

AN INTERCULTURAL STUDY ON CHINESE WOLF DAD'S FAMILY EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Cultural values in different countries directly influence on different educational goals, methods and results including children family education. And these differences may cause education and parents to inaccurately judge students or children from their own cultural values. Thus, the author tries to take this typical case of Chinese Wolf Dad for an example, focuses on comparative analysis of the family education between China and America from an intercultural perspective and finds some differences between two countries. Finally, we can extract the best of both China and America to ensure children's long term happiness, so as to let our Chinese family education better and make great contribution to the development of the society.

Keywords: intercultural study, Chinese wolf dad, cultural influence, cultural value, family education.

INTRODUCTION:

Children are future of a country and the world. Parents in every country pay more attention to family education. “Nowadays, increasing attention has been paid to family education by the modern society, and it gets a hot spot of society, which is closely related to tens of thousands of families’ vital benefits and urgent need. (Xu and Liu, 2010)”

Different countries have different cultures. Different cultures root in different educations including different family education. Chinese family education has long been the subject of controversy and has been different from American family education. In recent years, some even have claimed Chinese family education deprives children of freedom and suppressed their personalities. Maybe, the Wolf Dad method is a case in point. It is worthy for us to discuss the case from an intercultural perspective.

A CHINESE WOLF DAD’S STORY:

A Chinese dad, his name is Xiao Baiyou, who grew up in Guanzhou, which is capital city of Guangdong province in China. His major was finance at Ji’nan University. He later went on to build his wealth through real-estate investments and luxury goods (Comment, 2011). Now Mr.Xiao is 48 years old and successful businessman. In 2011, Mr.Xiao wrote one book that the title was “Beat Them Into Peking University,” about his family education’s methods. Mr. Xiao believes that his experiences of beating his children with a rotten cane made his children go into Peking University which is one of top universities in China. Therefore, Mr. Xiao Baiyou has been nicknamed “Wolf Dad” after his brutal and unbelievable family educational methods and he is actually proud of the title. “Wolves look ferocious and brutal, yet they have great wisdom and are exceptionally tender to their cubs,” Mr. Xiao said, his brutality, according to him, is only out of love(Sumitra, 2011).

Mr. Xiao Baiyou’s book tells the readers about all the family educational methods or all the rules he had established at home when his children were growing up. These rules are that his children can not drink Coca Cola which they surf the Internet, can not get any pocket money from their parents, can not have air conditioning in their rooms and can not take part in any extracurricular activities or social activities after class. Meanwhile, Mr.Xiao does not allow his children to make friends before they enter universities. Also, his children are not allowed to open the refrigerator when they do not get any permission. These rules were simple and straightforward. If his children violated these rules, they would be lashed with rotten cane. For example, his oldest son, whose name is Xiao Yao and twenty-one year old, received the most beatings, while his younger sisters were forced to stand nearby and watch. The boy was expected to set an example for the younger sisters. Mr. Xiao himself reminisces about his childhood he was beaten thousands of times by his own mother. He usually says that you can learn and remember the rules and disciplines when you are beaten frequently as a child, and that the pains help strengthen your mind, build up your character and develop a strong will. At the same time, he also mentions that fathers should behave like army generals but Chinese parents these days are too soft. Mr. Xiao believes that children below the age of eighteen years old are like animals and can not tell the difference between right and wrong. Three of his kids now attend one of China’s most prestigious universities, Peking University.

Mr. Xiao wants to educate his own offspring in the same method and hopes that he will have a dozen grandsons postdoctoral degrees, because he is the only male in the Xiao’s family and he has a responsibility to make the whole family be educated well. Mr. Xiao insists in his view that it is good method of family education to beat the children when they violate the rules. Mr.Xiao’s family education methods have aroused different reactions in China. In response to all the criticism, Mr. Xiao Baiyou has only one thing to say – that history will prove him right.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION:

Children are the future so family education is crucial not just to children’s successful life, but also to the future of a country. A well-educated country is a strong country, just as a well-educated man is a strong man.

However, different countries have different cultures which impact the values and beliefs of educations including family educations. These differences may cause educators and parents to inaccurately judge students or children from some cultures as poorly behaved or disrespectful.

To analyze this case from an intercultural perspective, the author focuses on comparative study of the family education between China and America, and find some differences between two countries, so as to absorb some advantages from American family education.

GOAL OF FAMILY EDUCATION:

Nowadays, traditional Chinese cultural values influence the mentality of most Chinese people, children are seen as their parents' belongings because they are brought to this world by their parents and are supposed to be obedient and filial to their parents' wills and arrangement when they are young and grow up. If their children would be successful in future, they should try their but a study hard, and their success would win glory for their parents and their family. To some extent, parents' desires and purpose would be that their children would finish them and make it come true.

A Chinese 'Wolf Dad', Mr. Xiao Baiyou educates his children and has a very clear goal of his family education, that is "Beat Them Into Peking University". It perfectly indicates the expectation of Chinese parents to their children. Maybe, parents always hope that their sons and daughters can be successful in the world. And this is also the goal of their family education, to make their children talents. They will try everything which they think is beneficial to their children's growth.

Otherwise, individualism often leads Americans to see their society as made up of individuals each with their own values and ideas. This point is well illustrated in the relationship between parents and children in American. Even since their birth, American children are regarded as individuals. That is to say children are not seen as subordinate to parents even though they are economically dependent and less experienced. Most Americans do not consider filial duty their parents. Especially, American parents attach primary attention to their children's independence and social adaptation abilities. At the same time, American family education achieve their aims to cultivate their children into a social man, who can adjust themselves to the society change, and deal with various things and have independent and social ability. Therefore, American parents always encourage their children to be independent since they are very young. When they fall, they have to stand up by themselves.

Thanks to different influence of cultural values, the Chinese and American parents have different goals of family education, Chinese 'Wolf Dad' like most Chinese parents, has a very strong desire, we may say, a very strong goal of family education "only encourage children to a top universities and then find well-paid jobs" and especially concern about children's learning achievements, and wholly ignore children's social adaptation abilities, damage their imaginations. At the end, although Chinese children study very hard and make great progress, they still do not have any abilities to adapt to the changing society. No doubt, sometimes Chinese parents' expectation would come to nothing, so that Chinese 'Wolf Dad' and other Chinese parents should change their mind, adapt to a changing society and make their family education's goal into a various development.

METHODS OF FAMILY EDUCATION:

From Chinese 'Wolf Dad's book, we may know Mr. Xiao Baiyou's family educational methods very clearly. He only wants his children to obey him or do anything according to all the family rules he has established at home, and has given many "Nos" to his children. Even his children were not allowed to make friends until college. If any one of his children broke those family rules, they must be beaten by his father.

Needless to say, methods of Chinese 'Wolf Dad's family education are very rude and have a little brutal method. Generally, in present-day China, the father's absolute authority in a family has been changed into responsibilities shared by both parents. Now, Chinese children are brought up in a favorable environment. But, Chinese children have less freedom than those in the past because they were born. The Chinese parents are often too eager to arrange everything for their children or impose on them all kinds of missions, which are sometimes their own never realized childhood dreams.

Many Chinese parents always regard their children as their own private possession in order to attain the children's return. Maybe, to Chinese parents, just like Chinese 'Wolf Dad', it is fair enough for them to conclude that children should or must obey family rules at home and follow their wishes or desires, and to repay them in the future, for they have put all their heart and soul into caring for the children. However, Chinese "Wolf Dad's methods are grounded in the deep-rooted feudal mentality of de-emphasizing individualism and private rights and let his children lose their individuality.

Contrary to the Chinese 'Wolf Dad', American parents have more ideas of individualism for their children. As George Kateb states, "The essence of all the revisions of human ties is a movement toward allowing individuals to make up their world as they go along. That is a principal aspect of individualism, and the hidden spring of self-centered behavior." (1992:227)

In American families, "parents mainly use an equal way to educate their children. They respect children's personality and rights. Children, in the family, are treated as independent individuals. Parents and children are equal (Li, 2006)." At the same time, American parents pay more attention to practical training, emphasis on training children in

practical social activities or community activities including how to make friends and how to date with boy friends or girl friends. Nevertheless, while American children are given much freedom in doing what they like, they are expected to observe disciplines and principles as well, for it is considered as the parents' responsibility to foster children with good manners, an independent personality and a sense of responsibility.

However, Chinese 'Wolf Dad' did not respect his children and treat them equally. His children could not do anything without any permission from their parents. In some extent, family education methods of many Chinese families always lack of equality as well as 'Wolf Dad'. At the same time, Chinese parents ignore the importance of practical training, instead they pay attention to preaching. Even some parents' family educational methods deprived their children of freedom and suppress their personalities. When necessary, they even turn to violence. Admittedly, there is an ancient Chinese proverb which says that capable pupils are trained by strict masters. So if children achieve excellence it may justify strict parenting to some extent. However, we can also point out that the physical punishment of children by their guardian is illegal. The Chinese 'Wolf Dad's method is a typical case in point.

RESULTS OF FAMILY EDUCATION:

At the present time,"there are many types of family education in the world and each of them shows distinctive features and is closely responsive to its culture (Joedy, 2012)." Thus, different cultural values influence on different family educational goals and methods.

With different family education goals and methods, results of family education must be different more or less. No doubt, how different Chinese and American family education's goals and methods are, there must be something in common. That is that Chinese and American parents all want their children to live a "happy life", but the problem is that their definition and content of happiness is quite different.

Although 'Wolf Dad' has sent his three children to Peking University, he has almost succeeded in educating his children. "Unsurprisingly this method does not seem to have produced happy children. His son said that he does not think he had a childhood at all (Grose, 2011)."

To Chinese parents, their children's academic performance is a direct reflection on the success of their parenting. There is a layer of fear and anxiety to this kind of parenting: fear of failure, and anxiety about whether the parents will measure up. (Lin, 2012) Hence, lots of Chinese parents always replace children's hopes and interests by their own wills and thoughts. Admittedly, "many Chinese parents have good intentions, and only want to help their children, but they may prove to be more of a hindrance than a help. Even the most well-intentioned parents can soon become a nightmare if they try to dictate their children's lives (Fang, 2012)." Meanwhile, Chinese children usually have blind obedience to parents, it not only makes pressure on relationships between parents and children, but also hinders Chinese children from making necessary changes for their future.

However, American parents educate children according to their different characteristics and what they do is to try to make their children a independent person. American children are able to live by their own and can choose any majors at any colleges and universities according to their own interesting. After they grew up, they can manage to live their own life. American children could be able to understand what is taught to them better and meanwhile to cultivate all kinds of interests in themselves in exploring the world. Moreover, American children own very good independent and social ability and do lots of part-time jobs to earn money for their needs so that they know that it is not easy to earn money. Generally speaking, American children have very good independent and social adaptative abilities for the social needs, and they always really enjoy studying and living both at universities and society.

CONCLUSION:

From the intercultural study on Chinese "Wolf Dad", we can know that traditional Chinese family education has been rooted in Chinese culture for thousands of year and most parents like Wolf Dad, persist in and dare not risk breaking the traditional rules of strict upbringing in family education. Many parents tend to follow others blindly when deciding on family educational methods. They cram children with knowledge which might not be useful. They beat them for not obeying because just like Wolf Dad, they fear their children will lag behind their counterparts in family education. Though parents love their children, their love becomes vulnerable and finally yields to the long-honored traditional thoughts and fierce competition in today's society. (Guan, 2012) In intercultural comparison with American family education, we can't deny that American family education style has its advantages that children should be taught how to survive competition in society and in the world.

Therefore, to have an intercultural study on Chinese 'Wolf Dad', the author wants our Chinese parents to solve problems in our family education, and to learn some things from American family education, and to gradually

change our minds, to explore new family educational goals and methods, so as to let our Chinese family education better and make greater contribution to the development of our society and the world.

Meanwhile, the author does not intend to imply that either of the Chinese family education or that of the American family education is better than the other. Both family educations have some good qualities that are worthy to be learned from each other. In a word, family education is very important. With the development of society, the family plays an important part in the early childhood of each person. All aspects of family education need to be improved. Finally we can extract the best of both Chinese and American family education to ensure children future long term happiness.

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