

The Connotation and Implementation Path of "Benevolence" in Education

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Abstract. Education is a cause of benevolence. Cultivating a heart of benevolence diligently is the essential duty of educators, enabling them to firmly stand on the three-foot podium, dedicate themselves to the field of education, and nurture the new generation of the era. This study analyzes the connotation of benevolence in education, and combines the actual cases of education and teaching to elaborate three specific paths of realizing benevolence in education.

Keywords: benevolence; education; connotation; path of implementation.

1. Introduction

Educationalism is an important moral support for the implementation of the aims of education. What is the spirit of educator? The famous educator Xia Mianzun once said, "Education without emotion and benevolence is like a pond without water. Without water, there is no pond, and without benevolence, there is no education." [1] But all educators have a kind of benevolence from the heart and soul, which is interpreted in contemporary times as a great spirit of benevolence. Benevolence is both a traditional Chinese virtue and the core of the value of education. Cultivating a heart of benevolence diligently is the essential duty of educators, enabling them to firmly stand on the three-foot podium, dedicate themselves to the field of education, and nurture the new generation of the era; it is the core of educator's spirit, and it is the intrinsic motivation to promote moral education in schools.

2. Connotation of benevolence in education

The essence of benevolence is to love people, which has been the Chinese way of establishing talents for thousands of years. [2] In the process of education, the connotation of benevolence is subdivided into two parts, its internal meaning is the cognitive and emotional attitudes based on one's own will and tendency to exert care, affirmation, help, etc., to assist the object of education; the external meaning is the behavior of caring, affirmation, help, etc., which are based on love and embodied by the specific educational practice of the education of moral education, intellectual education, physical education, aesthetic education, and labor education.

Starting from the essence of benevolence, this study delves into its practical application in the field of education and teaching. Why is it crucial to diligently practice benevolence? With unwavering enthusiasm for education, educators adhere to the three-foot podium, approaching each class with benevolence, sincerity, and genuine respect for every student. Through this approach, they ensure that their care and guidance result in benevolent achievements. They prioritize student-centered approaches, demonstrating conscientiousness and selflessness, while upholding strictness and benevolence. Willingly serving as stepping stones on students' paths of growth and as guiding pointers, educators nurture love through benevolence, spreading inspiration and teaching the values of benevolence. Furthermore, they care for students' hearts, dispelling the fog of uncertainty and igniting the flame of hope within them. This article will present practical examples from the field of education and teaching, offering a comprehensive explanation of how benevolence can be implemented in practice.

3. Paths of implementation of benevolence

3.1 Bend down and listen to the child's heartstrings to match their pitch

Sukhomlinsky once pointed out that "within the deepest recesses of every child's heart, there lies a unique string. When plucked, it emits a distinct sound. In order for a child's heart to resonate with our words, we must be attuned to the strings of their heart." Many students possess a strong desire to express themselves and share their thoughts, particularly with trusted teachers and peers. The process of students confiding in their teachers often serves as the most direct and effective pathway for teachers to understand their inner worlds. Through these conversations, teachers can gain insights into their students' characters. By listening to the content of their confidences, teachers can develop a deeper understanding of their students' daily lives and recognize their recent joys and anxieties. Additionally, by paying attention to the ideas and opinions expressed, teachers can learn about their students' needs and genuine thoughts. Education then becomes a natural and effective process.

For novice teachers, especially those who have recently entered the profession, they often have a tendency to provide solutions and guidance whenever a student confides in them. This is because novice teachers instinctively believe that the students are in need and require their assistance. However, in reality, the students may simply seek to share their emotions with the teacher. As a result, this mismatch in thinking often leads to poor communication between novice teachers and students. They may feel unable to truly connect with the students' hearts and struggle to identify the root of the problem. Due to professional habits, novice teachers may unconsciously offer various forms of "guidance" to the students, but these attempts may fail to touch the students' hearts. The teacher's approach may come across as detached and didactic, hindering fruitful outcomes in teacher-student conversations.

In the field of education and teaching, the effective implementation of "benevolence" lies at the core of successful moral education. The case of the "Taiji Kid" in the junior graduating class exemplifies the importance of adopting a path of benevolence by leaning in, listening to students, and connecting with them on a deeper level. In this particular class, all students were preparing for exams, but one student, nicknamed the "Taiji Kid," stood out from the rest. During several inspections of the self-study period, teachers noticed that while other students were diligently working on homework, the Taiji Kid would often wander around or even fall asleep. After observing the student for a few days, the teacher made three attempts to engage in conversation.

During the first round of conversations, the teacher invited the student to the office for a "small talk," discussing the student's future and aspirations. However, despite the teacher providing several reasons, the student only responded with one or two sentences. The lack of substantial feedback left the teacher feeling powerless, prompting the teacher to directly ask the student for a more substantial response: "Could you at least share your thoughts?" Unfortunately, the student remained silent.

In the second round of conversations, the student initiated the discussion. One evening during the study period, the Taiji Kid took the initiative to visit the teacher's office, expressing a desire to talk. Seizing this educational opportunity, the teacher pulled up a chair and sat face-to-face with the student, patiently waiting for a breakthrough in communication. The student sat silently for a long time, struggling to find the right words. The teacher refrained from pushing and simply waited in quiet anticipation.

After a considerable amount of time, the student finally opened up, sharing their recent struggles. The student expressed difficulty concentrating and having a multitude of thoughts but being unable to grasp any of them. The teacher probed further, asking why the student was having trouble concentrating and whether it was due to academic stress. Confirming the student's academic pressure, the teacher seized the moment to offer guidance: "It's normal to feel pressure, but you need to take action to change the situation!" The teacher enthusiastically provided instructions on how to improve the current circumstances. During this conversation, the teacher focused more on coaching the student rather than discussing specific academic subjects. Reflecting on this second round of conversation, the teacher realized that they had failed to address the core issues raised by the student. Although the

student mentioned difficulties with concentration and a racing mind, the teacher did not inquire further about the underlying reasons and instead attributed it solely to study pressure. This limitation in the conversation's effectiveness became apparent. Subsequent observations revealed that the student's heart was heavily guarded. In every interaction with a teacher, a child seeks understanding, not only regarding their words but also their emotions and experiences. This understanding, commonly referred to as empathy, is essential in fostering a loving and supportive educational environment. To truly love and understand students through an education of compassion, teachers must first learn to be attentive listeners.

Equipped with this understanding, the teacher initiated a third round of conversations. This time, when speaking to the Taiji Kid in the office, the teacher applied the lessons learned from the previous conversation, adopting a listening mindset and encouraging the student to share more. The student cooperated, starting with their struggle to keep up with the pace of learning and delving into their frustrations and confusion regarding studies. The student expressed surprise when the teacher refrained from immediate commentary. Sensing the teacher's sincere interest, the student continued after careful thought, revealing a more significant concern: "Actually, I have a more serious issue troubling me. I recently went through a breakup. She said she wants to focus on studying..." Understanding the underlying cause of the student's recent performance, the teacher first provided reassurance: "Thank you for trusting me enough to share such a personal matter. I hope you can soon overcome these emotions and concentrate on exam preparation." While the teacher couldn't resolve the student's emotional struggles, the conversation significantly improved the student's mood. Subsequently, whenever the student felt down and struggled to concentrate, they would seek solace in conversations with the teacher. The teacher discovered an effective and appropriate approach to educate the student, successfully achieving the goals of moral education through attentive listening.

From the success of these three conversations, it becomes evident that the Taiji Kid sought out the teacher not for guidance but rather as a trusted person to confide in and vent their negative emotions. In the field of education and teaching, teachers are often caught up in the relentless demands of their tasks, neglecting to pause and attend to those who may be struggling[3]. Without truly understanding the internal experiences of students, teachers may unknowingly impose what they believe to be helpful without recognizing their students' genuine needs. Such an approach to education merely presents an empty facade, lacking authenticity.

To be "in tune with the child's heartstrings," the era of teacher-centeredness, where authority is enforced from above, has been surpassed. Respectful listening and understanding are the inevitable demands of the era of "teacher-student equality." Listening encompasses various sensory, intellectual, and emotional dimensions, incorporating not just hearing but also interpreting and engaging in meaningful communication. Educational listening plays a crucial role in building positive teacher-student relationships, reflecting principles of equality, respect, and trust in education. Teachers must actively shift their mindset to be student-centered and student-oriented, striving to connect with students, delve into their inner worlds, and patiently listen to their concerns and experiences.

3.2 Moistening things silently, being the 'Great Teacher' of education and guidance

Tao Xingzhi, an esteemed educator, emphasized in the Declaration of Creation, "Educators are not sculpting gods, stone statues, or lovers; they are nurturing living beings of truth, goodness, and beauty." When it comes to underage students, they are not mere products waiting to be processed and packaged; they are unique individuals who require teachers to build bridges for their growth, provide support, and create a nurturing environment where they can explore, discover, and develop themselves consciously or unconsciously.

In the realm of education and teaching, effective moral education involves cultivating both the intellect and the heart. Sometimes, it requires a silent and subtle approach, permeating education with benevolence. The stories of the "not pocket the money one picks up" incident and the basketball relay

race exemplify the importance of implementing the path of benevolence through silent preaching and education.

During a class meeting, the teacher initiated a discussion on the topic of "not pocket the money one picks up" to encourage students to reflect on the value of integrity. Towards the end of the class, a mischievous student approached the teacher, clutching a five-dollar bill, and said, "Teacher, I found this on my way to school this morning." This particular student was known for being somewhat careless in their studies, which posed a challenge for the teacher. The teacher was pleasantly surprised and inquired about the circumstances surrounding the discovery. The teacher praised the student's honesty and encouraged everyone to learn from their example. At the same time, the teacher politely suggested that if the student could also be more attentive to their studies, it would be an added bonus. Although the student did not immediately hand over the money, it was not a significant issue. The crucial point was that the student resisted the temptation and made the right choice. As educators, it is important to allow students the space to make mistakes, learn from them, and progress. When students make the right choices, it is essential to acknowledge and appreciate their actions. The teacher observed that after this incident, the student demonstrated increased focus on their studies, submitted their homework on time, and improved their writing. Although occasional mistakes still occurred, the student displayed a sincere attitude towards acknowledging and rectifying those errors.

Another inspiring example of benevolent moral education unfolded during a basketball relay team competition. While the students cheered and shouted during the game, the teacher paid special attention to the subtle and beautiful moments during the relay process. In passing the ball, there were instances where students deviated from the route due to unexpected circumstances, causing them to spend more time. Some students, in their eagerness to catch up, would choose to cut corners and continue the relay from the next obstacle. However, the teacher noticed that three students in the class, Xiao Feng, Xiao Yi, and Xiao Teng, demonstrated remarkable honesty. Even when the basketball slipped from their hands, causing them to leave the designated route, they promptly returned to the original spot and started again, without attempting to take advantage of the situation. The teacher was pleasantly surprised by their integrity and found it worth celebrating. During the post-game reflection, the teacher shared this observation with the students, recognizing and praising the class for their actions. The teacher emphasized that their display of honesty was more gratifying than winning first place in the game, even though it took them a bit more time.

Praise and affirmation are not superficial gestures; they hold significance. When teachers offer affirmation and appreciation, they unknowingly sow seeds in the tender hearts of their students[4]. This fosters a firm commitment to making correct value judgments in matters of right and wrong. Benevolence is the essence of education, and in silence, teachers carry out their preaching and education. Educators should embody noble sentiments, aspire to lofty spiritual realms, and invisibly shape their students' pure hearts and sound personalities. They hold the responsibility of being the "first buckle" in the students' journey of life.

3.3 With gentle breezes and drizzling rain, creating water that polishes pebbles to perfection

"The blow of the mallet may shape, but it is the song and dance of the water that brings the pebble to perfection." This classic quote by Rabindranath Tagore reflects the underlying philosophy of Compassionate Education, which emphasizes the importance of gentle and firm adherence to educational principles.

Physical education is often a favorite class among students, but due to its unique teaching environment and status, it also becomes a class where issues of right and wrong arise. In the physical education classroom, opportunities for education present themselves from time to time. For example, some students find various reasons to avoid sports training, while others wander off to different areas of the school during free time, using the class as a platform for disruptive behavior. One particular student, Zhang, was intelligent but struggled with his behavior. He consistently displayed self-centeredness and had difficulty controlling his disruptive actions. Within the first two months of school, the teacher had three serious confrontations with Zhang.

During the first incident, the class was learning how to shoot from a fixed point in a basketball training session. Zhang was involved in a noisy argument at the back of the line, distracting the group and hindering their progress. The teacher intervened and discovered that Zhang was using the basketball as a tool to attack and disrupt others. To prevent further disruption, the teacher promptly removed Zhang from the group and made him stand alone for 20 minutes to reflect on his behavior.

The second incident occurred at the end of a class when Zhang raised his hand and informed the teacher that he had left his basketball in the classroom. The teacher considered allowing Zhang to retrieve it but decided against it due to the progress made during the practice session on the playground. However, Zhang did not return to the classroom, instead choosing to leisurely eat inside. Only when the teacher entered the classroom to look for him did Zhang pretend to search for his basketball as if nothing had happened. Frustrated by Zhang's behavior, the teacher labeled him as a "problematic student" and publicly reprimanded him, leading to a confrontation between Zhang and the teacher.

Reflecting on these two conflicts, the teacher realized that the initial punishment of forcefully confiscating Zhang's basketball and making him stand alone for 20 minutes had deeply wounded his self-esteem. This was even more pronounced during the second incident. It was only during the third incident that the teacher decided to take a different approach. Instead of harshly criticizing and punishing Zhang, the teacher sought to understand and respect his inner needs, such as recognition from his classmates and encouragement from the teacher. The teacher devised a gentle and well-intentioned "punishment" by demonstrating three sets of basketball training movements to the class. The teacher put genuine effort into this demonstration and remained consistent in future classes. This approach resonated with Zhang and awakened his awareness of the need to change his disruptive behavior. It became evident that Zhang embarked on a journey of self-education on how to deal with classroom discipline incidents, and that simple and rough punishment seemed inadequate and powerless. The teacher realized that punishment should be administered with gentleness.

The essence of gentle punishment lies in genuine benevolence, motivation, and awakening. Its purpose is to activate the students' inner positive factors, enabling them to recognize their mistakes through deep introspection and correct their behavior [5]. In the face of numerous disciplinary incidents in the realm of education, teachers should aim for less roughness and harshness in their punishment and instead adopt a more gentle and tolerant approach—one that administers punishment with love and within a framework of benevolence.

4. Summary

"The renowned educator Wei Shusheng once emphasized, 'Teachers should possess the ability to immerse themselves in the world of their students' minds. Instead of standing at odds with this world, complaining and sighing, they should engage in the tasks of plowing, sowing, cultivating, harvesting, and lingering within this realm of the mind.' As the primary agents of education, teachers should embrace the principles of benevolence, promoting equality, respect, and trust in their educational philosophy. This entails the willingness to humble oneself, actively listen, and acknowledge the inner world of students. Teachers should be encouraged to appreciate and praise, demonstrating a genuine passion for the noble task of educating individuals and executing every small responsibility meticulously, ensuring lasting impact. Moreover, teachers should possess an understanding of motivation and awakening, nurturing students with benevolence, fostering an environment of benevolence, inspiring benevolence, and teaching benevolence."

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