

The Value Connotation of School-Family Partnerships in China's Rural-Urban Fringe Primary Schools

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Abstract: As time goes on, researchers and educators gradually realize the significant role of school-family partnerships in children's education. Based on the lessons of previous research, this paper systematically exposes the value connotation of family-school cooperation respectively from the four aspects of children, family, school and society. It believes that proper cooperation will balance the intellectual and moral education of children, improve the quality of family education, stimulate the teaching efficiency and promote the social education reform. Moreover, in rural-urban fringe primary schools in China, due to the characteristics formed in the urbanization process, the specific practice presents different features. The needs in improving family education and pushing forward education reform are sharp and apparent. Instead, the realization of stimulating the teaching effectiveness is limited. In view of these situations, educators need to work on several fronts.

1. Introduction

In the process of a child's growth and education, in order to be highly effective, the education resources of the school and family should be integrated and optimized. The most complete education combines family education and school education [1]. School-family partnerships, or family-school cooperation, as a new concept of education and teaching, is rapidly emerging and has gained a huge market in developed countries' such as the United States and the United Kingdom, especially in primary and secondary schools. Many studies have shown that the combination of home education and school education can help students improve their academic performance and develop good habits [2], improve the teaching efficiency of teachers, and promote students to form a complete personality and realize their own value [3].

In 1988, the Central Committee of CPC and the State Council announced that to care for and protect the healthy growth of primary and secondary school students, it is important to integrate society education, family education with school education and combine them closely. It effectively pushed the elementary and middle schools in China to pay more attention to the family-school cooperation [4]. In Handbook of School-Family Partnerships, the first comprehensive review of the

effects of home-school partnerships, it's believed that the recognition of the value of this relationship led to an increase in policies and initiatives aiming at pooling of family and school resources to find and implement solutions to shared goals [5]. The methods and types of school-family partnerships in China can be divided into different levels according to the depth of cooperation, corresponding to different requirements and values [6]. In order to put it into practice, the educational and social value of the family-school cooperation mechanism in the context of Chinese society should be thoroughly understood.

Researchers have also reached a consensus on the importance of family-school cooperation, while for the understanding of specific values, most scholars expound from the aspects of school reform, teacher professional development and students' personal growth. Otilia Clipa and Anca Mirela Iorga think that family and school are very important factors in pupils moral conduct formation, and the role of this partnership becomes moreover a priority and a necessity [7]. Huang explains the value connotation of school-family partnerships from the perspectives of the uniqueness in family and school values and the challenges that social transformation poses to the home-school partnerships, involving four aspects such as students, parents, teachers and schools [8]. The official document issued by the ministry of education in 2015 included the important role of family education in the growth and development of pupils, highlighting the organic integration of family, school and social efforts. Nowadays, family-school cooperation has become one of the points of social education reform. With the participation of various forces, fostering school-family partnerships will not only promote the improvement of students, teachers and other individuals, but also affect the direction of family education and the allocation of social resources.

With the continuous development of China's urbanization, a transition zone with dual characteristics of urban and rural areas, namely the rural-urban fringe, has been formed between the central urban area and the surrounding countryside. It has diversified productive structure and economic components [9]. The population in this area is generally composed of citizens, farmers, and migrants, leading to big variations in occupations, lifestyles, and values. Moreover, the movement of people there is complex. At the same time, compared with the process of economic development, the development of the education system there is relatively lagging behind [10]. As an independent space that is different from rural and urban areas, the practice of family-school cooperation mechanism of the primary schools in the rural-urban fringe is also different from urban and rural schools because of the characteristics of their parents, students, and schools. In the context of the further advancement of urbanization in China, exploring the value connotation of co-education in the region can provide guidance and reference for improving the education level there and effectively exerting educational effectiveness.

2. The Analysis of Specific Values for Different Subjects

2.1. Balance Pupils' Intellectual Education and Moral Education

From the perspective of students, parents and schools can form complementary cooperation in moral education and intellectual education.

On the one hand, for parents, the teaching staff in schools is a high-quality educational resource with professional theoretical knowledge and standardized educational concepts, which plays an indispensable role in students' intellectual education. The school's curriculum and teaching methods also focus on teaching and preaching, aiming at disseminating cultural knowledge and improving academic standards. On the contrary, in moral education, there are fewer curriculums [11]. Moral education in existing courses is mainly carried out by establishing exemplary images and guiding

correct values in real cases. It has limited effectiveness on the establishment of complete personality and the formation of the value system.

On the other hand, for teachers, the subtle influence of parents will have a great impact on students' moral education. Christoph Wulf proposed the theory of learning by mimesis, mentioning that imitation learning is one of the important ways for pupils to expand themselves and touch the world, by imitating people around them, including parents, teachers and peers, children can learn about moral cultivation [12]. Teachers and parents are not able to keep a watchful eye on each individual student. Nevertheless, although parents are not professional educators, their behaviors are significant objects for school-age children to learn and imitate. Parents' education of their children is not only limited to their academic standards but also children's daily life, including the formation of value system, ways of making friends, mental health etc. Pupil's character cultivation can be further improved by following parental behaviors and cognition.

2.2. Improve the Quality of Family Education

From the perspective of parents and families, an ideal home-school partnerships will not only make parents more involved in their children's education, increase parents' participation enthusiasm, but also disseminate the correct family education methods and ideas, pushing parents into properly playing the role in children's education.

Firstly, through the school's initiative to ask parents to take part in children's education, parents' participation can be greatly promoted. Through benign family-school cooperation, the school will put forward almost the same level of requirements and suggestions for the parental participation for each family, and urge parents of multi-child families to allocate as much relatively balanced energy and attention as possible to each child, in case of the formation of educational deformities within a family.

Moreover, using the school's professional knowledge in education to disseminate the correct concepts of family education helps family education play a correct role in the growth of individuals. The object of family-school cooperation education is not only "pupil" but also "parent". Through school education for parents, it can correct parents' incorrect and stereotyped concepts, spread healthy family education methods, which helps build a harmonious family and maintain close parent-child relationships. In the process of parents participating in it, teachers, students and parents often exchange views and reach consensus through various communication and interactive activities. Through the school's education of parents, they will be more concerned about the growth of students, which makes for finding the right way to solve the problems among parents, children and teachers and forming a good teacher-child-parent relationship.

2.3. Stimulate the Educational Efficiency of Schools

From the perspective of teachers and schools, family-school cooperation in education can effectively exert educational effectiveness and supervise the educational work of schools.

Firstly, the most common form is that teachers mobilize the enthusiasm of parents and students, urging pupils to pay attention to academic tasks after leaving school to ensure the realization of teaching effects. For example, in many schools, teachers advise parents to urge their children to complete the daily homework and review tasks to consolidate the knowledge they learn at school. In this way, through the authority of parents in the family, students' academic level can be improved. Others communicate with parents through the online communities or certain application on mobile phones to promote students to develop good learning habits and enhance their learning ability.

Secondly, parents from all walks of life possess a wealth of social skills, which is a good supplement to school education. Researchers found that when field expert teacher parents enter the courses and when these are compared with the courses which classroom teachers enter, it has been determined that academic success of the students increases at the same level. However, the result of permanence of the knowledge being higher has been reached when compared with the courses which classroom teachers enter [13]. Therefore, the appropriate integration of parental skills can help students expand their horizons and broaden their scope of knowledge. For example, parents working in hospitals can conduct class teaching and popularize medical knowledge. Those serving in public security organs, such as the police station, can give self-protection lectures in schools to teach boys and girls how to protect themselves. The participation of expert teacher parents can make school education more vivid and flexible, in which case, the class model can be innovative and the teaching content can be expanded.

In addition, parents' supervision of the school can effectively promote the improvement of school management. In some fast-developing regions, there have been formal parenting organizations and parents committees. Those parents have united to form a group and participated in the supervision of school management work. They use their social experience to propose various suggestions and even directly take part in it, such as the improvement of catering and safety. Parents' participation in this way makes up for the school's limitations and promote the development of teaching management effectively.

2.4. Promote the Educational Reform in Society

From the perspective of society, the development of school-family partnerships can provide disadvantaged groups better support for children's growth, block the intergenerational transmission of poverty, further achieve educational equality, and promote the implementation of quality-oriented education.

In China, the current education situation for disadvantaged groups is still seriously worrying. School dropouts and absenteeism occur in rural and poor areas around cities. This is partly due to the family's economic constraints. Absence of parents in their pupils' education also blame for it, which has led to children being forced to drop out of school. Researchers found that the inclusion of parents in school education can effectively reduce the absenteeism of students, thereby reducing the dropout rate of children from disadvantaged groups [14]. Under the current College Entrance Examination system in China, getting rid of poverty through education is undoubtedly an effective way to block the intergenerational transmission of poverty. Through the school-family partnerships it is possible to further balanced the allocation of social educational resources to reduce the level disparity of education between the urban and rural.

In addition, in recent years, although schools in China have consistently promoted quality-oriented education, in reality, the teaching pupils receive is still focused on academic achievements. Nevertheless, the emphasis on the all-around development of pupils is still limited. The implementation of benign school-family partnerships can effectively balance test-oriented education and quality-oriented education, in the process of which the family plays the role of a balancer or buffer, making up for the one-sidedness of school.

3. Discussion

In China because the rural-urban region has different characteristics from urban areas and rural areas [9], students, parents and teachers of schools there have distinctive specific practices in their daily in-

teraction.

For students, due to the complex family background of the individual and diverse parents' careers, in the same class, the learning abilities and knowledge levels of students coming from cities and towns are uneven. As a result, schools and teachers need to devote further to take into account the personal qualities of the vast majority of students, thereby having limited time and energy allocation in family-school cooperation.

For families and parents, the differences in parents' values and educational level have deepened the complexity of family structure and growth background among different children. A satisfactory school-family partnership needs to adapt to specific situation of different families, which requires schools to give distinct consideration to each family. Teachers, after learning about the family characteristics, taking a personalized approach to cooperation to give full play to the role of family education. This puts forward higher requirements for the role of schools in family-school cooperation;

For teachers and schools, the particularity of teacher composition also increases the cost of work and coordination within the school. The home-school cooperation methods and the specific activities will be subject to long-term contradictions among teachers, which will affect the teaching level of teachers and the effectiveness of school education. At the same time, since the quality-oriented education has been comprehensively promoted in China, urban schools have undoubtedly become the forerunner of reforms due to their advantages of complete hardware facilities, strong faculty, and flexible teaching methods. However, rural schools have been constrained by the shortcomings of limited teaching resources, resulting in being listed as the objects of social support. In contrast, due to the limited numbers and scale, schools in rural-urban fringe areas are often overlooked in the process of reform. Exam-oriented education is still the priority [15]. Therefore, it is still a long way to go to reform the primary school education in the rural-urban fringe.

Based on the specific practice of family-school cooperation in China's rural-urban fringe primary schools, the value connotation of the school-family partnerships is also unique in the area. Family-school cooperation in rural-urban fringe primary schools plays a prominent role in improving the quality of family education and promoting education reform in society.

On the one hand, since the implementation of the family planning policy in China, most urban core families have three members, and their children have received the attention of almost all elders in the family. The efforts of parents, grandparents and other other relatives are devoted to one child, in which case, parents are relatively energetic and participate in education more. In contrast, families in rural-urban region and countryside are usually multi-child families. Parents need to distribute their attention on each child. Moreover, some are even affected by traditional notions of preference for sons over daughters, resulting in the attention on each child in the same family varies. Therefore, the significance of parents' involvement might be neglected. Increased parent school involvement and more active types of parent involvement are both associated with more positive development and greater mastery of early basic school skills in all subject areas [16]. At the same time, the study atmosphere in this area is not good, and most farmers and migrant workers have biased perceptions about the influence of family education and weak cooperation consciousness. They believe that the schools and teachers should take the main responsibility of educating. Parents think that as long as the family takes care of the child's diet and daily life, providing basic material support, they have done their duty, ignoring the role of helping children develop learning habits, understanding cultural etiquette and moral formation. One of the key points of co-education in primary schools and in the rural-urban fringe is to find out and correct the misunderstanding of parents in education, and to spread the correct concept of family education. Studies have shown that parents of disadvantaged families are more likely to develop utilitarian educational concepts, and participation in children's education will also decrease with the improvement of children's performance [17]. The educational

cognition of parents in the rural-urban fringe generally tends to be utilitarian, in which case, parents tend to pay more attention to the value of “admission to higher school”. As a result, parents pay close attention to exam performances and the completion of homework, in which case, they can hardly fully understand their responsibilities and ignore the “education value” [18]. Therefore, the effectiveness of cooperation is greatly reduced.

On the other hand, the families in the rural-urban fringe are facing the pressure of survival and economic conditions and most are marginalized. Compared with urban families, the families in rural-urban region are in more urgent need of participation of parents. Incorporating parents into their children’s education can better fill existing vacancies, effectively lower absenteeism and dropout to develop the social value of education.

However, the realization of stimulating the educational efficiency of schools faces difficulties in the primary schools there. Because the establishment of schools in the rural-urban fringe is often based on the gap between supply and demand, that is, the local supply of educational resources cannot meet the growing schooling demands of migrant workers’ children in the process of urban development [19]. Therefore, the school’s teacher composition is relatively special, often composed of young teachers drawn from various county and township schools, which are diverse and complex. The mark of traditional exam-oriented education is obvious and profound. Therefore, it is necessary to reconcile differences in daily teaching and school management. Teachers’ working habits and teaching concepts are various and even contradictory, which means it asks for more efforts to reach consensus. Therefore, when facing the problem of family-school cooperation, it is difficult for the school to avoid asserting its authority, worrying about the lack of professionalism of the parents, which may hinder the progress of teaching. Or in other cases, schools’ staff fear that it’s hard to please all, resulting in affecting the development of daily management. Some even use it as the gimmick of publicity stunt. Therefore, the family-school cooperation work of many schools is superficial and difficult to achieve the desired effect and stimulate educational efficiency.

4. Conclusion

The proper cooperation between family education and school education can promote children’s growth and social development from the aspects of students, families, schools and society. Parents and schools can complement each other in moral education and intellectual education to help pupils achieve all-round development. By increasing the enthusiasm of parents’ participation and disseminating the correct education concept, high-quality family education can also be achieved, and the one-sidedness of family support for children’s growth is reduced as much as possible. In addition, the supervisory role of parents and taking advantage of the diversity of parents’ professional backgrounds to incorporate parents into class and school management can effectively improve the educational effectiveness of schools. In the long run, forming benign school-family partnerships is still a useful support for deepening quality-oriented education and promoting social equality.

In China, the value of school-family partnerships is getting more and more attention from educators and researchers. Various subjects are exploring ways to successfully implement home-school cooperation in China. In order to realize the value connotation of home-school cooperation, the educators are focusing on the family educational concept and the relationship between parents and school. At the National Education Work Conference in China in 2019, it was clearly proposed that an instruction manual for family education and school’s guidance for parents should be published to update parents’ cognition and establish a scientific family education guidance service system. As the gender practice in the co-education is also a significant factor affecting individual’s growth [20], through the development and distribution of instruction manuals, their concepts of family education

will be reasonably standardized and corrected. To some extent, it can alleviate the “widowhood education” problem that most cannot avoid today.

In addition, although for most rural-urban regions primary schools with limited parents’ educational levels, taking part in the class teaching as the expert of some specific fields is not workable, for some urban schools, it can be regarded as a new way to deepen the relationship after all. This method directly promotes the academic development of students and realizes the value of family-school cooperation for students while increasing parental participation.

In addition, for a long time in the past, the government reform of family-school cooperation was mainly to meet the requirements of school accountability, but not to develop school-family partnerships in student learning [21]. The “Guidance of the Ministry of Education on Strengthening Family Education” issued by China in 2015 highlights the considerable role of family education for the growth and development of children in a formal document for the first time, highlighting the organic integration of family, school and society. To this end, educators and researchers also need to keep an eye on the respective roles of parents and schools in cooperative relationships, to avoid conflicts caused by the division of powers and responsibilities in case of hindering the realization of the value connotation.

All in all, home and school are the two main educational forces in the growth of students. Strengthening the cooperation between them to realize the value connotation of the family-school cooperation mechanism is conducive to harmonize relations of schools and families, aiming at generating an education resultant force and maximizing the educational and social significance.

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