

The brief analysis of China's Primary and Secondary Education—Based on the Analysis of the Quality Education in Foreign Primary and Secondary Schools

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Abstract: *Quality education is a localized concept in China, and the history of quality education in our country can be traced back to the 1980s. After decades of development, catalyzed by various factors, including the current period of social transformation, quality education has evolved from its inception to become a hot topic in educational reform and a subject of significant interest in the media. The implementation of quality education has played a vital role in promoting reform in China's primary and secondary education. However, it has also exposed numerous issues. This article analyzes the experience of quality education in foreign countries and discusses the problems and solutions concerning quality education in primary and secondary schools.*

Keywords: *Quality Education, Primary and Secondary Education, Domestic, Overseas*

1. Introduction

Quality education refers to an educational model aimed at improving various aspects of the learners' quality. It emphasizes the cultivation of moral character, ability development, personal growth, physical health, and psychological health education.[1] China has always taken the cultivation of high-quality talents in various fields as its educational policy. Improving the quality of the entire nation is a significant matter related to the destiny of the country. The current quality education system in China's primary and secondary schools is still in exploration. This article will start by analyzing the characteristics of quality education in various countries, compare them with China's quality education, and thereby discover the advantages that China's quality education can learn and draw from.

2. The Situation and Issues of Quality Education in China's Primary and Secondary Schools

Quality education has comprehensive, lifelong, and abstract characteristics, which are in stark contrast to the monotonous, short-term, and score-oriented nature of exam-oriented education. Exam-oriented education emphasizes the development of cultural knowledge in quality education in a one-sided and extremely unreasonable educational model. However, these two are not absolutely opposite. China's lifelong and decisive college entrance examination system has gradually pushed the education system towards exam-oriented. In the past few decades, exam-oriented education initially led to a rapid improvement in the overall quality of the population. With the motivation to learn driven by the goal of passing exams, primary and secondary school students quickly acquired a vast amount of knowledge, entered higher platforms through the college entrance examination, chose professional fields, and rapidly expanded the talent pool, playing a significant role in China's development over the past few decades.

However, as we entered the 20th century, the shortcomings of exam-oriented education gradually emerged. While it brought about a knowledge-based economy, the increasing pace of social change raised higher demands for talents. Those who received exam-oriented education exposed the drawbacks of incomplete development of comprehensive qualities. Moreover, the emphasis on scores in exam-oriented education intensified the phenomenon of educational "over-investment," where the cutoff scores kept rising, and students faced increasing academic pressure. This squeezed the time to cultivate other qualities, such as physical and moral development, as they were overshadowed by the focus on cultural courses. Over generations under the influence of exam-oriented education, society has widely formed the erroneous notion of prioritizing academic credentials above all else. Recognizing the drawbacks of exam-oriented education, China began to vigorously promote quality education, returning to the essence of

education and re-evaluating the significance of developing comprehensive qualities.

In recent years, China has made significant reforms in primary and secondary education with a focus on quality education. Policies such as the "Double Reduction" policy have been implemented, which have effectively reduced student pressure. However, concerns have also arisen among parents regarding the development of students' abilities and increased workload for teachers. These problems arising from educational reforms indicate that there is still a long way to go for future reforms in quality education in China.

3. A Brief Analysis of Quality Education in Various Countries

3.1. Social Orientation

Taking a broad look at quality education in various countries, it is evident that foreign quality education emphasizes strong social orientation. Different countries have different interpretations and emphases on cultivating students' social qualities.

For example, the United States is dedicated to fostering students' social skills and adaptability, aiming to create individuals who can meet the demands of the times and social development. To achieve this educational goal, the US has implemented various measures, such as emphasizing the cultivation of problem-solving abilities, promoting vocational awareness, enriching hands-on skills, and utilizing diverse regional resources. Students are encouraged to identify and solve problems based on real situations, and common educational methods include on-site investigations, decision-making simulations, and group cooperation, which help students develop problem-solving skills in a social context. [2] Additionally, as a capitalist developed country, the US provides financial training for its students, establishing a distinctive financial curriculum system to better serve the cultivation of talents for a market economy. [3]

In the case of the United Kingdom, its established system of quality education is named "gentlemanly education." This approach places importance on cultivating students' understanding of social relationships, including individual rights, obligations, responsibilities, interpersonal relationships, the relationship between individual freedom and discipline, social consciousness, and citizenship, which involves the relationships between individuals, society, and the nation. The "gentlemanly education" aims to enable students to comprehend representative and influential aspects of British quality education concerning personal and interpersonal relationships. It emphasizes students' ability to consider social relationships under different identities, handling relations with different genders, economic statuses, communication styles, and occupations. Moreover, it also addresses relationships within society, such as various employment-related relationships and commodity-related relationships, teaching students how to approach and deal with various relationships involving money, conducting interviews with people in society, establishing relationships with them, helping them understand social work fields, and involving them in discussions about ethical issues related to their professions. Finally, students are encouraged to genuinely engage in social relationships, participate in local affairs, engage in fundraising activities, and even visit hospitals and courts. [4]

France and Germany both emphasize a sense of responsibility, but the connotations of responsibility differ between the two. France emphasizes a sense of national responsibility or patriotism. It places a strong emphasis on cultivating students' patriotic sentiments, accomplished through emphasizing the development of students' mother tongue abilities and fostering a deep affection for their native language. French, as the embodiment of strong national identity, holds a supreme position in the hearts of French people. France's social orientation centers on the national level. [5] On the other hand, Germany's social orientation centers on the family level. The quality education in Germany relies less on schools and more on home-based education. In fact, German law explicitly stipulates that students should assist in sharing household chores, highlighting the value of children's family responsibilities. German quality education emphasizes that students should become valuable members of their families, with sharing household chores being a tangible reflection of their familial responsibilities and values. [6]

Apart from cultivating students' social orientation, the education systems established by various countries also stress the involvement of multiple social participants, viewing education as a civic affair in which the entire society participates. For instance, Japan incorporates fathers' responsibility for their children's education into educational laws, while France entrusts the Louvre to be involved in teacher training. [7] In countries like the United States and the United Kingdom, communities actively engage in education as a social affair, with students' learning experiences and contents being closely related to the

community environment they live in.

3.2. Emphasis on Physical Development

Foreign quality education places a high emphasis on cultivating students' physical health. Foreign quality education is closely integrated with students' daily lives and is pervasive throughout their routines. Special health courses are established to provide health education. The reason for the emphasis on physical development in foreign quality education is that they believe instilling good health habits in students during their adolescence has a lasting impact on their entire lives, greatly contributing to their lifelong physical well-being. Furthermore, these habits will carry on into their family life, guiding other family members toward healthy habits, thereby exerting a positive and lifelong influence on the whole family. This kind of influence is far-reaching and immeasurable in its profound significance.

3.3. Emphasis on Education through Hardships

Although many developed countries offer comfortable living environments and have high-quality family lives with abundant educational resources, the concept of "education through hardships" is an important aspect of their quality education to shape students' character.

For example, in Germany, apart from students shouldering household chores, they are also taught to be thrifty and economical from a young age to reduce the burden on their parents. In the United Kingdom, besides using punishment to correct students' mistakes, conscious efforts are made to create an environment where students experience hardships. Renowned public schools, like the elite boarding schools, deliberately provide challenging living conditions by reducing the quality of food and heating to remove any sense of pampering and to strengthen students' determination. This aims to improve both their physical and mental resilience.

3.4. Emphasizing students' moral education

Moral education is a focal point of quality education in countries around the world, and the characteristics of quality education in each country are often fully reflected in their moral education. For example, France's emphasis on "responsible citizenship" in its quality education is rare among Western countries. Its moral education focuses on students' ideological and moral qualities, using subjects such as history and geography as mediums. It has comprehensive characteristics, with a particular emphasis on students' ideological and patriotic education, reflecting the key aspects and characteristics of quality education in France. Australia's quality education system, on the other hand, focuses on the cultivation of students' moral qualities, aiming to foster students who "care for others" and respect the rights of others while pursuing truth. To achieve this educational goal, Australia has established moral education classes to guide the formation of students' moral perspectives. Australia's moral education reflects its emphasis on cultivating qualities that adhere to moral rules and fulfill social norms.

3.5. Religious Influence

Many countries have their own national beliefs, which is why schools in these countries offer religious courses. However, the significance of religious courses is more scientific and educational, emphasizing strengthening national identity and enhancing students' language abilities, literary levels, and artistic appreciation. Under the influence of religious beliefs, students can better improve their cultural competence and moral literacy through religious courses.

For example, in New Zealand, public schools follow the principles of "free, compulsory, and non-religious" education, but outside the core curriculum, schools are allowed to offer religious courses for religious education. Public schools, in compliance with the Education Act, may decide to offer religious courses in consultation with the school board and have the freedom to use teaching facilities as needed for these courses. However, religious courses have their own core subjects and fixed textbooks, and they are designed to foster students' learning and critical thinking abilities through religious education.

3.6. Education is a collective responsibility of the entire society

Family education, community education, and social education are equally indispensable parts of the quality education systems in many foreign countries. "Education is a collective responsibility of the entire society" has become a social consensus, and students receive education from various sources outside of

school before entering the campus. In the United States, the cultivation of students' reading abilities in quality education begins from an early age. Some shop owners even voluntarily reward children who achieve reading goals, demonstrating the collective participation of American society in student education. It is not only the United States, but many countries also focus on cultivating students' ability to solve problems using resources around them after they enter the school age. This starts with utilizing community resources, and the community plays a significant role in students' quality education. The family, school, and society collectively create a seamless learning environment for students.

4. Solutions for Quality Education in China

4.1. Emphasize the Cultivation of Students' Moral Standards

Through glimpses of quality education in various countries, it is evident that foreign systems prioritize a balanced development of ethics, culture, and physical fitness. The cultivation of moral character is considered a top priority in education. Different countries employ various methods to enhance students' moral education. Rich extracurricular activities and diverse teaching approaches encourage students to step out of textbooks and engage with society. By experiencing various social relationships, students understand the concepts of individuality, society, and the nation. They learn to identify and utilize resources to solve real-world problems. Encouraging students to face challenges and employing educational discipline to shape their noble character is also emphasized.

4.2. Enrich the Methods of Curriculum Evaluation

One major obstacle in implementing quality education in China is the burden of a heavy emphasis on cultural courses due to the influence of exam-oriented education. Exam pressure contributes to this burden. The evaluation methods for curriculum in China are too focused on written exams, where students are assessed solely based on written test scores. In contrast, foreign quality education can be effectively implemented because students face less exam pressure, allowing them sufficient time and energy for diverse extracurricular activities. Moreover, many courses are evaluated using methods other than written exams, such as field investigations and group cooperation, which assess students' abilities in various ways. This shift allows students to move away from rote learning and repetitive exercises often associated with "written" practices.

4.3. Emphasize the Training of Teacher Candidates and Continuous Professional Development

Since the implementation of educational reforms, China has been making strides in quality education, but the majority of frontline teachers still carry the shortcomings of the past exam-oriented education model. Many teachers excel at imparting subject knowledge but lack the ability to nurture students' character. They may not fully comprehend the essence and importance of quality education, leading to a confusion of policies between leadership focusing on "quality education" and teachers adhering to "exam-oriented education." Strengthening the professional development of frontline teachers in the context of quality education is crucial.

Simultaneously, teacher training institutions should prioritize cultivating the competence of teacher candidates in quality education and focus on developing their teaching ethics and professionalism. This will ensure the effective implementation of quality education, striking a balance between cultural education, moral education, and physical health education.

4.4. Stress the Involvement of Various Social Stakeholders in Education and Alleviate the Burden on Schools

One of the significant challenges in the current education reform in China is the widespread belief that schools bear the primary responsibility for education, leading to resistance from parents when it comes to education tasks assigned by teachers. This hinders the effective implementation of quality education.

In reality, education is a critical social matter that requires the participation of the entire society. Education should not only focus on acquiring theoretical knowledge but also on shaping students into well-rounded individuals. Therefore, parents should participate in their children's character education. At the societal level, schools have a multifaceted role to play in teaching and nurturing students, while the

surrounding community and social institutions have an obligation to provide educational support. Following the example of foreign quality education systems, enhancing the educational function of communities and social organizations can create a favorable learning environment beyond textbooks and offer additional learning resources.

Implementing this approach requires a concerted effort to change people's perceptions, inspire collective wisdom, and expand the cooperation channels between social institutions and schools. This will help students gain more opportunities for social engagement, dialogue, and practical experiences, thereby improving their practical perspectives and capabilities to adapt quickly to society after leaving school.

4.5. Grant Local Institutions Greater Autonomy in Education Management

China is a multi-ethnic country, with various ethnic groups having their own beliefs and customs. Even without distinct religious beliefs, each region possesses unique cultural characteristics. While relying on a single religious force for the development of quality education might not be feasible in China, diversification is possible based on the circumstances of each region and ethnic group. Education organizations at the local level should be granted more authority to develop specialized courses and distinctive educational models.

For instance, ethnic schools can offer specialized religious courses that enhance students' literary and artistic abilities through the study of religion. Different regions can use their unique natural and cultural resources for quality education. Each locality can develop specialized textbooks and adjust teaching content based on its own situation, making quality education more flexible and diverse for students.

5. Conclusion

Quality education is an essential educational system in the new era to enhance the capabilities of the talent pool. In the past few decades, China has benefited from the knowledge economy brought about by exam-oriented education. However, the various shortcomings of exam-oriented education have gradually permeated society. People have started to forget the true essence of education, which is to nurture individuals. The responsibility of education has largely fallen on schools, with other social entities absent, limiting students' educational environment to the confines of the school. This scarcity of a quality education environment, along with various challenges, has made the implementation of quality education exceptionally difficult, leading to educational issues and adding extra societal pressure.

Establishing a quality education system requires the joint efforts of the entire society. We should learn from successful experiences of quality education in foreign countries while considering our national conditions and gradually formulating measures. Building a quality education system is a significant and arduous task, but the future is promising, and it is a call of the times.

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