

Reconstruction of Parental Role in Learning Family—From the Perspective of Role Theory

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Abstract: From the perspective of role theory, there are obstacles in the cognition and behavior of parental role in the construction of learning family. Parents have a vague understanding of their learning role in the family. Therefore, in practice, we should refer to the ideal learning family model and reshape the role orientation of parents. This includes advocating equal status and multiple evaluation in the family to create a harmonious family atmosphere, and emphasizing the consciousness of parental role, that is, realizing the construction of learning family spontaneously without relying on the outside through self-driven learning consciousness.

1. Introduction

Since entering the new era, the Party Central Committee, with Comrade Xi as its core, has paid more attention to education and achieved fruitful results in the field of lifelong learning for all.[1]As the basis for individual growth, family plays a key role in individualization and socialization. However, in the practice of building learning family, the educational effectiveness of family is weakened due to the vague role cognition, frequent conflicts and undefined orientation of family members. Therefore, the key to return to the right track lies in focusing on parents as the core subject, studying their role in learning family, and verifying and improving the role theory by exploring the role function of parents in the construction process, so as to guide the learning family to a healthy development path.

2. Role Theory and Learning Family

Role theory is a theory that uses the concept of "role" to understand individual social behavior, that is, according to the social status and social identity of people, and according to people's understanding, expectations and requirements of a specific role, individual behavior is explained. [2] Role theory contains the following sub-implications: role cognition, natural role, role behavior and role function. Role cognition is a fundamental view and cognition of the role played by the role player, which is related to the role of the subject and the starting point of role action. Natural role is the role identity obtained naturally. For example, when a pregnant woman completes childbirth, she naturally obtains the natural role of "mother". This role identity exists with the emergence of

another role. In understanding the natural role, the subject needs to clarify the identity of themselves and each other, and clearly define their roles in their mutual relationship. Role behavior is the behavior shown by the subject under the driving force of their role cognition. Role function is the value and function carried by the role, which is reflected in the contribution of individuals to the organization through behavior, attitude and responsibility performance. Role value has both personal and social significance. The proper play of the parental role is not only related to the harmonious development of the family, but also has a profound impact on social progress. With the widespread spread of the idea of lifelong education, the concept of building a learning society emerged at the historic moment. As a social cell, the family should also become the main front to cultivate people's "lifelong learning". For what is a learning family, scholars at home and abroad have rich and intense discussions. Chinese scholar Li Yixian believes that "a learning family is an advanced family form that realizes the dynamic and coordinated development of individuals and families through continuous and lifelong self-learning, interactive learning and shared learning of all family members." [3] American scholar Pearson discusses in "Passport for a Lifetime": "a learning family is essentially an interactive family learning, a new type of family culture, and a family lifestyle that is in line with modern life." [3] Taking these two factors into consideration, the learning of family members and their interaction are indispensable conditions for a learning family. Although there is still no clear and unified conclusion on the connotation of a learning family at home and abroad, no matter what the interpretation is, it is always rooted in the common soil of family members' "attaching importance to learning, interactive communication and promoting growth".

3. The Errors of the Parental Role in a Learning Family

Learning family plays an important role in the growth and development of individuals. Chinese parents are often prone to mistakes such as excessive expectations, single mode requirements, heavy wisdom and light morality, heavy scores and light personality, and either spoiling or apathy. [4] There is often a gap between parental role cognition and practice, leading to cognitive deviation and behavioral conflict, and a widespread misunderstanding of the "naturalness" of parental role. This situation is not conducive to family harmony, and it is more difficult to cultivate children's enthusiasm for active learning, let alone the construction of learning family.

3.1 Errors in Parental Role Cognition

Parental role cognition is the beginning of parental role action in the process of parental interaction with internal and external objects in the construction of learning family. In life, parental role cognition misunderstandings are mainly reflected in: excessive attention to the external growth of children's material resources guarantee, excessive attention to the results of children's examination results of academic performance supervisor and excessive love and care of children's spiritual care.

3.1.1 Material Resources Guarantee

Parents' influence on children is undoubtedly very deep and very critical. [4] Usually, many parents (especially in less developed areas) often limit their role to providing children with material foundation, ignoring the value of emotional education to children's inner growth. Such parents lack the willingness to learn scientific parenting, believing that the responsibility of education lies mainly in the school, and the family only needs to ensure the basic growth of children. The core task of parents is to maintain family life. This view reflects that some parents have a confused understanding of their own educational role, which is a potential shirking of educational

responsibilities. Parents who practice the role of "material guarantor" usually lack the need to actively learn and educate their children, and their focus is more on the workplace rather than "pro-field". In this family environment, children's learning often comes from external pressure rather than autonomous learning under family influence. The family and the school have a clear division of labor and lack of integration, which makes it difficult to form a family psychological atmosphere to promote active learning, thus affecting the realization of learning family construction.

3.1.2 Academic Performance Supervisor

Parents are the dominant persons of family education and the implementers of education. Family education is not subordinate to school education, and parents' role in family education is definitely not the "teaching assistant" of school education.[5] In the context of exam-oriented education, parents often position themselves as the "supervisor" of their children's academic performance. This role recognition gives rise to the talent concept that takes scores as the basis for success or failure. The result is that children are evaluated by a single standard, and a large number of "exam-oriented" talents lack innovation and personalization. After school, children are often filled with various remedial classes. Parents expect their children to surpass others, but ignore the need to become excellent family educators. Parents as supervisors of academic performance often only focus on the excellent performance of their children, but ignore the fact that the parents behind those excellent children have set a good example of learning. These parents will spend time sharing reading and communication with their children, rather than indulging in short-term entertainment such as short videos on the Internet. Such families create a strong learning atmosphere, in which children and parents not only interact in the traditional parent-child role, but also share the responsibility of "learning community", which effectively promotes the construction of learning families. Parents who play the role of "supervisors of academic performance" will inadvertently turn the family into a continuation of school education, thinking that learning is only to learn subjects well, rather than realizing that the most important purpose of learning is to acquire ability. Without the growth of parents, there will be no growth of children.[6] As the starting point of children's personality and socialization, the family plays a key guiding role. If parents focus too much on their children's academic performance and fall into the role of "supervisors of academic performance", the family learning atmosphere will be mechanical and inflexible, which is not conducive to the stable construction of a learning family, and may even make a learning family a formality and a vassal of school education.

3.1.3 The Over-caretaker of the Heart

The best gift we can give our children is experience--they must be tempered by experience before they grow into tough and independent young people.[7] The one-sided role cognition of parents limits their children's experience of life and independent acquisition of experience. In the family, parents overly arrange for their children to complete affairs under command rather than actively experience the joy of life. This kind of greenhouse environment makes children rely on parents' instructions and lack self-care ability. Excessive indulgence education leads to children's habit of easily obtaining results and failing to cherish the value of efforts. In the long run, children's psychological endurance is weakened, their sense of life experience is low, and it is difficult to spontaneously produce learning motivation.

3.2 Conflicts of Parental Role Behavior

Parental role behavior is the explicit parental behavior shown by parents in the interaction process with family members. Under the current environment, the problems exposed by parental behavior have become obstacles to the construction of learning family. The conflicts between

parental roles and the opposition between parental roles and children's roles have become family problems that can not be ignored.

3.2.1 Internal: the Conflict between Parental Roles and Roles

In family education, traditional parents play the dual roles of employees and educational companions. But in the current era, parents also need to become "lifelong learners". Multiple role identity and tasks can make parents feel powerless, difficult to balance the responsibilities of each role, resulting in role conflicts, which can not be taken into account. At work, parents mainly take on a role of obedience and management; in the family, parents take on a role of dominance and active management.[8] In some authoritarian families, parents are difficult to change from the role of "workers", regard their children as "subordinates", take command communication, and even cause parent-child relationship crisis. In other types of families, most parents are busy with their work and do not invest enough in their children's education and companionship, leading to the prevalence of superficial family education.

3.2.2 External: the Confrontation between Parental Roles and Children's Roles

The construction of a learning family can not be separated from the participation of children's roles. Only when parents and children jointly advocate learning can they create a learning family with a solid foundation. The concept of parents used by parents is actually a derogatory word in English, containing the meaning of "patriarchy" and non-democracy.[6] The direct consequence of "patriarchy" is the unequal status of parents and children. Parents are in the upper rank, children belong to the lower rank, and children are affiliated to their parents. The confrontation between parental roles and children's roles is related to the harmonious health of the family and the construction of a learning family. The role conflict of binary confrontation is easy to cause multiple obstacles: first, it leads to emotional estrangement between parents and children, and poor communication makes children feel ignored and misunderstood, affecting the intimate relationship; second, it may damage children's self-esteem, and the lack of parents' encouragement and recognition will hit their confidence; third, conflicts and misunderstandings increase, and disagreements are easy to lead to quarrels and conflicts, destroying family harmony; finally, it increases the risk of psychological problems, and children may feel lonely and helpless due to the lack of communication, and they may even induce psychological disorders such as depression and anxiety.

3.3 Misunderstanding of the "Naturalness" of Parental Roles

The "naturalness" of a role refers to a role identity that exists with the emergence of another role. Parents are also one of the roles, and they obtain a role identity after married men and women complete childbirth. The father is the most important job for men, and the mother is the most sacred duty for women.[9] Some parents think that parents do not need to learn, which is contrary to the scientific concept of child rearing. They only see their responsibility as limited to the maturity of their children, ignoring the importance of parental education. This concept of "nurturing without teaching" makes children immature in heart but mature in appearance. Parents' misunderstanding of the nature of their roles, the influence of traditional ethics and their family authority lead to their lack of active learning motivation, and it is difficult to become a role model for their children.

4. The Should-Be Status of Parents' Role in Learning Family

In practice, parents often have a vague understanding of their role and task when building a learning family. However, no matter what kind of role they play, parents should have significant common characteristics -- as learners of knowledge, models of moral behavior and shapers of

children's minds.

4.1 Learners of Knowledge

The core of learning family construction lies in parents who take the initiative to learn. As the first teacher of their children, parents should first set an example and show a positive and enterprising attitude towards learning. Children will learn a lot from their parents, including their attitude towards learning. Children are the greatest observers. They have been observing the behavior of adults and considering the actions of their parents.[10] If parents themselves are not keen on learning or only focus on self-knowledge accumulation, children will easily think that learning is not important, affecting their interest and motivation in learning. On the contrary, parents who take the initiative to learn and continuously improve themselves will show their children the value of learning and stimulate their thirst for knowledge. Secondly, as educational leaders, parents need to constantly update their knowledge to adapt to social development. Continuous learning enables parents to effectively guide their children's learning and growth, and improve the quality of family education. Parents' learning activities can also enhance family intimacy and interaction. Through sharing learning experiences and exchanging new knowledge and experiences, parents can narrow the distance between themselves and their children.

4.2 Moral Model

The core of a learning family not only covers the improvement of knowledge and quality, but also emphasizes moral edification, especially the role of parents as moral role models. As a unique moral environment, the family has a penetrating moral influence on children. Parents take on the role of moral model and improve their children's moral cultivation imperceptibly. First of all, as the primary moral influencer of children, parents' behavior and values deeply shape their children's ideological habits and behavior patterns. Children are deeply influenced by their parents through imitation since childhood. Secondly, as the leader of children's moral education, parents need to practice correct moral values and values to effectively educate their children. Teaching by example is better than empty talk. Through personal demonstration, parents educate their children to respect, tolerate and care for others, and cultivate good communication behaviors. The injection of moral force can reduce the resistance to the construction of a learning family, making it closer to the ideal moral learning family.

4.3 Mind Shaper

If the parents' role as a knowledge learner and a moral model can be observed by the naked eye, then the parents' role as a soul shaping is to peer into the soul of their children from the inside of the learning family. Respect without indulgence, care without spoiling, cultivate children's strong ability to overcome the difficulties in learning and life, and avoid "cozy heart" is one of the core tasks. First of all, parents should be a listener, establish close relationships with their children, deeply understand their inner world, needs and feelings, and establish deep emotional connections with them to promote their healthy mental development. Then, parents should encourage their children to think positively and develop an optimistic attitude, teach them to see the positive side of the problem in the setback and learn to draw experience from failure. Thirdly, parents should cultivate their children's emotional management ability, teach them to recognize and express their emotions, help them build emotional regulation skills, and help them better deal with the pressure and challenges in life. Finally, parents should cultivate their children's social skills, teach them how to establish good relationships with others, encourage their children to actively participate in social activities, and help them develop a friendly, respectful and cooperative attitude. Parents should cultivate their children's strong psychological endurance, so that they have enough self-efficacy in

the face of difficulties, rather than parents "overstepping the boundary" to take care of everything for their children, and should "return" the initiative of their children's life.

5. The Role of Parents in Rebuilding a Learning Oriented Family

When analyzing the problems and expected states of parental roles in building a learning oriented family, it was found that there is a gap between role cognition, behavior, and expectations. To bridge this gap, the key to building a learning oriented family lies in establishing the correct role status, handling role relationships well, and strengthening role awareness.

5.1 Equal Role Status and Harmonious Family Atmosphere

A stable and harmonious family atmosphere is a prerequisite for building a learning oriented family, and equal status between parents and children is the foundation for creating a harmonious family environment. Parents safeguard their children's right to speak in collective family decision-making. Balancing power in decision-making power and allowing children's representatives to represent themselves is essential for safeguarding rights in practice, which enables all children to receive genuine education and achieve greater growth through equal participation.[11]

Equal role status can enhance respect and understanding among family members, and parents and children treat each other equally as independent individuals rather than simply superiors and subordinates. This helps to establish an open and honest communication atmosphere, promoting mutual listening and understanding of each other's thoughts and feelings among family members. Equal role status facilitates cooperation and collaboration among family members, making it easier for parents and children to form mutual aid relationships on an equal basis and jointly utilize their strengths to address family issues. This is conducive to creating a united and harmonious family atmosphere. Equal role status can promote the cultivation of autonomy and sense of responsibility among family members. When children are equal to their parents, they will be more proactive in taking personal responsibilities, actively participating in decision-making and household activities, which is beneficial for their growth and development.

5.2 Correct Role Evaluation, Injecting Learning Motivation

Traditional concepts and modern views on success lead to overly single criteria for role evaluation, focusing on further education and prestigious schools. Parents generally use exam scores as the sole measure of their children's success, neglecting their potential development, learning process, methods and resources, as well as the cultivation of diverse qualities such as interests and morals. As a result, parents become the role of supervising their children's academic performance, forming a rigid and one-sided evaluation mechanism for their roles, which is not conducive to stimulating learning motivation and comprehensive development. Returning to the construction of a learning oriented family requires advocating for diversified role evaluations and multiple perspectives. The roles of parents and children should form a synergistic effect to correct role cognition and behavior. For example, parents should learn to praise their children's achievements in non-academic areas. The actions of characters in encouragement are often more persistent. When parents encourage and praise their children's efforts and success, they will feel recognized and valued, and thus more actively engage in learning. Parents can also stimulate their children's interest and desire to learn by providing learning resources and discussing collaborative learning, promoting them to have stronger learning motivation.

5.3 Role Conscious Cultivation, Empowering the Construction of a Learning Oriented Family

Currently, the learning motivation of parents mostly stems from external pressure and insufficient awareness of spontaneous learning. In building a learning oriented family, the willingness of family members to learn independently should be the central issue. Parents, as the first role models for their children's learning, should cultivate a quality of "life consciousness", become the center of their roles, and become the source of "nourishment". For parents, role learning is the process of internalizing role expectations and is a prerequisite for role taking. [12] Parents need to have a correct understanding of their roles, understand their rights and obligations, follow norms, and be good at adjusting their emotional attitudes and moral guidance. In the practice of building a learning oriented family, parents should stimulate their children's role awareness through self role consciousness, and use their own role learning to drive their children's role learning. This process is a two-way influence and a result of a "two-way rush". Parents infect their children with their own role charm, forming a family culture of "spontaneous learning, active learning, lifelong learning" in the family space, fully leveraging the role of parents in rebuilding a learning oriented family.

6. Conclusion

The harmonious equilibrium among family roles serves as a vital nutrient for nurturing a thriving family ecosystem. To cultivate a truly learning-centric household, parents must undergo a transformation from their conventional role as educators to that of co-learners, moral exemplars, and nurturers of character. This strategic realignment of parental roles significantly enhances the learning environment within the family, thereby igniting children's curiosity and drive to learn. By embodying these roles conscientiously, parents act as catalysts, subtly instilling in their children an awareness of their own roles and responsibilities. This process effectively fosters the establishment of a "self-motivated, proactive, and lifelong" learning culture within the family, thereby accelerating the healthy evolution of a family that thrives on continuous learning and growth.

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