have taken place after Montessori education method entering the United States and China, and what directions should be taken

for improvement in the future will be discussed. The purpose of it is to enable the education law to get better development in China, and let China's early childhood education develop and become more diversified.

2. MONTESSORI EDUCATION METHOD

When Montessori first entered the United States a hundred years ago, it began to "stimulate children's interest in learning"[6]. It is a revolution that has completely changed the educational model. Different from the previous "Teacher centered" education, in the teaching process, teachers are no longer "guides", but "helper"[2]. It is because of this guided education model that children will learn to value cooperation, abide by the rules, and remain curious and love learning[1]. At this time, they will creatively achieve outstanding results. This teaching method in the early days of the United States caused great repercussions, and related schools mushroomed.

However the scene of this boom did not last long, and the opposition came out one after another. The educationist headed by William head Kilpatrick[6] criticized that this educational method paid too much attention to individualism and was outdated (the Montessori system examined). After that, Montessori withdrew from the American Montessori Society for nearly forty years, along with other reasons, such as

contempt for educators, travel restrictions in World War I, and language barriers[7].

During this period, Dr. Montessori did not stop her development. She turned her attention to the youth, and because of the influence of the world war, peace education was also integrated into the Montessori education law[7]. In the 1950s, traditional education was attacked by more and more Americans, and an alternative was badly needed to be found out. Nancy, a New York teacher who was interested in Montessori's educational method and attended Montessori's Congress, once again brought this educational policy back to the United States[5]. This time, the education law has not been excluded, but because it is in line with the needs of the society at that time, it has flourished so far. At the same time, there are elites trained by Montessori education method in various fields, which makes this education method more recognized.

3. THE DEVELOPMENT OF MONTESSORI IN CHINA

Compared with the United States, Montessori's large-scale entry into China was relatively late, and it had a relatively more suitable space for development 20 years ago[3]. At that time, like the United States in the 1960s, there was a trend of education reform, and a variety of non-native education models were introduced to China. Montessori is one of them. China, as a country with a large population, is facing some problems when accepting this kind of education law.

3.1. First stage

Firstly, due to the Montessori education method also has a nickname "children's home"[4], which means that in the classroom, all appliances are in line with the size of children's use, such as tables, chairs and cabinets, and need enough space for children's "work"[2]. This means that this kind of education method needs more space and which may cost more. Moreover, since the abolition of family planning in 2016, Chinese parents may have more than one child, which means more educational capacity is needed, and all the educational facilities previously provided for the "one child policy" are in short supply.

3.2. Second stage

Secondly, compared with other teachers, Montessori teachers need specific, professional training. Nevertheless, according to the annual statistics of the Ministry of education in 2016, the educational background of preschool teachers is mainly at the junior college level (a three-year school that does not issue a degree certificate), and 22.4% of the teachers only have a degree below high school. As can be seen from the figure below, there are only a few pre-school educators with graduate degrees. In the "analysis and Thinking on the quality of preschool normal students in Wuhan", Zhang Xueping, the author, summed up that the low vocational threshold of preschool teachers has become the main feature of the current preschool education.

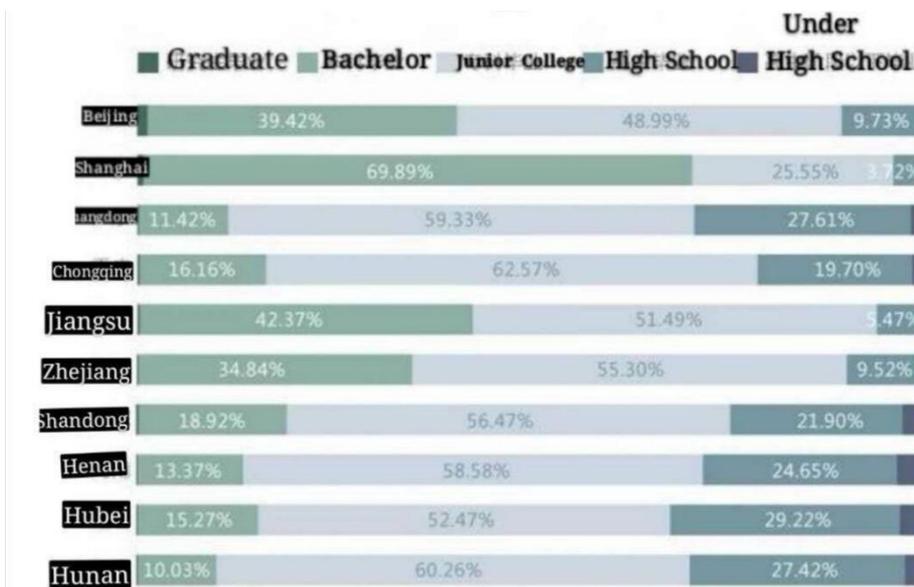


Figure 1. Statistics on educational background of preschool teachers in some provinces and cities in 2016.

3.3. *Third stage*

Thirdly, Montessori education method conflicts with traditional Chinese educational ideas. Montessori hopes to build an equal bridge between children and adults and give them enough respect. For hundreds of thousands of years in China, teachers and parents have absolute authority. It is also almost impossible to get rid of the system of rewards and punishments, which is one of the aims of Montessori. In addition, China's traditional education is more inclined to "cramming" education. Of course, this is also to prepare for the most important talent screening mechanism "college entrance examination". However, Montessori education tends to let children learn spontaneously and construct perfect personality by themselves. In addition, there is "mixed age education" which is rarely respected in China. The greater pressure comes from parents, because compared with Montessori education, the way parents raise their children is more consistent with the traditional education. If parents' ideas are not improved, it is easy for children to have a sense of tearing.

4. SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

For one is what kind of changes Montessori should make after entering China. For another is the changes in the future development of China's preschool education industry.

4.1. *The changes of Montessori*

Montessori can be more inclined to establish a curriculum system to train parents than to educate children. Because there is no doubt that children will spend more time at home, providing a good learning environment at home is just as important as learning at home. Even if children receive Montessori education in school, but have the opposite atmosphere at home, the growth of children cannot be balanced enough. For children who are not able to receive Montessori education in kindergartens, it is positive to experience such training methods at home, because trained parents can better understand their children's motivation and code of conduct. This can bring significant help, especially when parents are not able to understand the needs of children's growth, they will act in a way that hinders the growth of children, such as excessive interference in children when they are doing their own things, or helping children in many ways. If Montessori can cultivate parents and let them have a more comprehensive understanding of the purpose and concept of parenting, it will undoubtedly have a positive impact.

4.2. *The training of teachers in China*

In addition, in view of the fact that Montessori

teachers must receive special training, the association may consider cooperating with schools rather than allowing teachers to spend time on secondary training after finishing their studies. The second training not only means that preschool teachers of Montessori teaching method need to spend more time and money, but also make the field lack of enough new teachers. Secondary training will also cause immature institutions to take advantage of the opportunity to enter the market, which is a loss of value to the industry. Some professional institutions will also study in other countries in order to learn more professional Montessori related knowledge. But there are also some problems, that is, the learning content is not suitable for their own country, cannot play the advantages of professional direction, but also pay a lot of expenses on the way to study. To sum up, if Montessori can cooperate with the school to provide a formal, localized teaching, and enable the preschool teachers' professional students to fully receive training during the education period, it is a better choice. This can not only have enough qualified teacher resources, but also ensure that the education law maintains its original value.

4.3. *The change of the education system*

Third, as the cornerstone of any follow-up development of children, early childhood education has not received enough attention in China. From the table mentioned in 3.0, it can be found that in the occupation of kindergarten teachers, not most of them have bachelor's degree, and only a few have graduate degree. This is closely related to the fact that kindergarten teachers' profession has not been taken seriously and the welfare treatment is generally low. From "Zhi You Ji", a Chinese online job search platform, we can know that the average salary of kindergarten teachers is 5.5k, while that of primary school teachers is 8.7k, and that of middle school teachers is basically twice that of kindergarten teachers, which is 11.2k. It can be seen that kindergarten teachers are not a high salary field, which also can understand why few elites flow to this industry.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Generally speaking, Montessori education, as a concept leading the educational revolution, has its own uniqueness. However, when we integrate into Chinese society, we have to face the situation that there is not enough space and teachers. At this time, we can shift our goal from kindergarten or day care class to home, because parents can better understand their children and convey Montessori's educational philosophy. While accepting and promoting this

educational concept, China should attach importance to early childhood education and improve the related welfare and resource allocation. Only in this case, the elite are willing to enter the field, thus bringing a better atmosphere for the industry.

The shortcomings of the study are that the references lack the information of the most up to date, and refer to the contents of some Montessori official websites rather than the objective literature. If more extensive resources are collected, the research will be more objective.

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