

Analyzing American Family Education through *Modern Family*—Cultivation of the Independence of Children

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Abstract

Nowadays, much attention has been put on family education. Family, a part of society, which is also the cradle of the development of the capable people and the first place for children to grow. Family is the first place for children to learn, to talk and to grow. Education, essentially a social activity, is a way of cultivating children to inherit social culture and pass on production and life experience. No matter from the perspective of the contents in family education or from the relationship between family education and school education, the family education plays an important part in all education systems. This paper deals with the cultivation of independence of American family education through *Modern Family*. Based on the documentary, influential factors and the ways of cultivation of independence are analyzed in the aspects of ideology. We arrive at the findings that the reflections and contents, family environment, social environment and the ways of cultivation of independence are important to family education. This research arrives at the conclusion that this kind of way in family education is conducive for children.

Keywords

American family education, Cultivation of independence, Documentary analysis, *Modern Family*

1. The ideology of cultivation of independence

With the development of society, family education is becoming increasingly important. Family is the first place for children to learn, to talk and to grow. Education, essentially a social activity, is a way of cultivating children to inherit social culture and pass on production and life experience. Family education plays an important role in all education systems (Knowles, 1992). The initial goal is to ensure the sound development of children in physiology and psychology.

This paper attempts to analyze American family education through *Modern Family* about the kids' cultivation of independence. American family education focuses on the cultivation of independence of children about the contents of competence-based education and cultivation of ability of independence and ability of exploring and thinking. And this process is influenced by two main factors: family environment and social environment. American family also takes diverse ways to achieve the goal of this showed in the series such as building a democratic education mode, cultivating the ability of independence and social adaptability, and education of creation and experience of social practice (Ziyao T, 2023).

On the whole, families, as a kind of survival way, turn family education into a behavior with life ontology significance.

In the world of animals, the families are seemed as the basic way of surviving which also conducts family education with no difference: their offspring are trained to develop or exercise their ability to survive in various ways. After their offspring grow up, they adopt a compulsive way to force their offspring fulfill final independence and gain independent abilities. They seem to know that what kind of education and what kind of way can bring benefits to their children by the light of nature. In the terms of human beings, family education has the similar life meaning but much higher than that of animals in the way of formation essentially. Family advances education. Actually, all kids have the capacity to learn from everything they do or experience, so family education is an important part in people's complete studying process through their lives. Studying opportunities are presented by communications, vocations, park days and hang out nights between family members.

Family, a part of society, which is also the cradle of the development of the capable people and the first place for children to grow (Igovna, 2019). No matter from the perspective of the contents in family education or from the relationship between family education and school education, the family education plays an important part in all education systems.

American parents focus on the point that they want to cultivate their children to those who can adapt to multifarious situations and are able to live independently. American parents lay emphasis on the practices from the childhood of their kids. They practice their children in various ways and even create occasions to train them. They start by training children to do a good job in the trivial affairs of daily life. For instance: let the babies sleep alone without parents and stand up by themselves after their tumbling. And even let the little kids do their own housework such as washing dishes, sweeping floors and do the laundries etc. When their children are qualified to work or do the part-time jobs to earn money for living independently, even some of the children may have wealthy families. It will not only infuse them the conception of labor but also foster their abilities to live independently.

Therefore, the practices hone their skills and it's crucial for them to know that money doesn't come easily so that they should develop good habits of thrift. Family education refers to the educational processes parents apply to the children's development during the family interactive activities. The initial goal of family education is to ensure children's physical and psychological development before they accept collective educations (like kindergarten, school education, etc.), and lay a good foundation to their future lives. Furthermore, family education is to strengthen and enrich individual and family happiness (Vladimirovna, 2020). Family education is intended to prepare individuals for their family roles rather than repairing family dysfunction.

1.1 The reflections of American family culture in the drama

With the development of science and technology, internet has become a necessary tool for most people. American series has also become an indispensable part. Exquisite beauty of the images, lively twists, turns of the story, fashionable leading characters and the native spoken English, even just one of these reasons can explain why people like it. So it attracts a sufficient number of Chinese with its unique charm. Indeed, American series have rich themes, diverse styles and involves all fields. Some of those also depict the daily life of a number of American families. It's also an access for Chinese people to know the United States and the people live in it. We can see the special spots in these series which reflects the real world and the relationship among human beings. And some of Chinese people can be inspired by watching these American series. Families are of great importance in people's life. They are the first place where we start and receive our life-long education (Edward, 2006). To certain degree, individual growth and development is determined by his/her family education. Meanwhile, families are the most basic social institutions which embrace many cultural factors.

1.2 The contents of cultivation of independence

In American family, parents pay their main attention on the cultivation of independence of children. They play an important role in this process at many fields and many aspects. They take actions on cultivating children by the way of competence-based education, ability of independence and ability of exploring and thinking. It's conducive for the children to prepare before they enter the job market or make a living.

America is a nation full of chances, opportunities, and the spirit of exploration, which advocates independence and keeps the initiative in their own hands. So the emphasis of family education is Competence-based education. American psychologist Howard Gardner maintains that the intelligence of human beings can be divided into eight parts at least: (1) Language; (2) Logic; (3) Space; (4) Body Movement; (5) Music; (6) Interpersonal Interaction; (7) Introspection; (8) Natural Exploration (Gardner, 1993). These parts are written in his book *Frames of Mind*. According to Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligence, we can find that these eight aspects occupy the same positions in American family education. Compare to Chinese family education, American parents think that they have finished their duties and tasks if the children have been grown up to 18 years old and cultivated to a independent, responsible and sympathetic person. We can summarize

that the contents of cultivation of independence are the following aspects. Firstly, they regard the vocational ability as the foundation of education, also as the standard of training objective and educational evaluation. Secondly, they focus on the ability that lays the basis for teaching. Thirdly, they stress the self-learning and self-assessment of children. Lastly, they take the individualized instruction according to the different personalities of children.

2. The ways of cultivation of independence

2.1 Cultivation of independence and social adaptability of children

Family, not just a word, but an experience teaches children the value of relationships in family so that they can know how to deal with the relationships after entering the society. Most Chinese parents believe that the final aim of education is to strengthen the person's intelligence, rarely noticing the nonintellectual factors and spiritual health of children. And when intelligence education is mentioned, people always think that intelligence education is equivalent to cultural education or the acquisition of knowledge. Focusing on intelligence education, an ideal family education should contain that physical, psychological and moral evaluation and intellectual qualities as an organic whole. What's more, the acquisition of knowledge is not just learning knowledge but the ability to acquire and apply knowledge and wisdom showing in the practical process such as observing, memorizing, thinking and practicing. Bound and connected with other people, these factors usually function as a whole (Zhou, 2000).

American parents believe that the final aim for children cultivation is to make them from a kid to a social man to adapt to this society. They think that the ability of independence is the basis of a person to make a living without parents. Only when people have the ability of dignity, confidence and living independently, can they go through the hoops and meet the criterion society required. So they will not be weeded out by the world. If a kid know how to cooperate with others would adapt to the collective operation in the position, know how to coordinate the profits with others and consider that how to protect the profits as a whole. And if a kid knows how to finish the task alone would strengthen the ability to deal with all kinds of problem and form clear logical thinking mode. American parents also think that let the children take some significant roles so they can feel that anything they have done will also influence other people to a great extent (Faber & Mazlish, 2003). In *Modern Family*, Luke has a research subject must deliver the next day, at the same time, Haley has to prepare 40 cupcakes for the endowment drives in school. Clarie feels so nervous about their activities, while Phil reminds her that they don't need to supervise the children constantly and strictly. Although the children have experienced the frustration and distress, finally Clarie has realized that as parents, they need to give children more private time and space to cultivate their ability of independence and social adaptability.

2.2 Education of creation and social practice for children

On the one hand, the cultivation of creation in American family should stick to the principle of opening and all-around opening, including time, space, process and ways. Only in this way can they sure that the aim of creation and social practice finalize successfully. School, family and community create conditions to ensure that children have enough and reasonable time to study, take activities and social practices. The cultivation of creation and ability of social practice cannot be limited in class time, it needs to be cultivated in the expansive life space (Pupung, 2019). Therefore, school, family and community should use all resources to create the conditions that can be helpful. Let the children walk out to the wider world and to experience after class in the real life situations. The cultivation requires to connect the class with society and connect the prior knowledge in mind with the social phenomenon. Practice has proved, a long-term subtle influence can help children form good reflection habits, and help them create in reflection. Positive, initiative and active attitudes should be showed in front of children so they can face the society bravely. So they can get into the real life, find new things, confront the society, think boldly and select on their own.

On the other hand, the cultivation of the ability to deal with social problems and to face the social practice should insist the experience-oriented principle for American family (Eugenia, 2003). The experience of life means the understanding and inspiration of the significance of life. Because American family focuses on the experience-oriented principle, they ask their children to experience in studying process and social living. Children are asked to experience the difficulties to earn money, to do things by themselves, or even to live apart from their parents. Children will strengthen their self-experience in the real situations and a way of put into pragmatic life positively. Parents encourage them to raise questions audaciously and put themselves in others' position and think for others. Children will also experience the devotion and returns, and learn to deal with the relationships between the enjoyment and dedication, individual activities and community cooperation. In the process, they experience these things personally and deal with these problems realistically, they learn from this clearly and deeply.

3. Conclusion

Firstly, this study helps people to better understand the ideology of American family education in cultivation of independence and the contents used in cultivating show parents good examples for educating children. Secondly, the study has found that the influential factors in cultivation of independence of children. It highlights the family environment and social environment has the crucial influence for children. Finally, to achieve the aim of this, American parents take various ways to cultivate the ability of independence for children. This lays the foundation for children before they enter the job market and the competitive society.

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