Rules and Equality
- The Focus of the Two Cultures Analysis

Pedagogiskt docenturarbete

Huan Zhang
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Huan Zhang
Centre for Personalized Medicine, Department of Clinical and Experimental Medicine, Faculty of Health Sciences, Linkoping University

Abstract

The aims of education are to 1) cultivate a sense of responsibility and 2) develop the self-directed learning and problem-solving skills. In order to achieve the first aim, the article analyzed Elaine Chao’s family education, as an example, and focused on the most important part, the ‘Rules’ and ‘Equality’, in her family education. The second aim can be resolved by problem-based learning. The author states her unique perspective of learning, based on her education background in two different cultures.

Introduction

The aims of education are 1) to cultivate a sense of responsibility (to the individual himself/herself, to others or to the society)[1,2]; 2) to get the self-directed learning skills and problem-solving skills [3].

Why to cultivate a sense of responsibility is important? In the medical faculty, cultivating a medical student’s sense of responsibility is even more important than ordinary people. This because a doctor means not only an occupation but also health related and life entrusted responsibilities [4]. But how can people cultivate the sense of responsibility? The balance of Rules and Equality might be helpful.

Rules mean authoritative statements of what to do or not to do in a specific situation [5]. Equality refers to the state of being equal, in which all people within a group have the same status or a stipulation that all people should be treated similarly [6].

The problem based learning (PBL) method is well known for developing self-directed learning and problem-solving skills [7,8].

I obtained my MD and PhD in China and came to Sweden for a post doctor training. I experienced in both Chinese and Swedish cultures in education field. Although these two cultures are quite different in many aspects, I believe that there is benefit for medical students to combine different thinking from the two cultures.

Analysis

A sense of responsibility is not a born gift. It is developed in both family and school educations [9,10]. People start to realize their responsibility at their early ages, which is usually enlightened by their family education.
A good example is Elaine Chao’s family education. Elaine Chao was born in China and migrated to the United States together with her family. She received an MBA degree from Harvard and 36 honorary doctorates from different universities. Elaine served as U.S. Secretary of Labor during 2001 to 2009 and recently became United States Secretary of Transportation. She is regarded as one of the most successful women in the world because of her personal achievements. It is worth to mention that her family education plays a critical role to her success. Nevertheless Elaine is not the only excellent child in the family. Among her five sisters, all graduated from elite schools and even four of them were from Harvard University.

How can all children in the family be such superior? The secret is the unique education in Chao’s family, combining the essence of education from China and western countries.

The Chinese essence of education is ‘Rules’. The rules imply what must be done. For example, there is a rule in Elaine’s family: every day after dinner, Elaine’s father did his duty, her mother read books and all the children did homework. No one was allowed to watch TV before they had finished their ‘tasks’. Parents are always the best example to their children. Furthermore, Elaine believes that lifelong learning is essential for everyone. She learned this from her mother who earned her master’s degree at 51 years old.

The essence of education from western countries is ‘Equality’ [11]. Elaine’s mother usually didn’t tell her children ‘yes’ or ‘no’ directly. She was good at guiding the democratic discussion with them and giving them the chance to judge and conclude. Elaine’s youngest sister Angela talked to her mother that she didn’t want to learn playing piano as her sisters, but interested in French horn when she was 10 years old. Her mother didn’t force her to learn piano, but listened her reasons and interests and gave some suggestions. After the discussion, both of them agreed on a ‘contract’, which was, since Angela was really interested in French horn, she needed to persist at least one year for her interest. Even the French horn is the same height as a ten years old girl and too heavy for her to carry it, Angela had to solve the entire problem herself and trained three times per week for one year.

The ‘Equality’ prevents the right to speak, and the ‘Rules’ helps the ‘Equality’ to cultivate a sense of responsibility.

The education between teacher and students is similar to the education between parents and children. Parents are usually considered as the first teacher for every child. While children grow up, school education plays an equally important role as family education. ‘Rules’ and ‘Equality’ philosophy can be applied to school education, even on more advanced levels, e.g. in doctoral education, where the PhD students learn in the lab.

The ‘Rules’ for a PhD student includes lab safety, no cheating in examinations or
mistakes. Remember: mistakes in clinical work often cause severe hurts, wounds, infections, and other complications. Never repeat mistakes. Make sure every patient gets the care they need. Always double-check your work. Never forget, the patient's safety is always the first priority.

The article in the New England Journal of Medicine discusses a recent study that highlights the importance of continuous learning and self-directed education. The study found that doctors who engage in self-directed learning are more likely to stay up-to-date with the latest medical research and improve patient outcomes. The article also mentions the importance of critical thinking and problem-solving skills in medicine.

The article emphasizes the need for a change in the traditional education system. The current system is often criticized for being too focused on rote learning and memorization, rather than on critical thinking and problem-solving. The article suggests that new approaches to education, such as active learning and problem-based learning, are needed to prepare doctors for the challenges of modern medicine.

The article also discusses the role of technology in medical education. The use of online resources, such as medical journals and educational websites, is becoming more common, and is helping doctors to stay up-to-date with the latest research and developments in their field.

In conclusion, the article highlights the importance of continuous learning and self-directed education in medicine. It calls for a change in the traditional education system to better prepare doctors for the challenges of modern medicine.
Conclusion

The difference between Chinese and Swedish cultures presents a challenge to teachers and students and thus an opportunity to grow. When it comes to the supervision of PhD students with the Chinese culture, supervisors are usually stress ‘rules’, but in Sweden culture, supervisors pay more attention to ‘equality’. Ideally, both the teachers and the students should accommodate their teaching and learning styles, respectively, by learning about both cultures [15]. We should remain open for examining different ideas and explore the right kind of combination that creates a successful learning environment [16]. The combination of the essence of education from China and Sweden are the ‘Rules’ and ‘Equality’, which can cultivate a sense of responsibility. PBL can not only help students develop the self-directed learning skills and problem-solving skills, but also contribute to ‘Rules’ and ‘Equality’.

References