

Comparison of Education Development Between China and the UK in the Modern Times and Its Suggestions on Education Development in Contemporary China

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Abstract: The development of education has a great influence on the development of the nation. The comparative study on the development of education in different countries can help to better see the shortcomings. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Britain's comprehensive national strength ranked first in the world, so that it had better conditions to develop education. At the same time, China was invaded by Western powers, realized the importance of developing education, and took certain measures to promote the development of education. This paper compares the development of education in China and the UK in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the period known in China as the modern times, finds out that the two countries have great differences in educational content, educational development level and educational results, and put forward suggestions for promoting the development of education in contemporary China. First, China could prioritize the reformation of its education system, place emphasis on nurturing students' scientific, technical, and practical competencies and value the preservation of traditional culture and humanistic attributes. Then, China could take steps to ensure the widespread availability of compulsory education and enhance the quality of education through more focused and strategic approaches.

Keywords: China, UK, modern times, educational comparison

1. Introduction

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, China experienced the Opium War and entered modern times, beginning the history of being invaded. Western countries experienced the Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution, became powerful and began expanding outward, especially Britain, which experienced the second Industrial Revolution, ranked first in the world in terms of comprehensive national strength and established its colonial system around the world. At that time, China was forced to reconsider its view of the Western world and genuinely try to learn from the advanced technologies in the West to resist the invasion of the Western powers. Britain, on the other hand, with its prosperous economy, has been able to promote education more proactively and spontaneously. Therefore, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, China and Britain developed education passively and actively respectively, and the educational development showed different characteristics and produced different results. This paper will explore the development of education in China and the UK in modern

times, compare the differences and put forward some suggestions for the development of contemporary education.

2. Education Development in China in the Modern Times

In the late Qing Dynasty, education was primarily found in schools and private institutions in major cities. Wealthy individuals and intellectuals supported and established schools like Beiyang Public School and Peking University School, which introduced Western teaching materials and methods, producing a significant number of bilingual and advanced technical talents. Additionally, some Chinese students opted to study in Western countries for a more comprehensive foreign language education and a deeper understanding of Western culture, science, and technology. This paper examines the development and characteristics of education in the late Qing Dynasty by focusing on education in church schools, government schools and overseas education.

2.1. Education in Church Schools

After the Opium War, western countries got access to the late Qing Dynasty and missionaries followed. To better carry out missionary activities, they carried out educational activities to break the social and cultural barriers [1].

Calvin Wilson Mateer was one of the missionaries at that time. He actively carried out educational activities in Tengchow College, and diligently cultivated a group of talents who were urgently needed for the development of Chinese society at that time, who played an important role in the fields of education, industry and publishing and became a precious spark for the development of modern Chinese society [2]. He pointed out the necessity and importance of churches' carrying out education activities and developing Chinese education. He mentioned that the purpose of education included cultivating reliable missionary talents, introducing better Western education to China through Christian teachers and introducing the science and art of Western culture to China [3]. As a missionary whose main purpose was to preach, Calvin Wilson Mateer realized that the most needed educational resources in Chinese society at that time were advanced technology, so to better carry out missionary work, it was the first task to spread Western technology and culture to China.

In the late Qing Dynasty, church schools were an important form of spreading Western culture to China and spreading Chinese culture to Western countries, becoming a bridge of cultural communication [4]. They helped to cultivate a large number of talents in various fields such as foreign languages, science and technology and so on, objectively promoting the modernization of Chinese education.

2.2. Education in Government Schools

Government schools in the late Qing Dynasty were funded by the government to train talents with foreign language skills and advanced Western technology and culture for national development. However, as the Westernization Movement progressed and the demands of the international environment evolved, the government recognized that it was insufficient to solely focus on learning Western languages. The goal should be shifted to use the advanced technologies in the West to resist the invasion of the Western powers. As a result, from 1866 onwards, the government expanded the curriculum of Tongwen College, adding courses in Western social sciences and natural sciences.

The main task of the educational activities carried out by Tongwen College was to cultivate people who can apply what they learned, have real talent and practical learning and serve society [5]. The education in Tongwen College adopted the class teaching system, which helped to cultivate students' cooperative spirit. Students' practical ability was also greatly valued, for they were also scheduled to

take part in a variety of language practice activities, with the majority of these focusing on translation practice, such as translation and interpretation.

In the late Qing Dynasty, the Qing government set up schools to train language and advanced technical talents. In contrast to the education carried out by church schools, government schools carried out education activities according to the actual needs of China, and less accepted the penetration of Western cultural knowledge.

2.3. Overseas Education

There were five large-scale waves of studying abroad in modern China [6]. Destination countries of overseas education included the United States, Japan, France and the Soviet Union. The study abroad education in modern China began in 1868. Along with the changes in the development of various countries in the international community, the destination and purpose of study abroad also underwent different changes, and thus achieved different effects. However, they all made Chinese students receive different cultural influences from China.

The five large-scale waves of studying abroad in modern China let the students who received the overseas education personally feel the advanced Western civilization. Their thoughts underwent great changes, and they contributed their strength to the construction of the country after they had completed their studies [6]. Studying abroad in modern China has realized the dual unity of "saving the country through education" and "studying abroad is not to study abroad". In the process of spreading Western learning to the East and East learning to the West, foreign students have formed a dual cultural identity, which is also the source of their introduction to Western culture and the transformation of traditional society [7].

3. Education Development in the UK in the Modern Times

3.1. Butler's 1944 Education Act

In 1944, the British government passed the Education Reform Bill proposed by the Education Committee chaired by Butler. The basic contents include strengthening state control and leadership over education by abolishing the Board of Education and establishing a Ministry of Education to provide unified leadership over education throughout the country; establishing a public education system consisting of primary, secondary and continuing education; carrying out compulsory education. The Act also calls for the reform of religious education, teacher education and higher education [8]. The Act reflected that the British government at that time attached great importance to education and believed that the development of education should be managed by the state.

The Education Act of 1944 ended the unbalanced development of the pre-war British education system, formed a national education system of primary education, secondary education and continuing education, and expanded the opportunities for national education. The Act determined the basic principles and policies of the development of British education after the war and had a significant impact on the further development of British education.

3.2. Primary education

In 1870, the British Parliament passed the "Primary Education Act" proposed by Foster, then a member of the House of Commons, vice president of the Privy Council and Director of Education, including the division of school districts, the establishment of School Board, religious education issues and compulsory enrollment [9]. The Education Act of 1870 was the beginning of the British national education system and played a landmark role.

Since then, with the promulgation of the Primary Education Act 1876 and the Mundera Act 1880, the British primary education system was established and developed [10], providing strong support and guarantee for the continued prosperity of the UK, leading to a more inclusive and equitable society, with opportunities for personal growth and a vibrant national culture [11].

3.3. Secondary Education

By the 19th century, the status of British secondary education had not changed much, and the secondary education system of the 18th century, was dominated by donating grammar schools and public schools. The traditional and corrupt practices of donating grammar schools and public schools could not be ignored, so the British Parliament commissioned the Clarendon Commission to investigate the nine public schools in 1861-1864 [12].

The Clarendon Commission published its report in 1864, making recommendations against the abuses of public schools. However, this report was not adopted because the government considered that the conditions were not sufficient for the establishment of a national secondary education system, but it played an important role in the development of secondary education. The Act reflected that the British government at that time attached great importance to education and believed that the development of education should be managed by the state. By the end of the 19th century, the impact of scientific education made British secondary education finally change, but classical education still occupied an important position.

Generally speaking, due to the persistence of tradition and the strength of conservatism, the development of modern British secondary education is relatively slow, but the educational development in this period of history also laid the foundation for subsequent improvements [13].

3.4. Higher Education

After entering the 19th century, the Industrial Revolution brought the boom of cultural and scientific knowledge, and utilitarianism became an important principle, which generally required universities to research and teach practical new courses. The idea of establishing a new university was formed. This trend of thought prompted some scholars and bourgeois enlightened people to demand the establishment of new universities to teach secular subject knowledge, in this context, the rise of the New University Movement in Britain.

In 1828, the establishment of University College London marked the beginning of the New University movement, with an emphasis on education in the natural sciences. In 1829, the Anglican Church established King's College. In 1936, the two colleges merged to form the University of London [14]. Led by the University of London, in the second half of the 19th century, British city colleges were established. The rise of city colleges changed the tradition of British education, science education into universities, and higher education was opened to the children of the middle class. This not only sped up the process of making higher education materials more accessible to a wider range of learners and intellectual backgrounds, but it also marked the beginning of the secularization of British higher education [15].

4. Comparison of Educational Development between China and UK in the Modern Times

4.1. Educational System

Chinese schools in the late Qing Dynasty, whether church schools or government schools, paid more attention to the education of middle school and above, to train talents who could contribute to social construction and save the nation. Moreover, the establishment of the educational system was more

passive, thus it was not so suitable for the Chinese society in the late Qing Dynasty and could not truly serve social development.

The UK, under the requirement of economic development, carried out education reform and promulgated education-related bills in line with the law of development of the times, thus establishing a complete public and private school system, including primary, secondary, and higher education.

4.2. Educational Content

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, China and the UK developed education under the different requirements of the times, established different education systems, and thus developed different levels of education development, especially in the popularization of education. The education level of China in the late Qing Dynasty was relatively low, mainly learning from the West. In addition, educational opportunities were concentrated in cities and wealthy families. Education had a low degree of popularization. While the UK established a relatively complete primary, secondary, and higher education system, and required "compulsory enrollment" in the education policy [9]. Education had a high degree of popularization.

The different needs of social development have also influenced the content of education. The content of education in the late Qing Dynasty mainly came from the advanced culture and technology of the West, as well as the foreign language knowledge needed for learning Western knowledge. These educational contents could indeed solve the urgent problems of Chinese society at that time, but in the long run, since the educational contents did not train the students' abilities to learn, their contribution to the development of education level was limited. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the UK began to focus on the cultivation of scientific, technical, and practical skills, especially in the field of higher education and focused on the cultivation of students' creative and critical thinking skills, which could help to stimulate students' thinking and willingness to learn independently.

Due to the different educational concepts and educational purposes, China and the UK also had different educational outputs. At that time, China passively carried out education to save the country and finally improved the invaded situation of modern Chinese society to a certain extent. The British government put forward various policies to promote the development of education, carried out educational reforms, and finally established a complete education system.

5. Suggestions for Current Education

In the same period, China and the UK held different concepts and adopted different development strategies on education, which also led to different results in the overall development of education, economy, and society. A comprehensive analysis of the differences between the two countries shows that education plays an important role in the development of society. Therefore, based on the differences between Chinese and British modern education, this paper puts forward the following suggestions.

First, China could prioritize the reformation of its education system, breaking free from the constraints of traditional methods, and driving innovation and transformation in education. By fostering an environment that encourages creativity and critical thinking, China can empower students to adapt to the challenges of a rapidly changing world while promoting a culture of innovation and progress in education. Second, China could emphasize nurturing students' scientific, technical, and practical competencies to align with the demands of contemporary society, while also valuing the preservation of traditional culture and humanistic attributes. By prioritizing the development of students' scientific and technical abilities alongside traditional cultural and humanistic values, China can prepare its youth to thrive in a diverse and rapidly evolving global environment. Third, China

could take proactive steps to ensure the widespread availability of compulsory education and prioritize the expansion and advancement of education in rural and impoverished regions. By actively promoting the popularization of compulsory education and focusing on the development of education in underserved areas, China can work towards achieving more equitable access to quality education for all its citizens. Fourth, China could try to fully understand the underlying goals of educational development to enhance the quality of education through more focused and strategic approaches. By gaining a deeper understanding of the fundamental purpose of education, China can effectively implement measures to improve the overall quality of its educational system.

6. Conclusion

In the late 19th and 20th centuries, China carried out education in a passive situation and achieved the purpose of saving the nation. On the other hand, the UK took the initiative to carry out education and set up the foundation of the education system. Therefore, the two countries have great differences in educational content, educational development level and educational results.

Education is the fundamental way for mankind to pass on civilization and knowledge, train the younger generation, and create a better life. A nation needs to develop education in a more effective way to improve its comprehensive national strength. Based on this, this paper proposes to pay attention to the development of education, improve the strategic position of education, and improve relevant policies and systems to ensure the priority development of education.

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