

# On the Realistic Pedagogical Significance of Gestalt Psychology

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## Abstract

**The holistic view of Gestalt psychology plays an important role in people's understanding of the objective world. At the same time, the holistic orientation of Gestalt psychology will also have a certain negative impact on people's understanding. In the process of daily education and teaching, teachers' psychological cognition, teaching metacognition and students' view are bound by the overall orientation of gestalt to a certain extent. The analysis of these negative effects is of great significance for the correct use of psychological knowledge in the process of education and teaching and the improvement of education and teaching level.**

## Keywords

**Gestalt psychology; Holistic view; Teacher cognition; Teaching metacognition; View of students.**

## 1. Introduction

Gestalt is a transliteration of gestalt, which means "gestalt" in German. Hence Gestalt psychology, also known as gestalt or holistic psychology. Gestalt psychology was born in Germany in 1912, and its distinctive characteristic is to emphasize the wholeness of psychological phenomena. The overall orientation of Gestalt psychology and its outstanding contribution in the field of perception directly or indirectly influence education and teaching. At the same time, the Gestalt holistic view is opposed to another important teaching principle, individualized teaching. It is very important for teachers to grasp the relationship between Gestalt orientation and individualized teaching. If the relationship between the two is handled well, it will bring twice the result with half the effort to the practical work of education and teaching. On the contrary, the level of education and teaching is greatly reduced.

## 2. A holistic View of Gestalt Psychology

The Gestalt school believes that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, that the whole has something else besides the sum of its parts, that the relationship between the parts and the whole is meaningful, and that the properties of things are determined by the whole rather than the sum of the properties of the parts. [1] The wholeness and constancy of perception enable people to better understand the processing mechanism of mental consciousness. While the "wholeness priority" and perceptual set of perception help people to better understand the world around them, they also put a distinct gestalt mark on people's cognitive activities subconsciously. [2] Maslow pointed out that "holism is clearly true -- the universe is, in any case, a whole, intrinsically connected; Every society is always a whole, intrinsically connected; Each person is always a whole, intrinsically connected ". [3] Each student, each group, each class, etc., is a gestalt. It is from this point of view that Gestalt psychology has a wide and profound influence on education and teaching.

### **3. The Influence of Gestalt Holistic View on Teachers' Cognition**

#### **3.1. The influence of Gestalt holistic View on teachers' comprehensive information processing in classroom**

As a classroom teaching activity accompanied by complex psychological activities, it is always affected by the whole view of gestalt. In the course of classroom teaching, teachers must have classroom discipline guarantee if they want to complete the teaching tasks prescribed by the syllabus. Therefore, the only way to improve teaching effectiveness in the classroom is to make a holistic choice. In the complex and changeable classroom information, teachers automatically pay attention to high-frequency information (most explicit information with high frequency and strong signal in the classroom), while intentionally or unintentionally ignore those seemingly insignificant low-frequency information (a few recessive unconventional information in the classroom). This kind of automatic selection of teachers in the classroom seems to be conducive to the completion of teaching tasks and educational objectives, but in fact this kind of utilitarian selection runs counter to the essential law of education. The low-frequency information filtered out by it is the weak link in the improvement of the overall educational level of students in a class. Low-frequency information in class is exactly the first focus of teachers with years of educational practice. The lower the level of teachers' educational practice, the greater the restriction of the Gestalt holistic view on their attention surface.

There are two kinds of high-frequency information in classroom teaching. The first is the positive high-frequency information released by the students who actively participate in the classroom learning, which is preferred by the whole class. The opposite of this positive high-frequency information is the recessive withdrawing low-frequency information which is not explicitly expressed by a few introverted students or underachiever students. The second type is the negative high-frequency information released by the majority of students who do not actively participate in the construction of classroom learning, which corresponds to the relatively low frequency information composed by the minority of students who want to actively participate in the construction of classroom learning. When teachers with low practice level process the first kind of high frequency information cognitively, they will be affected by the overall gestalt view and automatically pay attention to the positive high frequency information beneficial to their teaching and filter out the recessive retreating low frequency information. As a result, the teaching efficiency can only be maintained at the above medium level at most. However, when cognitively processing the second kind of negative high-frequency information, teachers with low practical level will be affected by it and pay too much attention to it, so that they don't know what to do, and can't find effective classroom monitoring and processing means, leading to teaching failure. In the first case, teachers who are experienced in educational practice will pay more attention to the low frequency information while maintaining the high frequency information, so as to rapidly improve the teaching level of the whole class. In the second situation, teachers who are experienced in educational practice will take effective teaching monitoring measures to suppress negative high-frequency information and highlight low-frequency positive information to slowly improve the teaching level of the whole class.

#### **3.2. The influence of Gestalt holistic view on teachers' perceptual power**

In the classroom teaching, the teacher's perceptive power is mainly manifested as the teacher's mastery of students' knowledge and the students' perceptive ability of explicit limb language. In the process of teaching classroom knowledge and constructing students' knowledge, teachers with low practical level are easy to regard their own relatively mature knowledge background and understanding as a gestalt with students' background knowledge and understanding. From teaching design to knowledge explanation, we do not think from students'

point of view. Instead, all knowledge explanation and problem presupposition in teaching are from our own point of view. We try to imagine that students can understand and accept knowledge as quickly as they can. The first reaction is to question and blame the students rather than reflect on their own teaching is not right. This subjective behavior of teachers will gradually lead to low teaching efficiency. If teaching methods and attitudes are not adjusted in time, it will only lead to teaching failure. This is the first bias caused by the influence of Gestalt on teachers' perceptual power.

The essence of teaching is all the ways that teachers cause, maintain and promote students' learning. [4] In the process of knowledge imparting, teaching and learning are an interactive and two-way flow of information, and the leading role of teachers and the subject behavior of students are changing all the time. The play of teachers' leading role is based on the perception of students' acceptance and understanding of knowledge, which requires teachers to use perceptual power to grasp, and then adjust the teaching progress and methods. The special form of class teaching system determines that teachers usually perceive all students in the whole class as a gestalt in class teaching, which will cause two problems. The first problem is that teachers often only take into account the majority of students in the way of knowledge teaching, while ignoring the minority of students with special needs. However, in reality, some students think that open and passionate explanation can maintain their interest in learning at a higher level, while some students think that gentle and delicate explanation is more conducive to the acceptance and construction of knowledge, which requires teachers to have a deep understanding of each student's character and temperament before class, and take targeted measures in classroom teaching. The second problem is that for the same knowledge point, the depth of the teacher's teaching can only cover most students, while the different intellectual demands of superior students or underachiever are beyond the reach of the teacher. Students with excellent learning often expect teachers to speed up the explanation of knowledge and increase the depth of knowledge, which is opposite to underachiever students, who need more basic knowledge explanation and thinking guidance process, which requires teachers to have a full understanding of students' knowledge reserve in the preparation of lessons and students, and try their best to take into account the knowledge demands of students at different levels in class.

Explicit mental language is the body language that people's inner thinking activities reveal intentionally or unintentionally. It is composed of the information symbols conveyed by facial expressions, head movements and subtle movements of limbs. [5] For the importance of explicit language, some scholars believe that the proportion of human information transmission depends on body language is as high as 65%. [6] The limb language of both teachers and students is an important part of the classroom information exchange. The reasonable use of limb language by teachers and the timely understanding of students' limb language is extremely important for the information exchange between teachers and students, and it is also one of the real channels to know whether students really understand the classroom teaching knowledge. Influenced by the perceptual integrity in classroom teaching, teachers tend to treat the whole class of students as a gestalt for information processing, pay attention to the limb language of excellent students and cheerful students, and regard the limb language of these students as the feedback of knowledge learning information of the whole class. When teachers pay attention to the above mentioned students' limb language, they also ignore the limb language of underachiever and introverted students, which is very unfavorable to the learning of these students. At the same time, in the time axis, it is easy for teachers to perceive students' upper body language as a static gestalt at a certain point in time. The students' limb language is a dynamic gestalt with the explanation of knowledge and the expansion of content. When teaching knowledge, teachers should always pay attention to the timely changes of limb

language, and pay special attention to the introverted students and the underdeveloped students according to their stronger concealment of limb language.

### 3.3. The influence of Gestalt holistic View on teaching metacognition

Metacognition is the cognition of cognition, its essence is people's self-awareness and regulation of cognitive activities. [7], metacognitive thought has been available in our country for a long time. The discussion about "teaching and learning" contains the idea of the application of metacognitive in the teaching. Therefore, we thought that teaching metacognitive is teachers' plan, adjusting, monitoring and reflecting on teaching activities. Teaching metacognition is not only a key factor for teachers' successful development, but also an important way for teachers' growth, which is of great significance to education and teaching. According to the basic elements of metacognition, teaching metacognition can be divided into three parts: This paper discusses the influence of Gestalt psychology on teaching metacognition of teachers with different levels of practice by preparing textbooks before class, teaching experience and teaching monitoring during class and teaching reflection and attribution after class.

Teachers' pre-class lesson preparation is mainly to prepare teaching materials and students' teaching methods. Teachers with low practice level are affected by the overall priority of perception in lesson preparation, so they tend to perceive students' mental basis and their own mental basis as a gestalt, so as to analyze teaching materials from their own mental state. When writing teaching plans, they tend to start from their own thinking perspective, while ignoring students' cognitive characteristics. If the teacher does not get rid of the bondage of gestalt in the link of lesson preparation, then the teaching plan text and teaching method will be foreshadowed for the practice bias in classroom teaching. The problem presupposition in the classroom and the teaching monitoring method are all affected by the previous link, and the metacognitive experience of the teacher in the actual teaching of classroom knowledge will deviate from his vision of expectation. Teachers will be dissatisfied with students' slow assimilation and adaptation of knowledge, and students will also struggle to understand and construct knowledge in teachers' "obscure" explanations. The asymmetry of classroom information exchange caused by different cognitive starting points between teachers and students will have an impact on teachers' teaching monitoring. This is because teachers underestimate students' possible problems due to misplaced thinking Angle in the process of preparing students. Once the students' classroom performance exceeds the teachers' pre-set expectations, the teachers will become at a loss, which will affect the teaching effect.

Another important part of teacher metacognition is teaching reflection and attribution after class. If low classroom teaching efficiency or classroom teaching failure is a required course for every teacher to take the podium, then after-class reflection and attribution is the booster of teacher professional growth. The most important link of teaching metacognition is after-class reflection and attribution. Even if the lesson preparation before class and the teaching metacognition experience and monitoring in class fail, the teaching reflection and attribution after class can avoid the same mistakes in the future teaching. No matter how good the pre-class and in-class links are, if there is no after-class reflection and attribution links, then the teacher can only be reduced to a mediocre teacher. In teaching reflection, teachers should overcome the influence of gestalt, summarize and reflect on the subject and object of the teaching link and the teaching media from the two perspectives of teachers and students objectively and impartially, analyze every detail before class, during class and even after class, analyze and summarize every factor affecting the teaching, and make correct attribution.

Teachers with low practice level are susceptible to the influence of Gestalt continuity law, similarity law and concision law in the process of reflection and attribution after class. They do not fully analyze the problems in the teaching process, and often only see the surface phenomenon of the problems, but have insufficient understanding of the deep causes of the

problems. Thus, it is easy to blame students for mistakes when attributing problems. [8] The essence of teachers' bias in after-class reflection and attribution is the difference of teachers' handling of problems with different practice levels. The teachers with practical attainments can quickly enter the deep structure of the problem and grasp the essence of the problem, while the teachers with low practical level are just the opposite.

#### 4. The Influence of Gestalt Psychology on Teacher-student Outlook

Student view is the teacher's basic understanding and attitude towards students. [9] A teacher's view of students directly affects his view of education and the teaching methods he adopts. In practical work, teachers tend to form rigid, rigid and aging student view due to the influence of their own historical view or educational background knowledge, as well as practice level, which is also influenced by the overall view of Gestalt psychology.

Influenced by the continuous law of gestalt, teachers tend to authorize their own image when constructing the view of students. Instead of viewing students from the perspective of continuous development, teachers regard the students in the rapid development of body and mind and the students in the past and present state as a gestalt and consider students as the pronword of childish. Teachers who hold this view of students tend to be dogmatic when teaching, believing that what they have said and taught is correct, and imposing what they think is correct knowledge or words and deeds on students. Even if students have doubts or doubts about knowledge understanding, they will not try to relieve their doubts with an objective and equal attitude. However, students are people with independent personality in the rapid development of both body and mind. In the increasingly technological information society and the increasingly deauthoritative social trend of thought, it is hard to imagine what practical results will be achieved if teachers lack the people-oriented concept of students in their education and teaching. As mentioned above, when preparing textbooks and teaching methods, teachers tend to regard students' mental maturity and themselves as a gestalt from their own perspective, and prepare teaching plans and teaching methods according to their own thinking perspective, which subconsciously elevates students' mental maturity in a form.

Attribution theory is a common metacognitive knowledge used by teachers in education and teaching. In the attribution of events, teachers' cognitive differences on the so-called superior students and underachievers are often affected by the gestalt holistic view. "Excellent students will always be excellent, poor students will always be bad" is the view of students that teachers unconsciously hold in their mind. The reason is that teachers, affected by the gestalt similarity rate and closure rate, often regard the excellent students in their eyes as a gestalt. Even if the eugenics gestalt inevitably has many shortcomings, the teacher will mentally perceive it as a perfect gestalt, in order to maintain the perfect image that the eugenics Gestalt has established in the mind. Until the eugenics gestalt makes a major mistake, the teacher will continue the gestalt and it will be difficult to change it. If teachers hold such a superior student view, it is easy to ignore the bad habits and shortcomings of superior students.

The constant poor student view is a great injustice to the underachievers. If a teacher establishes the concept of "poor student" in his mind, when the poor student gets a grade, the teacher will first doubt the authenticity of the grade, and his intuition will make him confirm the student's grade from the opposite side. The teacher with low practice level may even speak sarcastically to the poor student. And the teachers who are accomplished in practice will praise the students from the perspective of appreciation. Even if the poor students get the results by improper means, the teachers' attitude of praise will promote the students and make the students develop in a healthy way. When poor students make mistakes, the teachers who hold the view of constant difference of poor students will often characterize poor students' mistakes

from a bad perspective, rather than explore the root cause of mistakes through the phenomenon, which is often called "labeling" effect.

## 5. Conclusion

Gestalt psychology has made outstanding contributions in the field of perception and learning theory, and its holistic view plays an important role in the process of understanding things. However, in the practice of education and teaching, the majority of front-line teachers must deeply realize the positive significance and negative impact of the Gestalt holistic view, especially in the context of the current national macro education policy of simultaneous development of the five education, moral education to cultivate people, which has important practical significance in today's vigorously advocating the transformation of education mode, to promote the healthy development of physical and mental health of young people. In teaching practice, teachers should deal with the relationship between overall priority orientation and individualized teaching, which is of great significance for school education work to prevent the occurrence of behavioral deviations such as school bullying during the growth of teenagers.

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