

Parents' Perspectives on After-School Educational Service from a Cross-Cultural Background: A Comparative Semi-Structured Interview Approach Based in China and Ireland

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Abstract : After-school educational service has been proven that it could benefit children's academic performance, socio-emotional skills, and physical health level. However, there is little research demonstrating parents' perspectives on the choice of after-school educational service from a level of cross-cultural backgrounds. China and Ireland are typical representatives of collectivist countries (e.g., estimated individualism score is 20) and individualist countries (e.g., estimated individualism score is 70) according to Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory. Living in countries with distinguished cultural backgrounds, there is an evident discrepancy in parents' attitudes towards domestic after-school education and parents' motivations for choosing after-school educational services. Through conducting a semi-structured interview with 15 parents from China and 15 parents from Ireland, using thematic analysis software (ATLAS) to extract the key information, and applying a comparative approach to process data analysis; results present polarization of Chinese and Irish parents' perspectives and motivations on after-school educational service. For example, Chinese parents tend to view after-school education as a complement to school education. It is a service they purchased for their children to acquire extra knowledge and skills so that they could adapt to the highly competitive educational setting. Given the fact that children's education is a priority for Chinese families, most parents believe that their children would succeed in the future through massive learning. This attitude reflects that Chinese parents are more likely to apply authoritarian parenting methods and having a strong expectations for their children. Conversely, Irish parents' choice of after-school educational service is a consideration that primarily based on their own situation, secondly, for their family. For instance, with the expansion of the labor market, there is a change in household structure. Irish mothers are more likely to seek working opportunities instead of looking after the family. Irish parents view that after-school educational service is an essential need for themselves and a beneficial component for their family due to the external pressure (e.g., the growing work intensity and extended working hours, increasing numbers of separated families, as well as parents' pursuit of higher education and promotion). These factors are fundamental agents that encourage Irish parents to choose after-school educational services. To conclude, the findings could provide readers with a better understanding of parents' disparate and contrasting perspectives on after-school educational services from a multi-culture level.

Keywords : after-school, China, family studies, Ireland, parents

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