

***Education Journal* and the Spread of Modern Western Teaching Methods in China**

XIE Dexin^{[a],[b],*}; XIE Changfa^[c]

^[a]Ph. D., Faculty of Education, Southwest University, Chongqing, China.

^[b]Lecturer, College of Education, Guangdong Polytechnic Normal University, Guangzhou, China.

^[c]Professor, Doctoral Supervisor, Faculty of Education, Southwest University, Chongqing, China.

*Corresponding author.

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Abstract

Education Journal published various articles on western teaching methods. It adopted strategies such as all-round introduction, focusing on publicity and research, in-depth symposium and prize for excellent lesson plans to publicize modern western teaching methods. These practices recorded the changes of the modern western teaching methods in China, promoted the transformation of Chinese teaching methods from tradition to modern, and stimulated the localization of the modern western teaching methods.

Key words: *Education Journal*; Teaching method; Strategy of spreading

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INTRODUCTION

Education Journal is a professional education journal of the well-known Commercial Press, famous for its long service life, large capacity, much content and wide distribution among the educational journals in the

modern China. As “a public platform” of communication among the education intellectuals, *Education Journal* has a strong “voice” to the education decision, reform and practice, which play as a guiding role upon public opinion. This journal aims at “researching education and improving student affairs”, serves real education and promotes the teaching reform. During its popularization in China, the modern western teaching methods were introduced, transmitted and studied in lots of relevant articles in *Education Journal*, which turned this journal into the important media and communication platform. This journal faithfully recorded the changes of the modern western teaching methods in China, promoted the transformation of Chinese teaching methods from tradition to modern, and stimulated the localization of the modern western teaching methods.

1. AN OVERVIEW UPON THE TRANSMISSION OF THE MODERN WESTERN TEACHING METHODS

At the end of the Qing Dynasty, the implementation of new educational system, the reformation and abolishment of the imperial examination promoted the development of Chinese modern education. With a rapid increase of schools and students, teaching practice showed many new problems, among which a prominent problem was that the individual guiding teaching method adopted by old-style private schools and academies couldn't adapt to class-based teaching system used in western teaching. How to reform the teaching methods, adapt to the development of teaching organization and improve teaching efficiency became important issues at that time. On this occasion, *Education Journal* (1909) produced. Based on serving the practical teaching reform and development, this journal devoted itself to the translation and transmission of the modern western teaching methods. From 1909 to 1918,

it concentrated on articles related with Herbart Didactics, also introduced and spread single stage teaching method (i.e., “Compound Teaching”, noted by the author) and Groups of Study.

Then, under the influence of the May 4th New Culture Movement and American progressive education movement, China turned directly from imitating Japan to study America. After 1918, various western education ideas were introduced into China, the new “personality-oriented”, “children-centered” and “life-based” teaching methods greatly impacted on the traditional school teaching ideas and caused an extensive concern in the educational field. In the 1920s, *Education Journal* showed insight into the need of the Chinese teaching reform and published a large number of modern western teaching methods. Some scholar pointed out that, it tended to introduce and propose the new teaching methods, especially the child-centered “Project method” and “Dalton Plan” (Zhou & Zhu, 2002, p.3).

According to statistics, from 1909 to 1948, the number and proportion of articles about teaching methods published on *Education Journal* are shown in Figure 1 (Wu, Liu, Ding, & Lin et al., 2006, pp.346-353, 388-394).

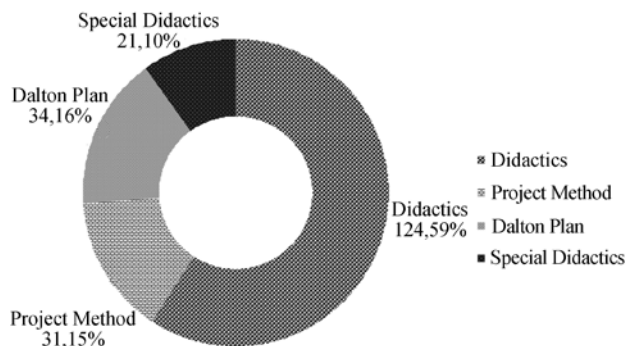


Figure 1
Articles about Teaching Methods on *Education Journal* (unit: piece/percent)

It should be pointed that the entries, such as “Didactics”, “Project method”, “Dalton Plan” and “Special Didactics”, are classified according to *Index of Education Journal (1909-1948)*. Whether this classification is reasonable or not, is beyond of this article. Articles about teaching methods are included in this paper in order to learn about the transmission of modern western teaching methods.

In addition, *Education Journal* paid attention to the application of western teaching methods upon different disciplines in elementary education. The number and proportion of relevant articles on *Education Journal* are shown in Figure 2 (Wu, Liu, Ding, & Lin et al., 2006, pp.346-353, 388-394).

According to Figure 1 and Figure 2, 328 articles about teaching methods were published on *Education Journal*, in which 31 articles were related with “Project method” while 34 ones were about “Dalton Plan”, respectively

accounting for 9.5% and 10.3%. Such data shows that this journal not only introduces and promotes modern western teaching methods, but also presents the transmission change from Herbart Didactics in the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China to “Project Teaching Method” and “Dalton Plan” in 1920s. It reflects the general situation upon spreading modern western teaching methods.

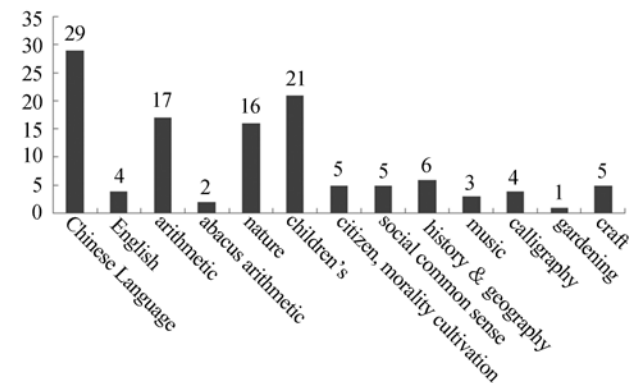


Figure 2
Articles on Special Didactics in Primary School of *Education Journal* (unit: piece)

2. BASIC STRATEGY TO SPREAD MODERN WESTERN TEACHING METHODS

With various western education trends, teaching experiments and methods, *Education Journal* relevant strategies on the spread of modern western teaching methods were adopted by *Education Journal* so as to meet the need of Chinese teaching reform.

2.1 A Comprehensive Introduction

On the one hand, *Education Journal* managed to offer a comprehensive introduction on modern western teaching methods. Before 1918, this journal introduced Herbart Didactics, Montessori teaching method, single stage teaching method, self-learning instruction method, Groups of Study, etc. Meanwhile, it involved teaching methods of different subjects in primary education. Furthermore, some other teaching methods were also included, such as *Batter Bill Grade Individual Teaching Method*, *Teaching Method of Labor View*, *Individual-based Grade Teaching Method*, etc.. In 1920s, this journal had extensive publicity upon the Project method, Dalton Plan, Gary System, Winnetka Plan, Haverty System, etc..

On the other hand, *Education Journal* managed to offer an overall introduction on a certain teaching method. Compared with Herbart Didactics, Montessori teaching method had a less effect in China. However, *Education Journal* published *New Education Method of Montessori Women History*, *Facility of Montessori New Education Method*, *Brief Biography of Montessori Women History*, *Soroban Education of Montessori theory*, *Preface of*

Montessori *Education Method*, Mrs. Bastid *Montessori Education Method Speech*, *Montessori Primary Education Methodology*, etc. These articles introduced its founder, development history, fundamental principle, content and facilities. It is obvious that this journal has a wide and deep introduction on modern western teaching methods.

2.2 Publicity and Research

As for some important teaching methods, although no special topic discussion was held, *Education Journal* conducted propaganda and research. Before 1918, this journal published relevant articles such as *Reduce the Teaching Time*, *Teaching with Full-Time Double-Session System*, *Fantastic Teaching Management*, *Rhine Five Formal Steps*, *Distinction of Teaching Time*, *Methods to Control Spare Time*, *Brief Introduction of Didactics*, *Education Criticism Purpose*, *Main Entries of Teaching Methods*, *Research of New Teaching Methods*, *On New Developmental Teaching Methods*, *Teaching Management Experience*, *Shortcomings of Current Education*, *My View on Education*, *Problem-based Teaching Method*, etc. In the 1920s, *Education Journal* published 31 articles to publicize and research the popular “Project Teaching Method” at that time.

In the specific historical context, *Education Journal* had reported and publicized the far-reaching didactics and project teaching method. These articles involved translation of western theories and researches on domestic reality, theories and operations, experiences and introspection of weakness.

2.3 In-Depth Monographic Study

Towards far-reaching teaching methods, *Education Journal* not only gave timely reports and publicity, but also gathered education powers and held in-depth monographic studies. These studies were mainly achieved by two ways.

On the one hand, *Education Journal* published “Editor’s Note” such as “Special Announcement”, “Declaration” and “Our Missions”, so as to indicate its aims, propositions and editorial orientation, to draw educators’ attention and to have monographic studies. In Vol. 10 No. 1, *Education Journal* treated “Reformation of School Teaching Methods” as one of its “aims”. It published 12 relevant articles and appealed to educators for teaching methods reformation. In order to encourage domestic educators to have in-depth study, it claimed that “this journal manages to honestly introduce and publicize various western teaching methods” in Vol. 14 No. 1. When it resumed publication in September of 1934, chief editor He Bing-song pointed out in “Our Mission” that “the particular mission of this journal is an exploration of pure education theories and teaching methods” (He, 1934).

On the other hand, *Education Journal* actively planned special issues about the popular teaching methods, guiding educators to have in-depth discussions upon

a certain teaching method. In the “Notice” of Vol.14 No.9, it announced that “*Dalton Plan Special Issue* will be published as Vol.14 No.11 or Vol.14 No.12 as a reference for the education field”. After the new education system was issued, the primary curriculum outline was produced while no reformation started in teaching methods, thus the reform spirit of new education system was difficult to realize. Therefore, *Education Journal* released a “Particular Notice” in Vol. 15 No.10, which planned “*Special Issue about All the Subjects in Primary Education* in lunar January next year” (1923). According to statistics of the author, 34 articles related with Dalton Plan were released in *Education Journal*, with 8 articles in the special issue of Vol.14 No.11 and 6 in that of Vol.14 No. 12; 14 articles about teaching methods of the subjects in primary education were released in Vol.16 No.1 of *Special Issue about All the Subjects in Primary Education* and 17 articles in Vol.16 No.2. It shows this journal’s great influence in the education field and reflects the researchers’ enthusiasm. Undoubtedly, these are conducive to its concentration of the education powers to have in-depth monographic studies.

2.4 Prize for Excellent Teaching Plan

In order to offer practical, valuable and easy-operation teaching plans for teachers in old-style private schools, *Education Journal*, according to the *General Regulations on Prize for Teaching Plan*, published “Notice on the Teaching Plan of *Bee* in the Chinese subject of elementary school” in the cover of its first issue (1909) so as to collect outstanding teaching plans nationwide. Meanwhile, it published trial teaching plans by 4 Nongmen normal students — *Chinese Subject Teaching Plan in Grade 1 of Primary School* by Gu Shu-Sen, *Chinese Subject Teaching Plan in Grade 2 of Primary School* by Wang Jing-yu, *Chinese Subject Teaching Plan in Grade 3 of Primary School* by Ye Feng and *Chinese Subject Teaching Plan in Grade 4 of Primary School* by Wu Ren-ying (1909). Then, in No. 2 of the same volume, prize was offered for excellent teaching plan of “*Honesty Prevails Throughout Society* in morality cultivation curriculum of elementary school”. Furthermore, in the No.4 and No.8 issues of the same year, the prize lists and teaching plans about *Bee* and *Honesty Prevails Throughout Society* were respectively published for reference. These teaching plans indicate that what the authors adopted are “Three” or “Five” Formal Lesson-steps.

It is undeniable that prize for excellent teaching plan by *Education Journal* is a strategy of Commercial Press. It should be noted that the publication of excellent teaching plan as a reference assist teachers in new-style schools with classroom teaching, which promotes the improvement and optimization of the teaching methods. Meanwhile, Herbert Didactics is better publicized and accepted by more and more teachers in new-style schools. Some scholar point out that the publication of outstanding

teaching plan by *Education Journal* offers samples for the teaching method reformation in primary and secondary education. Besides, it encourages front-line teachers to study and improve teaching methods, especially the publicity and popularization of Herbart's Five Formal Lesson-steps (Yang, 2012, p.200).

3. HISTORICAL REVIEW OF SPREADING MODERN WESTERN TEACHING METHODS

Education Journal plays an important role in the introduction of modern western teaching methods in China. It is not only faithfully records its transformation and pushes the reformation of modern Chinese teaching methods, but also promotes the localization of modern western teaching methods.

3.1 Recorders of the Transformation of Modern Western Teaching Methods in China

Education Journal, created in the late Qing Dynasty, stopped publication for two times because of the war in the Republic of China. In the history of Chinese modern education, this journal, as an important educational medium, promotes the publication of the modern western teaching methods.

As for articles related with teaching methods in *Education Journal*, before 1918, the main articles were about the introduction and publicity of Herbart Didactics while several articles involved Montessori teaching method, single stage teaching method, self-learning instruction method, Groups of Study, etc.; in 1920s, this journal not only greatly reported the popular "Project method" and "Dalton Plan", but also concerned Gary System, Winnetka Plan, Haverty System, etc. Meanwhile, it introduced some concrete teaching methods related with curriculums, such as elementary Chinese Language, English, arithmetic, abacus arithmetic, nature, children's literature, elementary composition, grammar, citizen, morality cultivation, social common sense, history & geography, music, calligraphy, gardening, craft, gymnastics, etc.. The majority of the teaching methods have been reported.

Education Journal managed to bring in the modern western teaching methods timely and comprehensively. At the same time, it focused on some in-depth studies. *Education Journal*, as a faithful recorder, witnessed the introduction and localization of the modern western teaching methods in China because it had continuous tracking reports on the western theories and the domestic research.

3.2 Propellent of the Teaching Method Reform in Modern China

In order to adapt to the regime change, Ministry of Education in the late Qing Dynasty and the early

Republic of China had designed the education system, which offered jurisprudential evidences for the wide introduction of western curriculum and teaching into new-style schools. However, the traditional private tutors inevitably felt helpless in front of the new-style teaching during the localization of the modern western teaching methods. Therefore, *Education Journal* actively introduced and publicized the modern western teaching methods, offering reference for the classroom teaching. The broad spread of the new-style teaching methods not only promoted the development of the modern western education, but also accelerated the transformation of old-style private tutors into new-style teachers, which advanced the reform of the traditional individual guidance teaching method.

After the May 4th New Cultural Movement, mechanical imitation of Herbart-based didactics limited the teaching form and the development of students' personality and interest. After some exploration, educational reform resulted in the "633" system in 1922. Then, the curriculum standards of the new education system produced, and the corresponding reform concerned curriculum and teaching material. During this period, *Education Journal* paid close attention to the western modern teaching methods. Overall publicity, wide introduction and timely translation offer reference for the reform and development of the domestic teaching methods, which promoted Chinese Teaching Reform Movement and Teaching Method Experiment in 1920s.

Some scholar pointed out, "the advancement of the modern education concentrated upon the methods — the improvement of teaching methods" (Xiong & Zhou, 2001, p.113). The teaching method reform in modern China is a modern transformation from the traditional individual guidance teaching method to the multi-element "personality-oriented", "children-centered" and "life-based" teaching methods. Such change is largely benefited from the introduction, publicity and research of modern western teaching methods by *Education Journal*. The spread of modern western teaching methods in China, not only brings powerful impact upon traditional Chinese teaching idea, but also speeds up the reform of modern Chinese teaching methods. Thus, *Education Journal* can be seen as an important pusher of teaching method reform in Modern China.

3.3 Guider of the Localization of the Modern Western Teaching Methods

During the spread of the modern western teaching methods in China, *Education Journal*, so as to meet the need of Chinese teaching reform, based on the wide introduction and publicity of western teaching methods, actively guided the educators to combine the domestic situation, research the specific application and explore the concrete implementation. Finally, localized treatises about teaching methods were finished.

As a series of important “education treatises”, these articles had been published in Vol. 1-16 of *Education Journal*. They are: *The Practice of Project Method*, *Outline of Project Method*, *The Practice of Dalton Plan*, *Outline of Dalton Plan (Volumes I-III)*, *An Introduction of Dalton Plan on Chinese Language Curriculum*, *Outline of Teaching Approach in Primary School*, *Summary on Social Principle of Teaching*, *Composition & Literature Teaching Approach*, *Teaching Approach Summary on Chinese Language in Primary School*, *Teaching and Exercise Approach of Arithmetic in Primary School*, *Teaching Approach of Nature History in Middle School*, *Teaching Approach of History & Geography in Primary School*, *Citizenship Education and Teaching Approach in Primary School*, *Teaching Approach of Process*, *Teaching Approach of Natural Science*, *Teaching Approach of Foreign Language*, *Teaching Approach of Painting & Music*, *Score Report of Moving Assistance Teaching Approach*, *Attempts of Moving Assistance Teaching Approach*, *Principles and Teaching Approach of Scientific Education* and *Teaching Approach of Physical Education in Primary School* (Wang, 2012, pp.296-297). Undoubtedly, these achievements were an important representation of the localization of the foreign teaching methods. Their formation was not only a specific application of the modern western teaching methods in the specific condition of Modern China, but also a summary and reflection on the teaching experience and theories. It is easy to understand, *Education Journal* always plays as a guider in the localization of the modern western teaching methods.

CONCLUSION

As an important medium and communication platform of the translation, *Education Journal* introduction, publicity, advocacy and research of modern western teaching methods, have played an important role in its localization process. The “Otherness” didactics is introduced into China, and then the process of “self” and “localization” are started. Although this transformation is very limited, even largely remain in the stage of simple imitation and mechanical copying, it is a preliminary attempt with modernized value in the real society and traditional culture of China. Nowadays, how to better explore didactics with Chinese style, embrace the prosperity of Chinese native teaching methods and abandon the simple imitation and mechanical copying is an urgent problem.

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