

Educational Time: An Inquiry into Educational Time Based on the Great Teaching Theory

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Abstract: Education and time are closely linked, Comenius also attaches great importance to the time of education, in his work “Great Teaching Theory” contains three important concepts of education time: early, timely and four stages. In the actual education process, education time is often deviated, Comenius pointed out a series of problems that existed in school education at that time when education time was neglected, and at the same time, he also put forward the corresponding corrections, which required an accurate grasp of education time and careful planning of education time.

Keywords: Comenius; The Great Teaching Theory; Educational Time

In education, the concept of time is quite important. In ancient Chinese texts, there are many references to time in education, such as the “Records of Learning”, which refers to “when the time is right”, and the “Analects”, in which Confucius exclaims that “what passes is as if it were a day and a night”. Comenius is known as “the founder of modern pedagogy” and “the Copernicus of modern education”. His Great Theory of Teaching is the first monograph on teaching theory in modern education history with a complete system, clear clues, and scientific methods,^[1] which gathers his important thoughts and research results on education theory, including important discussions on education time.

1. What is educational time?

Education is a practical activity related to the growth of individual life, and individual life is born and unfolds in the flow of time, so education and time are inextricably intertwined. Whether it is a purposeful, planned and organized specialized educational activities, or education in the broad sense of daily life, any educational activities need to experience a long or short course of time, education and the consumption of time are naturally linked together.^[2] The Great Teaching Theory contains the following three important concepts of time - early, timely, and four stages.

1.1 Classification by point in time: early vs. timely

Early is the earliest point in time for education. Early education is the education or training of a person as early as possible in childhood or early life. Comenius mentions that education should begin while it is still early so that the mind is not eroded, “It is best to devote the mind to the search for wisdom while it is still fresh, before it has acquired the habit of scattering its energies over a variety of things; the later the education begins, the more difficult it is for him to be supported, for by that time the mind is already occupied with other things.”^[3]⁸²

Appropriate timing, that is, proper timing, emphasizes the appropriateness of the point in time of education. The natural observance of appropriate timing is an important element in Comenius’ naturalistic educational thought. Birds do not reproduce in the cold winter or the hot summer, but choose the bright spring, because spring is the proper time for the reproduction of birds. From his principle of natural adaptation, Comenius pointed out that the growth of plants and trees needs to follow the proper timing, and the development of human beings should not be contrary to it, and there is also a proper timing in the process of human development that needs to be pursued and grasped.

1.2 Divided by time period: four stages

Based on his understanding of the principle of adapting education to nature, Comenius divided the stages of education according to age and learning ability in the Great Teaching Theory. Comenius believed that learning should begin in infancy and continue into

adulthood. He traced the guidance of nature and divided these twenty-four years into four distinct stages, namely, infancy, childhood, adolescence, and youth. and in assigning to each stage six years of light and a special kind of school: the school for infancy (0-6 years) shall be the mother's lap; the school for childhood (6-12 years) shall be the school of the state language; the school for adolescence (12-18 years) shall be the Latin school or the higher school; and the school for youth (18-24 years) shall be the university with its travels.

2. Why emphasize educational time?

Educational time occupies an important place in the entire educational activity and is crucial to human development. Educational activities cannot deviate from the laws of nature, and it is undesirable to neglect or even miss educational time at every stage of human development, whether it is ahead of schedule, behind schedule or misplaced. However, in the actual educational process, there are often various deviations in the timing of education.

2.1 Educational time is important

Comenius cited nature, pointing out that anything is easy to change and mold when it is delicate, and it is not easy to change after it grows up. The human brain is like wax, "because it receives the images which are presented to its senses by external objects, and in childhood it is very moist and pliable, and adapted to receive all foreign images. A little later, we find from experience that it gradually hardens and dries out, and things are not so readily imprinted or engraved upon it" ^{[3]27} When human beings are young, all aspects of the body's functions have great plasticity, at this time their imagination is lively, the body is soft, the mind is sensitive, the memory is firm and the desire for knowledge is strong, if you want to cultivate a person, you must train him at a young age, so that he can be prepared for all sorts of things.

2.2 Deviations in educational practices

Comenius pointed out that one of the mistakes made by schools or educators is to miss the right time for education. Virtue should be taught at an early age, before evil takes possession of the mind, but parents or schools do not start early enough in the development of virtue in their children, so that the child's mind is already occupied by evil or various impurities. In cultivating the seeds of learning, the school does not choose the proper time for the application of the mind, nor is the application of the mind properly divided into stages. Birds do not breed in the cold and the heat, but mankind goes against this law of nature and misses the proper time for education, and tries to sow the seeds of wisdom in the wrong season of life, and is doomed to labor without success.

Another error lies in the improper organization of educational time. Human educators often disregard natural demonstrations and act too eagerly, forcing young people to attend six, seven or eight classes a day, plus self-study. For young people, this is undoubtedly a kind of torture. Comenius criticized the traditional school for devoting "the mind for five or ten years, or even more than ten years, to things in which it is possible to become proficient in a year's work" ^{[3]43} Even though human beings have a long youth in comparison to animals, this lengthy and inefficient form of education is clearly a waste of early human life.

3. How to apply educational time?

In response to the deviations in the implementation of traditional schooling, as well as the indifference to and omission of the time of education, Comenius offered a corrective, suggesting that schools and educators should not only accurately grasp the timeframe of education, but also carefully plan for the period of time in which it is to take place.

3.1 Educational time should be accurately grasped

In Comenius's opinion, human education should start from the youth of life, that is to say, from childhood, and "the whole of a man's life depends on what he is taught in childhood, so that unless everyone's heart is prepared as a child to cope with all the accidents of life, any opportunity will be missed" ^{[3]40}. Concerning the timing of education for the cultivation of learning, virtue, and piety, Comenius mentions, "If piety is to take root in the heart of any man, it should be inculcated in him while he is still a child; if we wish any man to be virtuous, we should train him in childhood; if we wish him to make great strides in the pursuit of wisdom, we should direct his faculties from infancy in this direction." ^{[3]27} While emphasizing the importance of starting education as early as possible, Comenius also stressed the importance of seizing different points in time for timely education. For example, the development of intellect should begin in infancy, the cultivation of virtues in adolescence, and the inculcation of piety in early childhood.

3.2 Educational time periods should be carefully planned

Comenius' strategizing of educational time periods reflects his highly creative educational intelligence.

Firstly, the overall planning of the educational period. In the overall planning of schools, Comenius set up four types of schools for people of different ages and learning abilities, such as the mother school, the national language school, the Latin

school, and the university, and assigned different educational tasks.^{[3]180} Comenius also standardized the educational hours of schools. All public schools had to open at the same time and have vacations at the same time, so that the work of each class could be finished at the end of each year, and all pupils could reach a certain standard at the same time, and at the same time be promoted to the next class.

Secondly, the work of every hour and minute was carefully set down. Comenius repeatedly emphasized that time should be carefully divided so that every year, month, week, day, and hour would have a certain amount of work to do, for this would make it easy to accomplish all the work that had been planned, and if this division was duly observed, there would be no shift at the end of the school day that did not meet the standard that had to be met.^{[3]117-118} This requirement, however, varies according to the kind of school, and Comenius gives only a cursory description of the scope and work of the motherhood school, while for the state and Latin schools he considers it possible and necessary to specify carefully the work of each hour and minute.

Again, the time periods of education were chosen wisely. Among the time periods of life, Comenius believed that “the education of mankind should begin in the youth of life, in childhood”^{[3]70}, because childhood is equal to spring, youth is equal to summer, adulthood is equal to autumn, and old age is equal to winter. Of all the times of the year, Comenius thought that “if the school were to open in the fall and not in the spring, that would be the best way for us.”^{[3]206} And of all the times of the day, Comenius thought that the morning was the best time for reading, because morning equals spring, noon equals summer, dusk equals autumn, and night equals winter. night equals winter.

Finally, appropriate time for education was established. Comenius stipulated that public classes should not exceed four hours per day, two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon. No new work should be done in the afternoon, but the work done in the morning should be reviewed. The rest of the day could be used for chores or some form of recreation. This gives 22 hours per week, or about 1,000 hours per year, excluding time for relaxation on Saturday and worship on Sunday.^{[3]207} At the same time, he criticized the overly tight schedule of traditional schools, arguing that scheduling young people to study seven or eight periods during the day plus self-study was also unnecessary. Educational time must also be a combination of work and rest.

4. Conclusion

As an important figure in the history of Western education, Comenius’ concern for the age of education is of great significance. It is undeniable that Comenius’ educational thought still bears a strong imprint of the times, but his ideas on the laws of education, the step-by-step view of the child, and the emphasis on the time of education, which he summarized on the basis of his long experience of educational and teaching practice, have not only inspired the educators of the later generations, but also are still of great relevance today.

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