

## The Road of Homeschooling-Family and School Education in America and China

JIANG Wenyue<sup>[a],\*</sup>

<sup>[a]</sup>School of Education, China West Normal University, Nanchong, China.

\*Corresponding author.

Received 11 June 2017; accepted 13 August 2017

Published online 26 September 2017

### Abstract

This paper draws out the development of homeschooling in China through the concrete description of American homeschooling, and compares the family education of American and Chinese in different dimensions. From the development of American homeschooling to get the inspiration for the development of family education in China, so as to enrich the current research results on homeschooling and promote the further development of education in China.

**Key words:** Homeschooling; Validity; Sociality; Academic achievement; China; U.S.

Jiang, W. Y. (2017). The Road of Homeschooling-Family and School Education in America and China. *Higher Education of Social Science*, 13(1), 44-49. Available from: URL: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/hess/article/view/9896> DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/9896>

## 1. THE CONCEPT AND HISTORY OF HOMESCHOOLING

### 1.1 Family Education, School Education, Homeschooling

Family Education refers to the mutual influence and education between family and family members. It usually refers to the parents or other elderly people consciously through the words and deeds and family life practice, to impose a certain educational impact on their children's social activities. Family education belongs to non-formal education. Family education is closely related

to the daily life of the family, and it is an education in the daily life of the family.

Generally speaking, the main tasks of family education are that before children entering school, helping them lay a preliminary foundation in the development of physical and mental health, so as to get ready for school education. After the children are enrolled, they will work closely with the schools to urge them to complete the school's prescribed tasks, and continue to care for their health, develop their proper interests and cultivate good moral qualities. In view of the contradictions in life, family members will help each other. Compared with other forms of education, family education is more basic, infectious, targeted, long-term, flexible. Society and others can not carry out rigid administrative intervention on family education. They can only be carried out in a variety of ways to promote, infiltrate and guide, exert influence and adapt to the needs of society.

Family education is not an organized, strictly planned education system with a leader. The educators in the family education are generally not experienced or trained, also do not have the specialized knowledge or ability of education; they do not have education qualification, nor take examination, or being appointed, as long as they give birth to the child, they naturally become the children's educators; there is no uniform requirements, unified teaching outline or plan contents and materials for family education; there is also no fixed time and place, education just happens whenever or wherever it is possible. School education is the narrow sense of education that we usually refer. It is a purposeful, systematic and organized social activity that aims at the physical and mental development of the learner as the direct goal. The emergence of schools is that when the development of social productivity reaches to a certain extent, the emergence of social division of labor and surplus products and text development is relatively mature. It is generally believed that school education came into being in the slave society

period, and gradually evolved into the main place for training people. With the progress and development of society, school education was gradually improved.

With the rapid development of the machine industry, the relationship between the school education and the science and technology and production is becoming more and more close. School education is the need according to the needs of society and the education development, which is the main way to improve the quality of all kinds of people, and to cultivate a large number of personnel at all levels, as well as to promote scientific and technological progress and production. It is the inheritance and development of human culture, and the crucial method to promote social and human development. The characteristics of school education are: (a) The technicality of intelligence. School is a specialized training place with a fixed venue, specialized teachers, a certain number of students, as well as fixed teaching content, the training objectives of management rules and regulations, along with teaching equipment and specialized education means. (b) The strictness of organization. School education is an institutionalized education with strict organizational structure and system. From the macro point of view, there are various types of systems at all levels; at the same time, from the micro perspective, the school has dedicated leadership positions and education and teaching organizations, specialized agencies, departments of Ideological and political teaching style, and a series of strict teaching management system. (c) The comprehensiveness of action. School education is a comprehensive culture of human activities, it should not only care about the education object of knowledge and intellectual growth, but also care about the students' Ideological and moral formation, as well as the healthy growth of the body, so as to cultivate the students into comprehensive social people. (d) Systematizations of content. In order to meet the needs of cultivating all-round and complete social people, the content of school education pays great attention to internal continuity and systematizations.

The current academic community does not have a generally defined definition of homeschooling. It is generally believed that homeschooling refers to a school model in which school-age children are studying at home, that is, school-age children are not educated in public schools or private schools, but to accept education from parents or specialized education staff at their own homes. Shortly speaking, it means "education for schoolchildren by parents or guardians at home rather than at school." Because of the standard differences in the classification of studies, there are several different classifications of homeschooling in the United States where homeschooling is currently being implemented: (a) Different religious beliefs based on the ideology of the homeschooling. In the religious ideology of the homeschooling, they hope that their children learn basic religious doctrine, and to form

a conservative political and economic vision. (b) Those parents who dislike the professional and bureaucratic of modern education, or who received professional education, or the teachers themselves, or their relatives and friends are highly educated. They start their own homeschool according to their own educational experience with their own teaching ability, method and styles. This kind of homeschooling can be divided into three kinds: One is "highly structured", also can be called "traditional faction". This kind of homeschooling has fixed teaching time and place, there are strict systematic curriculum, following the traditional teaching methods of the school; the second is "less structured", also known as "compromise". Teachers teach at special times and places, reject school methods, and educators seek special teaching skills themselves, teaching aids are usually made at home, and books are borrowed from schools or libraries. Sometimes the older children in the family take on some tasks for teaching the little ones. (c) Extremism. They believe that the world is the best classroom, learning will happen at any time. In addition to the difference of ideology and parents' own teaching ability, parents' educational philosophy is different, and some have longed to educate their children under the community control of the past; some think that parents should also be involved in their children's development and education; some people think that homeschooling can provide children with a "life, learning and growth" atmosphere. There are different styles of homeschooling.

It is can be seen from the above that the concept of homeschooling and school education have significant difference: Its learning places, teaching means, media approaches, teaching subjects are significantly different from the formal school. Its specialized, organizational and systematic is weaker than the formal school, it makes learning more flexible on the aspect of time, space and content, so that free learning can be achieved to a certain extent, and learning can meet the individual needs of students. Although sometimes homeschooling also needs help from the school, the collaboration of it is still different from general family-school cooperation. Homeschooling takes the family as the core, and students basically don't keep regular contact with school. Homeschooling students, at least in primary and secondary schools, have broken away from the school system. It has broken away from all the disadvantages of school education, and, of course, has lost some of the benefits that school education has brought to individual development.

Homeschooling is different from the family education, the homeschooling emerged after the institutionalized education, the strong power of the system has significantly influenced it. Therefore, homeschooling has certain rules and regulations, for example, it needs the law to determine its legal status. Moreover, since higher education is difficult to be family oriented, students in both primary

and secondary education at home and school need to pass some tests to evaluate their quality of education when they enter higher education. Therefore, families and schools also need a certain standard, and family education is more personalized, but also lack of unified norms, which are more flexible and optional. Family education is mainly affected by the individual's attitudes, interests, values and other emotional fields, while homeschooling require more comprehensive influence on students' cognition, emotion and other aspects.

Compared with family education, homeschooling pursues more complete and systematic curriculum, and the teaching materials and learning contents are becoming more and more standardized. As for the educators, same as homeschooling, parents and family members are the natural teachers, besides, professional teachers on the Internet, the relevant members of the community or school teachers in the school can be the teachers of homeschooling.

### **1.2 The Historical Background and Course of Homeschooling Development**

The background and causes of modern American homeschooling include suburbanization, feminist movement, anti-culture left-wing thought and new religious right-wing thought, and Illich's "de-schooling" social radicalism educational thought. Suburbanization refers to after World War II in favorable conditions provided by the government, a large number of Americans migrated to the suburbs, the outskirts of incentive comfortable residential space and suburban private, anti-government views have effectively promoted the emergence and growth of family education. The feminist movement has changed the role of women, since women on public activities had a higher degree of participation, the education level has also been greatly improved. Women took their families as the workplace to take the education of their children, and affected the father of the child so that they pay more attention to family life, they had a consistent with their political views on life.

Since women play a vital role in family education, they are the main advocator and the experimenter of homeschooling, so the influence of Feminism on women is one of the main background of American family education; Anti-cultural left-wing trend criticizes the school education system, advocates individualized and non-centralized education, while the new religious of right-wing thoughts integrates religion into education, both of which are the very important background of American homeschooling; Illich's "de-schooling society" thought is a kind of typical radical ideological education. He believes that it is wrong for the United States public schools to implement compulsory education, which inhibits the development of students' personality, increasing social inequality, leading to distortion of

American values. He advocated the abolition of pre-school education, and to build a free social system. These ideas also indirectly provide the ideological background for homeschooling.

From the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 1870s, the initial form of homeschooling appeared. From the 1970s to the 20th century to the 1950s and 1960s, the development of homeschooling began. In the 1950s and 1960s to the 1980s, the homeschooling led to controversy. From the 1980s to the present, homeschooling stepped into development stage, and achieved the status of legalization at the same time.

---

## **2. THE CURRENT SITUATION OF AMERICAN HOMESCHOOL EDUCATION**

---

### **2.1 The Status Quo of Development**

Homeschooling has grown rapidly in the United States in recent decades and has become an alternative to formal schooling. Although homeschooling educators have been seen as heterogeneous in the past, they have a large group of people today, so the current homeschooling education in the United States has become a mainstream form of education. In the American colonial period, homeschooling was a basic form of parenting children, and of course homeschooling was not systematic and different from modern homeschooling education. After the emergence of a mandatory public school, homeschooling disappeared. Since the 1960s and 1970s, homeschooling has been gradually generated again. During this period, advocates and supporters of homeschooling have tried to legitimize the education of homeschooling. Parents of homeschooling have overcome the obstacles and consistently contributed to if who have become the main role of homeschooling.

### **2.2 Motivation for Families With Homeschooling**

Van Galen studied the parents' motives of homeschooling. The results of the study divided parents' motives into family education into two categories: ideology and teaching motivation. In Van Galen's groundbreaking research, ideologues chose homeschooling for two reasons: opposition to public / private school education and a strong desire to strengthen parent-child relationships. These parents are often fundamentalists, who have clear beliefs and values, support the role of the family, and condemn the lack of moral education in school education. On the other hand, in the second pedagogues, most of these parents have a good educational background and a strong education for their children to accept at the school. Such parents encourage personalized and creative education and do not bind the child's time and effort. Under the spirit of John Holt, the individualized and liberal way of family education is rich and motivated.

### 2.3 Current Policy of Homeschooling

In the colonial period, both the Native American Indians and the European immigrants had the tradition of family teaching, education belonged to the family affairs, the government did not intervene in the private affairs. After the independence of the United States and the founding of the country, education has gradually been regarded as public affairs. In 1800, 7 states out of the 14 states in the United States have clearly given the right to education and management to the state government in the state constitution, so that the education right of the government is superior than the one of families. After the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, other states have issued compulsory education law, teaching at home was a compulsory enrollment conflict “illegal” behavior. In spite of this, there were still a few families who refused to receive school education for their religious beliefs or meet their special educational needs.

From the 1870s onwards, with the government set up public schools, the establishment of compulsory education system echoed. Teaching-at-home families also tried to take organized, planned education. This is the formation of the American homeschooling budding homeschooling and the legalization. In the 1960s and 1970s, due to the rapid changes in American society, public dissatisfaction and criticism of traditional school education increased. John Holt, father of the American Homeschooling Movement, advocated “free homeschooling education” to encourage parents to teach at home and urged the government to give parents greater education autonomy. The public schools in the United States banned religious prayers triggered right-wing religious discontent, many people accused the Supreme Court “expel God out of school,” religionists, in order to defend religious, chose to teach at home. At the same time, supporters of homeschooling are also struggling to legalize their home school. Family education supporters set up a large number of civil societies, through lobbying propaganda, mutual assistance, protest and other means to safeguard their own rights and interests, established in 1983, the homeschooling legal defense association (HSLDA) was one of the most influential organizations (Cooper & Sureau, 2007). As a result of the efforts of homeschooling supporters, the process of legalization of homeschooling education accelerated in the late 1970s, and homeschooling was legitimized throughout the United States as the 1993 Michigan Amendment Laws endorsed homeschooling (Aurini & Davies, 2005).

Since the 1990s, American homeschooling have entered a period of stable development. First of all, basic education reform for the homeschooling provides a good opportunity for development. Education diversification, the introduction of competition in the field of education mechanism, giving parents more education options to become an important concept of education reform in the United States, homeschooling and charter schools,

magnet schools, etc. together become a new form of education supported by the government. Second, after the legalization of the homeschooling, the development environment of the homeschooling has improved markedly. Therefore, the rapid expansion of the size of the homeschooling, the development of vitality and educational advantages gradually appeared. Personalized courses, targeted teaching, good educational results and continuous improvement of the support system, so that the homeschooling has been more and more public recognized. So far, the homeschooling has become a dynamic part and the form of education of the U.S. education system. In the process of American homeschooling evolution, legalization is the most critical link, and its legalization is the United States educational development trend, which is the common result of change of education management model and the tireless struggle of homeschooling supporters and other factors.

### 2.4 Achievement of Homeschooling

Excellent academic performance: Researchers usually use benchmarks such as academic tests, grade tests and basic skills tests to compare the learning outcomes of home and public schools. According to the U.S. Department of Education study: “From the existing data, the level of homeschooling students is higher than the national level.” From 1995 to 2005, Washington also conducted a 10-year survey, according to the survey results, it can show that the national level of academic tests averaged 1016, while the corresponding result of homeschooling is 1083. It can be seen that the acceptance of homeschooling education students is relatively better than the public-school students (Murphy, 2014).

Moral quality is good: The multicultural differences in the United States lead to different moral values and values among different races. Therefore, it is difficult for the public schools to educate their children. In the actual teaching, public schools tend to weaken their children. Ethical education and moral education are in the position of neutrality; the children’s moral concept relies on the family to complete. If the child receives the public-school education, then the child spends the most of the time in school, the family’s concern of the child is relatively less, and children who accept the homeschooling often have more time to listen to the parents at home. According to incomplete statistics, 85% of American families believe in Christianity, and many parents use the Bible as a required course for children every day, and even use the Bible as a copy of a child’s writing. Under the influence of this culture, the children of the homeschooling will be more caring, considerate and respect more for others, the utilitarian will be less and they are not aggressive.

The destination of graduation is more ideal: to enter the higher learning institutions for further study, to choose online universities, to continue to study at home, to participate in the work; other options, such as



joining the army, taking part in social welfare work and so on. Although most of the students who receive homeschooling and those who receive school education will choose to pursue further studies, in particular there will still be a certain degree of difference between the two. Generally speaking, students who receive school education stepping into higher education are a logical choice, so the proportion of other options is smaller, on the contrary, there are more options for students who accept the homeschooling except for entering into higher education. Since individual freedom is emphasized in homeschooling, students have more freedom and free spirit of exploration, hence they will choose more suitable ways for self-development rather than the university.

Socialization is good: At the beginning of the homeschooling, many scholars questioned the social ability of students in the homeschooling. They thought that students of homeschooling have less contact and communication with others, and by which is the crucial way for learning social skills. As a result, they would have inadequate social ability. Therefore, scholars have done a lot of research and investigation, the results showed that homeschooling students have relatively more flexible learning time that they have a lot of time in their own interest in social activities, and parents attach great importance to social skills of children, hence social ability of these students are often higher than the public-school students.

### **2.5 Current Problems in American Homeschooling**

At present, in the United States, the phenomenon of homeschooling and public-school education coexists. There is a complementary relationship between homeschooling education and public-school education, not just one. Except for the different teaching methods, there is no conflict on essence. The choice of different teaching methods is only to provide children with better education. Different family values, family conditions determine the education modes, each has advantages and disadvantages, so no matter which way to choose, the one that is the most suitable for the child's education is the best way of education. Homeschooling focuses more on the individualized and creative training of children and gives them full freedom.

It arranges teaching content based on the different stages of children's development, but if the implementation of homeschooling families do not have reasonable arrangements will cause a lot of problems: improper content arrangements, to some extent will cause the child academic performance lagging; unscientific learning mode will hinder the way of parents and students to achieve their learning results, which will also affect their confidence in learning, so that students would form wrong way to thing about things. Family as a narrow

range of activities, if the arrangement of social activities is inadequate, it will cause the child's social capacity insufficient; students who take homeschooling are more prone to have psychological issues than students who take public education, which will cause them have more personality defects.

Despite the shortcomings of homeschooling, in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, driven by the "family education movement", homeschooling has become one of the strongest forms of education organization in the United States.

## **3. THE CURRENT SITUATION OF CHINESE HOMESCHOOLING**

At present, China's homeschooling has not developed very quickly, on the one hand because that many people do not have the idea of homeschooling, they only know the current legal school education; the other is because currently China does not have a good environment for the development of homeschooling, including the recognition of its legitimacy, the establishment of relevant organizations, the formulation of relevant policies.

Although China does not have a proper environment for the growth of homeschooling at present, with the rapid development of global homeschooling, China also has budding development of it. For instance, the emergence of "School of Mother Meng", although it finally got banned due to its conflict with traditional Chinese public education and its legitimacy issues, its emergence still represents the budding of China homeschooling which also drew great discussion of academic community (Sheng, 2015).

## **4. THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF AMERICAN HOMESCHOOLING TO CHINESE HOMESCHOOLING**

Through the study of American homeschooling, it can be seen that the development of homeschooling in the United States has also gone through a long period of time during which legal and policy support, civil society support, school education system support, and the development of network resources have promoted the rapid development of homeschooling. When homeschooling is now prevalent in the world, China, as a developing country, can not stop this trend and should strive to develop this new way of education. As a kind of new way of education, there is a lot of difficulties in the homeschooling. However, we can not refuse its development, which should be vigorously promoted.

But the development of a new thing can not be done with a single force. Therefore, the development of

homeschooling in China also requires the unremitting efforts of all parties to cooperate: (a) Legitimacy is the primary requirement, in order to develop in a large range in China, it is necessary to obtain legal recognition and support. (b) The establishment of appropriate groups to protect and lead the development of homeschooling in China. (c) Having a correct understanding of the complementary relationship between homeschooling and public-school education, regardless of the choice, the suitable way for the children is the best way to choose. (d) Homeschooling requires different learning methods, learning materials from the traditional ones hence it needs a lot of professional personnel for relevant research.

In summary, the development of homeschooling in China has a long way to go, but it must also be recognized that the developing homeschooling, enriching the methods of education, and individualized teaching approaches can enable everyone to enjoy equal education

with their own choices, which is the eternal mission for all the educators.

---

## REFERENCES

---

- Aurini, J., & Davies, S. (2005). Choice without market: Homeschooling in the context of private education, *British journal of Sociology of Education*, 26(4), 461-474. doi:10.1080/01425690500199834
- Cooper, B., & Sureau, J. (2007). The politics of homeschooling new development, new challenges. *Educational policy*, 21(1), 110-131. doi: 10.1177/0895904806296856
- Murphy, J. (2014). The social and educational outcomes of homeschooling. *Sociological Spectrum: Mid-South Sociological Association*, 34(3), 244-272. doi: 10.1080/02732173.2014.895640
- Sheng, X. M. (2015). Confucian work and homeschooling in Shanghai. *Education and Urban Society*, 47(3), 344-360. doi: 10.1177/0013124513489707