

The Analects of Confucius and Plato's Republic: A Comparative Study of Family Education in China and the West

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Abstract: This work will explore the differences between family education in China and the West, especially study and compare the family education ideas of Confucius in the Analects of Confucius and the Western ancient Greek scholar Plato in the Republic, and discuss their ideas from three aspects to analyze their influence. This work will also examine how Western family education can be integrated into the Chinese family education framework to improve child performance and the shortcomings of family education. It will also investigate whether the current situation and context of Chinese homeschooling (Chinese-style homeschooling) is conducive to its adoption and how appropriate changes can be effectively implemented. Finally, this work also has specific research significance to society. In the context of globalization, understanding and integrating different cultural concepts of family education can help build a more inclusive, innovative and universal education system to cope with an increasingly complex and changing human society.

Keywords: Family education, Comparative study, Confucius, Plato, Parent-child education.

1. Introduction

As the harbour for everyone's growth, the family has a crucial influence on individual development. The family of origin is the environment for individuals' initial growth and learning, and the parents' concept of right and wrong, relationship model and educational boundaries for children will be an important force to drive individuals forward [1]. Family education is the cornerstone of shaping individual character, values and social behaviour. In the context of globalization, it is particularly important to compare the ideas of family education in different cultural backgrounds.

Family pedagogy is an old and new science. It is ancient because the family is a form of social organization with a long history. Since its emergence, people have been engaged in the practice of family education, accumulating rich historical experience and changing and developing [2]. On the other hand, the scientific study of family education only appeared after the creation of writing, when there was already a class society.

The idea of family education has a long history in both China and the West. The Chinese Confucian thinker Confucius and the ancient Greek philosopher Plato, as representatives of the two cultural traditions, profoundly impacted the idea of family education in their respective cultures. With the acceleration of the process of globalization, communication and integration between different

cultures are becoming more and more frequent. The study of Chinese and Western family education can help individuals and society better adapt to the challenges of cross-cultural communication, promote cultural understanding and respect, and help countries formulate more effective education policies. By comparing the practice of family education in different countries, we can learn from the successful experience of other countries and provide a reference for our education reform.

The purpose of this paper is to compare the views of Confucius and Plato, explore the similarities and differences between Chinese and Western family education ideas, and its enlightenment to contemporary education.

A child who grew up in China may feel that most of our parents pay more attention to their children's studies and grades and neglect outdoor activities. However, an American boy in the author's class said his parents encouraged and supported outdoor exploration, so he has an extraordinary amount of knowledge in this area, which is crucial in some emergencies. Therefore, the author is eager to know what causes Chinese and Western parents to have different family education concepts.

2. Confucius' view of family education

Confucius (September 28, 551 BC - April 11, 479 BC) was a great educator, thinker and statesman in ancient China. As the founder of Confucianism and one of the founders of Confucianism, his views on family education have deeply influenced China's educational practice for thousands of years. He stressed the importance of education, believing that individuals can achieve self-cultivation, family harmony, governance and world peace through education.

2.1. Filial piety and family ethics

His historical background and cultural tradition profoundly influenced Confucius' educational view. During the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period (Circa 770 to 221 BC), when the society was in turmoil, Confucius put forward "benevolence", "courtesy", and "filial piety" as the criteria to maintain social stability and interpersonal harmony. In family education, "filial piety" is regarded as the highest virtue, the respect and obedience of children to their parents, and occupies the core position in the family. Confucius believed that cultivating the quality of "filial piety" through education could promote filial piety among fathers and children, create family harmony, and maintain and enhance social order and national stability. *The Analects of Confucius* (Confucius, Early Warring States period, about the end of the 5th century BC to the beginning of the 3rd century BC) mentions the importance of filial piety in many places. Specific manifestations of filial piety include respecting parents' wishes, caring for parents' health, and providing necessary support and care in their old age. For example, Confucius once said: "You must not know the year of your parents with joy, with fear. (Confucius, Early Warring States period, about the end of the 5th century BC to the beginning of the 3rd century BC) " This sentence emphasizes the concern about parents' age, rejoicing at their longevity, and worry about their ageing. Filial piety also involves material support and spiritual comfort for parents, such as "today's filial piety is called can support. As for dogs and horses, they can be kept; Disrespect, why not? Now, the so-called filial piety means supporting your parents. However, even dogs and horses can be bred. If there is no respect for parents, what is the difference between filial piety and raising dogs and horses? (Confucius, Early Warring States period, about the end of the 5th century BC to the beginning of the 3rd century BC)" This sentence emphasizes that true filial piety is not limited to material support but, more importantly, spiritual respect and care.

2.2. Responsibilities and methods of education

Confucius' family education concept focuses on moral cultivation, advocating the transmission of etiquette, morality and wisdom through words and deeds. In *The Analects of Confucius* (Confucius,

Early Warring States period, about the end of the 5th century BC to the beginning of the 3rd century BC), Confucius mentioned many times that education should start early. Parents are their children's first teachers, and they should lead their children to integrity and kindness by example. A saying in Chinese society, "The upper beam is not right, and the lower beam is crooked. (Yang Quan, Jin Dynasty, about 290 AD)" reveals that parents play an essential role in the development of their children. Confucius once said: "His body is right, and he does not order. Its body is not right, although the order is not from, and it can not correct its body, such as correct people. (Confucius, Early Warring States period, about the end of the 5th century BC to the beginning of the 3rd century BC) " To correct oneself can correct others; this concept continues today and has become a universally recognized societal norm. In addition, Confucius also repeatedly emphasized the educational responsibility and authority of parents, such as "parents are in, do not travel far, travel must be effective" ("The Analects of Confucius")(Confucius, Early Warring States period, about the end of the 5th century BC to the beginning of the 3rd century BC)[3], reflecting the importance and respect for the role of parents in family education.

2.3. Goals of Confucian education

All his life, Confucius pursued the spirit of "hearing the way in the morning, dying in the evening" (Confucius, Early Warring States period, about the end of the 5th century BC to the beginning of the 3rd century BC), self-improvement, research and preaching. His primary aim of education is to enable students, through education, to be determined, that is, to pursue truth and justice and to become virtuous men. In ancient Chinese society, the elders in the family attached great importance to "tearing descendants", the purpose of which was to make members of the family "adults" so that they could understand human relations, know etiquette, and gain a foothold in society [4]. *The Analects of Confucius* recorded the teachings of Confucius to the whole carp: "Taste independence, carp tend to pass the court." Say, "Do you want to study Poetry?" "No. " "If you do not learn Poetry, there are no words." The carp retired to study Poetry. The next day, independent again, the carp approached the court, saying, "Learn etiquette?" The answer is, "No. If you do not learn etiquette, you cannot stand up." The carp retired to learn etiquette. Hear both [3]. (Confucius, Early Warring States period, about the end of the 5th century BC to the beginning of the 3rd century BC) Learning "poetry" can be spoken, learning etiquette can be established, not accepting family education and guidance, not being a real adult, and not establishing a foothold in society.

2.4. Influence

Confucius' Confucian family ethics occupies an essential position in Chinese traditional society and has influenced the concept and practice of family education in China for thousands of years. Confucius' educational thought not only influenced ancient Chinese society but also profoundly impacted the educational concept and family ethics of the later generations [5].

3. Plato's view of family education

Plato (427 BC - 347 BC) was one of the great philosophers of ancient Greece and one of the greatest philosophers and thinkers in all Western culture. Plato constructed a happy, just and perfect country in *The Republic* and explained the education and teaching thought utterly. In *The Republic*, a "utopian" plot about education is perfectly conceived to embody the relationship between family and public education in the ancient Greek city-state system [6].

3.1. Preschool and Public Education

Plato held education in high esteem and believed in the power of education. He believed that education was a national event and greatly benefited the realization and establishment of an ideal country. Plato was the first philosopher to put forward the idea of preschool education and emphasize the importance of early education. He believes that people are plastic in their initial stages, so preschool education for children is essential and vital. By telling positive stories and playing inspiring games, children can develop moral qualities of integrity, kindness and courage [6].

Regarding family education, Plato advocated that children should be separated from their families and receive a comprehensive education through the state-provided education system, namely public schools. He believes that parents' personal prejudices and emotions easily influence family education. In contrast, the education the state provides can shape citizens' character more objectively, rationally and systematically [7]. This view of Plato differs from the family-centred view of Confucius. It reflects the tension and balance between the family and the authority of public education in ancient Greek society.

3.2. The cultivation of reason and virtue

Starting from the philosophical idea that idea exists before matter, Plato emphasized the exercise of reason in his education system and believed that education could guide people to know the truth and realize the purification and sublimation of the soul. He advocated that education should include not only subject knowledge such as mathematics, science, literature, music, sports, and philosophy to promote the development of people all around [6]. Plato believed that a just and harmonious society could be built by building a complete education system to cultivate citizens who could think critically, pursue justice, and be brave and patriotic. In addition, Plato's view of education also focuses on cultivating virtues. Plato's teacher Socrates once said, "The first thing is to care for the greatest improvement of the soul... Money cannot bring virtue, but virtue alone brings money and all other good things, both public and private [8]." Plato perfectly inherited the teacher's thought, and he regarded the good as the goal of educational cognition, "The idea of the good is the biggest knowledge problem, and the knowledge about justice and so on is only useful and beneficial from it (Plato, 4th century BC)."

3.3. Plato's educational goals

Plato always believed that the future of human beings and the fate of countries were closely related to the education they received [6]. He divided the purpose of education into two categories: the universal purpose of education and the ultimate purpose of education. The general purpose of education in the ideal country is to train the ruling talents of the country, namely, the philosophical Kings and the soldiers. At the same time, he also advocates that through education, the freemen and artisans should have a certain level of intelligence. Education aims to promote "soul turning", which is the change of the standing point of looking at the problem and the world outlook. Education should train people to rise from the visible world to the knowable world, to see the truth, the essential idea, and to know the highest idea – good [9].

3.4. Influence

Plato's concept of education profoundly impacted the development of family education in ancient Greek society. It made significant contributions to the formation and evolution of Western educational thought. His ideas influenced ancient Greece and laid the foundation for later Western educational thought.

4. Comparison and analysis

4.1. Purpose of family education:

The purpose of Confucius family education is to cultivate people's moral character, pay special attention to filial piety, respect and care for elders, and become a responsible and compassionate member of society. At the same time, we should become people with bright futures and honours and promote social stability and harmony through family education [4]. The purpose of Platonic family education is to cultivate rationality and kindness, to closely link individuals with the progress of society and the state, and to cultivate ideal citizens for the state [10]. Nevertheless, Confucius and Plato had some common ideas about the purpose of family education. They have reached a consensus on the cultivation of the adult and the separation of the family. In ancient Chinese society, emphasis was placed on cultivating children and grandchildren, and each family member held his or her position and role. Ancient Greece emphasized that parents should do their best for the growth of their children, and family members should perform their duties [4].

4.2. Content of Family Education

Confucius' view of family education lays more emphasis on moral education and individualized training within the family, emphasizes the core role of the family in education, and pays attention to reading and intellectual development while ignoring other aspects. In contrast, Plato's view of family education is more inclined to the education system at the national level, advocating quality education and believing that education should transcend the boundaries of the family and serve the interests of the whole society. However, they have similar ideas on moral education and knowledge and skills education, and both advocate cultivating virtue and morality [11].

4.3. Current situation of Chinese education

First, with the progress of society, Chinese families generally attach great importance to education, especially the basic education stage. Most parents hope to improve their children's competitiveness and social status through education, so they have high expectations for their children's academic performance and exam results. Secondly, the distribution of educational resources could be more balanced. Family education resources (such as high-quality schools, cram schools, etc.) are relatively abundant in large cities and developed areas. In contrast, educational resources are relatively scarce in rural and less developed areas, which affects children's educational opportunities and development. In addition, there may be conflicts between the traditional values of family education (such as respect for teachers and hard work) and the values of modern society (such as personality development and innovation ability), and parents and schools need to find a balance in education. Finally, with the development of information technology, the way family education is taught is gradually changing. Online education, online learning and other emerging forms of home education provide more options and possibilities but also bring new management and regulatory challenges.

4.4. The implications of contemporary education

By comparing the views of Confucius and Plato on family education and analyzing the current misunderstandings in China's education, the following revelations can be drawn: First, we should pay attention to the importance of diversified education channels. Family and public education should complement each other and give full play to their advantages to cultivate individuals comprehensively. Secondly, traditional values always face new challenges in modern society, so examining their adaptability in education with The Times is necessary. Finally, we should strengthen

the exploration of personalized education, respect individual differences, and explore personalized education methods to stimulate students' potential and creativity more effectively.

5. Conclusion

Through the in-depth comparison and analysis of Confucius and Plato's family education concepts, we can see the uniqueness and universality of their respective cultural backgrounds. Although Confucius and Plato come from different cultural traditions, their thoughts and contributions to family education have provided valuable experience and inspiration for human education. Confucius emphasized the human relations and moral cultivation of family education. At the same time, Plato paid more attention to the objectivity and universality of national education and proposed that education should go beyond the family and serve the broader social interests. Their educational ideas not only influenced their times but also profoundly impacted the educational ideas of later generations. In today's globalized world, understanding and integrating educational concepts from different cultures will help build more inclusive and innovative education systems to meet the challenges of an increasingly complex society.

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