The Sinicization of pedagogy for one century

ZHANG Zhonghua

Pedagogy was initially imported into China, known as “a discipline imported from abroad”. The introduction of Pedagogy and its Sinicization almost went hand in hand. The Sinicization has gone through six stages, which showed that more attention should be paid to Chinese educational reality, scientific research methods and the relationship between academic research and ideology. What is more, original research should be advocated and the relationship between national cultural and educational heritage and foreign educational theory should also be handled well.

Keywords pedagogy, Sinicization, educational practice, original research

1 Introduction

Pedagogy, as a discipline, has a history of over 370 years if it started with the publication of Didactica Magna (written by Johann Amos Comenius, Czech educationalist) in 1632; supposed that it was symbolized by the publication of General Pedagogy (written by Johann Friedrich Herbart, German educationalist) in 1806, it has a history of 200 years; if the publication of Experimental Pedagogy (written by Wilhelm August Lay, German educationalist) in 1908,1 was the beginning of pedagogy based on the emergence of psychology, it has a history of...
less than 100 years. However, pedagogy, as a discipline in China, has a history of one hundred years; it is a comparatively young discipline. Initially imported into China, it is often known as “a discipline imported from abroad”. Moreover, its development in China has not gone smoothly all the time because it has neither inborn growth conditions nor enough nutrition, which has worried Chinese educators for over 100 years. Until now, they still suffer from the problem of Sinicization that is called “perplexing pedagogy” by some of them (Chen, 1989). What is worse, some even draw the conclusion “to end pedagogy” (Wu, 1995). Education practitioners regard “the discipline of education” as “useless pedagogy” and “pedagogy divorced from reality”. How to develop pedagogy and how to establish its own system in twenty-first century are two important inevitable problems we are faced.

2 The main stages of the Sinicization of pedagogy

Much research has been done on the development of pedagogy in China. Professor Zheng assumes that Chinese pedagogy of 100 years could be roughly divided into 50 years in Old China and 50 years in New China, among which there were “four upsurges and two tortuous periods, one serious and one slight” (Zheng and Qu, 2002). Professor Ye suggests that it could be divided into two periods, marked by the founding of the People’s Republic of China, during which it could be divided into six stages on the basis of the fundamental conditions and main characteristics in the development process, in which three historical discontinuities and three great changes occurred (Ye, 1998).

In terms of pedagogy’s Sinicization, Chen holds that three reflections have been made on the achievements in pedagogical research. First, it focused on imported Pedagogy (edited by Ivan Andreyevich Kairov) in the 1950s, leading to the publication of Pedagogy in 1960, a collection of policies and decrees which flaunted the banner of “Sinicization”. Second, in the early 1960s, reflection on pedagogy, which was mainly based on a collection of policies and decrees, resulted in Pedagogy edited by Professor Liu Funian. Third, in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, it concentrated on the confused educational ideologies during the Cultural Revolution and Liu Funian’s Pedagogy as reference (Chen, 1998, p. 278).

In this paper, the Sinicization of pedagogy as a discipline is roughly divided into six stages.

(1) 1901–1915, being far from the Chinese educational traditions—learning from Japan—pedagogy appearing in China, the emergence of hazy consciousness of Sinicization of pedagogy.

(2) 1916–1949, giving up learning from Japan—mainly learning from America—initial probe into the Sinicization of pedagogy.