

A Comparative Study of British and American Education

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Abstract: Education plays an important role in our life. In the world, Britain is the earliest country who has an educational system in the world, whose educational system has a big influence on many countries. In detail, part 1, we have a broad introduction of education about these two countries including their learning phrases, essential examinations which determine their whole life, some changes on educational systems, some actions for better education, a variety of different kinds of schools, famous universities. Part 2 mainly tells the similarities and differences of Education in Britain and America. Part 3 is the further understanding about each country's educational system and we are going to introduce some sources of American educational system. On the basis of these details, it is convenient for us to acknowledge the history of their educational system. Through this part, it is a helpful tool to make us be acquaint with the origin and development of our country.

Keywords: Comparison; English Education; American Education

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of globalization, education is highly valued in the whole world, especially in America, England which educational system is focused more by people around the world. Thus, more and more people prepared to go a further study on both countries. Education generally is defined as an activity which increases people's skills of knowledge and has a potential influence on people's thoughts. Narrowly speaking, it only refers to school education, that is, educators exert physical and mental influence on the educated in a purposefully planned and organized way, according to social demands and developments needs of the educated, so as to cultivate people in certain social needs. By comparing and contrasting culture of these two countries, and using data and historical evidence, we will acknowledge their similarities and differences. Education system is a general frame for the educational development of a country including preschool education, primary education, secondary education and higher education. This study is to explore and analyze the cultural factor for education in both the UK and USA.

2. Brief Introduction of British and American Education

The UK and the USA have the same education system in mature. Both of them have four stages of education, that is, preschool education, primary education, secondary education and higher education. Nevertheless, there are some differences in their educational systems.

In Britain, the nineteenth-century is a crucial period in the history of Britain. Dickens looked at 19th-century Britain and said, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." Indeed, the 19th century is destined to be one of the most significant in Britain's history. Britain, which was the first country to complete the Industrial Revolution and reached the peak of the world, had already experienced a rapid change from tradition to modernization during this one hundred year. In this century, various aspects emerged in Britain, including politics, economy, society and culture, which were worth reconsidering and studying by us.

In Britain, people consider the school where you are educated is essential to your future and it is a reflection of your social class. Thus, when the policy—"children should go to the school nearest to you" is published, a quantity of British parents who belong to middle class urgently begin to move their house to a place which has high quality education.

From a historical perspective, the British educational system has some changes. It is managed by church in the beginning, then by government in the Industrial Revolution and by the state nowadays. In addition, more and more people have an opportunity to receive education.

For American educational system, they pay much attention to qualify-oriented education. All states in America require young people to attend school. And different standards vary in different states. It is recorded that 32 states require attendance to age 16. While the other 8 states require attendance to age 18 and so on. Thus, every child in America has almost 13 years to finish his/her study. Americans have a strong tendency to make their children aware of the importance of important social problems concerned by people.

When talking about levels of schooling, they have to enter elementary school until grades K-6 or K-8. After that, children in America have to attend secondary school lasting for 4 years of formal education from grades 9 to grades 12. Another characteristic is that there is no national curriculum in the United States and certain subjects are taught in all K9 to 12 systems across the country. Almost every elementary school provides instruction in these subjects: mathematics; language arts including readings, grammar, compositions and literature; penmanship; science; social studies including history, geography, citizenship and economics, music, art and physical education.

From a large perspective, research on the history of education is going out of the country and studying the whole world's educational history as a whole. It not only focuses on the development of educational history in the US, but also extends the research perspective to other countries in the world. The mode of learning, focusing on solving problems rather than memorizing theory, became popular in America. Many science courses are added to the curriculum.

3. Compare and Contrast between British and American Education

Education in the UK aims to help students develop their individual talents to the best of their ability and train them to contribute to society. Education in the United States is for everyone in society, not just for a few.

3.1 Similarities between British and American Education

Both of them have some similarities. First and foremost, Britain and America have a homology culture between the two countries. They have a historical background of education and education in United States has already inherited the ancient tradition of education in Europe, but developed to have its own characteristics.

Secondly, both of them have four stages of the educational system from Preschool education to primary education to secondary education to higher education. And some schools are fund by church. Thirdly, both of these two countries pay much attention to foster their children to become sociable students to get acquainted with people quickly in society. Although Anglo-American culture with homology, the difference between the two countries is still very large. At last, they both controlled by the church in the beginning.

3.2 Differences between British and American Education

The differences are like those. Firstly, Britain is a constitutional monarchy, while the United States is the federal presidential system and both countries have different education system, which is different between the two countries as long as the reason for education. Secondly, UK education aimed at helping students develop and train their personal skills to make a contribution to their society. They found fixed classes and their students don't have any right to choose their class. The primary and secondary education in Britain belongs to compulsory education, which is the same as China. Students between five years old and sixteen years old have to receive compulsory education. In addition, students must pass national tests at the age of 7,11,14 and 16 and some of these have a huge influence on their future.

However, the systems in the United States are different from most other countries. They set up different kinds of classes for different people. Education in the United States is held for every person in society not specifically designed for few people. They held using tax for free education, sewing, typing, wireless and automotive repair and other subjects besides general school subjects such as math, history and language. Students are able to choose a large number of subjects according to their own interests, personal plans and talents by themselves.

From the perception of history and culture, British education has a very long history and its early education has its own system, focusing on the personalized training and all-round development of students; Emphasizing "elite" education, the top aristocratic schools headed by Eton College have cultivated a large number of political and business elites.

While America is a country of immigrants, it pays more attention to multicultural education. Although it has a history of only a few hundred years, it is already one of the most educated countries in the world, and the continuous acceptance and integration of cultures has also promoted the development of education. Moreover, under the impact of religion and modern waves, it is closer to the trend of the new era and advocates individuality, freedom and innovation.

4. Interpretations of Similarities and Differences

"No two leaves are the same in the world". Both of these two countries have similar and different characteristics. Here are some

interpretations of similarities and differences in America and British Education.

4.1 Interpretation of the Similarities

Firstly, both of these two countries have a similar cultural background and they tend to be consistent in the educational system. At the beginning of the school both in Britain and in America, it was set up and controlled by church. No matter Britain or America, the origin of education began with the religious elements. The only difference is its origins. Secondly, both British and American educational system, as human beings' intangible heritage, have the tendency to become similar, that is to say, we human beings are likely to have equal educational characteristics. Thirdly, both of these countries have a purpose to cultivate sociable people.

4.2 Interpretation of the Differences

The education in Britain has undergone a lot of changes. At first, only wealthy people are able to receive education. When three stages happened, it changed from voluntary to compulsory. After the Industrial Revolution, with the increasing demand of making profit, the government made a decision to take responsible for children's study and regulated children aged between 5 and 10 must go to school to satisfy the demands for intellects and make high-qualified instruments.

When the English colonialists came to the eastern coast of North America in the early 17th century. The Puritans who belong to the largest group of these first colonists, found the freedom to practice their religion in the small towns and villages they built on the edge of the forest in Massachusetts. They required everyone to read the Bible. Puritans also set up a system of education in their colonies and declare that all property could be taxed for the common good including the support of schools. These two actions still have an influence on American youth today.

5. Conclusion

So far, we have looked at English education and American education as outlined. We have also compared English with American education for their similarities. We have made a contrast between English education and American education to see differences of their own. In the third chapter we have tried our best to make some interpretations of similarities and differentiations concerned.

The British education system is more rigorous and conservative compared with the American education system. In the United Kingdom, higher education pays more attention to professional knowledge and has a strong academic atmosphere. While higher education in the United States is able to exercise students' comprehensive ability, such as leadership and organizational skills, communication and coordination skills and so on. According to statistics, American university students change majors an average of 2-3 times during their undergraduate years, which more vividly reflects the characteristics of the American education system. In terms of the academic system, the United Kingdom implements a semester system, which lacks flexibility and cannot transfer and change majors, while the United States implements a credit system, which is universal and flexible for transferring and changing majors, and credits are exchanged between schools. Of differences, they are pioneering in the modern educational system. Although culture in Britain and America have several similarities and a lot of differences, they are valuable intangible heritage in human history of British and American education.

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