

The Practice Path of Montessori Educational Philosophy in Family Parenting and Its Effect on the Development of Young Children's Independence

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Abstract: In the field of modern early childhood education, cultivating young children's independence has become an important goal. With its unique educational ideas and methods, Montessori educational philosophy provides new ideas for family parent-child education. Integrating Montessori educational philosophy into family parent-child education will help the development of children's independence and meet the current social needs for the comprehensive quality training of children. This study focuses on the practical path of Montessori educational philosophy in family parent-child upbringing and its effect on the development of young children's independence. First, the core concepts of Montessori educational philosophy, family parent-child upbringing, and young child independence are defined, and the relevant theoretical foundations are elaborated. The practical path includes creating a suitable family environment, cultivating young children's ability to take care of themselves in life, guiding independent learning and establishing a good parent-child communication model. The practical effects are manifested in the improvement of young children's ability to take care of themselves, think and make decisions independently, interact with society and manage themselves. At the same time, the study also pointed out that there are challenges in practice such as difficulties in parents' cognitive transformation and limited environment creation, and put forward suggestions such as strengthening parent training and flexible environment creation. Research shows that the effective practice of Montessori educational philosophy in family parent-child upbringing can significantly promote the development of young children's independence.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

Family education is gradually shifting from a model of “over-involvement” to one of “autonomous stimulation.” With the acceleration of urbanization and the prevalence of the nuclear family model, one-child families commonly face parenting pressures. About 68% of parents exhibit “doing things for the child” behaviors, such as feeding and organizing belongings on behalf of the child, resulting in a self-care ability compliance rate of less than 45% among children aged 3–6. Montessori's educational ideas have become an important reference for early childhood education around the world because of their systematic cultivation of children's independence. Its core propositions highlight “environmental presuppositions” and “autonomous discovery”, and have been shown in preschool education institutions to improve children's sense of order by 60% and prolong their concentration by 40%. However, there are still significant obstacles to its implementation in the family environment. Only 23% of parents can accurately understand the essence of the “sensitive period” theory, and the layout of family space is often contrary to Montessori “dwarf design” and “organization” principles. Existing research has mostly focused on the teaching practices of Montessori kindergarten, with less attention paid to parent-child collaborative implementation strategies in family scenarios, and a lack of long-term observational data on the development of independence. This research gap hinders the in-depth integration of Meng's ideas into the family education system and limits the full implementation of its educational utility. Therefore, exploring the localization practice of Montessori educational philosophy in family education and its impact mechanism on the development of independence is both practically urgent and theoretically necessary.

1.2. Research Significance

It is of great value to explore the implementation methods of Montessori's educational concept in family parent-child education and its positive effect on the independent growth of young children. From a theoretical perspective, this study not only expands the application areas of Montessori's educational concept, but also constructs a more systematic theoretical framework to help educators and parents more deeply understand and practice this educational idea. From a practical perspective, the study provides parents with specific and feasible guidance to enable them to effectively apply Montessori educational concepts in the family environment, thereby promoting the development of young children's independence abilities in a targeted manner. By exploring how Montessori's educational concept is applied in family parent-child education and its effectiveness, this study aims to provide a reference for the formulation of relevant education policies, promote the effective integration of family education and school education, and promote the all-round development of children. At the same time, hope to draw social attention to the importance of family education, enhance parents' educational awareness and ability, and create a more optimized environment for children's healthy growth.

2. Definition of Core Concepts and Theoretical Foundations

2.1. Definition of Core Concepts

2.1.1. Montessori Educational Philosophy

Maria Montessori, an Italian educator, is the founder of the Montessori educational philosophy. This concept is centered on young children and advocates that education should follow the natural growth laws of young children^[1]. Montessori believed that young children have unique psychological characteristics and learning styles, and education should be tailored to their internal needs and respect the rhythm of their independent development.

Montessori education emphasizes creating a suitable learning environment for young children, allowing them to explore and learn in a free and autonomous state. Through a variety of teaching aids and activities, educators help young children develop concentration, autonomy, organization and creativity, and promote their balanced development in physical, mental and emotional aspects, thereby laying a solid foundation for future growth.

2.1.2. Family Parenting

Family parenting refers to the education and training work carried out by parents and children through communication and interaction within the family. It includes parents' daily care of their children, emotional care, moral guidance, knowledge transfer and other levels. Family parent-child education affects children's physical health and living habits, and has a profound impact on psychological growth, value formation and social adaptability. High-quality parent-child education can build a harmonious and warm family environment, enhance the close relationship between parents and children, and provide solid support and guarantee for the growth of young children.

2.1.3. Young Children's Independence

The concept of young children's independence refers to the ability of children to understand, explore and deal with problems within a specific age range with their own abilities, without the assistance of others. This ability covers many aspects such as self-care, independent learning, independent thinking and self-selection. Children with independence will actively participate in various activities and are happy to try new things. Demonstrating courage when faced with challenges and cultivating young children's independence will help enhance their self-confidence and sense of responsibility, enable them to better integrate into the social environment, and lay a solid foundation for future independent living and learning.

2.2. Theoretical Foundations

2.2.1. Montessori's Theories of "Absorbent Mind" and "Sensitive Periods"

Montessori's theory of the "absorbent mind" posits that preschool children, during the developmental stage from birth to age six, possess a unique psychological capacity that enables them to unconsciously absorb various information and knowledge from their surroundings, much like a sponge absorbs water [2]. This "sensitive period" theory explains that at a specific stage of development, young children will show a strong desire to explore and motivation to learn certain things or activities. If targeted teaching and inspiration are implemented at this stage, half the result will often be achieved. When children are in a language-sensitive period, their language acquisition process will appear smooth and efficient. These two theories together lay a solid psychological foundation for Montessori educational thought and help educators accurately grasp the learning characteristics of young children and the best time to intervene.

2.2.2. Vygotsky's Theory of the Zone of Proximal Development

Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) points out that in the process of children's growth, there exist two levels of development: the level of actual development, and the potential level that can be reached through the guidance of adults or cooperation with more capable peers [3]. The so-called "zone of proximal development" refers to the interval between what a child can do independently and what they can achieve with guidance. The core of education is to identify this zone and provide appropriate support and inspiration, enabling young children to transcend their current abilities and reach higher levels of development. In the context of family education, parents can apply this theory by assigning challenging tasks that promote skill enhancement and cognitive growth.

2.2.3. Erikson's Theory of Personality Development

Erikson's theory of personality development divides an individual's growth into eight stages, each accompanied by specific psychosocial conflicts that need to be resolved [4]. During early childhood (ages 3–6), children primarily face the conflict between initiative and guilt. If children experience positive developmental experiences at this stage, they can develop the ability to explore and try new things courageously, thereby forming positive personality traits. On the contrary, it may lead to guilt and withdrawal behavior. This theory recommends that parents should actively guide young children to actively participate in various activities during the family upbringing process, provide them with necessary autonomy space and support, assist them to smoothly get through this critical period, and then build a sound personality foundation.

3. The Practice Path of Montessori Educational Philosophy in Family Parenting

3.1. Creating an Appropriate Family Environment

Montessori education emphasizes the concept of "prepared environment", which means creating a safe, orderly and fulfilling space based on the growth patterns and needs of young children, in order to stimulate their curiosity and autonomy [5]. In family life, creating such an atmosphere requires parents to carefully design and arrange it. First, environmental safety should be ensured to eliminate potential risks such as sharp objects and harmful chemicals. At the same time, keep it neat and organized, so that children can form a good sense of order through clear visual signals. Secondly, children should be provided with a variety of sensory experiences and hands-on materials, such as building blocks of different shapes and colors, puzzles, art supplies and kitchen utensils, to guide them to explore and understand through touch, observation and practice. Parents should also change objects in the environment in a timely manner according to their children's interests and development stage to maintain the vitality and attractiveness of the space. An appropriate family environment can stimulate children's enthusiasm for learning and promote their independent exploration and growth.

3.2. Cultivating Young Children's Self-Care Ability

An important component of young children's independence is the ability to take care of themselves in life. Montessori education focuses on improving young children's ability to take care of themselves in life and encourages them to complete daily tasks such as dressing, eating, cleaning and organizing things on their own. In family parent-child education, parents should create appropriate opportunities and support for young children to help them master the skills of self-care in life. Parents can provide appropriate tools and materials, such as low wardrobes, easy-to-grip tableware and soft towels, and patiently guide young children to complete various tasks and provide appropriate encouragement and support. By demonstrating the correct way to do it, parents should gradually reduce their intervention so that young children can gradually learn to complete tasks independently. At the same time, parents should allow young children to make mistakes, encourage them to learn from their mistakes, and continuously improve their self-care ability. Developing self-care skills in life not only enhances young children's self-confidence and sense of responsibility, but also helps promote the all-round development of their independence.

3.3. Guiding Young Children's Independent Learning

Montessori education emphasizes children's self-directed learning, encouraging them to select learning materials and methods based on their interests and needs. In the practice of family education, parents should create sufficient learning conditions and resources to help children engage in self-directed learning. Parents should provide suitable tools and materials, low wardrobes, easy-to-grip tableware, soft towels, etc. Parents need to patiently guide young children to complete various life tasks and provide appropriate encouragement and support. Parents can demonstrate the correct operation method and gradually reduce intervention so that young children can gradually acquire the ability to complete tasks independently. Parents should allow young children to make mistakes and encourage them to learn from their mistakes and continuously improve their ability to take care of themselves. By cultivating young children's ability to take care of themselves, they can enhance their self-confidence and sense of responsibility, thereby promoting the development of their independence.

3.4. Establishing Effective Parent-Child Communication Models

Parent-child communication occupies a central position in family upbringing. The Montessori educational philosophy places special emphasis on the individuality of children and advocates that parents establish an equal, open, and effective mode of communication with their children. In the process of family parenting, parents need to learn to listen to their children's perspectives and emotions, acknowledge their suggestions, and patiently hear their expressions, understanding their needs and emotional states ^[6]. Parents should use concise and clear language when communicating with their children and avoid overly complex or abstract vocabulary. It is important to respect children's opinions and choices, encourage them to express their views, and grant them appropriate autonomy. Parents can use parent-child reading, game interaction, spiritual communication and other channels. Deepen the emotional connection with children, build a harmonious parent-child relationship, and through the formation of a good parent-child communication model, enhance children's sense of security and belonging, and promote the healthy development of children's social abilities and emotional levels.

4. The Effects of Practicing the Montessori Educational Philosophy on the Development of Young Children's Independence

4.1. Improvement in Self-Care Ability

Montessori education focuses on daily practice and lays the foundation for young children's independent development. In the family environment, parents can guide their children to complete tasks such as dressing, dining, and storing toys independently by creating "prepared spaces" and configuring appropriately sized furniture and readily available items ^[7]. Parents should slow down their pace, break down complex actions into smaller steps for demonstration, and provide

opportunities for children to make mistakes. When children complete tasks independently, they not only acquire life skills but also gain self-confidence and a sense of self-efficacy through the belief of “I can do it.” The sense of achievement obtained through personal effort becomes an internal driving force that motivates continuous exploration, laying the foundation for developing a responsible character and helping children transition from dependence on others to self-service.

4.2. Enhancement of Independent Thinking and Decision-Making Ability

The essence of the Montessori educational philosophy lies in granting children “freedom within limits.” In family settings, this concept is applied by parents offering limited but meaningful choices rather than doing everything for the child ^[8]. For example, letting children play with blocks or read first, or choosing which clothes to wear, demonstrates respect for the child's inherent development pace and interests. It can ignite the spark of their independent thinking and judgment. When children bear the consequences of their choices and feel their influence, they can learn to weigh the pros and cons, predict the consequences and solve difficult problems, and break out of the rut of passively following instructions. This process effectively sharpens the ability of logical reasoning and critical thinking, and further shapes individuals with unique insights and independent decision-making ability.

4.3. Development of Social Interaction Ability

In the Montessori education system, the course “Grace and Courtesy” is very important in the home environment ^[9]. Through their own words and deeds, parents guide their children to know how to make requests, express gratitude, apologize, and respect the personal space and labor results of others. When facing disputes between rivals, parents should play the role of guides rather than arbitrators. Motivate children to express their inner feelings and master the skills of negotiation and concession. Practical operation can make children realize that they are part of society and must follow collective norms, thereby cultivating empathy, collaboration and the ability to resolve conflicts. They no longer focus on themselves, but learn to think in different ways, which lays a solid foundation for smoothly integrating into the social collective.

4.4. Improvement in Self-Management Ability

The construction of a sense of order is a crucial aspect of Montessori educational and the cornerstone of the development of self-management skills. In the family environment, this is specifically reflected in the placement of objects in fixed locations and the establishment of stable and predictable daily processes. Children need to follow the principle of “returning objects to their original locations after taking them” and actively organize and return them to their original places after the activities. Internalize the order of the external environment into an inner sense of order and recognition of rules. Children gradually learn to regulate their own behavior and time. By abiding by agreements and achieving set goals, children are able to exercise precious self-control and the ability to delay satisfaction, thereby forming internal discipline that does not require supervision from others. This is the core psychological element required to achieve a high degree of independence.

5. Challenges and Suggestions for Practicing the Montessori Educational Philosophy in Family Parenting

5.1. Major Challenges in Practice

5.1.1. Difficulty in Parental Cognition and Conceptual Transformation

Many parents grow up in a traditional authoritative education environment, accustomed to doing things for them and giving orders. In contrast, the concepts advocated by Montessori education, such as “following the child” “giving freedom” and “no intervention”, form a clear conflict with their traditional concepts ^[10]. Fearing that their children will not grow up smoothly after letting go, many parents are eager to see the results of their education and find it difficult to truly believe in their children's own development potential. This ambivalence often makes them hesitate in practice, or remain only in formal imitation, failing to fundamentally complete the role transformation from

“preacher” to “guide” and “observer”.

5.1.2. Spatial and Resource Limitations in Environmental Setup

An ideal Montessori environment should include a designated activity area, neatly arranged shelves for teaching materials, and sufficient, professional learning tools. However, this poses a challenge for families with limited living space. High-quality Montessori materials are often expensive, and many parents, due to busy work schedules, are unable to devote sufficient time and energy to careful planning. The process of creating and maintaining a “complete environment” makes many parents feel overwhelmed in the initial stages of implementing Montessori education, perceiving it as having a high threshold that is difficult to achieve in an ordinary household.

5.1.3. Tests of Parental Competence and Patience

Montessori education sets high standards for parents, who must possess keen insight to identify their child’s interests and sensitive periods, great patience to wait for the child to complete repetitive tasks such as dressing and eating, and a calm mindset to accept disorder and “mistakes” that occur during exploration. Continuous self-discipline and emotional regulation are also required. For parents already feeling fatigued in daily life, this presents a serious challenge, making it easy to revert to simpler and more authoritarian parenting methods when patience runs out.

5.1.4. Coordination among Other Family Members

Family education is a complex systematic process. If only one parent implements Montessori principles while other family members (such as grandparents) hold different views, educational disagreements easily arise. In intergenerational caregiving, indulgence and overprotection are common, directly hindering the development of a child’s independence. Inconsistent standards and differing expectations among family members may confuse the child, who might even learn to take advantage of such inconsistency. Consequently, the continuity and effectiveness of Montessori education are seriously affected, and internal family conflicts become more likely.

5.2. Suggestions for Promoting Practice

5.2.1. Strengthening Parents’ Understanding and Skill Training in Montessori Philosophy

Parents should actively deepen their understanding by reading Montessori’s classic works, participating in online and offline practical workshops, and joining parent discussion groups. Through these means, they can fully grasp the core ideas of Montessori education and comprehend the child development psychology underlying them. Only by thoroughly understanding why Montessori methods are implemented can parents maintain both principle and flexibility in how they operate. Furthermore, parents should master specific observation methods, environmental design techniques, and communication strategies, transforming theoretical knowledge into practical competence and thus enhancing both confidence and effectiveness in practice.

5.2.2. Flexibly Creating a “Montessori-Style” Home Environment

When setting up the home environment, there is no need to overly pursue expensive professional teaching aids. The key is to understand the core elements of Montessori educational: order, autonomy, authenticity and elegance. You can use the existing items at home to place toy baskets of different categories on low cabinets, open up corners in the kitchen suitable for children to participate in meal preparation, and configure hangers at the entrance that are easy to put on and take off shoes and socks. Combined with actual conditions, the integration of Montessori’s concept into daily situations can also create a growth space that encourages children to explore independently.

5.2.3. Enhancing Parents’ Self-Cultivation and Emotional Management

Parents should regard self-improvement as an important part of the parenting process. With the help of mindfulness training, recording reflection diaries and other channels, they can enhance their self-insight in order to promptly discover and regulate their own worries, understand that a slow development rate of children is a normal growth law, and appreciate the significance of repeated

practice. Parents need to master methods of self-care. Ensuring adequate rest time and only by maintaining personal emotional stability can become a safe and trustworthy “safe haven” for children and accompany them to grow together with a more peaceful attitude.

5.2.4. Promoting Family Communication and Consensus

The key is to build open communication channels within the family. For parents who practice Montessori educational, they can convey their own educational concepts and the positive development of their children to their families with a gentle and firm attitude, strive to obtain their recognition and assistance, and use family meetings and other channels to discuss and formulate certain fundamental family norms together. We are committed to achieving “consistent pace” in education, exploring common understandings of scientific parenting while respecting elders, reducing differences within the family, and building a unified and harmonious growth environment for children.

6. Conclusion

This study focuses on the implementation methods of the Montessori educational philosophy in family parenting and its influence on the cultivation of young children’s independence, conducting a systematic analysis and drawing the following key conclusions:

First, the Montessori educational philosophy has clear and feasible implementation strategies in the home environment. By building a family atmosphere that meets the growth needs of young children, parents can gradually improve their self-care skills. Encouraging young children to explore and learn independently and building an equal and respectful parent-child communication method, the basic principles of Mons education can be transformed into specific family education behaviors, and a suitable supporting structure can be built for the development of young children's independence.

Second, the practice of family philosophy has shown a clear positive effect on the independent growth of young children. It can effectively enhance young children's self-care skills and reduce their dependence on adults. It helps to cultivate children's independent thinking and judgment abilities, allowing them to take the initiative in dealing with problems, and has a positive impact on the improvement of children's social skills and self-control. Lay a solid foundation for the comprehensive progress of young children in the future.

Third, when applying Montessori educational concept in family parent-child parenting practice, it is difficult for parents to change their cognition, environment creation is constrained by resources, parents' own abilities and patience are lacking, and the lack of cooperation within the family is still a practical challenge. By strengthening parent concept cognition and skills training, flexibly adjusting the family environment, and improving parents' literacy and emotional management ability, it is still a practical challenge. Internal family communication to reach consensus and other channels can effectively alleviate challenges, promote the more effective implementation of Montessori educational concept in family parent-child education, and give full play to its positive role in the independent development of young children.

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