

Investigation and Thinking on Education of Left-behind Children in Remote Towns: an Example from Junior Section of Shangmei Middle School in Xinhua County

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Abstract: The left-behind children education problem in remote towns is more complicated than that in the rural area. These children are confronted with problems including the physical and mental development and the formation of morality mainly owing to the serious family education deficiency. In this paper, we took the Junior Section of Shangmei Middle School in Xinhua County as an example, analyzed the problems occurred during the education of these left-behind children in towns, and put forward some suggestions. These problems will be solved if all walks of the society pay more attention, and the families, schools, and the other social members work together to create a good educational environment for the education and health of these children.

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of economy in china, more and more rural surplus labourers have been liberated from the land and gone outside to find jobs, and the special groups called left-behind children or stay-at-home children have emerged since the reform and opening-up. Generally, they are teenagers under 18 years old in the rural areas and do not live together with their own parents [1]. Some of the children have learning difficulties, less disciplines, fearful personalities, or even aggressive behaviours, causing the widespread concerns from all walks of life [2]. Apart from these, there are two more groups of left-behind children. The first group is the left-behind children in the relatively remote counties or towns. For example, in the downtown of Xinhua County, some young people have gone out to work and there are also many left-behind children at home. The other group is the children born from the rural areas who now live in towns with their relatives or friends because the educational resources in the countryside are relatively poorer and they want to receive the better quality education resources. These children are reared in their relatives' or friends' families in towns, and also become a left-behind children group. In fact, these two groups which we should like to discuss in our study live in more complicated environments than those left-behind children in the rural areas.

Owing to the lack of the normal family education, these children are usually confronted with problems including the physical and mental development and the formation of morality. The left-behind children problem has now become a comprehensive issue involving the aspects including education, society, law, and economy, and it will not only influence the children's growth but also affect whether their parents can work outside at ease or not. And it will even be a factor concerning security and stability influencing the society.

Xinhua County is a relative remote county in Hunan Province of China with the total population more than 1.4 million. Because the economy of this county is not very developed, some of the young people prefer to go out to find jobs. Then the problem of left-behind children in the

downtown is also prominent and even complicated than that in the rural areas. According to our survey, over 60% fresh students in the 2017 grade belong to the left-behind children in the Junior Section of Shangmei Middle School of Xinhua County. In some classes, the situation is more prominent. For example, in Class 341 which has a total number of 48 students, forty one students of them are the left-behind children. Among them, seven children are from the single parent families. They are all looked after by their distant relatives or friends, causing a serious family education deficiency.

In this paper, we analyzed the problems occurred during the education of the left-behind children in remote towns and put forward suggestions to solve these problems, hoping to find the keys to create a favourable social environment for the health and growth of the left-behind children.

2. Problems Occurred During Education of Left-behind Children in Towns

During the investigation on the left-behind children and interviewing with the teachers and the other school staff, we found a series of problems in the education of the left-behind children.

2.1. Deficiency of Family Education

Most of the left-behind children are looked after by their relatives or grandparents, and some of them even live themselves alone without the actual guardians [3]. This deficiency of normal family education directly impacts their behaviours, the mental health, and the development of their personality and intelligence. Their guardians have no suitable methods to give concern for the children mentally, letting along giving helps and instructions on learning. They often supervise the children with the traditional attitudes and methods, finally causing the children indifferent to relatives and relationships, with isolated personalities, weakened study consciousness, and declined academic performances. In Class 341 of the Junior Section, their academic performances are always the lowest among all of the classes in the seven grades.

2.2. Lack of Necessary Care in Life

The left-behind children are easier to be affected in terms of the nutritional status and physical health without the necessary care of their own parents as compared to the normal children [4]. When these children are sick, maybe nobody cares after them properly, and sometimes their reasonable demands will not be responded in time. As it is known to all, the protection and rearing are very important for children on the juvenile stage, but these children can not live together with their own parents, making their life conditions difficult on the stage.

2.3. Left-behind Children Have Poor Behavioural Habits

Many migrant workers hope the schools to educate their children all-roundly. But the fact is that in most schools, the teachers can not give enough attention to every left-behind child because the class size is often large and the teachers' teaching tasks are very heavy. These lead to the phenomena occurred among the left-behind children such as the less discipline and control, the bad lifestyle habits, and not obeying rules of schools [5]. In the investigation, we found that these children had not formed good learning and living habits, many of them could not finish their work consciously, and gradually their academic performances declined.

Since some of the parents are long-term migrant workers and do not live with their children together throughout the years, they often feel very sorry to their children, and prefer to compensate their children simply with money and materials instead of care. But these actions have obvious negative effects because the children lack effective supervision and will form a lavish habit on spending money and generate erroneous life values.

2.4. Left-behind Children Are Vulnerable to Unhealthy Social Trends

The left-behind children are on the stage of the forming of their overlooks on the world, life, and value, and they are vulnerable to some unhealthy social trends. As a result, some of them are very weak in the understanding of right and wrong. For example, some left-behind children often skip

classes and indulge themselves in the internet cafes and karaoke bars. During the daily inspections by the school, the teachers could find that these children appeared in these places frequently. Some left-behind children even spend the whole night to play games in the internet bars. Furthermore, some left-behind children like to mix with the idle loafers out of the school, showing the tendencies to commit crimes.

3. Suggestions on Education of Left-behind Children

The education on left-behind children is a comprehensive social problem. To solve this problem, we should deepen the cooperation among the families, society, and schools, bringing the left-behind children into the effective guard so as to create a favourable environment for their growth.

3.1. All Walks of Society Should Pay More Attention to Education of Left-behind Children

The physical and emotional growth of the left-behind children should be cared about by all the society. The county government and relative departments have the responsibilities and obligations. They should strengthen the public propaganda on the relative laws such as “the Law on Compulsory Education” and “the Law of the Protection of Juveniles”, and give the left-behind children more care, support, and understanding. Meanwhile, the institutions of government can train the guardians with cultural and mental health education to promote their personal qualities, and then the guardians can bear the rearing and educational responsibilities better for the left-behind children. And the government staff can also carry out the “pairing support” project to help each of the left-behind children, which is a project proposed by the government and each member of the staff forms a pair with one left-behind child to give the child with supporting and helping.

At the same time, the social environment should be more purified further. For example, we should strengthen the supervision on the internet cafes, karaoke bars, and video halls near schools and the juvenile students should be strictly banned to enter into such kind of places. These places are often attractive to those children with less self-control. When a better social environment is created and a more positive social climate is formed, the left-behind children will be better cultivated and make progress imperceptibly.

3.2. Creating Good Family Environments

The family education is still a necessary part in the education of left-behind children although their parents often work outside all the years. Some parents suggest that their cultural levels are not high enough to help their children in learning. In fact, the migrant workers usually have not been well-educated, but at least they can educate their children mentally. The long separation between the left-behind children and their parents may cause communication barriers. It is the direct reason why the impact of the left-behind children problem is getting serious. Then, how should the parents do properly?

Generally, the good family educational environments should be created. A harmonious family is an irreplaceable educational resource. Thus, the parents should strengthen the communications with their children, and make every effort to stay with them a little longer. When they have not been along with their children for a period of time, they can communicate with their children through telephone or wechat, to care about children’s lives and thoughts, letting the children fully feel the loves from their parents. It is very important for the forming of the children’s life styles and the outlook on life and value. On one hand, the parents should not only focus on learning, but also concern about their children’s comprehensive abilities and qualities. On the other hand, the parents should keep in touch with the teachers frequently, and get to know the status of learning and growth of the children timely. Through the feedback from the teachers, the parents will know about the thought trends of their children, and give the guidance accordingly to prevent the bad thinking tendencies from germination.

3.3. Schools Play Main Role in Education for Left-behind Children

Schools are the principal places where the left-behind children live and take part in activities.

The teachers are the main reliable persons when the parents of the left-behind children do not live with their children together. Thus, the teachers should pay more attention to the learning, life status, and thoughts of the children. Through these emotional inputs, the children will feel the collective warmth from the schools, and acquire the proper psychological dependences and attributions.

The schools and teachers should deal with the educational problems properly. Through the investigations, we put forward the following measures:

Firstly, the schools should establish the regular contact mechanisms among the schools and the parents, and the schools and the guardians. And the schools should transmit the correct educational concepts to the parents and guardians, then the teachers, parents, and guardians can care about the children altogether. The teachers inform the parents and guardians about the children promptly, and all of the three parts work together to build a harmonious environment for children education. To realize this, we built several wechat groups among the parents and guardians in the Junior Section of Shangmei Middle School, and all the members in these wechat groups can communicate with each other conveniently.

Secondly, the psychological counselling rooms should be established in schools, and there should be at least one psychological counselling teacher working in each school to conduct the mental health instruction on children. In some schools with a better condition, the mental health course can be set up.

Thirdly, the schools or classes should establish the personal file system for each left-behind child to get hold of the dynamical changes of them in respect of life, learning, and thought, and educate and take care of them accordingly.

Fourthly, the teachers should take part of the responsibilities from the parents and guardians, and create more chances to talk with the left-behind children to promote the intimacy degree between them. And the schools can open the telephone hotlines free of charge for the parents and children to communicate with each other more frequently.

4. Summary

The left-behind children problem in towns may be more complicated than that in the rural areas. The fundamental solution to the education and growth of the left-behind children is that the whole society can realize the seriousness and importance of this issue. All of the members in the society should care about their education and growth. This is not only related to the future of the children, but also related to the happiness of hundreds of thousands of the families and the stability of society. A trinity educational model of family education, school education, and social care will create a good social environment for the left-behind children to grow healthily.

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