Research on Education for Left-behind Children in Rural Areas from the Strength Perspective

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ABSTRACT

At present, the research on the education of left-behind children in rural areas mostly adopts the problem perspective. This paper focuses on the research on left-behind children in rural areas from strength perspective, and then explores and applies the strengths and resources of left-behind children in rural areas to assist them in achieving their own goals and face up to setbacks in life, as well as seeks the social work intervention in the education for left-behind children in rural areas, so that the education for left-behind children in rural areas will obtain closer attention and better development.

Key words: strength perspective, left-behind children, educational problems

STATE IN EDUCATION FOR LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN IN RURAL AREAS

A large number of studies have found that rural left-behind children have more problems than non left-behind children. As the first teacher of the child, parents play an irreplaceable role, while it is difficult for migrant parents, who choose to go out for work, to provide their children with timely supervision and guidance, and therefore left-behind children fail to be instructed and influenced by their parents’ words and deeds in the process of socialization, so that there is a gap between left-behind children and non left-behind children in the initial stage of socialization. The weakening of the family education function leads to a series of problems in the study of the left-behind children.
Due to the lack of timely and effective supervision of parents, it is difficult for left-behind children to develop good study habits, so that they may lack learning motivation and have poor academic performance, and even play truant or drop out of school as time passes.

**STRENGTHS FOR LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN IN RURAL AREAS**

**Strong adaptability to new things**

Parents of left behind children mostly work in more developed areas, and they are more exposed to new things and more willing to share new things with their children than those who live in rural areas throughout the year. The rural left-behind children who live in this environment all the year round are more adaptable to new things and are more willing to accept new things.

**Independent self-care ability**

Since parents work outside throughout the year, a large number of left-behind children live with their aged grandparents, or even depend on others, or live alone, which makes left-behind children more independent than non left-behind children, so that left-behind children have independent self-care ability and even they can take more housework, and take better care of the elderly grandparents.

**External attention and support**

In recent years, with the development of economy and the change of the city, the government and society have paid increasing attention to migrant workers, and the left-behind elderly and left-behind children, who are behind the migrant workers, also go into the public view. The issues of the lives, health and psychology of such special groups have also received close attention, and an increasing number of policies have been implemented, so that the left-behind children have more resources and advantages in policy and social support.

**SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION IN EDUCATION FOR RURAL LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN FROM THE STRENGTH PERSPECTIVE**

Dennis Saleebey believes that strength perspective is an important mode of social work practice, and the strength here not only refers to the client’s own strengths, but also refers to the characteristics of the environment for the client and social relations. It can also be said that the conditions of the client can be regarded as strengths under certain conditions. Shi Bonian believes that the strength perspective emphasizes containing the client’s strengths to explore and apply his own strengths and values to assist them in solving difficulties. And the strength perspective focuses on intensifying the existing strengths and capabilities of the clients and lays stress on the roles and values of capabilities,
resources, interest, values and achievements and aspirations in solving their own problems.

**Empowerment—To realize the concept of helping people to help themselves and establish partnerships**

Empowerment refers to the process of helping individuals, families, groups, or communities to explore and expand resources, instead of being restricted to advocating more benefits and power for the client. In empowerment relationships, meaning is given to everyone. From this perspective, social workers can assist rural left-behind children find their own strengths, which will make the rural left-behind children form positive self identity, so as to help improve their self-confidence, and to face the problems more actively, thereby achieving the purpose of helping people to help themselves.

**Resilience—To tap the potential advantages and apply empathy**

Resilience is a force to rebound on difficulties and obstacles as well as the ability for individuals to resist dilemma, through which the clients are able to overcome the difficulties and setbacks. Social workers uphold this concept, and believe that rural left-behind children are equipped with abilities of growth, studies and changes, so it can stimulate the resilience of left-behind children, so as to tap their potential advantages.

From this perspective, social workers should first affirm rural left-behind children's resilience, and apply the empathy to get closer to left-behind children, which will enable left-behind children to be convinced that there are people caring about them and standing with them. The social worker should make left-behind children establish firm belief in their inherent resilience.

**Integration—To adapt to new living environment, and make use of all resources available**

The integration concept of strength perspective emphasizes “people in the situation”, which is the integration of people and environment, and the integration of people in the social macro-environment. Rural left-behind children live in an environment with a lack of parents’ company and the care of grandparents, where the material needs can be met but spiritual world can be seldom satisfied, so that children cannot timely make corresponding changes to adapt to the environment, resulting in environmental imbalance. In this regard, social workers need to reconstruct the living environment of the left-behind children and realize the integration of children and the new living environment.

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Moreover, they should integrate resources more effectively for the linking resources of education issues for left-behind children. For example, it can be linked to the public learning resources like provincial and municipal libraries to provide learning space and books for left-behind children. Science museums and other places can be linked to enable the rural left-behind children to learn and visit so as to motivate their interest in learning. It can be linked to the competition resources of provincial and municipal education units to improve the rural left-behind children’s enthusiasm for learning through competitions and urge them to learn more happily.

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