

## On the Benevolence Heart of the Preschool Teacher

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### Abstract

Early childhood education is a meaningful activity for the enlightenment and cultivation of young children's minds. The benevolence heart of preschool teachers should be the necessary prerequisites and core character for preschool teachers to engage in educational and teaching activities. It is not only the lofty expectation of society and kindergarten education for preschool teachers' professional quality, but also the "unique" virtue of preschool teachers' profession, emphasizing the harmony of material and spiritual, perceptual and rational qualities. Which is manifested in love with oneself, children and the cause of early childhood education, etc. The benevolence heart of the preschool teacher's which have the characteristics of empathy, tolerance, caring and alertness. The formation of the benevolent heart of preschool teachers is of great significance to the development of children's physical and mental health and the professional development of the self. The cultivation path includes preschool teachers' self-cultivation of morality, the harmonious guidance of the social public opinion environment, the creation of scientific kindergarten culture of benevolence, and the construction of a perfect preschool teacher professional development system.

**Key words:** Preschool teacher; Benevolence heart; Young child

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What is a "good" teacher? This is a problem that has never felt outdated since ancient times. On the eve of teachers' day in 2014, Xi Jinping has proposed that there is no unified model for good teachers, but they have common characteristics, that is have ideal-belief, have moral sentiments, have solid knowledge and have a benevolence heart. ("Xinhua Daily Telegraph", 2014) Therefore, benevolence heart is the direction of a good teacher in the new era, and also the significance of education for human. Early childhood education is the cornerstone of national education. It carries the foundation of the "Strengthen Moral Education and Cultivate People", and the preschool teachers are more shoulder the lofty mission of young children become "people". Through combing the practice of early childhood education, it is found that the phenomenon of "deprivation of morality" and "missing norms" of kindergarten teachers is endless. For example, the 2017 Beijing Red, Yellow and Blue Xintiandi Kindergarten Child Abuse Incident, the 2018 Liaoning Shenyang Kindergarten Child Abuse Incident, and the 2018 Shanghai Ctrip Kindergarten Child Abuse Incident, etc. It is obviously a critical issue to explore the connotation, characteristics and cultivation path of the benevolence heart of preschool teachers which has great theoretical and practical value, and also provides reference for the professional moral construction of preschool teachers in the new era.

### 1. THE CONNOTATION "BENEVOLENCE HEART" OF PRESCHOOL TEACHERS

#### 1.1 The Origin of Teacher's Benevolence Heart

"Benevolence" is the outstanding traditional culture of the Chinese nation and also the core content of Confucianism. Confucius said that the benevolent, the people are also. ("The Doctrine of the Mean") In his view, the reason why people are human is fundamentally "benevolence". In the "Analects of Confucius Yanyuan" records, Fan Chi asked

benevolence, Confucius said that “Love People”. It can be seen that love people is the essence of “benevolence”. In here, Confucius thought that love “people”, with “love” as the core, and then proceed from this to love the people around you. As a teacher, Confucius believed that the benevolence heart for students manifested in selfless imparting to students and selfless care and respect for students. In Mencius’ view, the first condition for as a teacher is “virtue”. Only when a teacher possesses the virtue of benevolence can he care for his students. At the same time, he can also be respected by his students. And the Mo-tse was put forward the idea of “concurrent love”. He believes that as a teacher who should love all the students, practice concurrent love and mutual benefit personally. And be a model for students, take the lead in imitation. That is to say, “when you care about others, look at it as if you care about yourself (“*Mo-tse-Concurrent Love*” (Part I))”, and “the concurrent love of people is the way of Saint King (“*Mo-tse-Concurrent Love*” (Part II))”. In short, “benevolence” is from “benevolence” to “love”, from “love” to “benevolence”. Dong Zhongshu in the Han Dynasty clearly put forward the theory of “fraternity”, believing that the education of saints is “take fraternity as its purpose”, “education is based on benevolence”. The prerequisite for teachers to teach knowledge is “fraternity”, and then to carry out “benevolence” education. It can be said that the Confucian scholars of the Han, Tang, Song and Ming dynasties all regarded benevolence as the highest moral principle. (Zhang, 1986) Since then, Han and Tang dynasty and later Confucian developed the ideological connotation of the virtues of teachers’ benevolence, from the based on “benevolence” to the combination of “benevolence” and “wisdom”, that is, the combination of morality and wisdom, and morality first.

## 1.2 The Connotation of “Benevolence Heart” of Preschool Teachers

Early childhood education cause is a cause of love, and early childhood education without love is unimaginable. Preschool teachers’ “benevolence heart” has both the scope of the general teacher “benevolence” and its special nature. Then, for preschool teachers, what are the important connotations of “benevolence heart”? From the above discussion, it can be seen that preschool teachers’ benevolence heart should be the prerequisite and core character which is essential for preschool teachers to engage in education and teaching activities, and the soul of preschool teachers’ morality. It is not only society and preschool education cause’s lofty expectations of preschool teachers’ professional quality, but also more highlights the “unique” virtue of preschool teacher profession which emphasize its material and spiritual, perceptual and rational harmony of contact, and performance is love oneself, love early children, love early childhood education cause, etc., and the fundamental purpose is to promote the physical and mental health

development of children, at the same time promote preschool teachers’ professional development. The preschool teacher’s heart of benevolence is manifested in loving oneself, namely, the multidimensional presentation presentation of the preschool teacher’s “self-esteem”, “self-love”, “self-confidence”, “self-knowledge”, “self-modesty” and “self-respect”; is a self-understanding, acceptable own teacher identity, amiable, approachable quality. As the American philosopher Erich Fromm argued in his book “*the Art of Love*”, the first step in learning to love another is to love oneself. Because you are also a human, if you can’t love yourself, how can you love others? (1956/2008, p. 73) It can be seen that learning to love oneself is the basis and prerequisite for loving others.

Preschool teachers’ heart of benevolence is shown in love children, that is, will listen, understand the mind, have the method, have the wisdom to love the children. Confucius has said love people can be divided into two parts: love their loved ones and wide love, close to the people with lofty ideals. The former is refers to love their relatives, mainly refers to parents and elders who are related by blood with oneself; the latter is refers to love the people and things outside the relatives. In Confucius’s view, each of us should have a extensive mind, concern and cherish all people in the world, love others as if they love themselves. The Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China newest introduced “*the New Era of Teacher Professional Behavior Ten Guidelines Notice Full Text*” clearly stated that preschool teachers should concern and care for young children. (The Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China [MOE], 2018) It can be seen that the state attaches great importance to the growth of children. To love children is the core of preschool teachers’ professional ethics and the more symbol of their heart of benevolence. (Wang, 2016) Former Soviet Union famous educator Sukhomlinsky said, love of children is the most important thing in a teacher’s life. Children are the sun in the morning, is the flowers of the first bloom, is the most important and critical period of children’s life, and the children’s mind more needs attention from the preschool teacher. Therefore, preschool teachers should have deep love for children, care for children, and fully respect and trust them. However, teachers’ love for children is not blind and excessive spoil, but the love of “in love there is strictness, in strictness there is love, and severe and kindness combined”. Only in this way, the teacher’s love is really beneficial to the child’s physical and mental health development of love. Teachers can only be filled with love and respect for young children from the inside out, always have a benevolent heart, will sincerely from the perspective of young children, consider young children’s consideration, anxious about young children’s anxiety, thinking young children’s think, and do what young children will do. Preschool teacher’s benevolence heart is shown in the love of preschool education cause, namely, the pursuit to “truth”, “goodness” and “beauty” in

teaching activities, regarding oneself as the embodiment of benevolence and morality, and devoted to the early childhood education career perfect development. On November 7, 2018, CPC central committee state council about “*Some Opinions on Deepening Reform and Normative Development of Preschool Education*” (hereinafter referred to as “*Several Opinions*”) came out, undoubtedly, it will inject a strong impetus into the reform and development of preschool education in the new era, and clearly put forward the professional feelings of improving teachers’ professional accomplishment, and cultivating the professional feelings which have a ardently love of preschool education cause and young children. (CPC central committee state council, 2018) Therefore, the preschool teachers who have benevolence heart always have an optimistic and positive attitude towards the cause of preschool education. This optimistic and positive attitude can make preschool teachers maintain a positive attitude towards everything around them, and make them fully aware of themselves, the environment and the truth, goodness and beauty of education and teaching. At the same time, more can make preschool teachers devoted to the cause of early childhood education.

## 2. THE REPRESENTATION OF THE BENEVOLENT HEART OF PRESCHOOL TEACHERS

### 2.1 Empathy

The so-called “Empathy”, also known as transposition thinking, is to stand on other person’s position to experience other person’s feelings and ideas. Sukhomlinsky said in the book “*to Trust the Child*” that it should not bruise the most sensitive corner of their heart when influencing the inner world of students. (1981/2009, p. 13) The preschool teachers with empathy heart know more about how to respect and understand children in dealing with problems, rather than injuring their young hearts by making inappropriate acts. To know, sometimes what preschool teacher say inadvertently, even a look, which was possible have an immeasurable impact on young children. As preschool teachers and children are at different age stages and in different positions, they naturally start from different perspectives to looking at problems and treating things, thus will producing different psychological reactions and feelings. If as the preschool teacher can have empathy heart, take the initiative to look at the problem from the perspective of children, understand children’s inner world, children will naturally be willing to get along with you, be honest with you and be friends with you. Like us, children are also the experience of their own feelings, (Li, 2017, p. 124) it’s just that more often than not they don’t know how to express their feelings properly. No matter how funny, irrational or even unreasonable

children’s behavior is in our eyes, preschool teachers should treat children with earnest manner. At the same time, preschool teachers should to understand and tolerate their actions from the perspective of children, because this is the key to opening the door which is lead to the inner world of young children.

### 2.2 Tolerant Heart

As an educator who should give our children enough space and let ourselves have enough patience, which is the most basic education method. (Montessori, 2015, p. 112) Because children are in a special age stage, physical and mental development is not mature, therefore, preschool teachers need enough patience, confidence and tolerance to treat young children. Preschool teachers’ tolerance of children is to understand not only why children are like this, but also what they really want to express. Children are living individuals, also like us with subjective initiative, only preschool teacher really understand the needs of children’s hearts, kindergarten education activities are meaningful. When communicating with children, people all know that children have their own unique characteristics, but if preschool teachers are not careful enough to observe, no further inquiries, it is likely to misunderstand children, to bring unnecessary trouble to the relationship between the teachers and children. Preschool teachers should allowable children to make mistakes, and more to be kind and understand their mistakes. Gold cannot be pure and man cannot be perfect, not to mention children who are still in ignorant state about everything around them. Facing the imperfection of children, preschool teachers more need to treat them with tolerance heart. Preschool teachers treat children’s tolerance is a kind of selfless benevolent, but this benevolent is not equal to indulge and also not equal to blind love, but inclusive but not connive, tolerance and not indulgent love. As Sukhomlinsky said, teachers love students, not palliative compromise, not let things drift, but a kind of parental tenderness, and it’s a love that combines sagacious strictness and strict requirements. Therefore, as a preschool teacher should with the heart of tolerant and understanding to face squarely every mistake of the children, to help the children correct the mistake, and to be the guide on the road of children growth.

### 2.3 Caring Heart

Graceful verse by the Indian poet Tagore, “The business of the flower is sweet, the business of the fruit is precious, but let us do the business of the leaf, for the leaf always hangs down its shade humbly and attentively.” (Tagore, 2015, p. 21) Isn’t “the business of leaf” just described as the great people’s teachers who are selflessly dedicated and silently paying? Isn’t it the preschool teachers of “New bamboo is higher than the old bamboo branches, all supported by the old”? Preschool teachers bear the dual functions of combining care and education, which is related to the physical and mental health development

of hundreds of millions of children and the healthy development of preschool education cause, more need preschool teachers have a caring heart. (The Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China [MOE], 2012) Noddings, a famous contemporary American philosopher of education, puts forward the idea of caring education, which indicates that the goal of school education is to cultivate people who have a caring heart for themselves, others and even the world. (Noddings, 2004, pp. 1-5) This means that the preschool teacher who cultivates the flowers of the future motherland must first be a "Caring person", must have a broad mind to care for others, always pay attention to the emotional changes of children, be good at using verbal and physical expression to convey care to children, and always treat children with care heart, so that can teach children learn to self-care and also possess a care heart for others.

#### 2.4 Vigilance Heart

The teach by precept and example of preschool teachers is always the important thing that cannot be ignored in children's education, especially in terms of interpersonal communication, the preschool teacher says the words, with what kind of tone to say and so on, will bring the imperceptible influence to the children. This means that always keep alert in the process of getting along with young children is not negligible for preschool teachers. As Italian early-childhood educator Montessori said, children are sensitive and very susceptible to our influence. (Montessori, 2015, p. 76) The role of teachers is to guide children to learn to think and practice, rather than let children become their own imitators. (Montessori, 2015, p. 37) Therefore, as the preschool teacher who spends the most time with children in the kindergarten should always keep an alert heart at all times, and pay attention to own actions and words. To know that every word of a teacher, even a casual little action, is likely to be the object of children's imitation, because children are in a special age stage, imitation ability is very strong, and love imitation is one of the nature of children. Therefore, preschool teachers need to keep the heart of vigilance all the time, do that "lead by example", for children to play a good role model. To be specific, the first is vigilance our educational purpose whether always based on promoting the physical, intellectual, moral and aesthetic various aspects development of young children as the core? Is it conducive to promoting the comprehensive and harmonious development of children's body and mind? (The Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China [MOE], 2012) The second is to be alert to whether our educational means can achieve "from goodness to goodness"<sup>1</sup>? ("Chinese Children Net", 2018) Is it possible to "teach students according to their aptitude" and

"different from person to person"? The third is alert our education way whether follows the children's body and mind development rule? Does it conform to children's learning style and characteristics?

### 3. THE CULTIVATION OF THE BENEVOLENT HEART OF PRESCHOOL TEACHERS

The key to the healthy development of children's body and mind lies in the benevolence heart of preschool teachers. Just as the German philosopher Jaspers said that the education is the spirit-body communication between people. (1991, p. 2) How to cultivate the benevolence heart of preschool teachers? Starting from the logic of ethics, the binding force of professional ethics on individual professional behavior is nothing more than internal and external. The former is based on professional conscience and moral conscience, forming moral consciousness; the latter is due to various punishments caused by the loss of morality, including the condemnation of public opinion, it depends on various external constraints, such as supervision and so on. (Zhou, 2011) In other words, the formation of benevolent heart as preschool teacher virtue soul requires the combination of external constraints and internal self-cultivation.

#### 3.1 Preschool Teachers Should Pay Attention to Their Own Moral Cultivation

As an incarnation of the early childhood education cause, preschool teachers naturally have the heritage of the spirit of benevolence. (Jiang & Long, 2011) However, the preschool teachers are not only the sender of knowledge and the caregiver of young children, but also the researchers. This requires the preschool teachers to meditation reading, concentrated study, and discover and understand the connotation of benevolence of contain of the classic works. The first is to guide the preschool teachers to respect the children and accept the imperfections of the children. The benevolence of preschool teachers is more reflected in the interaction between teachers and children, which is a kind of "I-you" dialogue and openness. (Jaspers, 1991, p. 170) Ten fingers have long and short, lotus out of the water has high and low. As a group of people at the stage of special physical and mental development, young children seem so puerile and immature in all aspects of their growth. It is inevitable that mistakes are made. As preschool teachers, they should learn to understand and tolerate young children, and also accept the imperfect performance of young children. The second is to enhance self-reflection ability. Lao-tzu once said, people who can understand others are smart, and those who can understand themselves are wisdom; those who can overcome others are powerful, and those who can overcome themselves are more stronger and also not

<sup>1</sup> The word has two "goodness". The former is "goodness of method", "goodness of means" and "goodness of process", and the latter is "goodness of ends", "goodness of results" and "goodness of pursuit".



defeated. Everyone are all small members of this vast universe, and all should correctly understand ourselves and find our own position in order to better develop and progress ourselves. The third is to pay attention to the cultivation and formation of good moral habits. Habits are the bridge and intermediary for the formation of the benevolent quality of preschool teachers, it also more needs the persistent self-discipline and efforts of preschool teachers. Preschool teachers should pay attention to the cultivation of conscience. As a moral self-consciousness in the depth heart of the people, it has a supervisory and regulating effect on the formation of the benevolent heart of preschool teachers. In short, preschool teachers need to constantly improve their moral cultivation. Only by truly understanding the essential connotation of the spirit of benevolence can practice the benevolence heart in daily young children teaching activities.

### **3.2 Social Public Opinion Should Suitably and Appropriately Evaluate Preschool Teachers**

Preschool teachers can't exist from the society, their own professional ethics should conform to and meet the requirements and expectations of the society, but the social requirements and expectations of the preschool teachers' morality should be based on the teachers' ability to "do something". At present, insufficient attention to early childhood education, and the status of kindergarten teachers is not high, the treatment is low, and the workload is cumbersome and complicated. The society opinion environment has too high requirements for the preschool teachers' professional ethics, instead may lead to the antipathy and rejection of the preschool teachers, even this excessive moral requirement is in itself an immoral request. In short, as the formation of the benevolent heart of the teacher's moral soul of preschool teachers requires both the supervision-guidance and the support-guarantee of the social public opinion environment.

### **3.3 Create a Scientific Benevolent Type Kindergarten Culture**

The cultivation of benevolence consciousness is inseparable from the edification of good atmosphere, and kindergarten is the workplace of preschool teachers. Whether the kindergarten culture is warm and harmonious affects the cultivation of the benevolent spirit of preschool teachers imperceptibly. Kindergartens should establish the flag of "harmonious friendship" and "warm and harmonious", and create a benevolent type kindergarten culture to guide and promote the cultivating of preschool teachers' benevolent heart. The so-called benevolent type kindergarten culture which is the kindergarten culture of equality mutual assistance, positive way and harmony friendship with benevolence spirit as the main melody; it is the spirit of charity that leads the kindergarten to continuous development and progress. "Equality mutual assistance" means that all the members of the kindergarten communicate with each other on an equal footing and

help each other, forming a management culture of the kindergarten mainly coordination and cooperation. "Positive way" is to integrate the spirit of personal benevolence spirit into the kindergarten community, learn from each other, encourage growth, transform the spirit of benevolence into a booster for continuous progress, and form a healthy up and learning community culture. "Harmony friendship" means that on the premise of equality and respect, in the kindergartens each other form a interpersonal relationship culture with benevolence as the core, stick together and mutual respect. In the cultural atmosphere of benevolent type kindergarten, it is beneficial to incentive and strengthen the benevolence spirit of preschool teachers. To create a positive health, harmonious pleasure working atmosphere for preschool teachers, so that during the kindergarten they can give full play to own subjective initiative to promote the development of the kindergarten, the primary need to realize self-worth.

### **3.4 Construct a Perfect Professional Development System for Preschool Teachers**

The introduction of "*Several Opinions*" has clearly demanded that improve teacher training system, and improve teachers' professional level and scientific teaching ability. (CPC central committee state council, 2018) It can be seen that the state is urgent to the new age preschool teacher team building. Preschool teachers are professionals who perform the duties of kindergarten education and teaching, and also spend the most time with children in the kindergarten, and their words and deeds all affect young children in an invisible. Therefore, benevolence should be as the goal, and construct a development system which not only conforms to the development of the times but also benefits the professional of preschool teachers themselves, and provide a platform for the professional development of preschool teachers. First, attach importance to the the complementary of internal learning and external communication in kindergartens. In the kindergarten internal, a systematic mechanism suitable for the professional development of preschool teachers should be built according to the actual situation to provide sufficient and diverse learning resources, strengthen the learning communication among teachers in the kindergarten, creating a learning atmosphere of mutual help and mutual growth, and forming a community of learning-type preschool teachers. In addition, teachers in the kindergarten should be encouraged to actively participate in the training on professional development outside the kindergarten, so as to strengthen their own professional development and promote the overall quality of the kindergarten teachers group. Second, pay attention to the combination of self-improvement and professional training. As a preschool teacher in the new century who should first of all have a sense of self-development, keep up with the pace of the times, and focus on self-learning,

self-improvement, self-education and self-growth. At the same time, a professional training system for preschool teachers that conforms to the development of the times should be established. Different forms of professional training should be carried out according to the actual situation in the kindergarten to meet the different learning needs of preschool teachers. Third, face squarely the connection between teaching research and academic research. "Several Opinions" indicate that the preschool education and research system should be improved, the preschool education and research institutions at all levels should be improved; and the garden-based teaching and research and regional teaching and research should be strengthened. (CPC central committee state council, 2018) As the preschool teachers in the new era, they should not only "learn to teach", but also have a certain sense of innovation and teaching and research ability. More importantly, they should have a certain academic level and research ability. (The Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China [MOE], 2017) These are not only the requirements of "Professional Certification Standards for Preschool Education", but also more is the challenges that preschool teachers should accept in the new era.

Love, is the most basic human emotional expression, but also a kind of emotion from the heart. Benevolence, is the foundation of being a man, more is the initial heart of the reason why teachers become teachers. The Russian philosopher Tolstoy said that if a teacher only love of education, then he can be a good teacher. If a teacher to love and love students together, he is a perfect teacher. In the new era, preschool teachers should cultivate their own benevolence consciousness, strengthen their benevolent behaviors, and stick to their benevolent heart, and really treat yourself kindly from the heart, caring for children, loyal to education, and serving socialist education with Chinese characteristics. At the same time to train successors to the overall development of morality, intelligence, physical fitness and beauty for the new era of socialism.

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