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The international transferability of Froebel's early childhood pedagogy with respect to the People's Republic of China

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Abstract

Fröbels ideas and concepts of early education emerged in the first half of the 19th century and have had a considerable impact on kindergartens throughout the world. It is the basic premise of the study that they also would find their way into China after the opening process of this country began in the late 1970's.

The research is based on two central questions: What were the major determinants of the intertemporal and international transfer of the Fröbel pedagogy over a time period of 150 years? What is the role of Fröbel in relation to cultural characteristics that differ among countries?

Field work comprised 169 interviews with major actors of early childhood education in China and in Germany and was intended to deal with the validity of a number of hypotheses arrived at by logical deduction.

The major result of the study is that Fröbel's pedagogy would not, in principle, be rejected in China but its transfer appears to face barriers if the original scale of values of the pedagogy were to be fully applied. Special concerns are to be raised in view of the religious background of concepts and the so-called sphere philosophy. As a result, kindergartens in China that already explicitly refer to Fröbel are nothing but superficial and commercially oriented ventures. To introduce the "true" Fröbel to some larger degree would presuppose a corresponding support of government entities as well as of personalities recognized and well known as multipliers in educational processes of the country.