

# *Spencer's Concept of Happy Education in Open Education*

Yuanhong Yi, Guifei Li\*

Teaching Center, Guangzhou Open University, 510091, Guangzhou, Guangdong, China

\*Corresponding author: 121637780@qq.com

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**Abstract:** Spencer's concept of happiness education emphasizes the happiness of teaching and learning, advocates natural education and self-help education, trains students to be happy people, and promotes people's all-round development. Because of its own particularity, open education, which is integrated into the concept of happy education, is facing difficulties such as the limitations of the comprehensive quality of teachers and students, the constraints of the campus environment and family environment. It is necessary to pay attention to the psychological situation of students, implement differentiated teaching, cultivate the ability of self-help education, and improve the fun and self-confidence of adult learning. At the same time, we should strengthen teacher training, effectively integrate resources, optimize teaching design, innovate teaching methods, strengthen the construction of campus cultural environment, form a family school connection mechanism, create a good happy learning atmosphere, and cultivate application-oriented talents to meet the needs of the new era.

## 1. Introduction

Happy education is to enable students to learn in a happy learning atmosphere, feel happy, form a good and sound personality, guide students to become a happy person, fully reflect the importance and respect for students, and make students grow healthily and happily by using happy teaching methods and means. The idea of happiness education has a long history. From Confucius and Mencius in ancient China to Socrates and Rousseau abroad and Cai Yuanpei in modern China, the idea of happiness education has been put forward at different levels. For example, Confucius put forward that "those who know are not as good as those who are good, and those who are good are not as good as those who are happy", Zhu Xi "teaching people without interest, will not be happy to learn", and Tao Xingzhi also put forward such educational concepts as "learning and music are inseparable". The concept of happiness education promotes students' sense of happiness from the three dimensions of the purpose, content and method of education.

## 2. Connotation of Spencer's Happy Education Concept

Spencer took the idea of "happy education" as the central idea in his book "Education Theory" and applied it to teaching practice. Through psychological research, it is proved that students' learning effect is the best in a happy state. In Spencer's Happy Education, he proposed to be a happy educator

and instill his ideas in students, so that students can fully experience the fun of happy learning, clarify the purpose of happy education, and cultivate students to be happy people. Spencer has been advocating the method of happy education all his life, and lighting up the guiding light for parents and educators on the road of children's education. He emphasized that education should be fun, advocated self-help education and natural education, and created a happy learning environment for children.

Spencer put forward the secret of happiness education in his book on happiness education, and believed that the methods and means of education should also be happy. Only in this way can children become happy people. In a happy state, learning any knowledge is easy and easy, while in a low mood, its potential and intelligence will be constrained, and scolding and blaming will not bring good results. Therefore, educators should be happy people, and first adjust the children's emotions to make them happy, confident and focused, in order to improve the efficiency of learning.

Spencer's natural education is based on the social evolution theory to build the basis for the balanced development of man and nature, and to pursue the free development of individual diversity and individuality to become a complete social man. It mainly includes three parts: learning from nature, following the laws of natural evolution, and punishing the natural consequences. His natural education method encourages children to fully feel the power of nature, which can not only cultivate children's aesthetic sense, but also inspire children's understanding, so that their dreams can be put on the wings of flight, and sad hearts can be comforted by the breeze. The education of nature is happy, beautiful, and ubiquitous. He pointed out that the methods and skills of education may change with the passage of time, but the laws of education and nature are consistent. He suggested that a natural education plan should be formulated to regularly experience nature, choose natural days and discuss the mysteries of nature.

Spencer believes that the purpose of happiness education is to train students to be happy people, awaken the feelings of love, cultivate the ability to help themselves, and guide students to obtain "purposeful happiness". Its education mainly includes physical education, self-education, self-help learning and love education [1]. Physical education is the basis of mental education. Only a healthy body can have a sound mind; Self help education cultivates students' ability to think independently, and self-education enables students to examine their own habits and behaviors independently and correctly; The education of love makes students feel love and constantly repay love. Spencer believes that only happy educational methods and processes can make students happy in learning. Therefore, in the teaching process, we should create a happy learning atmosphere, learn to understand and respect students, and give them positive hints to help them form a correct concept of honor.

### **3. Difficulties in the Implementation of the Concept of Happy Education in Open University**

As an important component of the lifelong education system for all, the core of open education is "openness", which is mainly presented from the concept and realization levels, including educational ideas, educational objects, educational resources, learning methods, educational levels, and the openness of the educational system [2]. Open education insists on taking students as the center, breaks down the constraints such as age, time and space of students' learning, and breaks down the educational barriers caused by subjective and objective conditions such as material, culture, and system. Relying on modern information technology, through the continuous improvement of the openness of education methods, resources, services, subjects, and systems, it realizes the popularization, democratization, and lifelong education [3], and builds a learning society. In the context of the epidemic, nearly 1.6 billion students around the world have been affected [4]. Open education faces greater responsibilities and more challenges. How to promote the strategy of creating excellence and improving quality with quality, and better serve lifelong learning, is a new topic for

open education. Apply the concept of happy education to open education teaching, optimize teaching design, innovate and apply happy education teaching methods, focus on the cultivation of students' comprehensive quality, and improve teaching quality. However, due to the influence of open education teachers, educational objects, families, schools and other factors, the application of the concept of happy education faces many difficulties. This paper uses the micro, middle, outer and macro systems of Bronfenbrenner's ecosystem theory to illustrate the dilemma of happiness education in the practice and application of open universities from the two levels of micro subject and medium environment.

### **3.1. Micro Level: Insufficient Interaction between Teachers and Students**

As an important component of the lifelong education system, the open university mainly faces adult students, and the admission conditions are relatively loose. At the learning level, the learning ability and comprehensive quality of open education students are uneven, the willingness to learn independently is not strong, and the attendance rate is not high; On the level of resource utilization, under the background of "Internet +", students' ability to master and use online course learning resources varies greatly, and the overall level of digital literacy is medium to low [5]; On the psychological level, it is mainly manifested in physical and mental fatigue under multiple pressures, self centered loneliness, inner inferiority of adult education, anxiety and fear due to lack of learning ability, and emotional impetuosity caused by eagerness for success [6]. Because the students in open education generally have the problem of contradiction between work and study, their attendance rate is not high, their class participation is low, their acceptance of innovative educational concepts is not strong, and their interest is not high. When using happy education practice in the curriculum, the students' participation enthusiasm is insufficient, and the implementation effect of after-school feedback is lower than expected.

The teachers of the Open University are changing from a single knowledge disseminator to an organizer and director of learning construction. Some scholars have studied teachers' teaching attitude, teaching ability, personal charm, teaching methods, etc., which will to some extent affect the improvement of students' learning initiative and self-efficacy, and also contribute to the improvement of learning satisfaction and teaching effect [7]. Wang Junfeng and others showed that 59.49% of the students believed that teachers' teaching attitude, ability and methods had a great impact on learning [8]. To integrate the concept of happy education into the course teaching process, so as to improve the teaching effect and improve the comprehensive quality of students, teachers are the key and teaching links are crucial. Therefore, teachers should innovate teaching methods, improve teaching ability and strengthen teacher-student interaction based on the concept of happy education. Jing Degang pointed out in 2021 that the open university system has a large number of teachers, including 91000 full-time teachers and 34000 part-time teachers. However, the overall scientific research level is low and practical skills are lacking. In terms of teaching, due to the characteristics of open education and the impact of the epidemic situation, most of the teaching is carried out online. There is less interaction between teachers and students, and practical teaching is not targeted. In addition to the pedagogical background of open education teachers, teachers of other majors do not know much about the connotation of the concept of happy education and the importance of teacher-student interaction. Classroom teaching is mainly about knowledge indoctrination. The concept of happy education is rarely integrated into the construction of curriculum resources, teaching design and innovation of teaching methods and applied to teaching practice.

### **3.2. Middle Level: Campus and Family Environment Restrict the Implementation of the Concept of Happy Education**

In this paper, the intermediate system and the outer system of Brownfenbrenner's ecosystem theory are summarized as the meso level to elaborate. The inter system refers to the interrelationship and relationship among the micro systems (subjects), such as the campus environment. Only by forming a strong positive relationship can the optimization effect be achieved. The outer system is the environmental system that the micro subjects do not directly participate in but have an impact on their growth, such as the family environment, good family education and harmonious family relations are conducive to healthy growth. The campus environment discussed in this paper is mainly elaborated from the cultural level. The so-called campus culture is a cultural phenomenon recognized by the mainstream social values formed by the interaction between teachers and students based on the platform of teaching activities and other carriers in the process of education and teaching [9]. The campus culture of open education has both general attributes and unique attributes. Its outstanding feature is openness. It breaks the space-time constraints from educational objects, resource sharing, teaching activities, etc. Most interactions between teachers and students are carried out through the open education teaching platform, and some are completed through WeChat and QQ. Especially in the context of the epidemic, it is a dilemma and challenge for teachers to implement the concept of happy education in their teaching design and implementation. In addition, the campus culture is not fully reflected in the educational function of open education. Although it has formed the cultural spirit of school motto and school spirit, it is still in the exploration and development stage. There are also some misconceptions, such as the difficulty and unimportance of campus culture construction for in-service students, which makes in-service students lack enthusiasm to participate in campus culture construction activities, and the overall sense of belonging of students is not strong. At the same time, there is less communication between on-the-job students, facing the dual pressure of work and study, and it is difficult to give play to the advantages of group team learning. Under the influence of the lack of a good campus learning cultural atmosphere, it is necessary to further promote the concept of happy education into the whole process of open education, which puts forward higher requirements for teachers and students. In the outer system, open education students are mainly adult on-the-job students and those who fail in the college entrance examination. Their learning ability is relatively insufficient. In addition to their own reasons, on the other hand, the conflict between work and study is also affected by the work and family environment. Family is the most important, basic and core spiritual home, which deeply affects individual development. Intimacy and entertainment of family environment are negatively related to learning burnout, while contradiction is positively related to learning burnout [10]. Adult in-service students face triple pressures from family life, work and study. Most of them aim to obtain diplomas and improve their skills. 64.31% of students aim to obtain diplomas. 49.29% of them devote less than one hour to study every day. The main influencing factors are busy working and family, accounting for 76.2% and 26.06% respectively. Innovative educational concepts and teaching methods are not paid much attention to, Especially for students whose family members are not harmonious, their work is not satisfactory, their pressure is high, and their colleague relationships are complex, their enthusiasm for participation is low, which has also become a constraint to the implementation of the concept of happy education in the Open University.

### **4. The Specific Implementation Measures of Happy Education in Open University**

Happy education is a promoter of teaching efficiency. As a new field that higher education must attach importance to, colleges and universities should create happy learning for students and happy teaching for teachers, so that teaching and learning can be organically integrated, while giving full play to the function of family education, which can effectively promote the all-round development of

people [11]. Happy education in college classroom should follow the practical principles of pleasure, participation, motivation and depth [12]. Open education should, based on its own particularity, effectively integrate resources, create professional brands, optimize teaching design, innovate teaching methods, integrate the concept of happy education, improve students' professional quality, and focus on cultivating career expanding talents to meet the needs of socialist construction in the new era.

#### **4.1. Based on the Concept of Happy Education, Optimize Teaching Design and Innovate Teaching Methods**

Based on the above problems of open education students at the learning and psychological levels, on the one hand, we should strengthen the psychological health education for students, cultivate a positive and optimistic attitude towards life, face the difficulties encountered in learning and life with a positive attitude, and instill the concept of lifelong education. It is never too late to learn, learning is glorious, and help students build strong self-confidence, Overcome some open education students' sense of inferiority. On the other hand, teachers should implement differentiated teaching for different groups in the process of resource construction, teaching design and implementation, build rich curriculum resources in theory and practice to meet the learning needs of different groups, and design diversified teaching activities in teaching to attract the learning interests of students at different levels, In the process of implementation, it is more flexible, such as hiring enterprise tutors or position experts to practice teaching, improving the job skills of in-service employees, and helping solve problems in work practice. The improvement of skills will further improve the learning initiative and enthusiasm, further clarify the learning goals, and enhance the fun and confidence of adult learning.

How can teachers attract students to participate in the curriculum in the teaching process? In addition to enhancing the reserve of professional knowledge and enriching the construction of resources, they also need to further innovate the teaching methods, integrate the concept of happy education in the teaching process, so that students can learn in a happy way to improve their learning efficiency, improve their comprehensive quality, and ultimately cultivate students to become happy people. Based on the above problems of teachers in teaching ability, attitude, professional quality and other aspects, the Open University should strengthen teacher training and focus on improving teachers' teaching level from the following aspects.

First of all, in the teaching process of imparting professional knowledge in the curriculum, we should focus on the cultivation of students' moral character and willpower. Teachers should do a good job of model demonstration, establish correct moral standards, encourage students to do good deeds, strengthen the ideological and political teaching of the curriculum, so that students can put correct moral concepts and qualities into their minds while learning professional knowledge, and form correct three outlooks. Spencer put forward that in moral cultivation, we should grasp the way to adopt natural punishment. Artificial punishment is only a supplement to natural punishment. We should avoid giving orders to students, allow them to show self-awareness, and cultivate their self-discipline. Secondly, we should implement the concept of natural education and strengthen practical teaching. In the teaching design, teachers should change the teaching method of "emphasizing theory teaching and neglecting students' practice", make full use of the practice teaching base, lead students to put down their mobile phones, leave the network, go out of the classroom, and get a happy feeling from nature. In addition to the practice teaching base, field teaching can also be carried out. For example, environmental protection law can be taught on the spot in garbage dumps, rivers and other places, Community governance can directly enter the community to guide students to find problems in real life and propose solutions and measures to solve problems, so as to improve their comprehensive quality. Third, innovate teaching forms and methods, optimize the design of teaching activities, and

improve the implementation of teaching strategies. Teachers should change their ideas, build a new teacher-student relationship of "being both teachers and friends" on the basis of democracy and equality, create situational teaching, create a happy classroom, stimulate learning interest, induce students to actively participate in classroom teaching, innovate teaching forms, such as situational teaching, case teaching, debate teaching, group discussion, etc., so that students can learn from "fun, action, and play" to improve the teaching effect. The fourth is to cultivate students' ability of self-help education, especially for adult students, due to the contradiction between work and learning, their participation in classroom teaching is low, and they can not fully play the role of group and team learning, which largely depends on autonomous learning. Spencer put forward that "the purpose of education is to one day not to teach", and believed that the main purpose of education is to cultivate students' ability of self-study and self-education. Students' inner pleasure should be taken as the standard to measure the effectiveness of educational methods and content. Self help education can not only cultivate students' will and quality, but also enable students to experience the joy of learning and cultivate their ability to apply existing knowledge to practice.

#### **4.2. Strengthen the Construction of Campus Cultural Environment**

The campus culture of open education is an open and three-dimensional system, which integrates the concept of open lifelong education, breaks through the "wall" cultural restrictions of ordinary colleges and universities, highlights the guidance of spiritual culture and value, condenses and inspires the positive, optimistic, united and upward momentum of teachers and students, sticks to the dominant position of students, takes teachers as the leading role, and inherits excellent traditional culture, Build an open education campus culture with space extension based on Internet +.

First of all, we should give full play to the function of the open education student union, build student associations based on the characteristics of various majors, integrate the concept of happy education into the second classroom, carry out various forms of social practices and cultural activities, highlight the dominant position of the open education students' campus culture construction, and form a student-centered campus culture. Secondly, we should create a campus culture of "learning with pleasure", form a good learning atmosphere, and enable students to establish the concept of learning with pleasure. Innovate and establish the training mode of "learning guidance - self-study - learning assistance". At the same time, use pleasant teaching methods to guide students to participate in curriculum teaching, pay attention to self-help education, let students learn in happiness, and improve their learning ability and effectiveness. Third, integrate patriotism education into the construction of campus culture, carry forward the excellent traditional Chinese culture, revolutionary culture and advanced socialist culture, strengthen the education of cultural self-confidence, adhere to the guidance of cultural self-confidence, strengthen cultural heritage, and enhance the recognition of teachers and students on campus culture. Spencer's idea of happiness education also proposed that we should pay attention to the cultivation of morality, will and quality. As a college student in the new era, we should establish lofty ideals, adhere to the four self-confidence, shoulder the responsibility of the times, be brave to struggle, improve our humanistic quality, and cultivate our moral integrity, which puts forward higher requirements for the construction of campus culture. The integration of patriotism education into campus culture is an important means to inherit and carry forward the excellent Chinese national spirit and culture, an important channel to shape the sound personality of college students, and helps to promote the realization of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese Dream. In the construction of campus culture, with the help of various forms of campus ritual activities, such as theme party day activities, revolutionary commemoration day activities, traditional festivals, etc., the red gene is used as the carrier to consolidate political identity, enhance the sense of mission, belonging and honor, and play the role of moral cultivation. Fourth, we should strengthen the

construction of campus cultural system and give full play to the educational function of system culture. Establish a "people-oriented" system, highlight the dominant position of university teachers and students, and enhance their democratic awareness and participation awareness. At the same time, in the design of the system, we should respect students' self-management awareness, create a good learning, living environment and organizational atmosphere, realize the humanization of the system, and help students develop in an all-round way. In terms of family environment, teachers and head teachers should strengthen communication with parents, form an effective home school connection mechanism, fully understand the growth process of students, pay attention to their mental health, help to form a happy, high-density family environment, and guide parents to help students develop together.

## 5. Conclusion

The concept of happy education focuses on cultivating happy people and promoting the all-round development of people, which is consistent with the concept of "three guarantees" and "ideological and political education" in China to a certain extent. In the practice of happiness education, the open university, due to its own particularity, faces the constraints at the micro and meso levels, such as the differences of subjects and the lack of interaction between subjects, the contradiction between work and study, the constraints of family and campus environmental factors, etc. In view of the above problems, it is proposed to optimize the teaching design based on the concept of happy education, innovate teaching methods according to different people, strengthen the construction of campus culture, highlight the function of spiritual and cultural leadership and value guidance, and guide and optimize the family environment to jointly help students develop.

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