

# The Application of Tao Xingzhi's "Little Teacher System" in Primary School Teaching

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Tao Xingzhi, a famous educator in China, put forward and implemented the "little teacher system". Children became students and teachers at the same time, which had a profound impact at that time. Decades later, in the context of teaching reform, the "little teacher system" can still play a role in primary education. Based on the analysis of the origin and application of the thought of "little teacher system", this paper explores the significance of this application of the educational theory in the current primary school teaching, the conceivable role, and the reasonable application forms and strategies.

*Keywords:* Tao Xingzhi, little teacher system, primary education

## Introduction

Known as the flag holder of Chinese people's education, the great educator, Tao Xingzhi, devoted his whole life to the cause of education. "Came with a heart and did not bring half a root of grass". He wholeheartedly explored a way out for the education of the motherland. Tao Xingzhi's educational theory and thought not only played an important and positive role at that time, laid a good foundation for Chinese education, but also provided inspiration and thinking for modern education. Based on the thinking of "little teacher system", this paper discusses the inheritance and practical application of this thought in primary school.

## The Ideological Source of "Little Teacher System"

"Little teacher system" is a new form of educational organization, in which children to teach others knowledge. It is based on the principle of "Knowledge is passed on as soon as it is known" in the process of universal education practice (Cheng, 2015, p. 54). What inspired Tao Xingzhi at first was that he noticed that his children and his mother played and studied together, which made his mother start learning smoothly. It was a new way to teach in a small range through children at that time. This unique form not only solves the problem that young male teachers are inconvenient to teach for girls and women, but also helps those who are unable to attend formal schools to get education. It persuades the older generation to promote their progress and improves women's education. In the 1930s, although there were some obstacles and shortcomings in the promotion of the "little teacher system", some achievements were made, which had a real impact on education and played a certain role.

Nowadays, in the context of teaching reform, the proper use of the teaching management form of “little teacher system” is also conducive to improving students’ learning efficiency. Now, the implementation of the “little teacher system” is still in the form of students as little teachers. More students will be placed in the “hero of learning” position to learn independently and help each other. Students teach others in learning and consolidate knowledge in the process of teaching, which has certain reference and guiding significance in today's teaching environment.

### **The Form and Strategy of the Application of “Little Teacher System” in Primary School Teaching**

#### **The Application Form of “Little Teacher System” in Primary School Teaching**

Nowadays, education has been popularized. At this time, the purpose of the “little teacher system” has already taken effect. Adopting the “little teacher system” is to let students become little teachers and form a learning community to help each other and make progress together. The application forms of “little teacher system” can be roughly divided into two categories. One is small teachers helping manage classes; the other is make one student pair with the other students or form a learning community. Now, the primary school in Chinese will arrange early self-study and lunch self-study. At this time, you can arrange the little teacher to rules his class and lead everyone to complete the study task. For example, in Yuehe Primary School in Huzhou, Zhejiang Province, China, there are small teachers of reading, writing, etc. to help teachers complete different learning tasks. Pair wise mutual learning can be one-on-one or group-driven. It is usually the students with good grades who help other students. In fact, the learning effect of students’ mutual learning may be better. Teachers often fail to fully understand students’ receptive ability. At the same time, it is mentioned in educational psychology that the formation of learning community can help students to achieve the role of mutual confirmation, mutual inspiration, and complementarity through mutual communication and cooperation. In this way, it is more helpful to help students learn.

#### **Teachers are the Main Part, and “Little Teachers” are the Auxiliary**

The primary school educational work should still be dominated by teachers. First of all, teachers should have a clear understanding of this. Teachers should complete their own work, and then guide students to adapt to the identity of a little teacher, and guide students to improve their learning efficiency by helping each other. At the same time, teachers should also change their educational concepts. We should choose to believe the ability of students and give support to the work of little teachers in the class. Meanwhile, the most important thing is to give encouragement. Do not forget to give more children the opportunity to show themselves and let more children have the opportunity to become “little teacher”, so as to improve their ability. Secondly, teachers should also understand that although “little teacher system” aims to guide students to help each other and form a learning community, Tao Xingzhi also mentioned that “teach your students to be teachers and you can also learn from students”. Teachers can also “teach students to be your teachers”. Why? The teaching process is not just a simple knowledge transfer. The more we grow up, the more limited we will be to the narrow things in front of us. As a teacher, we must keep improving. Everyone can be your teacher. Only when teachers learn from students modestly can they get closer to student’s psychology, know their abilities and needs and know how to teach better. As Tao Xingzhi once said, “There are many things a child can teach. If you are willing to learn from your students, they will be able to keep your youth of thought” and “they will be able to insure you, so that you will never fall behind”.

### **Teachers Should Manage and Organize “Little Teachers” and Improve the Corresponding Evaluation System**

Although we must absolutely trust the ability of little teachers, the teacher still needs to provide psychological guidance and help to them. Even if he/she has the identity of a little teacher, he/she is still a student. He/she should be friendly in front of his/her classmates. Once, there are some contradictions among classmates, the teacher must deal with them properly and help them. Secondly, some students may have good academic performance but their ability of expression and teaching is weak. At this time, the teacher should also guide and encourage them in the previous period of time, so as to give them opportunities to make progress. At the same time, the emergence of any teaching system and form is inseparable from the final evaluation. Teachers should take the form of students' self-evaluation, students' mutual evaluation, teachers' evaluation, and other forms to help the “little teachers” better develop themselves and also can make the class produce a more harmonious learning atmosphere.

### **The Significance of the Application of “Little Teacher System” in Primary School**

#### **It is Feasible to Apply the “Little Teacher System” in Primary School Teaching**

First of all, looking back to the source, in the early 1920s, Tao Xingzhi put forward that “A little teacher is a primary school student”. He pointed out that “I can guarantee that a six-year-old can be a little boy, which is an iron fact”. He also put forward that a little teacher is usually under 12 years old. This is the age of primary school students. It can be seen that primary school students have the psychological quality, cognitive basis, and thinking level as a little teacher. At the same time, the teaching goal of primary school is relatively simple. The learning goal and task of students are relatively clear. The imitation ability and shaping ability of primary school students are also relatively strong. So, they can also complete the corresponding learning management and learning tasks.

#### **The “Little Teacher System” can Help Students Consolidate Knowledge in Teaching Practice**

As a “little teacher” who manages other students' study in the early self-study and other time, he/she will certainly cultivate a sense of responsibility in this process. In advance, he/she must consolidate the teaching task, which will promote his independent study. When helping other students, they will review what they have learned and understand it more deeply. From Tao Xingzhi's initial practical experience, we can found the more children teach others, the more they learn. People who only store knowledge in their heads learn the least (Hu, 2008). Moreover, in the process of mutual learning, the formation of a learning community can make everyone in this group have a richer, more comprehensive and deeper understanding. Besides, in the process of students communicating with each other, they may have new doubts about a certain knowledge point. This is an opportunity for deep relearning, which can guide students to study and explore by themselves. In addition, to some extent, the “little teacher system” is also in line with Tao Xingzhi's teaching thought of “integration of teaching, learning, and doing”. The most outstanding point is that the “little teacher system” also takes students as the hero of learning. It attaches importance to the main role of students, and gives students the opportunity to learn actively. It also makes the connection between “learning” and “teaching” at the student level to inspire teachers to further clarify the role in classroom teaching, which is not teaching people to learn, but “teaching people to learn to do things” (Zhou, 2001, p. 15). In the process of becoming a “little teacher”, students are also in a process of self-exploration and knowledge learning, a process of self-achievement, a process of action, observation, reading, discussion, and thinking.

**The “Little Teacher System” can Guide Students to Stimulate Interest in Learning**

On the one hand, as a “little teacher”, they will be more active in learning to ensure their own academic performance. This sense of achievement and responsibility will drive them to study independently and actively. At the same time, when students stand up and turn themselves into experts and protagonists, they will have a deep understanding of the problem (Zhang, 2016, p. 23), process their knowledge with information, and in the process of helping students, “little teacher” will have various ways, which is the redevelopment of knowledge. In the process of teaching, they will present their learning results and learning experience. It not only helps them gain a sense of achievement, but also helps our classmates. All of them will find the beauty and fun of learning. Besides, in order to have a chance to be a little teacher, the students with poor grades will work harder and will naturally have greater interest in learning.

**The “Little Teacher System” can Produce the Effect of Model Incentive**

In fact, this point corresponds to the third point. When there are many “little teachers” in the class, these students can become other students’ role models and encourage other students to study hard. However, it is worth noting that teachers should give students as many opportunities as possible to become “little teacher”. And let more students have the opportunity to show themselves, so as to better play the role model incentive effect.

**The “Little Teacher System” can Cultivate Students’ Various Abilities**

First of all, the previous point also mentioned that being a “little teacher” can consolidate knowledge. This process of internalization and then externalization of knowledge is a very important ability of learners. Secondly, it is to cultivate the ability of students’ cooperative learning. Tao Xingzhi once said that “little teacher system” is “educating children through constant self innovation in collective life, so that children can unite to be learning more effectively”. Is not this the core idea of “independence, cooperation, exploration, and practice” advocated by the current new curriculum reform (Cheng, 2015, p. 56)? The process of cooperative learning among students makes them more united and cultivate the spirit of cooperation, which is not only conducive to knowledge learning, but also to the cultivation of personality. At the same time, being a “little teacher” in the class will make students more confident and outgoing. When he leads the class to complete the learning tasks and helps the students master the knowledge, students will get different highlights.

**Conclusion**

In the early 20th century, Tao Xingzhi put forward the “little teacher system”. It is applied to today’s teaching activities and become a reuse and new innovation of education forms. Excellent educational theory and practice are worth inheriting and developing. Nowadays, the application of “little teacher system” will more reflect the students’ master spirit in school. Make students have chances to show themselves in the stage of learning and let students grasp the initiative of learning, building a harmonious and independent classroom step by step. Give students more opportunities, more space and let them go forward together on the way of continuous knowledge exploration. As a teacher, we should give full play to the role of guide and help children to move forward independently early. At the same time, there is no doubt that the system still needs to be improved in practice teaching, seeking more scientific and reasonable application and seeking more effective strategies. Continuous development and exploration can promote the new progress of education.

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