

The Differences of Family Education Between China and America

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Abstract

Nowadays, children live in a more privileged life and are provided by family and society with more advantageous conditions. At the same time, social development needs children have high qualified talents to face such environment, then good family education is the key point to the high qualified talents. Because family is the first place that children receive education, which plays an important role in the intellectual development and the quality of the children. There are many types of family education in the world and each of them shows distinctive features and closely relate to its culture. And American family education is the most famous one among them. There are great differences in the concepts, methods and results of education between America and China. My paper will analyze those differences from the three aspects, especially the differences on cultivating children's independence, creativity and relationships between children and parents of the two kinds of family education. I hope to find a satisfied family education method through comparing the differences between Chinese and American family education so as to provide a helpful way for Chinese family education.

Key words: Difference; Family education; America; China

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INTRODUCTION

I have heard a story about Chinese and American children. It is said that there were many Chinese and American children who were left in a forest and nobody there except themselves. American children ran away quickly to find substances in order to survive, whereas Chinese children were just crying for they don't know what to do without their parents. After hearing that, you may be very surprised that why there was a great difference between two countries' children. The reason is that they receive different education. Education is a highly complicated process which is connected with families, schools and society throughout children's whole life. But family education is the most important course in a child's life. In the dictionary, the definition of family education is explained in this way: Parents or elder generation educate the child or teenage in family, and different society needs different family education. But those scholars who studied family education explained it in another way: Family education is that a society uses to educate new generation with aims and systems..."So family education is not only significant to children but also to the whole family, even the country.

Family education is not only the education of the pre-school education, but also all life education. With the development of education system, the thoughts of American family education come into China gradually, so apparently there are many differences of family education between China and America. I will focus on the conceptions of parents view and child-rearing view, the methods of bringing up independence, creativity of children and children's relationships with parents, and the results of two different family educations.

1. CONCEPTIONS OF FAMILY EDUCATION IN AMERICA AND CHINA

As we all know, family is the first school for children, parents are the first teachers, and their ways of teaching

and teaching conceptions may affect our whole life. That is to say, family education is so important that all parents should pay more attention to it.

But what is more important in conception of family education is child-rearing and parents' view. According to my readings, child-rearing view is that parents bring up and teach their children. Parent-views refer to parents' attitudes or methods of bringing up children, which are different in America and China.

1.1 Child-Rearing View and Parents View in America

In America, parents' aim is to train their children to have the ability of adapting to various environments and living independently. Based on this concept, most American parents emphasize more on training their children's ability of independence once they grew. They believe that children's growth must rely on their own experiences, because they think that children should form a self-supporting conscious and the capacity to live independently during their childhood. This training contains many aspects, such as work, patience and the spirit of hard work, etc. Through such process of training, children will form the labor sense, learn some work skills and develop a habit of labor. Besides, children can learn how to overcome difficulties, and rich their knowledge. It is just in the unconscious process that children will obtain the independent survivability and take the responsibilities for the society.

1.2 Child-Rearing View and Parents View in China

Compared with American, Chinese parents have a very different conception of children's family education. Some parents in China only care about whether the children have a promising future. Based on this expectation, the majority of parents feel that their responsibility for their children is to create as good conditions as possible so that the children will not worry about anything in the future. Chinese parents would like to provide everything that they can for their children in the process of children's growth. In short, they would like to sacrifice anything if their children can live better with their help. Therefore, in the process of children's growth, the most important thing that parents concern is to develop their children's intellect, except for caring children's daily life. In order to give children a good condition in study, parents would not let children do anything except studying. As for the children's independence, civil awareness and their ability adapting to the society in the future, they consider little or not at all.

2. TWO DIFFERENT KINDS OF METHODS OF FAMILY EDUCATION

According to the different backgrounds of the culture, the Chinese parents' educating measures are totally different from the American countries' in cultivating independence,

creativity of children and children's relationships with parents

2.1 Differences in Cultivation of Children's Independence

Most American parents think that the child is an independent individual since he was born, who has his own willing and characteristic. Neither the parents nor teachers have priorities to determine or restrict their children's behaviors. In order to let the children recognize that they are the masters of themselves, American parents will give their children enough freedom and will not make decisions for them in most occasions. And they cultivate their children's independence in many aspects. Forlet children sleep alone in a single room from an early age; or when children tumbling, parents will not help but let himself get up; and parents also encourage children to take part in climbing mountain or rock, and other competitive activities, which is for the sale of bring up their spirit of "pirate". At the same time, many American children take part-time jobs to support their own expenses when they grow up.

American parents are willing to respect and understand their children's feelings, thus they think carefully about their words and choose the appropriate time to educate their children. The famous basketball star, Michael Jordan once said, "I admit that our children will inherit some good traditions, but I don't think we should make rules to teach them what they can do, because I think even if they do, they will not be happy." His words may represent the thoughts and attitudes of most American parents in family education.

Compared with American parents, Chinese parents hold a very different attitude toward children's independence. It is well known that in the later of last century, for the sake of sustainable and harmonious development, our country has carried out the one child policy as family planning, for this reason there's an increasing number of families with one child, and Chinese children have been considered as the apple in their parents' eye since then. So it is not surprising that Chinese parents try their best to do almost everything for their children, such as helping them to washing, cooking meals and so on. Even parents don't support their children to do part-time jobs because they fear their children get hurt. In short, many Chinese parents, especially the parents with one child, arrange and decide everything for their children or even become the substitution of their children almost in all aspects of life. Therefore, the children have no chances to experience and contact with the society. The serious consequence is that many children cannot do what they should do in their ages. For instance, the seven-year-old children cannot wear by themselves, the nine-year-old children cannot tie their own shoes. "In the city, the primary school students need their parents to accompany with them to go to school and go home, and they let their parents take bags for

them; many middle school students cannot wash their own clothes; the most serious thing is that many university students need their parents to accompany them to enroll at the first year. In a word, many parents finish everything for their children.

2.2 Differences in Cultivation of Children's Creativity

As for cultivating children's creativity, there are also great differences between China and America. American parents encourage their children to innovate and surpass their predecessors in all fields. They think that children, like adults, have the independent ability of study, and they hold a positive attitude to their children's creativity. They encourage children to explore and provide very different views on some problems and let children solve these problems through their own efforts. Even though children cannot get a positive effect, the parents would not interfere with children's work; instead, they would let their children to be aware of the problems gradually in the process of developing and then correct their faults by themselves.

Chinese parents are always just satisfied with their children to imitate others. They always hold a negative attitude on children's exploration activities, and many activities are always stopped by their parents. For example, the children who demolished an alarm clock in the United States families will not be blamed by their parents. Sometimes, they will work with their children to repair the clock when the children cannot do it. They will even encourage children to demolish the clock again and reinstall it. But, if the same thing happened in Chinese families, parents may just blame children even though they have installed it back. The children's creativity is usually ruined by their parents' strict supervision in the early age.

2.3 Differences in Cultivation of Children's Relationships with Parents

The relationship between children and parents is also very different in America and China. In American family education, parents are children's friends, they are equal at home. If the children do something wrong, parents and children will discuss democratically. At first, the parents get to know the children's minds and then communicate with them, and tell them how to correct. By this way the children will understand the truth and won't make the same mistake again in the future. It is very clear in the "*Declaration of Independence*" that the American people also pursue democracy. "*The Declaration of Independence*" says that all the people are born equally; they are endowed with holy rights including life, freedom and pursuit of happiness."

This also manifests in American families. Parents never think that they have priorities to order their kids, and they believe that children have the right and ability to decide something by themselves. On the one hand,

children should experience the life so that they can obtain what they can get only through their own work. On the other hand, children will gain happiness from working. In a word, parents and their children are equal at home, and they regard each other as good friends.

But in China, children should be obedient to their parents at most times. Why is the relationship between children and their parents like that? We can find the explanations from ancient history. "An ancient in China named Zhou Gong once said that one can do nothing successful in lack of a warm family." His words also indicate that children should respect their parents completely. The Western Zhou Dynasty, a dynasty of slavery, the morality required children should support their brothers and parents. There was a saying "all the soil and objects belong to the emperor." Although the Western Zhou Dynasty had been ruined, but the virtue has been passed down. As a result, many people inherit the thoughts and demand their children to be obedient to them unconditionally. In parents' minds, they have the priority to decide their children's life without considering children's feelings. As a consequence, there are always a gap between parents and children for lack of equal and effective communication. In short, the relationship between parents and children is just obedience.

Except the differences above, there are still many differences in family education between America and China. We can find a lot of examples in daily life. American parents usually do not give children the right to inherit the property, because their parents think that inheritance is the worst thing in life. This will make the children have no chance to experience their success and failure, Bill Gates is the best example. However, Chinese parents have only one principle for the distribution of property: to take over his father's business.

3. THE DIFFERENT RESULTS OF THE TWO KINDS OF FAMILY EDUCATION

3.1 The Result of American Family Education Methods

Because the concepts and the methods of family education are different, the educational results show some obvious differences. The children in the United States indicate the following characters when they are young.

Firstly, their ability of independence is very strong. They do not depend on their parents or families from 18 years old. They often do some part-time jobs to supply their consuming requirements or tuitions. Even many students from rich families also do part-time jobs.

Secondly, they have the capability adapting to the market economy. The children in America begin to manage the finance when they are young, which let children deeply understand that it is not easy to earn money, and help them to form a good habit of spending

money. For instance, “There are two brothers (one is 12 years old, the other is 14 years old) in New York, who establish a company of washing cars independently under the affection of their parents. They work very hard and ask for little payments. In order to reduce the cost and get more customers, they would rather walk to the stores where the price is lower to buy tools, wax scours and so on, even though the store is very far”. We can obviously see the good habit that the American family built from this story.

Thirdly, they have the abilities adapting to social environments, because they have experienced the life through their own work. Many teenagers in America are not afraid of bitterness and have the perseverance of overcoming difficulties. They can face difficulties calmly and live harmoniously with people around them; they also have the confidence and courage of being independent as a member of the society. These qualities and skills form the foundation of their future development.

3.2 The Result of Chinese Family Education Methods

On the contrary, Chinese children show the following characters. Although their schoolwork is better than that of American students, they cannot live well independently for lack of independent consciousness. They strongly rely on their parents or other people and are passive in doing things. At the same time, they lack the abilities of adapting to environment and face difficulties. What's worse, they only want others to care about them, and lack of sympathy and the ability to help others. At home, they don't want to care for their parents; and in society, some of them lack social responsibilities. Supposing if a person only cares about himself, what responsibilities for the society can he take?

It is not difficult for us to distinguish the two kinds of family education which one is better. But my aim is not to admit American family education or blame Chinese family education. Both of them have advantages and disadvantages. Therefore, we not only admit and accept the American good points, but also succeed and develop our benefits, such as, cultivating kids' traditional virtues and the value of moral since childhood.

CONCLUSION

All in all, there are many differences between China and America family education and each has its strong points and weak points. As parents, whatever they do and how to do, they just want to be better for us. Just like Jimmy said to his daughter in the movie “I was just trying to be a

good father”. So no parents never love their children. As children, we have been grown-ups, we also should stand our parents' position to understand them and learn to care for them.

American famous writer John Brasal said in his best seller Family May Hurt You “When a person grows up, all his behaviors are determined by family environment during his childhood.” That is to say every child grows up under his parents' family education, what kind a person will be, depends on what kind of family education he received. Children's character and destiny are connected closely with his family education. For the family, for the children, for the parents, we should change the wrong conception of family education and correct it at once.

So Chinese parents should reject the dross and absorb the cream of them, which is in order to improve the level of family education and bring children a colorful family education from their childhood.

We, Chinese, should change Utopian expectation of children's education. Give up the harmful types of family education; pick up good ideas from American' family education. We need to turn “talent” education into “human” education; to turn “one-sided” family education into “all-round” family education; to turn “restrained” education into “loose and comfortable” education; to use scientific mode of family education to speed the reform of family education. If we can follow these changing, Chinese families education will go to a bright future. American also can get something they lack of from our family education.

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