Comenius’ View on Education Punishment*

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Comenius clearly pointed out in his great teaching theory that when necessary, we should use blame or punishment, reprimand or whip. Education punishment can make students gradually realize the process from “heteronomy” to “self-discipline.” In order to effectively implement education and punishment, we must formulate a perfect legal system and establish a specific disciplinary system; clarify the fundamental purpose of education; implement loving punishment; and set up a good example image and adopt multi-body disciplinary model.

Keywords: great teaching theory, Comenius, education punishment

Introduction

Gu Mingyuan explains the punishment of education in the Great Dictionary of Education: It refers to the negation and criticism of students who have bad behavior. It is essential purpose is to help students form a correct view of right and wrong, correct wrong behavior, and at the same time, it is also conducive to maintaining the normal order of school education and teaching practice (Huang, 2020). With the popularity of appreciation education and incentive education, as well as some media’s insidious and severe criticism on teachers’ punishment of students, more and more teachers dare not use the right of education punishment. There are three main forms for schools and teachers to avoid education and punishment: dare not to manage, cannot manage, and do not want to manage (Wen, 2020, p. 105). However, it is not only the necessity of teaching, but also the responsibility of teachers to punish students’ mistakes properly. Comenius clearly pointed out in his great teaching theory that “when necessary, we should use blame or punishment, reprimand or whip” (Comenius, 2014). Education punishment can make students gradually realize the process from “heteronomy” to “self-discipline.” British educator John Locke thinks that education can never give up punishment. Education without punishment is “calcium deficient” education, and it is also incomplete education (Locke, 1998, pp. 56-70). Therefore, we must “return” the power of punishment to teachers, let them use it legally, reasonably, and reasonably, and promote the progress and growth of students.

We Should Formulate Perfect Legal System and Establish Specific Punishment System

We should form a “state school class” disciplinary system, that is, the state formulates the legal system.

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The school defines the disciplinary rules, and the class implements the characteristic class rules. At present, the state has promulgated relevant laws and regulations on education punishment. For example, in 2019, the Ministry of Education published the “Implementation of Education Disciplinary Rules for Primary and Secondary School Teachers (Draft),” which affirmed the legitimate status of education disciplinary power and listed the disciplinary actions that teachers can take under certain circumstances. This shows that the state has realized the current situation and problems of education punishment in primary and secondary schools, and hopes to solve them accordingly. But the authors think this is not enough. We need to improve its legal nature. For example, although the document makes a definition of education punishment, but its legitimacy boundary is not clear. We must distinguish education punishment from corporal punishment, which is not only the permission of teachers to exercise their power, but also the guarantee of students’ safety. It is scientific and feasible to define the definition of education punishment by means of “generalization + enumeration” (Liu & Zhang, 2020, p. 36).

Discipline is an important aspect of school disciplinary rules. Comenius (2014) believes that, “School without discipline is like a millstone without water,” which fully affirms the important position of school discipline. When the school makes the discipline legitimate, standardized and clear, teachers can better exercise the right of education and punishment. For example, teachers often do not dare to control students, because they are afraid that parents and society will question their own disciplinary behavior. However, if there is a clear stipulation in school discipline, there is no need to have such worries. Students can be educated in time to correct their wrong behaviors.

In the class, the teacher should implement the unique punishment method to each student under the background of school discipline. This does not mean that teachers treat students differently, that is, good students will not be punished for their mistakes, and poor students will be severely punished for their dereliction of duty. Comenius believes that “sometimes some harsh words, or in front of the whole class to reprimand is very effective, sometimes a little praise of other students also has a great effect” (Comenius, 2014). Teachers should be fair and impartial according to each student’s personality characteristics, mistakes, and other specific issues of specific analysis. For example, when an introverted, clever, and sensible child is distracted in class, the teacher can come to him and remind him silently. When an extroverted and mischievous child is distracted in class, the teacher can directly name and criticize. Although the two methods are different, the purpose is the same. Therefore, teachers should have a variety of punishment methods for each student and class.

Make Clear the Basic Purpose of Educating People and Carry out the Punishment With Love

Comenius believes that “with regard to discipline, it is better for a young person to know his goal, its subject matter and possible forms, and then he can know why he should use systematic strictness, when and how to use it” (Comenius, 2014, pp. 145-149). The maintenance of discipline depends on education and punishment. Therefore, teachers must understand the purpose of education punishment, which is to educate people. Education punishment is not to make students feel humiliation and shame, but to promote their better growth and development. Teachers must not confuse the concepts of punishment and punishment. Punishment is highly aggressive and focuses on the mistakes students have made. Punishment has a clear educational nature, and the focus is that students will not make such mistakes in the future and can be improved. Therefore, we
should regard punishment as the starting point of students’ mistakes, and make them recognize their mistakes, correct their behaviors, and achieve self-improvement.

Teachers in the process of punishment should always maintain a belief-love student. Teachers’ disciplinary power is not to vent their emotions or highlight their status, but to help students become better themselves. First of all, teachers must keep calm, sincere and calm, without any personal feelings. As Comenius said, “discipline should be free from personal factors, such as anger or hatred, but should be carried out with such frank and sincere goals as to make students know that it is for their benefit” (2014, pp. 175-178). Only in this way, teachers can exercise their power objectively and be fair to every student. Secondly, teachers can choose suitable and diversified punishment methods. Teachers should exercise the right of punishment according to the students’ mistakes and the characteristics of the students themselves. For example, compensatory punishments, let students make up what they lack, and let them become the discipline committee members of the class for the students who love to talk. This not only supervises others, but also restrains oneself. For example, challenging punishment can set a time period for students who love to stray. If they can concentrate on this period, they will succeed in the challenge and even get rewards. This not only gives students a goal to pursue, but also more effective than just blaming and criticizing. Another example is exchange punishment. Students who do not like homework can sacrifice one of their favorite activities in exchange. This can not only urge him to finish his homework, but also let him understand the truth of gain and loss. The way of punishment is diverse, but the original intention of teachers is certainly unchanged. Finally, teachers should reflect on themselves and rationally consider whether their language and actions are in compliance with the regulations, whether they can achieve the effect, and whether they can bring about the growth of students. Teachers should also look for the relationship between the causes of students’ mistakes and their own education, and find the missing chain of education. Education punishment must adhere to education oriented. Otherwise, it will only put the cart before the horse and push students to the abyss of pain. Punishment in education is indispensable. If it is properly used, it will certainly receive good education effect and convey the teacher’s love for students. As Wang Yimin (2011) said, “The punishment of education contains the punishment of love, and the love of education contains the love of punishment” (p. 50).

Set up a Good Example Image and Adopt Multi Subject Punishment Mode

“Teachers should always give them examples of the behaviors they should imitate and regard themselves as a living example,” Comenius (2014) said. The best way of education is to be deeply influenced. Teachers must be strict with themselves in school and become the model in the hearts of students. If teachers themselves can make mistakes, how can we convince students? Of course, good examples are not only teachers, but also students and parents. Teachers can elect excellent students in all aspects of the class, so that other students learn their flash point. But at the same time, teachers should do the principle of moderation, fairness and justice, do not favor, do not blindly trust the role models. Because the extreme will reverse, if not, it is easy to make other students feel disgusted, isolate or even bully excellent students. Parents play an important role in family education. Most of the time, the wrong behavior of students is often because the parents themselves do not pay attention to the education of their children, do a wrong demonstration. And sometimes, students in the school to develop a good habit are easy to fall short under the incorrect guidance of parents. Therefore, parents should set an example by example, use correct ideas and appropriate practical actions to teach students by words and deeds, so as to infect and edify students, and become an example in the hearts of students and do a good job in
family education. At the same time, parents should often keep in touch with students, teachers, and schools, grasp the basic situation of students in the near future, and take effective care and response.

Not only is the subject of example diversified, but also the subject of participating in education and punishment. In education punishment, the main body not only includes teachers, students, and parents, but also news reports, the public, and so on. Teachers can delegate power to students. For example, teachers can let students participate in the development of class rules. This can not only reflect the wishes of most students, achieve democracy, but also have greater binding force on students, so that they will not complain after being punished for mistakes. Now, many schools adopt the “self-management committee” mode also reflects the idea of decentralization, so that students self-management, self-discipline, and self-development. Of course, teachers should determine the true weight of disciplinary power according to students’ age, daily behavior habits, and so on, and also must do a good job of supervision to ensure the operation in a good order. News media and the public also play an important role in education and punishment. Some news media may exaggerate some things intentionally or unintentionally, increase the degree of topic and attention, arouse the attention of the public as well as all aspects, and even give up education punishment. This is harmful but not profitable. The news media should be objective, fair, comprehensive and accurate in reporting educational disciplinary events. It should not only reveal the existing problems and play a supervisory role, but also actively publicize the excellent cases and good effects of education and punishment. The public should keep a clear mind and rational analysis. They should not only show some understanding, support, and tolerance to the disciplinary behavior of education, but also dare to expose it and not be a cold and merciless bystander.

Conclusion

An experienced teacher once said: A child’s mistake is like a hole in the skirt, which cannot go out without mending, and it will affect the vision. If we can master the technology of “embroidering holes into flowers,” and skillfully embroider a flower in the “wrong” place, it will be an unimaginable beauty (Wen, 2011, p. 50). Some of Comenius’ views on education punishment are still applicable today. We should integrate China and the West according to the actual situation, and strive to make the educational punishment view play its most effective role. Education punishment is just like a rose with thorns on it, but it is also extremely fragrant. The authors hope every teacher can master the artistic charm of education punishment, allow children to make mistakes, and make every mistake become a driving force for progress and an opportunity for growth.

References