

A Survey on the Application of WeChat Platform on Home-school Cooperation

Yafei Wang*

School of Humanities and Law
North China University of Technology
Beijing, China

Yumeng Zhao

School of Humanities and Law
North China University of Technology
Beijing, China

Abstract—This study is to investigate and analyze the application of WeChat platform in home-school cooperation and discovers the problems existing in the current home-school communication. It is a case study, in which a primary school in Beijing was chosen to be surveyed. Questionnaires were handed out to twenty teachers and sixty students' parents and then further interviews have been done. According to the respondents, WeChat platform can bring teachers and parents into close contact and enhance home-school cooperation. In terms of the deficiencies of home-school communication on WeChat platform, some suggestions were given accordingly. For families, they should not neglect their educational responsibilities. For teachers, they should make clear what and how to communicate with parents in group chat and private talk. For the school, it is better to appoint professionals to run the official account to fulfill its effects.

Keywords—WeChat platform; home-school cooperation; primary school; case study

I. INTRODUCTION

With the rapid development and popularization of computer network information and communication technology in China, the network has become an indispensable part of daily life. With the continuous reform of the educational system and the issuance of various documents by the Ministry of Education to promote the change of teaching concepts and educational models, the traditional home-school interaction channels are unable to meet the requirements of education in the New Era. A new model of home-school cooperation based on the network platform came into being. With the popularization and rapid progress of education informatization, the home-school cooperation model has been transformed from the traditional one-way model into two-way model.

To better home-school cooperation, efficient means of online cooperation is essential, such as QQ, WeChat, Weibo and other kinds of instant messaging software favored by the majority of educators. WeChat platform, with the advantages of zero cost (which requires only a small amount of data traffic), cross-platform communication, as well as anytime and anywhere transmission of voice, video, pictures and files, has become the main part of the new home-school cooperation model.

II. REVIEW OF THE RELATED RESEARCH

Vasyl Sukhomlynsky, a prominent scholar, believes that six factors influence children's progress, and the top two are family and school. Family and school are the two educational environments in which students live the longest and have the most interpersonal relationships, which exert an irreplaceable influence on their all-round development [1]. A large number of research materials shows that some developed countries, such as the United States, Britain and Japan, practice home-school cooperation research earlier than China, both in theory and in practice, having accumulated abundant experiences [2]. The cooperation between home and school in the United States entered a mature stage from the 1990s to the beginning of the 21st century. At this stage, the cooperative education policies of home and school mainly include parents' participation in school management and decision-making, parent education, and home-school partnerships [3]. The cooperation between home and school in the UK is not just a policy guarantee, but also the support of the community. The Parents Teachers Association (PTA) UK, the UK Parents Committee, the Parent Participation Network and other social and school cooperative organizations have been playing an important role. The schools offer the parents resources, information, training and other aspects of assistance [4]. Japan's home-school cooperation is for parents to participate in not only the school education activities but also the school PTA meetings [5].

Compared with the foreign countries' home-school cooperation practice, Chinese model is forming its norm. With the deepening of education reform, the research of home-school cooperation in China has evolved from the stage of analyzing and learning from foreign theories of home-school cooperation to the stage of self-exploration. China has basically constructed the home-school cooperation mode with its own characteristics in line with the basic national conditions. In the same way, to build a home-school cooperation model must be in conformity with the basic national conditions of the country. Lin Xiaofen mentioned that network social tools not only reduce the misunderstanding between teachers and parents, but also enhance the efficiency and convenience of teachers' work. Home-school cooperation is the demand of the development of the Times for education and the inevitable trend of the development and perfection of education in our country [6]. The importance and necessity of home-school cooperation have been gradually understood by the public, and many

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scholars and primary schools have carried out theoretical research and practical exploration on home-school cooperation. However, the long-term conservative and closed education concept held by Chinese parents has led to the phenomenon of mainly relying on school education. It is not an easy thing to veer the traditional concept existing for so long a time although there are numerous theoretical studies on home-school cooperation. The theoretical research and application of scholars still need to be developed and improved constantly in reality. At present, home-school cooperation in China has been initially explored and developed, with certain effects, but there are still many problems to be solved.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

A. Research Object

The survey focused on teachers and parents in the target primary school. Twenty teachers, including the headmaster and some administrators, and sixty parents answered the questions. In this primary school, there are twenty classes and about thirty students in each class.

B. Research Method

This study is a case study. A primary school in Beijing was chosen to be the target school. We contacted the headmaster of the school and she was interested in the study and then asked for the agreement of the teachers and the parents to be surveyed. In practice, the researchers designed two sets of questionnaires for teachers and parents respectively.

C. Research Questions

This study is to answer the following two questions with the help of questionnaires and interviews.

(1) What is the current situation of the cooperation between home and school under the support of WeChat?

(2) How should the school and parents further optimize the cooperation between home and school supported by WeChat platform?

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS AND ANALYSIS ON THE APPLICATION OF WECHAT PLATFORM IN HOME-SCHOOL COOPERATION

A. Results and Analysis on the Basic Information and the Users' Attitude to WeChat

As for the necessity of home-school cooperation, most teachers and parents agreed that it was necessary, while only 20.91% of teachers and a very slight of parents (about 0.97%) agreed that home-school cooperation was not necessary. It shows that both teachers and parents have come to realize the importance of home-school cooperation. While school education is essential, family education is also essential. It ceases the misunderstanding that only schools are responsible for the educating of the students. The all-round development of the students cannot be realized without the support of the family education.

WeChat accounts for the largest share with 92.73%, showing that compared to other channels, WeChat has more coverage, and teachers are more willing to communicate with parents through the WeChat platform. Obviously face-to-face communication is the most direct and effective way, but it is impossible for teachers and parents to conduct daily interviews. Parents' talk no matter at school or at home would be taken only when the student has serious problems with their studies or psychology. Usually, WeChat appears particularly convenient for teachers and parents contact at any moment.

B. Results and Analysis on WeChat Group Application

Most of the teachers and parents have joined the student's WeChat Class Group, only a very small number of teachers (about 7.27%) and parents (about 3.88%) did not join. According to the researchers' follow-up understanding, the teacher, often the head teacher, has joined the WeChat group without exception, and often sends notifications in the WeChat group. Both teachers and parents use WeChat groups very frequently. It is used almost every day and even many times per day.

When asked whether they are satisfied with the Class Group, 63.64% of parents mentioned that although most of the WeChat groups had the basic group rules, but some parents sent too many chat messages, resulting that some important information submerged. And despite the fact that some parents realized that their children's education needs the joint efforts of schools and families, they would return to the traditional one-way mode. 43.65% of parents do not actively interact with teachers, indicating that in practice it is easy to revert to the school-led way, which is passively accepted by parents. While for teachers, 43.64% of them expressed they were very busy. They may not have a large chunk of time to deal with various questions in the WeChat group. These problems may in the long run lead to a lack of depth in home-school cooperation, which does not reflect the joint efforts of school education and family education. But 65.45% of teachers use WeChat group to assign homework and course requirements. What's more, 55.45% and 57.27% of them send files and photos respectively.

As for the parents' attitude to homework assignments, not all of them are satisfied. While most parents have no problem with teachers' assigning homework to the students in WeChat Group, 16.5% of parents do not approve of the practice. The original intention to set up a group is to focus on the communication and interaction between teachers and parents in order to build home-school cooperation, and to help parents solve the problems in the process of educating their children, not just to assign students homework.

When asked whether they often post educational articles in the WeChat group for parents to read and learn, only 22.33% of the teachers answered "Yes" and even 4.85% of teachers said they have never posted any. We believe that it is necessary for teachers to share some educational articles. The development of ideal home-school cooperation is a process, during which, teachers and parents should work together and learn together. With the increasing demand for family education, many parents lack enough knowledge to educate children, thus teachers should give help and guidance, so that

more and more parents will be armed with education theories and practice. Education is a complicated project. If there is no high education quality of the family, even though schools and teachers pay great efforts, it will not receive the ideal effects.

C. Results and Analysis on WeChat Platform Private Talk

Most of the teachers and parents are friends in WeChat platform, which means they could contact each other very conveniently, however, through the follow-up questions, the researchers found that most parents actually want to have more contacts with teachers, but they always have concerns, such as the fear of disturbing the normal work or rest time of teachers, or the fear of being laughed at due to their own level in terms of education. As for teachers, they are willing to answer the questions raised by parents in the process of educating their children, but they do not have enough time and energy to answer all of the questions or answer the similar questions over and over again.

The teachers and parents usually contact each other to discuss about students' achievements, discipline, or abnormal thoughts and personalities. Thus, it can be seen that the cooperation between home and school is still on the superficial phase at present. The content of home-school cooperation is too narrow and has not been further developed. They never talk about what resulted in the abnormalities and how to help the students go back to the right track. Communication between the two sides is to solve a problem, but the talk sometimes might be interrupted by other information or talks, so that the communication cannot last long. The platform cannot supply a long-term cooperation opportunity. These are the problems left over from the one-way model in the initial stage of home-school cooperation, which needs long-term proper guidance to get on the right base. Moreover, the content of home-school cooperation is limited to the students' academic achievements, which is hard to be extended to many aspects. Parents have a lower awareness of the importance of their children's interests, hobbies and personalities. Teachers should guide parents to pay more attention to children's development in all aspects.

Only 1.82% of the teachers considered that the communication effect was not good, and the majority of the other teachers thought that the communication effect was still quite fruitful even if it did not achieve the expected communication effect. Only 7.77% of parents remained stuck in the old stereotype that it was the task of the school to educate their children, and 44.66% of the parents believed that communication with teachers had contributed significantly to their children's education. It is believed by 47.57% of them that it has a certain effect, but through efforts and improvements, it can be brought into full play. In a word, most parents have great expectations for the new home-school cooperation model supported by the WeChat platform.

D. Results and Analysis on WeChat Official Accounts

The WeChat official account is a new function that provides business services and users' management to individuals, business and organizations. The task for the administrator of the official account is very simple. As long as the published content meets the normal standards, everyone can become the operator of WeChat official accounts. The

operator can realize all-round communication and interaction with the specific group members.

According to the researchers' recent concern and understanding of the official account of the target primary school, hereinafter referred to as GuanWei, 80% of the articles that Guan Wei has posted in the past were used to introduce school dynamics and teaching activities. The researchers classified and summarized the articles posted by GuanWei and find that the articles posted can be mainly divided into six categories. They are: School dynamics, Student extracurricular activities, Teacher teaching activities, School news, School notices and Home-school cooperation.

According to the survey, the majority of the teachers and parents read Guanwei of the school whenever it is renewed. Only 11.82% of parents and 21.36% of teachers did not read respectively. This demonstrates that most parents concern more about the school dynamics, teachers may work at school every day, to understand the day-to-day school, so pay little attention to Guanwei.

The largest group of the parents (88.18%) think that the information that Guanwei posts does not help to educate students, and only a small proportion think that it is helpful. This shows that the process to record various teaching and research activities in Guanwei is of little significance to link the parents and teachers.

Through the analysis of Guanwei and the results of the questionnaire, it is clear that at present, the focus of the articles is on the school activities, playing a role of recording, rather than guiding.

V. SUGGESTIONS

A. Suggestions for WeChat Groups

1) Suggestions for teachers in the WeChat group

The researchers believe that the WeChat group was founded in the hope that teachers and parents can have a platform to communicate in a timely manner in the process of educating children to encounter a variety of problems, but it's hard to break the logjam once it's filled with course assignments and notifications of school events. Teachers should take the lead in improving the atmosphere of the group. There is still ample room for further development of the content that can be communicated between home and school. Teachers should instill in parents common goals and broaden the level of home-school cooperation. Teachers should also put themselves in parents' shoes and work out practical activities suitable for parents and students, so as to increase parents' enthusiasm to participate. It is not easy for teachers to finish the task. It is a task with the expectations of many students' parents, who look forward to a deeper communication with teachers and hope that teachers can provide more information and learning resources. But teachers are not supposed to use WeChat platform frequently to assign homework, which may lead to over-reliance on mobile phones.

2) Suggestions for parents in WeChat group

As people's individual demands continue to enhance, educators are paying more and more attention to liberal

education, which happens to be a key stage in liberal education. Parents may be influenced by factors such as family background and education level, which may lead to conservative ideas. At this point, parents should read more books to improve themselves, to coordinate with schools to carry out home-school cooperation activities.

Parents should also grasp the concept of home-school cooperation correctly. Many parents still believe that school education is more critical than family. In fact, educational responsibility between school and family cannot be quantified. Instead, the school and the family should reach a consensus of cooperation, otherwise it is easy to cause the school unilateral appeal. Parents should not only take part in extra-curricular activities or parent-child conferences organized by the school, but also participate in parent-child cooperation. In the process of home-school cooperation, the attitude of the parents is of particular importance. If the parents are still in a passive state, the home-school cooperation cannot be conducted in depth.

Parents may set up parent committees and participate more in Open Day Activities organized by schools. Parents with enthusiasm and initiative, often chosen as the representatives, contribute a lot to the development of school. What's more, they could devote to bringing those introverted, passive parents to be involved in the construction of home-school cooperation.

B. Suggestions for WeChat Platform Private Talk

Teachers should consider the proper method they communicate with the parents. They should make clear what content could be mentioned in WeChat Group and what can only be talked about privately.

In the results of the survey, most parents still attach great importance to their children's privacy. Parents hope teachers shouldn't post questions about their children's privacy on WeChat groups. Teachers should also protect students' privacy. At this point, we hope teachers should use the private chat function of WeChat, and contact parents about private issues by one-to-one communication. Some parents said grades and bad behaviors shouldn't be reported in the group. In conclusion, some common issues can be talked about in the group, but it is not suitable to publicize students' personal and private issues. What's more, the teachers and parents should concentrate on the present talk when dealing with some problems, lest the talk would be broken by other talks.

C. Suggestions for the WeChat Official Account of the School

In the survey, we found that most parents and teachers, although without frequent browsing, but will follow the school's Guanwei with interest. The researchers hold the view that Guanwei of the school should record every bit of

development and all the large-scale activities since the establishment of the school.

As for the quality of Guanwei, the researchers suggest that the university could hire a professional editor to run the Guanwei or train the operator in selecting and editing. First of all, if the layout is completely out of order and the best content will affect the user's sense of reading, which will greatly discourage parents to browse through the article to learn to enrich their enthusiasm. Secondly, it is suggested that the articles in Guanwei should be grouped into columns and updated by columns. The column with no regular update is difficult to attract people's long-term attention. Finally, it is suggested that Guanwei can set up a special column for home-school cooperation and publicize some articles or short videos about home school cooperation every week or every two weeks. If schools wish to work better with parents, it is necessary to understand each other. Parents shouldn't hold the view that sending their children to school is the end of their educational mission. Instead, they should be aware of the importance of family education.

VI. CONCLUSION

This paper investigates and analyzes the current situation of home-school cooperation in the target primary school through the research and puts forward relevant suggestions.

There are still some deficiencies in this paper, which is limited by the research area and the research object. Although the questionnaire has been revised and adjusted many times, there are still some gap to be perfected. The researchers will strive to compensate for these deficiencies in the future, but also hope that there will be more researches on home-school cooperation.

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