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# Good Experience of Values Education Mode in the UK and the US for the "Left-behind" Children's Values Education in China

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**Abstract** Based on the development status and development characteristics of the "left-behind" children, we analyze the current situation of the "left-behind" children's values education in China. After studying the training methods and mode of young people's values in the US and Europe, we reflect on the "left-behind" children's values education in China, and point out the following deficiencies in the "left-behind" children's values education in China: the traditional Chinese culture is at the ebb, and socialist core values have not received close attention, being developed sluggishly; the educational content is stale and the method is single; the rise of science education leads to the decline of humanities education, hindering comprehensive human development. We draw the following precious experience from the values education in the UK and the US for the "left-behind" children's values education in China: laying great emphasis on humanities education, to promote comprehensive human development; seeking and reshaping the mainstream values under plural values; giving full play to the social forces, to promote the development of the "left-behind" children's values education.

**Key words** The "left-behind" children, Values, Education, Training mode

In recent years, there have been an increasing number of migrant workers in China. As of the end of 2008, the number of migrant workers in the city reached 226 million (*Report of Chinese Bureau of Statistics*), and the economic development entails an increasing number of labor. Consequently, there will be more and more migrant workers choose to work outside the home. The lag of policy implementation in China, and a series of social problems arising from migrant workers' working in the city, can not be completely resolved. The problem, that the children whose parents work outside the home can not normally receive compulsory education, is becoming increasingly grim along with increase in the number of migrant workers. In recent years, the government has been committed to solving the education problem in the poverty-stricken areas, but the information in poor areas is backward, and infrastructure construction is insufficient, leading to the increasingly prominent issue of the education of the children left behind.

## 1 The "left-behind" children and the formation of their values

**1.1 The status of "left-behind" children** In the research field of education, there are differences in the specific definition of the "left-behind" children. According to the understanding of the "left-behind" children, this research adopts the definition of left-behind" children by Fan Fang *et al.*<sup>[1]</sup>: the "left-behind" children are the minor children staying in the home, whose par-

ents long work outside the home, needing to be taken care of by others, and the age of the "left-behind" children is limited under 16 years. There are about 580 million "left-behind" children in China, mainly in the central and western provinces, such as Sichuan, Anhui, Guangdong and Hunan<sup>[2]</sup>. The study report shows that at present, the primary education for the "left-behind" children in rural areas has been basically ensured, but the compulsory education higher than junior high school has not yet been popularized comprehensively.

In terms of mental health, the "left-behind" children are long separated from their parents, lacking face-to-face communication and exchange, leading to emotional alienation. Lack of affection seriously affects the physical and mental health of the "left-behind" children<sup>[3]</sup>. Studies have shown that there is strong aggressiveness in personality of the "left-behind" children, who are always melancholy<sup>[4]</sup>, with low self-esteem<sup>[5]</sup>, severe inferiority complex<sup>[1]</sup>, and serious interpersonal problems. The prominent human communication problems found include indulgence, having no ambition at all, being bullied and attacked<sup>[6]</sup>, coldness and loneliness, self-humiliation and inhibition, precociousness, depression, willfulness and impetuosity, anxiety, and egotism<sup>[1]</sup>. They often view things negatively and pessimistically. The individual's mental health, character development and values are closely related, so laying emphasis on the "left-behind" children's values education is the basis for the "left-behind" children to create healthy mentality and personality.

**1.2 The factors influencing the formation of children's values** Values refer to a person's overall view and overall evaluation of the surrounding things or objects, which are ruler

and guideline for one person to measure the external things. Values have an important impact on the personal life in the future and career development, related to the healthy development of the personal character and mentality, so it is necessary to carry out values education for the children.

Cultivation of values accompanies our whole life. Initially, the parents play the role of the enlightenment teachers to carry out basic values education for the children. School education assumes the important role of values cultivation, and the students' values get increasingly mature during the schooling period, gradually forming a system. After the students enter into society, they will gradually improve their own values, forming the values system. With the progress and development of the times, the entire social values also develop constantly, and the use of the values will be with us for life. There are many factors affecting the formation of the values. According to the study, the most important factors include the gratification of the personal desire, acceptance and accumulation of new knowledge, the relationship between the individual and the group, and individual personality characteristics. These factors constitute the conditions for the formation of values and values system.

## **2 The current situation of the "left-behind" children's values education in China and the existing problems**

### **2.1 The current situation of the "left-behind" children's values education in China**

**2.1.1** Family education plays a role in enlightening the children and laying a foundation for all aspects of development of the children. The absence of wardship arising from the parents working outside the home all year round, leads to the lack of role in cultivating the "left-behind" children's values. Children do not get effective care and guidance, and the lonely life is likely to exert adverse impact on the "left-behind" children's outlook on life, values, and social outlook, distorting some "left-behind" children's values. Parents work outside the home and the family economic conditions are better, which may excessively cultivate the "left-behind" children's utilitarian values; the children believe that working outside the home to earn money can create a better life, and take this distorted and one-sided concept as their future goal, extremely unfavorable to the cultivation of positive values and outlook on life.

**2.1.2** School education is an important stage of children's development. The particularity of the "left-behind" children makes the school education assume a greater role in promoting the children's healthy growth and cultivating their values. However, the moral education in China has always been neglected by the school. In the backward rural areas with insufficient teachers, backward teaching concepts and poor conditions for running a school, the moral education continues to weaken. The idea of many schools is still the exam-oriented education focusing on school record, taking the students' score as the only ruler to measure the students' future development, but neglecting the cultivation of good values for the students, so that the student's view of things and way to deal with things are not

guided correctly. In addition, many "left-behind" children are physically and mentally fragile. If the ways and means of school education are slightly improper, the "left-behind" children's self-esteem may be hurt, not conducive to the physical and mental health of children left behind.

**2.1.3** Social education is the supplement to family education and school education. In the Chinese traditional rural culture, the literate person within the village ("small community") serves as "mentor" of values education, who mainly adopts the mode of value imparting to cultivate the values and moral character<sup>[7]</sup>. In modern society, as the network and information develop continuously, rural "small community" is integrated into the whole social environment, and the social environment has an important impact on the development of the "left-behind" children's values. According to statistics, in recent years, children's crime rate continues to rise, and 70% of children's motives of "crime" arise from the stimulation of media violence programs<sup>[8]</sup>. From the whole process of formation, development and improvement of morals, for good personality education received in schools or good behavior education received at home, if the social education link is missing, the effect of values education will be greatly reduced.

### **2.2 The problems in the "left-behind" children's values education in China**

**2.2.1** The traditional Chinese culture is at the ebb and socialist core values have not received close attention, being developed sluggishly. China's accession to the WTO has brought not only economic growth, but more rapid integration of culture. There is huge chemical reaction between precipitate western culture and a long history of traditional culture; the Chinese society rapidly absorbs this "imported" culture, but traditional culture is consigned to oblivion by the society; the construction of spiritual civilization does not keep pace with the economic development; many factors are responsible for cultural fault in China. Under this circumstance, how to guide values education for the "left-behind" children is a major problem for the "left-behind" children's education in China at present. To make the country powerful, it is necessary to make people strong; if the young people are full of vigor and vitality, the country will be powerful.

The contemporary young people are charged with the mission and important task of building a socialist harmonious society. China is a country with a large agricultural population, and the number of "left-behind" children increasingly rises, so the society and the school must pay attention to the values education for the "left-behind" children, using the school and social education to make up for deficiencies in family education.

Whether the values are healthy and correct has an extremely important impact on the "left-behind" children's future life and career development. So the educators and scholars should focus on the goal of dramatic socialist development, actively lay emphasis on the "left-behind" children's values education.

**2.2.2** The educational content is stale and the method is single. The ideological and moral teaching materials are quite out-

dated in China. Although the Ministry of Education has always been committed to new curriculum reform, it fails to focus on the society's holistic needs to develop teaching materials based on the great environment of holistic social development. Most of the content and cases of moral education is broad and empty. In terms of method, it only pays attention to the single values indoctrination, instilling the knowledge of the books into students' mind. Although the practical activities of teaching are increased, they ultimately become a mere formality.

Due to many aspects of the particularity in the "left-behind" children, the common ideological and moral content does not necessarily apply to the "left-behind" children. For example, some chapters in the ideological and moral books (such as using science and technology to create life, donate money for the poor mountainous areas, and expressing sympathy for the elderly person of no family) are of no practical significance to the "left-behind" children; the content is even vague, general and impractical.

Some counties with many "left-behind" children add some chapters concerning the "left-behind" children in the textbooks (such as "We Have to Be Optimistic", and "Proud of Parents"), for example, the government of Wusheng County in Guang'an City of Sichuan Province compiles the series textbooks of Growing up with Me with the schools. However, there are few educational departments truly committed to the implementation of these actions, and it still needs the whole society to fully pay attention to the "left-behind" children.

**2.2.3** The rise of science education leads to the decline of humanities education, hindering comprehensive human development. With constant China's social and economic development, there is an increasingly huge demand for high-tech talent. From the beginning of the 19th century, China's education circle began to pay attention to the educational purposes of "relying on science to save the nation" and "developing industry to save the nation". To the 20th century, the ideology of western education was constantly introduced to China, the Chinese education circle was more enamored with science education, and many schools laid excessive emphasis on science but ig-

nored liberal arts<sup>[9]</sup>. To the present, the saying of "You can get used to everywhere if you learn the math, physics and chemistry well." is still heard in many schools.

This distorted thinking of education stems from the huge demand for talent to develop the Chinese economy. In the context of laying emphasis on science education, naturally humanities education can not be taken seriously. Under the great social environment of "laying excessive emphasis on science but ignoring liberal arts", the "left-behind" children's values education will encounter relatively greater resistance. The phenomenon of rural households ignoring the reading and study has existed for a long time in Chinese society, and at the stage of minors, many "left-behind" children, ignored and influenced by the family and society, choose to drop out of school to work. When the whole society's concept of education and values encounter deviation, the quality of education must be affected, and the training of personnel must not be comprehensive.

**3 Comparison of the values education mode between the UK and the US**

The values education in the UK has always been in the forefront in the world. The ideas and methods of values education in the United States, Europe and other countries are, more or less, affected by the values education in the UK. We introduce the characteristics and methods of values education in the UK and the US, summarize the advantages and practical features, in order to obtain revelation for promoting the values education in China.

The British public schools use the traditional culture and modern culture as the basic content of values education, and adopt different teaching methods for students of different ages<sup>[10-11]</sup>. Table 1 makes a brief introduction of three kinds of methods with characteristics; the values education in the US mainly adopts four kinds of methods (values instilling, values clarification, moral reasoning and values analysis); each method has different characteristics and implementation path<sup>[12]</sup>.

**Table 1 Comparison of the values education mode between the UK and the US**

Item	Values education in the UK	Values education in the US
General method and curriculum arrangement	The values education in the UK uses descriptive methods and instructional methods.	The values education in the US mostly uses instructional methods to integrate the values education into various cultural courses and social studies curriculum.
The specific method	Collective worship, aimed at using the time for prayer to cultivate students' sense of civic responsibility and spiritual experience.	Values clarification, with an effective way to make the children receive values education in a relaxed environment.
	Discussion time, aiming to develop students' self-awareness and identity by discussing the hot issues.	Moral reasoning, aiming to illustrate the point and practically use the theory of values by judgment and reasoning of dilemma.
	Outdoor activities, designed to enable students to deepen the knowledge of the values and develop positive values.	Values analysis, analyzing the contradictions in values learning, to enable students to learn self-judgment.
The characteristics of the values education	Strong theoretical foundation; rich practical application; perfect information communication mechanism; incorporating families and communities into the values education system.	Definite education objective; clear core values, close to daily life; values permeate through the basic course; operable methods.

## 5 Precious experience from the values education in the UK and the US for the "left-behind" children's values education in China

**5.1 Laying great emphasis on humanities education to promote comprehensive human development** Marx put forward the doctrine of comprehensive human development, and believed that the all-round development of intelligence and physical strength was the main purpose of education<sup>[13]</sup>. Promoting the comprehensive human development should depend on science education and humanities education. In the process of cultivating people's thinking and exploration spirit, we should focus on cultivating good moral sentiment and healthy values. The education of the human spirit can help the "left-behind" children to think about what is life, how to live, and what kind of life is meaningful; make the "left-behind" children beyond their own narrow mind, overcome temporary hard life, and strive for spiritual pursuit and freedom. Therefore, it plays a role that the education of science and rationality can not replace<sup>[3]</sup>.

We can learn from the British values education, to integrate the humanities education into the classroom and practical activities, carry out group discussions in the classroom; increase practice activities in the courses of society and culture, for example, in the teaching of history course, the guided discussions and instilled teaching are combined, to inspire students to explore the knowledge, gather knowledge and share knowledge. In the teaching process, we should fully mobilize the students to think and act positively, to cultivate optimistic and positive spirit of exploration.

**5.2 Seeking and reshaping the mainstream values under plural values** Since the 1980s, the UK has begun to research values. Dr. Neil Hawkes specially extracted 22 positive qualities as the content of values education. The values education in the US is as long as the history of the US. Before the independence of the US, schools in the US mainly selected benevolence, tolerance and integrity inside the Bible as the core values to carry out values education. After the independence of the US, educators and scholars conducted analysis and comparison of the selection of values quality, and it was provided in the *Constitution* that justice, integrity, law obeying, and equality were regarded as the core theory of values education<sup>[14]</sup>. So, only after making the core values clear can we have correct objectives of values education. The educators in China should transcend the restriction of nationality and region, to refine the core values combined with the traditional Chinese culture.

In view of the special growth experience of the "left-behind" children, we should pay attention to the content of values education. Firstly, carrying forward the spirit of collectivism, and promoting the collective spirit. Given the "left-behind" children's personality of self-abasement, we should lay more emphasis on cultivating their collective spirit, to eliminate the adverse part in the character. Secondly, cultivating the spirit of dedication. Knowing the significance of dedication can make

the "left-behind" children considerate towards their parents, and learn dedication. Third, promoting patriotism, and strengthening the patriotism education.

**5.3 Giving full play to the social forces to promote the development of the "left-behind" children's values education** The departments of education should pay attention to the "left-behind" children's values education, compile teaching materials use cases based on the "left-behind" children's physical and mental development. Local government should put together social forces to promote middle and high school education in poor townships as soon as possible. Local schools should pay more attention to the "left-behind" children in school, show care for them and help them as much as possible. The "left-behind" children are neglected arising from the family factors, and especially the social factors. Government departments in various regions should carry out the registration and survey of the data concerning the "left-behind" children, and make the children keep contact with their parents via telephone or video weekly or monthly, to avoid some psychological problems caused by alienation.

In the school education, it is necessary to strengthen ideological and moral education, coupled with some cultural and historical courses; conduct positive interaction with the family and the community; use comprehensive educational method; use the value instilling and transmission theory; use the value theory by moral reasoning; use the value analysis to truly understand and internalize value theory. In the case of lack of family education, it is necessary to use the close relatives accompanying the "left-behind" children to show care for the "left-behind" children in terms of life and learning, to make up for part of the lack of affection. Moreover, we can also use the power of the community to give care for the "left-behind" children in terms of life and learning.

## 6 Conclusions

Values, an important part of the children's physical and mental development, are the basis and condition for they to feel the happiness in life, feel the meaning of life, and feel the value in life. Values will affect a person's behavior, attitude, and personality development; affect a person to judge right from wrong, good from evil, honor from shame; have a very important impact on the individual's social life, career choices, and moral character in the future.

So in terms of the method of values education, it is necessary to use a comprehensive approach to carry out values education for the "left-behind" children; in terms of the content of values education, it is necessary to take advantage of the mainstream values and take into account the actual needs of the "left-behind" children to carry out education for them. The values education for the "left-behind" children is an important and arduous task, and all social forces should unite to jointly make contribution to the development of the "left-behind" children.

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construction of cultural and ecological protection zones, thereby promoting the development of cultural and ecological protection zones.

**5.2.7** Achieving double protection of intangible cultural heritage and geographical indication intellectual property. Many kinds of intangible cultural heritage, in fact, have nothing to do with the specialty, and the geographical indication. However, the intangible cultural heritage of traditional craftsmanship is closely related to human factors of geographical indication. Some traditional food products have characteristics of geographical indication, and contain intangible cultural heritage. For example, Xiaogan rice wine is a national geographical indication specialty; the traditional productive technique of Xiaogan rice wine is the intangible cultural heritage of traditional craftsmanship; the geographical indication name "Xiaogan rice wine" is the intangible heritage of agricultural brand. Therefore, we should implement double protection on intangible cultural heritage and geographical indication of the traditional food products.

**5.2.8** Developing the cultural industries related to traditional food products. The Sixth Plenary Session of the 17th Central Committee took "culture" as the central theme, and passed *CPC Central Committee's Decision on Deepening the Reform of the Cultural System, and Promoting Development and Prosperity of Socialist Culture*, pushing the cultural industry into a pillar industry of the national economy.

As we all know, the traditional specialty culture is the wing for the development of traditional specialty industry; the traditional specialty industry is the basis and carrier for the traditional specialty culture. We should rely on the geographical indication of traditional food products and cultural heritage resources, to publish more books about traditional food product culture and traditional craft; perform the craftsmanship of traditional food products; protect the geographical indication, tangible cultural heritage and intangible cultural heritage; es-

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establish the museums of traditional food products, and carry out the related cultural festival activities; strengthen the research on food product culture; carry out traditional food product culture tourism (especially Happy Farmhouse) and education; develop the cultural industries related to food products.

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