

Life Oriented Mindfulness Education: Mindfulness Education under the Guidance of Life Education Theory

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Abstract: Mindfulness is used in the field of Education, but in many Chinese works of literature, Mindfulness Education is regarded as a way of Mental Health Education. To have a correct understanding of Mindfulness Education and to build a Mindfulness-Based Education Model, this paper studies Mindfulness Education in combination with Tao Xingzhi's Life Education Theory. Firstly, it combs the relationship between Education, Mindfulness, and Life. Secondly, it demonstrates that Mindfulness Education is a form of Life Education. Thirdly, it discusses Mindfulness Education under the guidance of Life Education Theory. And finally, in the conclusion, it puts forward the education mode of Life oriented Mindfulness Education.

1. Introduction

With the development and research of the mindfulness project, mindfulness has been introduced into the field of Education. Mindfulness Education is considered as a way of Mental Health Education^[1] in many Chinese articles. Education is the activity of cultivating people. Mindfulness is the inner state and ability of an individual. This ability comes from life and helps people to improve their life. In the field of Education, it may be a misunderstanding to limit Mindfulness Education as a way of Mental Health Education, which may also be one of the reasons why there are little researches on Mindfulness Education and the research methods are limited in Chinese articles. To correctly understand Mindfulness Education and construct a Mindfulness-Based Education Model, this paper studies Mindfulness Education in combination with Tao Xingzhi's Life Education Theory. Firstly, it combs the relationship between Education, Mindfulness, and Life. Secondly, it demonstrates that Mindfulness Education is a form of Life Education. Thirdly, it discusses Mindfulness Education under the guidance of Life Education Theory. And finally, in the conclusion, it puts forward the education mode of Life oriented Mindfulness Education.

2. The relationship among Education, Mindfulness and Life

Education is the activity of cultivating people.^[2] Modern education advocates Subjective Education and Personality Education. Educators play the role of guidance, promotion, and standardization,^[2] stimulate and cultivate learners' subjectivity and initiative in education, and promote people's personalized development.^[2] Mindfulness is understood as "the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment"^[3]. In other words, mindfulness is a state in which an individual purposefully focuses on and perceives "present moment experience"^[4], which reflects the individual's subjectivity and initiative; and the "present moment experience" comes from the change of body and mind, which is expressed as personal life experience. In the field of Education, the change of body and mind with the increase of age is considered as "Man's development"^[2], and education is to promote the development of people towards the expected direction. The function of education in promoting man's development is to promote man's socialization and individuation, and eventually make a person become a unique person living in his real life.^[2]

Studies have shown that developmental periods of humans are related to the effect of mindfulness

training, and mindfulness training has the most significant effect on the post-test and follow-up life of subjects who are in late adolescence (15-18 years old).^[5] This period is just the time for building one's self. It can be said that man's development belongs to himself. Education awakens the learner's self, mindfulness is inside the learner's life, and life is the purpose, means, and content of education. Thus, as it is shown in figure 1, as for the relationship between life and education, on the one hand, it is that education provides people with opportunities for survival and development; on the other hand, Life Education is an education of life, by life and for life"^[6-7]. As it is for education and mindfulness, mindfulness brings one's subjectivity and personality what modern education emphasizes for one thing; Mindfulness Education is an education of mindfulness, based on Mindfulness and for the cultivation of Mindfulness for the other thing. As it is for life and mindfulness, life brings changes to man to one side; one's state of mindfulness is cultivated from attention and awareness of life changes to the other side. Therefore, Education, mindfulness, and life together promote man's development in the process of shaping a unique person.

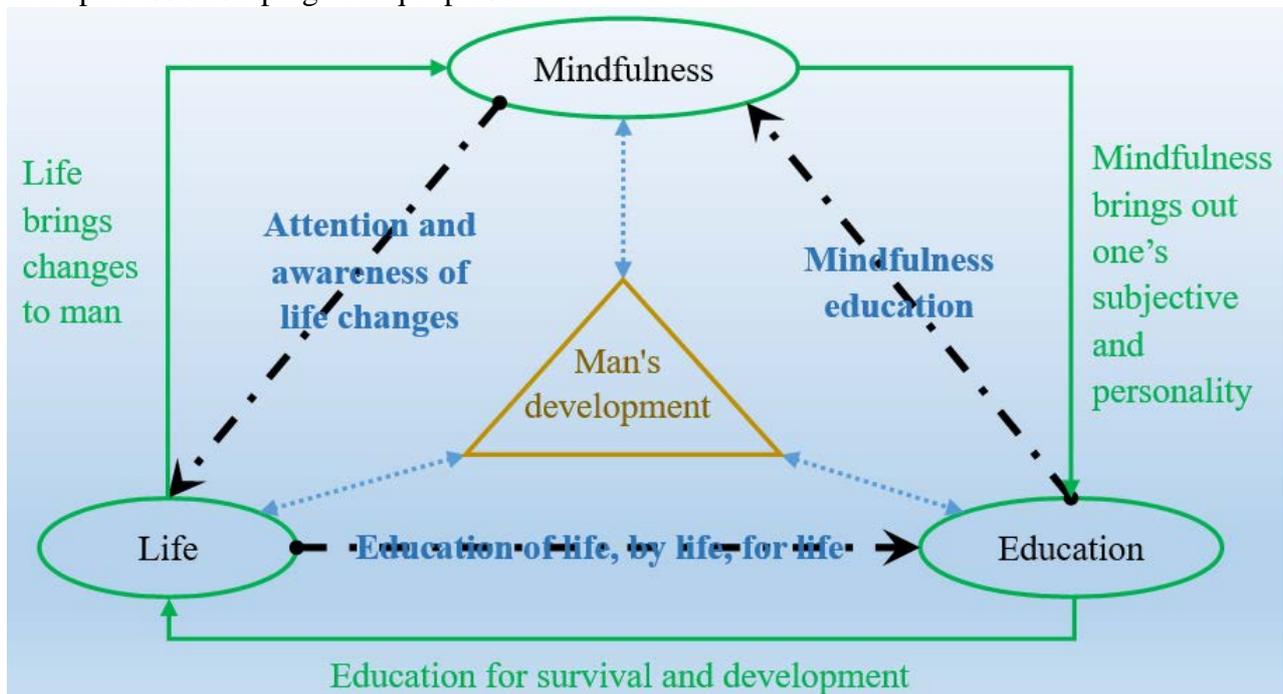


Figure 1 The relationship among Education, Mindfulness and Life

3. Mindfulness Education is a form of Life Education

When mindfulness is introduced into the field of education, from the perspective of Education, as it is shown in figure 2, Mindfulness Education should take teaching mindfulness technology, standardizing mindfulness operation, persisting in mindfulness practice, and sharing mindfulness experience as its basic content, to promote learners to improve their internal mindfulness levels. Mindfulness level is the basis for evaluating the effect of Mindfulness Education. One's attention is attracted by his or her life experience, and he or she chooses to accept the influence of life education by mindfulness-awareness for growing up constantly. Therefore, mindfulness Education is theoretically a form of life education.



Figure 2 Mindfulness Education is a form of Life Education

However, with the development and research of the mindfulness project, mindfulness has been introduced into the field of Education in the real life. Mindfulness Education is considered as a way of Mental Health Education,^[1] and this view has been quoted by many Chinese researchers. This statement may directly quote the research results of Psychology and Medicine. Previous studies have shown that mindfulness exercises have positive functions in emotion awareness and management, attention control, cognitive and behavioral management.^[4,5,8] Mindfulness can improve life satisfaction by improving resilience or reducing neuroticism.^[9] Mindfulness can also affect people's mental health^[5] and happiness^[10]. There are some psychological and brain mechanisms of mindfulness^[11], and so on. These results show the effect of mindfulness. Therefore, when mindfulness is applied in the field of education, researchers are habitually inclined to pay attention to the effects of a mindfulness intervention on mental health problems and the improvement of mental health levels.

In the research of Mindfulness Education, by literature reviews, scholars propose to develop mindfulness projects to improve students' attention, communication ability, and emotion management ability.^[12] Many empirical studies of Mindfulness Education also put mindfulness in the context of School Mental Health Education to verify the effect of mindfulness intervention and improving life satisfaction and well-being.^[9-10] Although education should be based on a correct understanding of the laws of body and mind, the focus of education should return to the essence of "cultivating people". Some studies on Mindfulness Education gradually realize that we should explore the influence of other school moderators of Mindfulness Education, such as the teachers' personal experience and learners' age.^[5, 13] As school education is a special part of life education,^[7] this paper realizes mindfulness is the concentration and awareness of "present moment experience" and mindfulness is an attitude of life when it discusses Mindfulness Education in the field of Education. Although mindfulness belongs to one's inner side, one can detect all changes inside and outside the body and mind by mindfulness meditation, and it is an active factor to create a new life for one's own. Therefore, Mindfulness education belongs to the category of Life Education.

Life Education is an educational thought formed by pragmatism educators' exploration of the essence of education. In the Early 20th century, based on inheriting and reflecting on Dewey's Life Education, Chinese educator Tao Xingzhi put forward the theory of Life Education in combination with the educational situation in China at that time. His theory of life education advocates "Life education means an education of life, by life and for life"^[6-7]. The relationship between the society and the school is that the society and the school are integrated, and the life that the society needs is the education that the school should provide; the way of education is "learn as you do, teach as you learn", "The method of teaching should be based on the method of learning and the method of learning should be based on the method of doing."^[14] Life Education Theory points out that life is education, and "teaching, learning and doing" should be consistent. Mindfulness is one's inner state and ability being improved in practice, and for the cultivation of mindfulness, Life Education Theory can guide for Mindfulness Education. It provides enlightenment for educators on how to spread mindfulness

technology among people; and for learners on how to transform technology into ability through mindfulness practice and experience.

4. Mindfulness Education under the guidance of Life Education Theory

According to Tao Xingzhi's Life Education Theory, this paper discusses the practice of Mindfulness Education from three aspects, as is shown in figure 3.

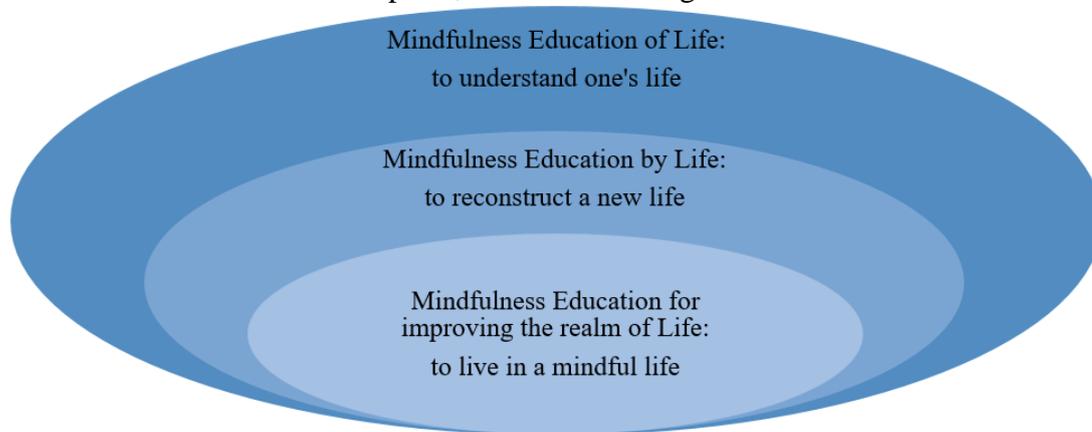


Figure 3 Life oriented Mindfulness Education

4.1 Mindfulness Education of life

When Tao Xingzhi discussed Life Education, he divided it into three periods: first, the separation of life and education; second, the period of school socialization; third, life is education.^[15] In the first period, education was for a small number of people who were not engaged in production and provided content unrelated to public life. In the second period, education is oriented to workers, and education should improve the productivity of workers. In the third period, education is for all people, and education and life are integrated. What life needs is just the content of education. Education needs to meet the needs of life. Nowadays, it advocates Life-Long Education, Subjective Education, Personality Education, and Universal Education. It has reached the stage of integration of life and education. As society needs education to train its builders, the individual needs education to bring a better life. In the development of human beings, it needs the education to give consideration to the requirements of society as well as that of the individual, and promote the socialization and individuation of the individual.

Based on Tao Xingzhi's Life Education Theory, Wang Jianping and Yang Xiuping also believe that “life is the center of education”, the origin of education is life, and education should give people the ability to pursue happiness.^[16] Mindfulness is an individual’s inner ability of concentration and awareness. In the process of pursuing happiness, when an individual needs to choose the facing the temptation from life, the concentration and awareness of mindfulness can bring rational awareness of the advantages and disadvantages of the temptation as to make a better choice and accept the results of choice. Some studies have shown that acceptance is the mechanism of mindfulness intervention.^[17] Therefore, Mindfulness Education is about the awakening education of life. By improving the level of mindfulness of life, we can face and understand the current life and solve the problems of life.

4.2 Mindfulness Education by life

According to the theory of life education, life education is an education by life. Life is full of changes, changes bring educational significance to life, and education is a purposeful and planned activity to cultivate people. Therefore, education needs to choose the content of life to carry out meaningful education.

In modern mindfulness projects, there is some specific perceptual training activity, such as eating grapes, body scanning, observe breathing, and observe thought, and so on, as well as there are seven basic attitude requirements for practice, including non-judgment, patience, initiative, trust, no

compulsion, acceptance, and let it go. ^[18] A common result of these attitudes is to face change with concentration and awareness. Pretending to be a “scientific observer”, the practitioner will observe the trend of events from “inside” to “outside”. Then, the changes on the subject will be simply detected and recorded from the “first-person perspective”. Through the group sharing activities in the project, the recorded facts will be rationally discussed and analyzed, and it will form the true perception of personal experience and interpersonal acceptable cognition. In Education, the problems caused by the departure of the body have become increasingly prominent, and at the same time, the view of embodied education has gotten much attention. ^[19] Mindfulness Education by life is to carry out mindfulness practice by the selected life events. By changing the perspective, individuals are both educators and learners. They can obtain new experience from rational sharing of personal experience to deconstruct the original and uncomfortable experience, and obtain interpersonal support as well as reconstruct new life experience.

4.3 Mindfulness Education for improving one’s realm of life

Tao Xingzhi advocates: “the fundamental significance of education is the change of life. Life is always changing, that is to say, life is always with the meaning of education.” ^[7] “Change” is expressed as “impermanence” in Buddhist terms. Buddhist doctrine sums up everything in life as “impermanence”, and it is believed that “impermanence” brings “suffering”. Then, the method of eliminating suffering is explained as “all dharma have no self” and “nirvana is tranquility”. That is to say, if there is no self, there is no persistent subject, and “suffering” becomes an objective existence. According to the law of origin, “It is the end of the cause, so it is the end of the bitter fruit” if the cause of suffering changes with nature, the “bitter fruit” would also change. “Mindfulness is the purpose of Buddhist practice, and mindfulness practice is the way for Buddhists to reach the realm of nirvana. In the daily life of devout Buddhists, they insist on the four foundations of mindfulness to see through the causes of “change” and constantly improve their realm of life.

Tao Xingzhi's exposition on the fundamental significance of education has the same meaning as the significance of Buddhist mindfulness practice. One who doing mindfulness practice is to focus on and be aware of the life changes, as to understand the meaning of education and accept both cognitively and emotionally one’s life as it is, thus, one builds his or her views on the world, life, and evaluation of value. Therefore, Mindfulness Education is a way to cultivate mindfulness by teaching mindfulness technology, standardizing mindfulness operation, insisting on mindfulness practice, and sharing mindfulness experience. The learner who is educated to improve a higher level of mindfulness state, at which he or she calmly observes life changes to improve the realm of life and lives in a mindful life.

5. Conclusion

Education is an activity of cultivating people. Modern Education advocates respecting and cultivating people’s subjectivity and initiative to promote people’s all-around development. Man’s all-around development is man’s all-around, free, and personalized development. The inner mindfulness of an individual reflects his or her subjectivity and initiative and endows him or her with the ability to pursue a happy life. Mindfulness Education takes teaching mindfulness technology, standardizing mindfulness operation, insisting on mindfulness practice, and sharing mindfulness experience as its basic content to promote learners’ inner mindfulness level. A life-oriented Mindfulness Education, as figure 3, is guided by the theory of life education. It means Mindfulness Education of life, by life, and for improving the realm of life. Life-oriented Mindfulness Education provides an educational model for transforming mindfulness from technology to ability, promoting the unity of socialization and individuation in one, and responding to the requirements of man’s all-around development.

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