

## Is the starting line for education really that important?

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### บทคัดย่อ

ทุกวันนี้การศึกษาของเด็กมีมูลค่าสูง ดังสโลแกน “อย่าปล่อยให้เด็กแพ้ที่จุดเริ่มต้น” ซึ่งมีอิทธิพลในวงกว้างและลึกซึ้ง เพราะมันสะท้อนให้เห็นถึงปัญหาที่มีอยู่ในสังคมและการศึกษาของจีนในระดับหนึ่งและ “ไม่ปล่อยให้เด็กแพ้ที่จุดเริ่มต้น” ยังเป็นปรากฏการณ์ทางสังคมและปรากฏการณ์ทางการศึกษาอีกด้านหนึ่ง เราไม่ต้องการให้ลูกหลานของเราล้าหลังในด้านการศึกษา ในทางกลับกันเรากังวลว่าการเริ่มต้นเรียนรู้เร็วเกินไปจะทำลายธรรมชาติของเด็กและไม่เอื้อต่อการเรียนรู้ตลอดชีวิต บทความนี้จะศึกษาปัญหานี้จากมุมมองวิภาษ

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### Abstract

Today, where children's education is highly valued, the slogan “Don't let children lose at the starting line” has a wide range and depth of influence, because it reflects to some extent the problems existing in Chinese society and education. And “not letting children lose at the starting line” is a social phenomenon and an educational phenomenon. On the one hand, we don't want our children to fall behind in education. On the other hand, we are worried that starting learning too early will obliterate the child's nature and is not conducive to lifelong learning. This article will study this issue from a dialectical perspective.

**Keywords:** Starting line, Early education, Life-long learning

### 1. Introduction

In the family, children's education is always an inevitable and important topic to talk about. Parents hope that their children will be able to achieve something in their future lives and live a higher quality of life through receiving a good education. Therefore, they want to try to send their children to the best kindergartens and primary schools, let them participate in various interest classes to develop their so-called specialties, and participate in intelligence training classes to train and improve their intelligence, so as to prevent their children from losing at the starting line.

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Specifically, the meaning of the “starting line” metaphor has the following three points:

First, just like the starting line on the sports field, there is a unified starting line or starting point suitable for all children. Children start the cruel competition as soon as they are born; The second is that early experience plays a decisive role in the development of children; The third is to learn as early as possible. "Learning" here mainly refers to academic learning. The psychological hint that the “starting line” metaphor brings to society and the public is: if you miss the “starting line” and fall behind from the beginning, the consequences will be disastrous.

### 1.1 Differences between China and the West

Western culture recognizes that everyone has a different starting line. At the stage of basic education, children's self-awareness has not been sufficiently developed, and the effects of personal efforts have not been fully reflected. Therefore, their level depends more on their origin and talent. The situation in China is just the opposite. Under China's current education system, what kind of high school can go to is mainly to "fight yourself" and rely on grades. The culture of "fighting yourself" will inevitably not attach too much importance to "innateness", but pay more attention to acquired efforts.

In other words, when Western cultures look at education issues, they recognize that everyone has a different starting line, and also accept the view that because the starting line is different, the results are different. Chinese people pay more attention to fairness, hope that everyone has the same starting line, and believe that the destiny of life comes from hard work, not innateness.

### 1.2 Where is the “starting line” for education?

First of all, the “starting line” exists in the parents' traditional educational concept. From a sociological perspective, the fierce starting line competition reflects the inequality of educational opportunities. Torsten Husén, a famous Swedish educational sociologist, proposed that there are three levels of equality of educational opportunity, namely, the theory of equalization of starting point with priority of efficiency, the theory of equalization of process with priority of fairness, and the theory of equalization of outcome that highlights individual development.

However, looking at China's education from the three perspectives of starting point, process and result, inequality of educational opportunities is an indisputable fact. There are significant gaps between different regions, between urban and rural areas, schools, and stratum. Economically developed areas have guaranteed investment in education. Good schools often gather the best local teachers and the most advanced hardware equipment. In poor areas, even the basic teaching facilities cannot be guaranteed. In the context of this serious imbalance in the distribution of educational resources, parents hope to use their own investment to make up for the losses caused by the imbalance in education.

Secondly, the “starting line” also exists in the commercial activities of various training institutions. Slogans such as "Don't let children lose at the starting line" and "As high as the starting point, the result will be better" are the treasures of various education and training institutions. Nowadays, all kinds of education and training institutions in society are mostly engaged in commercial activities, not real

educational activities. As we all know, the pursuit of business activities is profit, not the true growth and development of children.

Finally, the “starting line” still exists in the current Chinese college entrance examination system and test-oriented education. According to the survey, in the opinion of many parents, children will at least have to go to a type of undergraduate in the future. Good kindergarten is the foundation. Carrying out advanced education is also a helpless move for parents, in order to let the children have a skill and add more bargaining chips to their advancement. Under the baton of the college entrance examination system, parents will consider everything that can increase the probability of their children entering college. The brutal competition of exam-oriented education makes parents have to start preparing for their children's advancement at the “starting line”

## 2. There are two views on whether there is a "win or lose" on the “starting line”:

### 2.1 View 1: There are winners and losers on the starting line

There are two main reasons for thinking that there are wins and losses at the starting line. The first is the issue of education fairness. In order for their children to have a better development in the future, parents have to find ways to enter a better school. The second is based on the conclusions of various brain science research and psychology research. Early education is regarded as the most important period in the development of a person's life. Once certain "critical periods" are missed, it will have a profound impact on the development of a child's life.

#### 2.1.1 Education equity

One of the manifestations of unequal education quality is the difference in the types of schools. First of all, there are differences between key schools and non-key schools in terms of teacher allocation, infrastructure, and financial support. Especially in the era of the implementation of the key school system, key schools enjoy a higher status and are the targets of local government key support. More education Resources are allocated to key schools, and studying in key schools means that you can enjoy better learning conditions.

Secondly, key schools can usually select students first, and it is easier to gather high-quality students. Students who enter key schools not only have relatively stronger abilities, but also have more high-quality peers. Peer effect is considered to be an important factor affecting individual achievement. [9] Of course, the influence of the more prominent alumni network of key schools on individual development cannot be ignored.

Third, key schools will attract better teachers, and more knowledgeable and insightful mentors will help students form higher professional ambitions and engage in higher-status jobs in the future.

Finally, key schools have a better style of study than non-key schools, and the label of prestigious schools also has a halo effect on the future employment of students. In short, attending a



key school means enjoying a better environment for growth and success; on the contrary, if you are turned away from a key school, in the eyes of Chinese parents, you are losing on the “starting line”.

Although quality education has become the mainstream ideology, examination-oriented education still occupies a dominant position in actual teaching. The logic of reality is very clear: At present, China’s high-quality educational resources are limited. The allocation of educational resources and the stakeholders of basic education activities (students, parents, teachers, schools, and local education administrative departments) are determined by means of “one-dimensional education evaluation” and ordering of test scores. All seek the maximization of their own interests in a rational way. These are objectively existing scenarios in the operation of the basic education system, which will inevitably lead to examination-oriented education as a paradigm of educational practice, which is difficult to substantively break. Therefore, as stakeholders in basic education, students, parents, teachers, and schools can easily accept the “starting line theory of education”.

### 2.1.2 Early education

Pre-school education plays a key role in promoting children's development, learning and happiness. If children perform well in the early learning and growth process, it will help prepare for formal school learning and get a better workplace in the future Advantages to achieve higher achievements. In particular, early entry into the school system can reduce educational inequality and comprehensively improve students’ learning effects.

Tu Rongzhen (2017) found that the value of preschool education is long-term and universal based on the data from the China Education Tracking Survey. It not only has a positive impact on the performance of junior high school students, but also has a significant effect on reducing the probability of repetition of junior high school students. Wang Huimin (2017) empirically found based on the same data that receiving preschool education helps junior high school students to achieve better performance in cognitive and non-cognitive abilities. Chen Chunjin (2017) empirically based on the Shanghai survey data of the International Student Assessment Project (PISA) and found that compared with the control group who did not receive preschool education, receiving preschool education has a very significant positive effect on 15-year-old middle school students' academic achievements such as mathematics, reading, and scientific literacy.

### 2.2 View 2: There don't have winners and losers on the starting line

Another point of view is generated on the basis of criticizing the former. In their view, the former obviously compares life to a sprint, and life should be a marathon. The speed of the starting point will not affect the final sprint, and life should be for a long-distance marathon, the speed of the starting point will not affect the arrival of the end point. Pay more attention to the nature of children and the importance of lifelong learning.

### 2.2.1 Adapt to nature

Rousseau declared to “live according to nature,” “take the path that nature has planned for us,” and “obey the guidance of nature.” Rousseau tends to take the inner nature of the individual as the starting point of education, and his educational philosophy under the guidance of this inner view of nature is as follows: Education should be guided by cultivating natural persons, developing various talents and interests, and seeking motivation for free development, to help individuals achieve the free development of nature. It puts children's unique personality in the first place of education.

American educator Dewey believed that education is life and growth. “Because growth is the characteristic of life, education is continuous growth.” However, if “children are placed in a passive, receptive or absorbing state”, “results in resistance and waste.”[18] Dewey believed that growth is also the essence of education, and at the same time this growth is continuous and continuous development. Dewey tends to take the experience of the interaction between the individual and the environment as the starting point of education. The educational philosophy propositions guided by this interactive view of nature: Education should be based on the task of creating a situation, guided by the unification of positive and pluralism, with the help of the continuous process of continuous transformation of experience, and the rational organization of materials, so as to realize the continuous growth of the educated experience.

Montessori believes: “In a free environment, that is, in an environment suitable for his development, the child’s mind develops naturally and reveals its secrets automatically. This principle must be adhered to, so all Educational efforts will not sink deeper into an endless chaos.” The environment here has at least two meanings: The first means the external space environment. Give children a free, bright and spacious environment as much as possible. The best is a natural, non-artificial environment, because children will not feel depressed in such an environment. The second meaning is the inner spiritual world, let them do what they like to do according to their own interests and expertise as much as possible, and don't be too much restricted by the outside world. The environment in which children grow up is very important, especially the inner spiritual world. Don't let them bear too much burden at a young age, leaving unpleasant shadows in their childhood, which will have a negative impact on their future growth.

Vygotsky proposed the "syllabus" for children and the "syllabus" for teaching. The corresponding teaching types are "spontaneous teaching" and "reactive teaching". He believes that the teaching of preschool children lies in the "spontaneous-reactive" type between the two, and advocates that "preschool education should be close to spontaneous teaching", that is, the education of children should be based on their life background and original experience, and pay attention to children's recognition. Understand the development structure and follow the characteristics and laws of children's learning and development.



### 2.2.2 Lifelong education

In 1965, Paul Langerand of France, Director of the UNESCO Adult Education Bureau, formally proposed the concept of "lifelong education" during the International Conference on the Promotion of Adult Education hosted by UNESCO, and then the concept of lifelong education as an international education. Lifelong education advocates receiving continuous education from all aspects in one's life, and meeting the needs of social development and self-improvement through continuous learning. In terms of time, lifelong education expands education into one's life; in terms of space, it penetrates education into all aspects of life. Everyone is not only the object of learning, but also the subject of learning.

With the advent of the age of lifelong education, our society will become a learning society, and lifelong learning will become the demand of everyone. Lifelong learning emphasizes continuous learning. Learning is a long-term and changing process, not just the pursuit of short-term effects. The result it wants to achieve is to improve people's quality of life and happiness index through learning to acquire the ability to deal with problems and solutions, rather than to achieve outstanding achievements at a certain stage, let alone to demonstrate through external proof its own excellence.

## 3. Summary

### 3.1 Appropriateness of Educational Competition

The core of Darwin's "Origin of Species" is "natural selection, survival of the fittest". On the one hand, the theory of "natural selection" inspired people to work hard in the specific context at that time; On the other hand, it was simply extended to the social realm and evolved into the human society's rule of "the weak eating the strong."

On the one hand, only a small number of students who have won the competition can have fun in education, and other students can only become "foreigners" of education, lack interest in learning, and even drop out of school prematurely. On the other hand, education that overemphasizes competition is a long-term potential moral education for students. This kind of moral education training is likely to be a so-called "absolute and refined egoist."

### 3.2 Differences in the starting point of growth

According to Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, human intelligence has multiple subtypes, such as language intelligence, spatial intelligence, sports intelligence, mathematical logic intelligence, musical intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, and moral intelligence. Children's intelligent combinations are diverse and equal, with inherent differences; On the whole, children's subdivisional intelligence development has the same rhythm as spring, summer, autumn, and winter, but specific to each child, the developmental sensitive period of specific subdivisional intelligence also has certain differences.

From a philosophical point of view, every child is a unique “self” with the characteristics of body, mind and soul. This "self" is unique and unique in the universe. In fact, the growth of children is the growth of "self", and the process of education is the process of "protecting" and "helping" children's unique “self-growth”.

### 3.3 Rhythm of educational life

There are two philosophies in the practice of children's education: one is “the sooner the better”. Another philosophy is “the more the better.” Good education should imitate nature, and the sequence of human growth process is “body-emotional will-rational soul”. Therefore, education should start with the feeling of body and image, and then arrange courses according to the natural order of human growth: Before the age of twelve, the growth of the advantage of the "body-emotional will" is the main reason for the growth of the advantage of the “rational soul” after the age of twelve. Secondly, education is based on the growth of children, and it should follow the cognitive growth law of "action grasp-image grasp-logical grasp" from the outside to the inside.

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