

# Reflections on China Triggered by the Forest Kindergarten in Kassel, Germany

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## ABSTRACT

Globalization has penetrated into all fields with the passage of time. The education industry is no exception. Since, the preschool education is the beginning of children's education, the suitable and reasonable preschool education can provide a good start for children's future development. Under the background of globalization, this paper compares the differences between Germany and China in the teaching mode of preschool education. At the same time, this paper analyzes the outdoor activities carried out by forest kindergartens in Kassel, Germany, and puts forward some opinions and inspirations for Chinese children's outdoor activities. The study shows that although the advantages of forest kindergarten education model in Germany outweigh its disadvantages, there are still many problems in the application of forest kindergarten education model in China, namely, the lack of space, insufficient teaching personnel, the lack of supporting infrastructure, and the lack of support and understanding from the parents. However, how to implement this educational model in China still needs to be studied in the future.

**Keywords:** *Globalization of education, preschool education, forest nursery*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

**Background of study:** The globalization is a kind of concept, also is a kind of human society development phenomenon process. Globalization in a general sense refers to the growing global ties, the development of human life on a global scale and the rise of global consciousness. Countries depend on each other in politics, economy and trade. After the 1990s, with the expansion of the influence of globalization on human society, globalization has already penetrated into the education industry at the present stage, many countries and regions in the world are deeply affected by the globalization of education. From the perspective of culture, the impact of globalization on preschool education in the world is reflected in the spread of educational ideas and experiences among different cultures with the spread and exchange of culture in the process of globalization. Compared with the education globalization, the education mode of each country has the characteristic of high localization, so the education conflict is bound to happen.

**Reasons of study:** Preschool education is the beginning of education, which plays an important enlightening role in children's physical and mental health, brain development and emotional cognition. With the advancement of educational globalization, the field of preschool education in China has begun to pay attention to the educational models of different

countries, and the traditional preschool education model in China has also exposed some problems. More importantly, in recent years, the domestic voice for strengthening children's outdoor activities is getting higher and higher, because outdoor practice is the only way for children to know nature, know society and form unique values. But the country still does not do enough in these aspects, even there is a gap. The forest kindergartens, which originated in Denmark and flourished in Germany, are a new type of kindergarten education model. These kindergartens have many ways to carry out outdoor activities, different forms and contents of practical activities on children's physical and mental health has played a very good role in promoting.

**Significance of study:** The differences and gaps between Chinese and German preschool education in outdoor activities reflect the globalization of education, and the discussion of this issue is of great significance to the children's outdoor activities in Chinese preschool education. This paper compares the advantages and disadvantages of Germany, which is one of the leading countries in the world in preschool education, in order to promote the development of our country's preschool education.

**Methods and contents of study:** This study is mainly through the analysis of Germany in the field of preschool education in the forest kindergarten education model, to explore the advantages and

disadvantages of this model after the implementation in China. The methods applied in this study are as follows: Literature research method, case study method, descriptive research method

## **2. BASIC SITUATION AND ADVANTAGES OF FOREST KINDERGARTEN IN KASSEL, GERMANY**

Forest kindergarten originated from Denmark and prospered in Germany. In recent years, forest kindergarten has become popular in Europe, America, Japan, South Korea and other places. The emergence of forested kindergartens is in part a return to the Friedrich Fröbel of the preschool. "A person, especially those in their teens, should know nature in their hearts, in accordance with the spirit of God who lives in nature and governs it." Friedrich Fröbel said. He wants teachers to take their children to the wild to experience nature and be close to it at least weekly. In addition, the suitable physical and geographical conditions and the environmental education concept which pays attention to emotion and practice also provide the conditions for the vigorous development of forest kindergarten. So far, there have been many forest kindergartens in Kassel, and even ordinary schools regularly carry out the "outdoor forest project" activities.

Wald kindergarten in Kassel is a typical forest kindergarten where children spend their days outdoors in the forest. Wald kindergarten divided the children into groups of about 20 children, two professional teachers, an intern, and volunteers. At about 9 o'clock, the children would gather at the kindergarten gate, greet each other, sing, and walk toward the forest. The children were playing in the forest, unrestrained and in harmony with nature. Their main activity is to observe plants and small animals, and sometimes play some adventure games. In all weathers, the children wear raincoats and boots, and each child has a schoolbag with outdoor supplies, water glasses and lunch boxes. At noon, the children would get together to share their delicious food and chat happily.

Most of German parents see many advantages in forest-themed outdoor activities. Forest is a symbol of nature, so that children can love nature, close to nature, and advocate the emotional awareness of nature. In modern society, various types of electronic products emerge one after another; the opening of forest kindergarten is conducive to reducing children's dependence on electronic devices, free to explore the mysteries of nature in nature, play imagination[1]. We can't explain it to a child who has never seen anything like it, simply by having a child sit in a classroom with a science picture book and point to some creature in the book and ask you what it is. So go out into the woods, get in touch with nature, kids touch it, smell it,

parents don't even have to explain it, they already know a lot[1]. More importantly, through the observation of different life, children will cherish life more, and make friends with nature. In line with this educational model, the city of Kassel has provided adequate environmental education resources and established relevant educational institutions. Teachers can use models or specimens from local natural history museums or water experiment centers to tell children about different topics and types of natural knowledge, these activities satisfy the children's curiosity and thirst for knowledge, increased their knowledge reserves, making for the study of the enthusiasm is particularly high. In addition to all the natural sciences, children can learn many other subjects in such an environment. For example, they can learn mathematics by using branches of different shapes and sizes in the forest[1], you can learn art by watching the colors of different plants in the forest, and you can even learn a lot about how to survive in the wild. In addition, these outdoor activities are bound to increase the amount of exercise these children, over time, can increase sports skills, to achieve the role of physical fitness. If there are some climbing, running and other sports, will also be good for children's bone growth. At the same time, in the process of exercise, may face some physical limits, which will also improve the children's safety limit judgment, thus reducing the risk of injury. So does long-term teaching in the forest increase the chances of injury? The answer is no. First of all, before the activity, the kindergarten will do as much as possible to take precautions, and there will be specialized medical staff to follow. Secondly, when children run, they will be more careful not to fall down and get hurt because they have no parents to take care of them, but if they fall down or get hurt, they will also seek help from their teachers in time, they will be stronger in the face of difficulties and learn to protect themselves. And with plenty of outdoor space and plenty of fresh air flowing through the forest, some of the compounds released by the trees also boost immunity to viruses and bacteria that are less contagious indoors[2]. Finally, in addition to being a great help to children in learning and physical development, the establishment of forest kindergartens can also shape children's character. They are more independent and optimistic without their parents; they learn to share, care about others, and even have leadership skills in group activities.

Forest Education provides children with a multi-sensory natural experience, but also improves the children's observation, concentration and willpower, self-learning and problem-solving ability[3]. The rich nature and the vitality of the forest can release the children's nature. Meanwhile, the children can gradually understand the true meaning of life. The environmental education, which has been immersed in the environment since kindergarten and involved the children personally, undoubtedly plays an

important role in the cultivation of German citizens' environmental awareness and environmental literacy.

### **3. POSSIBLE PROBLEMS IN CHINA**

Under the influence of globalization, the concept of forest kindergarten education has also spread to China, but as far as China is concerned, it is still difficult to implement. First, most of China's kindergartens are built in cities or towns, on the plains, and there are not enough forests to support outdoor activities like those in Germany. Second, China has a large population, the average number of kindergartens is still large, and the number of teachers per class does not match the number of students, plus some natural activity areas have more tourists, so even if the development of such outdoor activities as forest kindergarten is also difficult, the probability of accidents. Third, China is still a developing country, while Germany is already a developed country, so there is a certain gap in the level of economic development. Therefore, China's infrastructure construction is still not perfect; there are not enough relevant resources to support the implementation of this teaching model. And German citizens for the protection of the environment are strong, but China's young children still lack in this respect, so the probability of damage to the environment is greater. In addition, if the establishment of forest kindergarten, it must be built close to the natural areas, but these places are mostly remote, far from the city, transportation is difficult, such as parents. Fourth, most Chinese parents still adopt a conservative educational approach to their children's preschool education. They cannot fully understand the educational philosophy of forest kindergartens, and the popularity of forest kindergartens is not high, so the cost of forest kindergartens is relatively high, few families can afford it. Finally, the teaching model of forest kindergartens in Germany is very mature, popular in the country and accepted by most parents of young children, so that there is a clear solution to the problems or disadvantages that may arise, for example, the government or the school will buy site insurance or health insurance and so on. But this model of education is only a preliminary concept in China, so Chinese educators are still inexperienced and ill-conceived.

### **4. SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

The application of new education model to a country will inevitably produce a lot of problems, so only in combination with their own national conditions and reasonable improvement, can let this new education concept play its due role. In view of the above-mentioned question, there are suggestions for

improvement. First, the government should increase the investment in the field of preschool education. The practice of any project or idea requires certain financial support, so the government could set up special education departments to assist local kindergartens to carry out outdoor activities in the forest, or set up pilot forest kindergartens in individual cities to identify problems and develop solutions. Secondly, in order to reduce the occurrence of accidents, measures can be taken to separate natural museums or natural science academies from kindergartens, so as to avoid the high number of tourists in natural scenic spots, or to establish forest education bases in cities, by moving nature into the city, children can learn about nature, and teachers can use existing resources and equipment to impart knowledge. Third, the kindergarten can implement the policy of spring and autumn vacation, the use of spring and autumn vacation time, or weekends in the outskirts of the city to do some adventure activities. In this way, children can not only be close to nature from time to time, but also in the holiday can have a parent's company. With the participation of parents, the risk is reduced and communication between parents and children is enhanced.

### **5. CONCLUSION**

Preschool children's cognitive development is the most rapid and important period in their life cognitive ability development plays a very important role in the foundation. Outdoor activities are essential, the establishment of forest kindergarten, close to nature, is to improve children's cognition, the effective way to form values. Therefore, the implementation of the "forest kindergarten" or "forest outdoor activity" in China, which is popular in Germany, must be combined with the actual situation of the country, flexible application. In fact, there are loopholes in before-mentioned suggestions for improvements. For example, how government funds should be allocated, how local museums will lose money due to the outdoor activities of kindergartens, who will make up for the loss of teachers during holidays and so on. Even though the German model of education has matured, the description of it is too idealistic. Thus, further research is needed. In any case, under the trend of education globalization, educators can still learn the excellent education ideas of other countries and perfect their own shortcomings. That will be beneficial in the end.

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