

Learning Story: A Child Development Evaluation Model of New Zealand

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the connotation, characteristics and evaluation process of "learning story", a learning development evaluation model that originates from New Zealand and focuses on children's ability and learning process. Through the horizontal comparison between "learning story" and traditional "observation record", "educational reflection" and other methods of children's behavior analysis and evaluation, it can be seen that learning story is a kind of evaluation method that focuses more on the common progress of teachers and children. As a part of the curriculum, it promotes children's learning and curriculum development with dynamic and formative evaluation methods and contents. Its evaluation adopts 4D procedure, namely from the four dimensions of description, record, discussion and decision, and is compiled through three steps of "attention-recognition-response".

Keywords: New Zealand, learning story, child development evaluation

I. INTRODUCTION

Against the background that countries all over the world are making efforts to improve the quality of preschool education, from 1989 to 1991, the Ministry of Education of New Zealand proposed the project "Preschool Education Curriculum Research in New Zealand". The New Zealand preschool education curriculum "Te Wh a riki" (Maori, meaning "woven straw mat") was promulgated in 1996, which contained a kind of spider web-like curriculum structure, namely, a new course model with intertwined network is consisted of four educational principles such as empowerment, holistic development, family and community, relationships, and five children's development clues of welling-being, belonging, contribution, communication, exploration. The curriculum syllabus "Te Wh a riki" emphasizes the acquisition and development of the mental inclination (similar to the concept of "core literacy" proposed in China) that children need to transform into lifelong learners, and also emphasizes children's interaction with others, environment and things and the establishment of mutually beneficial learning relationship [1]. When "Te Wh a riki" was promulgated, the New Zealand government realized that the specific implementation of the new evaluation model for children's learning is the key to whether the curriculum can be implemented in early childhood education institutions [2]. At that time, the preschool education circle in New Zealand had reached a general consensus on the assessment methods of young children's learning development, that is, one-to-one evaluation based on a predetermined list of

physical, emotional, emotional, social, and skill dimensions. In the implementation of the new curriculum, the first problem encountered is that there is a conflict between the traditional evaluation standards and the curriculum concepts presented in the new syllabus. This determines that the evaluation practice must be reformed in order to realize the real curriculum reform. Therefore, in 2001, Margaret Carr, the early curriculum expert of New Zealand, a professor of University of Waikato in New Zealand, and his team proposed a child learning assessment model "learning story", which was put into practice, and was consistent with the view of children, education, learning and evaluation adopted by "Te Wh a riki".

II. THE CONNOTATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF "LEARNING STORY"

Based on the framework of the New Zealand National Early Education Curriculum and several years of research, early curriculum experts in New Zealand have developed a "learning story", which is a system for evaluating children's learning and development in the form of narratives. Different from the traditional standard evaluation method, "learning story" focuses on children's actual learning process, children's thoughts and ways and reasons of their thoughts, that is, to capture children's interest in learning, analyze children's learning methods, and explore children's learning motivation. "Learning story" is formative, and prefers to further promoting children's learning process rather than just evaluating children's final learning outcome. "Learning story" is a part of the curriculum, which can

promote the generation of the curriculum in the continuous interaction and response between teachers and students; it is also an observation under the real situation, recording the "magic" moments in the children's learning process in the form of photos and words; it focuses on the children's interests and highlights, rather than shortcomings and weaknesses, and sets up children's self-confidence and personality identity as learners through these valuable records; and it makes the role of teachers in the process of education different. Teachers become observers, listeners, communicators, play partners and encouragers for children, role models, consultants, counselors and protectors of children, creators and lifelong learners of children's learning. The methods, strategies and contents for teachers to promote children's further learning are proposed on the basis of comprehensive observation and evaluation of children.

In "learning story", teaching begins with the observation of children's learning. Teachers try their best to analyze and understand children's learning process, and finally use the information they recognize to effectively plan and support children's further learning.

III. THE EVALUATION PROCESS OF "LEARNING STORY"

Professor Carr pointed out that the evaluation process of learning story includes four aspects: describing, documenting, discussing and deciding, which is called 4D method. "Describing" refers to defining learning, forming and developing ideas related to learning opportunities at that time; "documenting" refers to recording learning and evaluation in certain ways such as text, photos and collected works; "discussing" refers to communicating with other teachers, children and their families on children's learning and assessment, so as to confirm, question or develop a certain kind of analysis and interpretation; "deciding" means to decide what to do next, including spontaneous response or formal and informal plans. Deciding what to do next is a key step in the teaching process, which includes responding to children's suggestions, initiating proposals, changing development direction and intervention. In many situations, this process is often referred to as "planning". Records provide topics for discussion. Discussions often involve a description of learning or are related to deciding how to proceed. Adding family members' voices in the record is like a discussion.

Attention, recognition, and response constitute the basic content of the "learning story". "Attention" is the teacher's observation of children's learning; "recognition" is the teacher's analysis and understanding of children's learning; "response" is to use the identified information to effectively plan and

support children's further learning [3]. From this, it can be seen that the writing steps of learning story actually correspond to 4D programs. Attention reflects the description of the procedure, indicating that the teachers observe the children's learning and make the statements; recognition reflects the process of discussion and recording, indicating that the teachers analyze and understand the children's learning behavior through various methods such as discussion and recording; the response reflects the decision-making process, which is based on the observation and analysis of children's learning behavior. This "three-step evaluation process" of attention, recognition and response is a process of gradual filtering. Teachers will "note" many activities or states of children in their work, but they will "recognize" some of them as learning activities or state, and then they will choose to "respond" to a part of the identified learning activity or state, which is not fundamentally different from the 4D method. The three-step evaluation process of attention, recognition and response has the same structure as that of the "learning story". It is easier for teachers to use the "learning story" evaluation method correctly, and these three steps can also be used to make "learning story" writing more convenient.

IV. THE DIFFERENCE AND CONNECTION AMONG "LEARNING STORY", "OBSERVATION RECORD" AND "EDUCATION REFLECTION"

Before being exposed to the evaluation system of "learning stories", teachers will also use other methods, such as observation records, education reflections, etc. to observe and record children's learning. They will also interpret and analyze children's behaviors and formulate further teaching practice plan. As more and more kindergartens and teachers explore learning story in the process of education and teaching, it is inevitable that many teachers are confused in practice, that is, there is a gap among learning story, familiar observation records and education reflections. What is the difference and connection? (See "Table I")

TABLE I. THE DIFFERENCE AND CONNECTION AMONG "LEARNING STORY", "OBSERVATION RECORD" AND "EDUCATION REFLECTION"

	Observation record	Education reflection	Learning story
Connotation	It is a way to truthfully record the behavior of the subject, and then analyze and improve the education behavior.	It is an useful thinking activity and a way of further learning.	It is a mode of behavior and thinking, and a formative evaluation method. It focuses on the learning process rather than just the result of learning. It is part of the curriculum and conveys the enthusiasm, joy and love for learning.
Infant behavior	Producing spontaneously or under the guidance of a teacher's organization	Producing spontaneously	Producing spontaneously
	Usually being in the context of regional activities	Usually taking life activities, regional activities, group activities as the background	Usually taking life activities and regional activities as the background
	Nature: positive or negative	Nature: positive or negative	Nature: positive
Teacher roles/functions	Supporter, collaborator, guide	Carrying out education reflections and seeking education strategies	Providing mental or material support for young children, participants, guides
Recorders	Teacher	teacher	Teachers write separately; teachers and parents write together; children participate in writing
Expression ways	Usually using the third person	Usually using the third person	Usually using the second or third person
Reviewers	Teacher, principal	Teachers and related leaders	Teachers, children, parents, community workers, education experts and other relevant personnel

V. CONCLUSION

The "learning story" is child-centered and pays attention to the common progress of teachers and children. It is not only a means and concept of evaluating children's learning, but also a way for teachers and children to grow together. As a teacher, it is necessary to make good use of learning story in the daily work, and provide support for curriculum generation and children's learning and development based on the observation and evaluation of children in real situations.

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