

Status Quo of Family Education of Junior High School Students in Rural Areas

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Abstract— Family education in rural areas is in trouble and this has considerable implications to the future of children. A research was conducted on the family and students at Yu'an Middle School. From the description of the basic status of student's family, a tracing of the main problems in the family education was made that were summarized in six situations namely: family education philosophy yet to be improved, emphasizing knowledge acquisition but neglecting moral education, limited family education for part of "Home Student", extra-high expectation of parents but with simplistic education methods, lack of proper family culture atmosphere, lack of effective communication and exchange between parents and children. To improve this situation, we proposed a mobilizing social support and enhancement of social interactions in educational institutions particularly in strengthening the linkage of parents with schools and creating new mechanisms between families, the school and the committee of community family education.

Keywords— Family Education, Rural Areas, Status Quo.

I. INTRODUCTION

WITH today's focus of education towards total development, the status, functions and values of family education being one of the three pillars of modern education carries a great implication to the development of a modern society. However, family education is in trouble due to the incompetence of systems and institutions in rural areas caused by lack of guidance from experts on the field. As part of the grassroots education staff in the rural areas, we believe that education gains its great momentum and foundation from basic education. That school and family education must interact with each other towards a balanced development. In line with these, a study on the status of the family education of junior high school students in the rural areas was conducted meant to enhance the parent-oriented guidance tasks of family education.

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II. SURVEY METHODS AND ORGANIZATION

A. Subjects

All of the 850 students of the Yu'an Middle School were surveyed along with their parents in order to have a thorough description of their family background. From the 850 questionnaires that were sent out, 835 were considered to be valid from which 250 from these were family visits wherein 240 of these visits returned a valid and fully accomplished questionnaire.

B. Survey Method

Students collectively answered a survey questionnaire with the guidance of their teachers while the questionnaires for their parents were administered at home, and were collected and returned by the students after their respective parents had been done in answering them. Also, 150 students were sought as regards for their family background, student's homework habits, reading, games, health, supervision and urgency on learning. Interviews to 250 families in ten (10) villages were conducted for eight weekends. Interview outline or guides were used by the interviewees. All in all, it took around six (6) months for the entire survey and analysis to be done for this study.

III. STATUS QUO AND MAIN PROBLEMS

Yu'an Middle school is a rural junior high school on the outer suburbs of Shanghai, China. Based from the September 2008 statistics, the school has 850 students of which 307 of these were considered "boarding students". Boarding students stands for students whose parents are not at home or are often not at home. Statistics shows that there are quite a number of family problems related to education that exists wherein some are considered to be substantially alarming although family education is considered to be turning a little bit for the better.

A. Descriptions of Basic Status of Student's Family

(1) Farmer Laborer Family

These are students or family whose parents are mainly farmers and that their skills are mainly on farming and nothing else, supports a family with 3-5 members, or are considered to be extended. Working hours on the farm is from morning to night and the main source of income is by selling agricultural products and by-products from their respective farms. Educational attainment for members of this family group is either until junior or senior high school which in return

provides them only with low-earning jobs and income. They are described to be lacking in social skills and parents on this type of family group can only teach their children going to school basic and traditional knowledge, hoping that they will have a better life in the future than them.

(2) Semi-farm laborers Family

In this category, the main or head family member particularly the husband has the highest educational attainment, works outside the family farm or are migrant workers. These types of workers are classified into two (2) namely: (1) the one that works at a nearby market or town enterprises who goes to work in the morning and return home at night. During the harvest period, they get engaged in the farm activity. They are financially well-off with a relatively wide social circle. Although they live with their children, they are considered to be lacking quality time with them. They do not participate directly in their children's education but rather provide only advice on these matters. The other type (2) are those who work in the cities far from their family home and so do not engage in any farm activity even during harvest seasons but rather delegate this to others. If necessary, they decide to just sub-contract their lands to others. They remit or send money to their families back home. Most of them are very much economically well-off and their children are usually assisted by the other parent or grandparents as regards to their school works. However, these family members who stay with their children at home usually have a lower-level of education that also resorts into spoiling the children which in turn makes these children fall into bad study habits.

(3) Private Enterprise Owner or Rural Manager Family.

This type of family has a better economic condition than the semi-farm laborers. Parents from this class have a wide social dimension and so attend more social activities. Fathers from this group are seldom at home and children are generally brought up by the mothers. Parents of this group also pay more attention to their children's cultural courses, but often neglect their moral education.

B. Main Problems in Family Education

(1) The family education philosophy is yet to be improved.

The findings revealed that most parents who were respondents in this study have a vague idea on family education with a 10.01% laissez faire share on their children. Some parents attach little importance to family education and believe that it is not their responsibility but that of the school where they placed their children. Taking it from such thinking, it is good to note that it is not expected that parents must become great educators to their children, yet it is always believed that successful children happens because of excellent parenting and that includes giving a great amount of time and concern to the children's schooling. And so such traditional thinking of making the school solely responsible for the formative values of education must be discarded. This is considering the fact that the children's manner of thinking and ways of behaving and dealing with day-to-day matters has substantially changed and are already quite different from those of their parents. Adapting to the change will be both then

beneficial to parents and children who will never be then left or lagged behind. It is to be understood that children below ten years old still holds that their parents particularly the father's words and teachings are the truth. Also, as children grow older, the supervision and management that their parents spend with them related to education decreases, while communication time increases. This can be attributed to inadequate educational infrastructure in rural areas, poor economic conditions, incompetent government measures and investment related to education aside from lack of knowledge on higher education of the parents' of the school children.

(2) Emphasizing Knowledge Acquisition but Neglecting Moral Education

Findings showed that inappropriate monetary rewards of parents to their children results to children's bad habits of unnecessary spending (3.95%). In recent years quite a number of parents had focused solely on the intellectual development of their children setting aside the importance of values development capitalizing so much effort on their children's intellectual advancement while giving minimal efforts to the cultivation of their moral values that promotes better behaviors. Parents, being the first teachers of their children play an important role in shaping their children's moral values, personalities and temperaments. This would produce the right views and methods on educating their children in terms of valuing their studies as well as their emotional development.

In this case, the love of parents for their children must evolve around the integration of teaching their kids the importance of acquiring education, emotional maturity and warmth within the family.

(3) Limited Family Education on the part of those categorized as "home students".

Responses revealed that parents working outside the farm resulted on having children regarded as "home students". In the recent years, a number of parents from the research locale had become migrant workers in Shanghai leaving their children to attend school in the rural area under the care of the more senior members of the family. This kind of scenario resulted into the children being spoiled by their senior caregivers or grandparents. Though such set-up is beneficial and convenient given the working conditions of the parents and the financial gains it provides, the rearing of children especially during their formative years is an obligation of the parents. The parents should take an enormous time in monitoring their children's educational development both in school and at home, and should never be left only to the school and to the grandparents who look after them.

(4) Extra-high Expectation of Parents within the Simplistic Education Methods.

The study revealed that 21.35 percent of the students are being coerced to learn and 5.21% use coercion with punishment and as a form of discipline. The point here is that parents must take into consideration the multiple or varied personalities and differences of their children, and encourage each to develop and enhance them. Expectations of parents then should be reality based with vast considerations on the

interest, capabilities and intelligence of their children with due respect to what they want to become or courses that they may want to pursue in the university level. Though currently there are parents who prioritize that their children pursue education in the university level with no regards to the former's interest and capabilities. This is usually based on the parents' beliefs that a university degree will be a passport for a better life comparing it to their experiences in the past. And as a preparation, kids are expected to excel or be always number one in school to be considered good which in turn provides a negative experience to children should they fail to meet such expectations. And in some serious cases, kids who get into this kind of expectations or situations consider running away from home to escape such high standards set by their parents for them. In fact, many social problems result from these cases of parental pressure, where 83% of the parents expect and pressure their children to get higher grades but give no assistance or time for them in doing their school work which is a pre-requisite for excelling in school. On the other hand, there are those parents who provide ample time for their kids' education in school and studying at home that such kids were spared from any household responsibilities and are in fact even served well with all their needs. Such case when overdone results into having children who are dependent, greedy and insensitive in helping others.

(5) Lack of Proper Family Culture Atmosphere

Many parents in the research locale pay little attention to their children's education either because their educational attainment is low and do not compensate the level needed in assisting their children to learn school work or simply because they are busy at work. They expect their children to excel or be good in school but will never take any initiative to assist them at all.

Another hindrance for parents' assistance or intervention on their children's school activities is their addiction to vices such as mahjong, playing cards and drinking or alcohol. Parents would rather seek such entertainment activities instead of spending study periods with their children. Also, there is seldom any book in most of the households and even newspapers are seldom read. Although it can be said that the economic conditions of the farmers have generally improved, minimal investment on cultural and ideological progress has been made. This affects how children behave towards their school homework which they usually take for granted and when parents learn about such behaviors, they impose strict discipline or punishment.

Truth is, family environments are important determinants of a healthy childhood. Good relationships between parents create strong positive implications for children and their growing up years. This is also true with the senior generations in the family who must do the same to set good examples from which the younger generation of the family can draw respect from. Peaceful co-existence between the members of the family must be maintained, and equal treatment among children must be upheld divorced from any kind of maltreatment and abuse.

(6) Lack of Effective Communication and Exchange between Parents and Children.

Based from the results of the survey, 10.42% of the parents of the students in this study admitted to being busy working and have no time to take care of their children. Some of the parents can even hardly meet their children on weekends nor even communicate with them to monitor their children's progress or concerns. Rural parents on the other hand also suffer the same problem of lacking proper communication with their own children and even with the teachers and school where these children attend. It was then found out that quite a number of parents were considered to be not cooperating with their children's teachers in terms of monitoring the educational progress of their kids.

Many of the parents believed that working hard and giving-up all their time to earn money to support their children is already more than enough, and so expect that their kids will repay this by respecting and listening to them. On the other hand, children believe that it is their parents' responsibility to provide enough financial support to them giving little consideration or value to the hard-earned money given to them by their parents. Such contradictory view maybe attributed to the wide communication gap existing between parents and children which can be bridged by means of great efforts from parents to try to understand the psyche of their children allowing enough space to recognize how different they are from them.

Many parents adhere that their most important task is to provide for their children's basic needs while matters related to education must be left to the teachers and the school. In the interview done with the parents, their most general answer regarding this issue is that they send their kids to school and everything related to it is all up to the teachers who these parents view are the ones solely responsible for it. Also, 63% of the parents that were interviewed answered that they ask their children for matters concerning school, but still views the institution as greatly influenced by strong feudal hierarchy with limited awareness on equality. Also, most of these parents from the rural areas believe that all the children must do is to obey in return for all the handworks done for them.

IV. SUGGESTIONS AND MEASURES

A. Mobilize Social Support and Enhance the Social Public Functions of Educational Institutions

The idea of a scientific family education of school still needs further promotion for public and societal awareness. Different channels of communication must then be utilized in order for this to be accomplished. In particular, various educational institutions of higher learning both in the municipal and provincial levels, including primary and middle schools must be engaged in the promotion of this scientific family education concept. Human resources from these institutions can be tapped to provide free seminars, orientation, trainings and other multi-media presentations to all concerned sectors so that such move can then be concretized and put into action.

B. Strengthen the Establishment of Parents' School

Parents' school will serve as a center for learning the concepts and context of the scientific family education. It will also serve as an important communication and intellectual exchange channel between the school, the students and their parents in order to concretize the vision and concepts of family education. It will also be the venue to start creating textbooks or modules for parents that will train them on how they can properly guide their children's education at home, aside from re-learning ways on how to become better and effective parents to them.

C. Further Enhance the Awareness of Parents about the various Services of School and Establish New Mechanism between Family and School

Home visitations must be institutionalized and be conducted selectively which can then be used as case studies that will enhance the knowledge needed for an effective family education. Further studies regarding parenting, migrant working, single parenting, and other family related issues affecting children's education and family situation may be conducted. Results from such studies would then be utilized to draw further strategies and actions that will address problems and concerns affecting rural families and the education of their children. Effective filing system of various records of students must also be worked out and such must contain their psychological and behavioral profiles which can be used to further understand and provide their parents concrete measures on dealing with their children. Parents' hotline, parents' day and suggestion boxes may also be set-up in order to establish better connection and communication with them.

D. Establish the Committee of Community Family Education

This committee will serve as a steering body that will promote social cohesion by means of effectively transmitting advanced family education philosophy and scientific family education methods. Support groups for parents will be organized through this committee in order to inspire and learn family education among each other through sharing of various experiences and encounters. It will become the role of this committee to function as a family counseling center that will provide consultancy services to concerned sectors in the society. As of now, the basic idea of putting up the committee for the community is seen as a catalyst that will pioneer the movement for attending and resolving issues in the family education of parents.

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