

Original Paper

Examining the Chinese English Education “Rat Race” through the Lens of Social Darwinism

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Abstract

“Rat Race” is the translation of the Chinese slang term “Juan”, which alludes the widespread English education anxiety in China. The term is coined against the backdrop of limited high-quality English educational resources and mirrors drastic internal competition among Chinese students. While Social Darwinism, with its principle of “natural selection and survival of the fittest”, suggests that competition is an essential factor in society and individuals are supposed to stand out from the group. Despite its drawbacks, this theory is still able to reflect China’s current English education phenomenon. This paper delves into the circumstance of “rat race” from the perspective of Social Darwinism and analyzes the effects and implications of the “rat race”. Based on the data that released by the Chinese Ministry of English education, the reality of Chinese English education “rat race” is gradually exposed. These findings echo complicated reasons and consequences of “rat race”. More specifically, this kind of competition undoubtedly unveil the impediments of English education system, economic depression and stereotyped standpoints, Some scholars studied the occasion of “rat race”, but they only unravel reasons or suggestions toward such dilemma. Thus, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive standpoint of “rat race” and explore new search ideas as well as giving policy suggestions.

Keywords

Rat Race, Social Darwinism, competition, English education

1. Introduction

As we all know, a country’s English educational system is of great importance for the development of society and individuals. Chinese education system emphasizes students’ basic knowledge and skills such as reading, writing, mathematics. As for English, the listening, speaking, reading and writing are essential. In this way, their professional and academic ability will be greatly enhanced. Additionally, Chinese education system underscores students’ self-discipline. In other words, students are supposed

to obtain the capability of independent study and observe classroom rules. In recent years, gradual shift from advocating instrumental way of studying to humanistic aspect of learning. As stated in the National English Curriculum of 2017, the main target of curriculum is to fully implement the party's English educational policy, cultivate and practice the core value of socialism, carry out the fundamental task of moral English education, and promote socialist builders and successors with Chinese feelings, international vision and cross-cultural communication skills. (Note 1) On the other hand, Chinese English education system pay much attention to examination results which students are encountering immense academic pressure and sacrificing their physical and mental health. Furthermore, students' propensities of critical thinking, innovation and creativity will be shrank. In order to establish a firm foothold within their peers, students need strengthen their competitive edges and enrich themselves from a holistic level.

Competition can be divided into two sections, one is benign competition, which refers to all participants are able to make progress, not through horizontal comparisons but through their own vertical differentiation. Another one is malicious competition, which is unsustainable and will hinder the overall personal growth and character formation. The essence of "rat race" is, to some extent, a competition. Someone hold the view that "rat race" indicates dire internal competition and things will be internalized rather than extending to outward when they reach a certain degree of extension, which will cause meaningless mental internal friction and it's a signal of "inflation" in effort. On the flip side, others reckon that "rat race" is sort of nonthreatening and harmless competition. For one thing, the phenomenon of "rat race" creates sound learning atmosphere and motivate students to study harder and endeavor to get better academic performance. For the purpose of outperforming their peers, students will adjust their learning strategies, engage in deeper learning and seek for additional study resources. For another thing, competitive environment gives students chances to cooperate and learn from each other, at the same time, knowing about their merits and drawbacks as well as fostering a teamwork spirit. As a matter of fact, "rat race" may be caused by integrated competition, herd mentality, collective unconsciousness, peer comparison and English education anxiety and so on.

Social Darwinism is a concept that presented in the late 19th century, influenced by the opinions of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution and natural selection. Herbert Spencer, as a follower of Social Darwinism, plays an important role in the development and popularization of Social Darwinism. He deems that competition is a catalyst of social progress, because every individual in the society is continuously strive for survival. In the process of establishing a pleasurable and meaningful society, the measures that human being takes to survive will be cruel. (Note 2) It is obvious that his point of view has a certain degree of subjectivity and bias. In terms of the English education situation in China, a great deal of parents are still willing to sign up for extracurricular classes or interest courses after the "Double Reduction" policy that was issued in 2021. "Double Reduction" policy mainly refers to reducing the burden of homework and extracurricular training on students in compulsory English education. Social Darwinism is still a controversial topic and has its significance and drawbacks.

Applying Social Darwinism into Chinese English education condition is to make best of both the worlds and explore some solutions toward vicious competition through the lens of critical thinking along with promote further English education in China.

2. Social Darwinism and English education Competition

This part will discuss the junction between Social Darwinism and Chinese English education. Since Social Darwinism has always been debatable and the situation of “rat race” has its own advantages and disadvantages, it is necessary for us to make up for the Chinese English education’s shortcomings by learning from Social Darwinism’s strengths and vice versa.

2.1 Analysis of Social Darwinism

The principles of Social Darwinism are “survival of the fittest” and “natural selection”. Karl Pearson, a British scientist, inherited and developed Spencer’s Social Darwinism theory, more focused on the theory of evolution from the aspects of research attitude and specific research methods and expanded the scope of evolution theory application. However, he believed that the formula for human development was severe competition and eugenics should be based on a version of social evolution. (Note 3) In the context of Social Darwinism, the term “fittest” doesn’t means robust body or biological features but refers to the state of success, superiority and power. In order to adapt the society and survive in competitive environment, individuals must embellish themselves with abundant knowledge and skills. At the same time, they are supposed to compete for excellent learning resources. Because all living organisms face competition for scarce materials in their environments. If not doing so, they are going to be left behind of this world. “survival of the fittest” is initially used to describe the animal world which indicates that animals will die if they don’t snatch foods or available resources with their rivals. It also described how the characteristics and traits of animals increase their survival chances so that reproduction is more likely to be passed on to future generations. Comparing with human-being society, English teachers and parents will examine their students or children based on the examination results and academic performance. While in workplace, life value is measured by quantitative indicators such as working experiences, awards and merit points.

According to Social Darwinism, “natural selection” in society leads to “survival of the fittest”. “natural selection” illustrates the process of adaptation and change in biological organisms and unveils the momentousness of competition in forming political, economic, cultural and social structures. Besides that, Social Darwinist claims that competition for opportunities, status and resources drives societal progress. It is social interventions or guidelines that avoid inequality and poverty. Through knocking out incompetent and faint individual or groups, talents and professionals will push this world into further development. Nevertheless, the occurrence of “natural selection” is highly disputable and not universally accepted on the grounds that the application of natural selection extremely simplified complex social rules and ignores the significance of appropriate cooperation and compassion, which will partly determine social order and justice. Huxley, a celebrated educator in England, noted that

survival of the fittest was by mistake used by Darwin as a substitute for natural selection, and then it caused common misunderstandings that the fittest are the strongest and the best. (Note 4) In contemporary society, it is essential to evaluate social phenomenon in different ways and get to know that social improvement will not be solely driven by competitive forces.

2.2 Connection between Social Darwinism and English Education

Within the framework of Social Darwinism, competition is always viewed as indispensable factor in social progress and enhancement. In the realm of English education, competition exists everywhere, students will endeavor to get high academic scores and try to be the top in standardized exams. Through competition, students are encouraged to extend their multiple intelligence and capabilities to the fullest potential and gain all-around development. To some extent, students are able to harvest higher achievements and get ready to adapt the challenging and complex world in such competitive environment. In school, it is unavoidable for students to center on ranking among classmates. Thus, ranking system is closely connected with competition in English education. The purposes of these systems are not only evaluate and compare the performance of students but also examine schools and English educational institutions. Proponents reckon that this kind of system is beneficial to assess successful practices and build confidence to those brilliant students along with making them clear their own positions. Although competition and ranking systems have some assets, they still face scrutiny and criticism. Opponents argue that extreme competition will make youngsters lose their self-actualization and confidence, and ranking system overlooks individual differences, non-academic skills as well as cooperation spirit. They also assume that heavy reliance on ranking system is the main reason that cause English education inequality and English education anxiety. In essence, competition can serve as useful tool and ranking system may provide motivational perspectives. But we still can not neglect their drawbacks. To sum up, it is essential to keep critical thinking and strike a balance between inspiring benign competition and prioritizing all-around development.

Meritocracy, a concept that associated with social Darwinism, enables talented individuals to rise to the top and stress meticulous evaluations. Obviously, the biological basis of excellent students can not be denied, and their genome, brain activity level have great differences with average children. In addition, the maturity of brain image technology and brain mechanism have provided new evidence for the inherent biological basis of talented children. (Note 5) Some scholars propose that meritocracy helps allocate resources more efficiently and motivate students to get a sense of personal responsibility. On the other hand, others claims that outstanding students are rare and privileges will limit equal chances for all students. On top of that, meritocracy will hinder the study of individuals who born in poor family or lack of enough English educational resources and then they are not able to compete with others equally. There is no accurate statement on the numbers of gifted children among their peers. Based on the data investigated by The National Association for Gifted Children states that American gifted children accounts for 6 to 10 percent of all students. (Note 6) As we can tell, talented children constitute a small share, but competition among gifted students is still drastic. Some talented students

even battered by fierce competition and imperfect academic performances, and their self-confidence and learning motivation have decreased, requiring them to accept psychological counseling or even drop out of school. (Note 7) Influenced by social Darwinism, the pursuit of success in English education emphasize on achieving favorable outcomes. This learning attitude renders students to overcome their disadvantages so as to pursue and attain English educational and career goals. By weaving meritocracy and success together, it is easy to realize the value of fostering an relaxed, supportive and inclusive learning environment.

2.3 How Social Darwinism Influences the “Rat Race” in Chinese English Education

In old China, a student must experience imperial examination so that he can be proved to be successful and ambitious. The imperial examination was called “Ke Ju Kao Shi” in China. It can be divided into three parts, provincial exam (xiang shi), metropolitan exam (hui shi), and palace exam (dian shi). It is recorded that in the early Song dynasty, around 80 thousand people who took the provincial exam but only 2334 people get passed. It means the acceptance rate is only 3%. Such drastic competition exactly reflect the principle of “survival of the fittest” and “natural selection”.

2.3.1 Pressure on Students to Excel

In current society, Chinese students still undertake overwhelming pressure on study. “Gao Kao”, the National Higher Education Entrance Examination, is essential for high school students and their parents. In order to seek admission into universities and colleges and change their future, they must make great efforts to get good marks and grades in English. Besides that, some students are required to devote substantial time and energy into this crucial examination so as to meet their parents’ expectations. Due to the excessive competition and pressure in “Gao Kao”, some students may have great psychological problems such as exhaustion, burnout, depression or anxiety. The relentless focus on exam preparation is probably render them lack of confidence and can not get overall well-being. But one thing we can not ignore is not all students encounter these issues, and some of them deem that when faced with stronger opponents, one becomes stronger.

Standardized testing have a strong focus on test scores and rankings, which can measure students’ knowledge and skills so that they can make adjustment on their study plan according to their scores. The English teachers are suitable for changing their teaching plans and find solutions to their mistakes. Although these valuable data provides useful suggestions and insights, they are not supposed to be the only standard of assessing students’ academic abilities and behaviors. Because sole criterion will determine students’ enthusiasm and self-assurance and the capabilities of critical thinking, problem-solving and creativity need be considered. In addition, portfolios, formative assessment, project work, peer assessment and self-assessment should be greatly advocated. It is important to create a positive, motivated and meaningful learning atmosphere.

2.3.2 Intense Competition for Limited Opportunities

In China, after graduation, some students will choose to take post-graduate entrance examination for better professional promotion or just be afraid of finding jobs and face the real society. For this

examination, students are required to grasp a wide range of subjects, which include specialized knowledge and some general knowledge and aptitude tests. The determining factors of this examination include examination grades, academic performances, research experiences, recommendation letters and interviews during the selection progress. Worth mentioning at this time is intense competition among test takers.

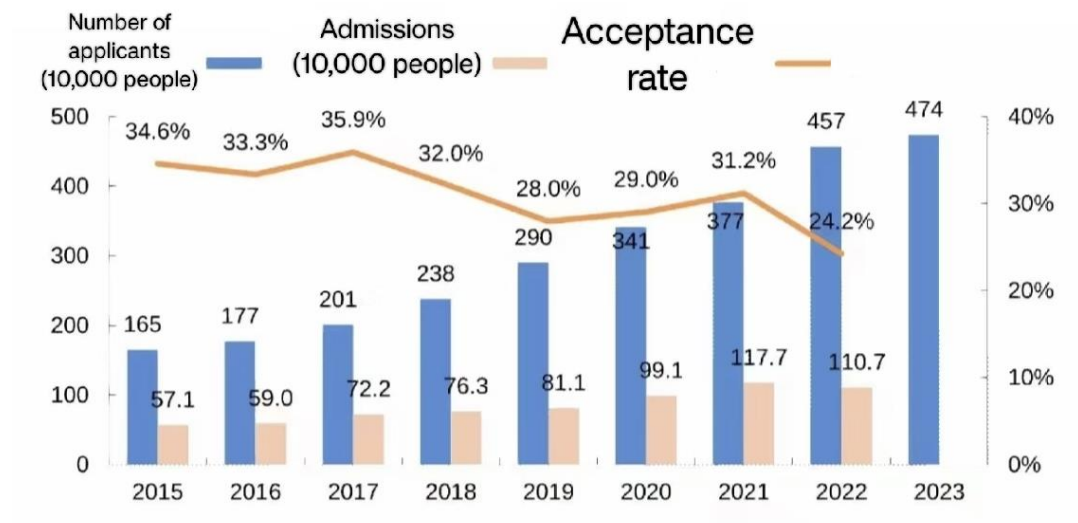


Figure 1. Postgraduate Entrance Examination Registration and Admission Status

Source: The Ministry of English education of China.

What is shown in the table above indicates that in recent years, a growing number of students pay increasing attention to take postgraduate entrance examination. The figure of candidates have grown year by year; but on the other hand, the admittance ratio has overwhelmingly dropped. Although English is just one of the subjects in this exam, to some extent, the grades of English can still determine students' admission situation. Taking into account what has been illustrated above, not only we surely draw a conclusion that rigorous competition is bound to play a significant role in this examination as well as students are suffering great pressure and challenges. On the purpose of pursuing and embracing the promising future, they have to stand it and strive for admission. Most importantly, some students will spend two or three or more years to prepare it without working. Long time span, competition, and great psychological load will influence their mentality.

Over and above that, competition still exists in scholarship attainment and financial aid. The assessment standards of scholarship and financial aid are not only concerned with students' test scores and classroom performances but also their personal skills and extracurricular achievement. In order to get higher GPA, students need endeavor to participate in all kinds of contests that are related to enhance their English, and also proceed a large number of social practices to enrich themselves. Students who get the highest GPA of all subjects have greater possibility to gain scholarships.

3. Reasons, Effects and Implications of “Rat Race”

This section is concerned with how “Rat Race” is formed, and its influences in students, society and parents along with suggestions to tackle with inappropriate competition. A host of people consider “Rat Race” as weird phenomenon and will be detrimental to the development of current society. While others argue that it is “Rat Race” enables people to activate their potential and adapt this society in a quick speed. Thus, it will be effective to explore the essence of “Rat Race”.

3.1 *Unraveling the Depths of the “Rat Race”: Understanding Its Existence*

There are a great number of reasons about “Rat Race”. Society, parents and students themselves are main factors of this situation. It is necessary for us to figure out how these elements play great roles in “Rat Race”.

3.1.1 Exploring the Societal Forces behind the “Rat Race” Epidemic

It is deserve noting that in current society, the valuable resources are limited and the allocation system is not perfect enough. Therefore, it is hard to achieve complete English education justice and then English education anxiety has come out. English education anxiety refers to this position that many parents and students always worry about their behaviors and abilities. In other words, parents fear that they does not endow their children high-quality learning holdings and sound study environment. However, students doubt their performances and test scores as well as classmate rankings all the time.

In ancient China, academic achievement holds immense value in Chinese culture, and many young people are more likely to strive for English educational excellence since good grades in study can not only obtain high reputation but also get good social status. But they still under great pressure and it stems from the belief that academic success is the key to gain a bright and hopeful future. Confucian values are deeply ingrained in Chinese English education and have a wide influence on the “Rat Race”. And it is not easy to change their competition sense and determination to be well-known. Out of this reason, it is better for students to realize the importance of personal achievement and serving for the society. Nowadays, with the rapid progress of economic growth and technical development, robots are gradually substitute some repetitive works and a lot of graduated students are facing unemployment occurrence. Then part of students will choose to go into university again and get higher degree. For one thing, they are not confident enough about their abilities and can not stand drastic competition in workplace. For another thing, they need a transition to understand what they want to become in the future and truly know about themselves. It is undeniable that income disparities will cause “Rat Race”, because when poor people get acquainted with wealthy people’s life style and social standings, then the desire to live up to wealthy people’s life standards and quality will be increasingly intense. The gap between rich people and poor people will affect social mobility, and “Rat Race” mentality occurs.

3.1.2 Psychological Aspects of “Rat Race”

Unified competition is a pivotal factor that cause “Rat Race”. And it means under integrated thinking model and same standards, individuals will strive for snatching the resources that are considered belong to themselves. Various elements, forms and systems are gathered together so as to create a competitive

environment. To some extent, unified competition will motivate students to study harder for their future and become more diligent and serious than previous learning state. However, integrated competition may render students forget the effectiveness of cooperation and invest much time, money and energy into meaningless chasing. Although unified competition plays an essential role in Chinese English education, the influence of conformity psychology can not be ignored. Herd mentality mainly means individuals incline to follow and adopt the behaviors, sentiments and principles of a large group or society. Even though sometimes they feel uncomfortable and contradictory to their personal ideas or preferences, but they still conform to social norms, criteria and rules. It is the same situation in English education field, some students prefer to follow their classmates' step to do what most people are doing so that they will not get rejection or disapproval. For example, when some university students are going to graduate and fear to work, they will choose to take post graduate entrance examination even though they are not sure about the major and school and then the result will be terrible, namely, they do not get admission and waste almost one-year to prepare it. Therefore, for the young people, it is necessary to possess critical thinking, independent mind and innovative perspectives. In addition, the problem of collective unconsciousness can not be ignored. The concept of collective unconsciousness is originated from incorrect social mainstream values. If individuals do not make efforts to create achievements, they are not able to achieve parents' expectations and friends may make fun of them. This kind of subconsciousness forms invisible stress.

Based on Erikson's stage theory of personality, human development includes a range of psychological phases. Each stage will have relative psychological crisis and challenges and measures can be taken. The fourth stage is related to "Industry and Inferiority" and it often happens in school age like 6 to 11 years old. At this stage, the contradiction is about diligence and self-abasement. Children are paying close attention to their skills and academic performances. From their point of view, success in gaining mastery and knowledge from other people spurs industry and ability. Being study hard children will get more respect and trust and have more opportunities to win in competition. On the contrary, continuous setbacks and failures may result sad feelings and lack of confidence.

3.1.3 The Thoughts of Students and Their Parents

Parents always play an essential role in their children's life, and they have much investment, great expectations and high degree of anxiety to their children, and then it causes intensive parenting and "helicopter" parenting. On the one hand, their parents spend much time and energy in their children's English study, and some parents even quit their job just for looking after their children. In addition, they are willing to put their money into English courses rather than helping them to find the real self and enjoy the process of learning. Part of them only focus on their children's standardized tests' scores or rankings and overlook their psychological and mental health. At the same time, parents expect their children are capable of getting high grades all the time so that they will receive compliment from neighbors or friends. It can also meet their sense of superiority and be confident about parenting styles. One thing need be mentioned is that parents always worried about their children's career development

and wish their children can be more outstanding and intelligent than themselves. Thus, they prefer to plan their children's future or just hope their children can achieve what they can not achieve due to a series of complicated reasons. On the other hand, some parents even just wanna relieve stress and anxiety from workplace. Then they will choose to transfer what they experienced to their children. In other words, they are "selling" anxious feelings. However, this way will definitely harm their children's feelings and emotions.

Beyond parents' elements, students will also get into involution because of the following factors. First of all, their values have changed under "Rat Race" atmosphere. They bear in mind that only supersede their peers, high-salary jobs will beckon them. In essence, this is "alienation" from capitalism, since they regard themselves as the part of "idealized self" and consistently criticize their own shortcuts along with refuse to find the path of improving themselves. According to Kohlberg's theory of moral development. There are three levels of moral development processes, namely pre-conventional level, conventional level and post-conventional level. Among the second level, stage 3 and stage 4, moral decisions are made based on fulfilling others' expectations, being a good guy, maintaining social norms and keep good interpersonal relationship. Children are appealing to get praise and encouragement by behaving good in front of their parents or friends, and they extremely care about others' opinions on them. When they make decisions about moral problems, they usually take social rules and others' views into account. As a matter of fact, the situation of "Rat Race" is made by this mentality, since most of students eager to meet their parents or English teachers' expectations. Additionally, some individuals are afraid of being discarded by the group and they crave for gaining exclusive competitive advantages in the group.

4. Examining the Effects of "Rat Race"

The occurrence of "Rat Race" is not an accident, and it is resulted from many factors. Proponents deem that the intense competition enables students to focus on their academic performances such as mathematics, language learning and technology rather than entertainment activities. On top of that, students can cultivate their self-discipline and prepare for unpredictable difficulties and learn how to take responsibilities. The competitive atmosphere also encourage students to get admission to more excellent and prestigious universities. In the test-oriented learning environment, getting relevant knowledge and skills help students to adapt the fast-growing society. While the opponents argue that "Rat Race" will affect students' mental health and bring about much stress, depression and unhappiness. In addition to that, rote memorization and test-oriented exams can not foster students' creativity, initiation and social skills so that it is hard to get holistic development. The competitive, to so extent, is able to exacerbate English education inequality and the gap between wealthy students' English educational situation and that of impecunious students will be amplify. The contenders hold the view that put the heavy workload and energy into academics may cause students lack of sufficient time for fostering hobbies and interests. In fact, whether "Rat Race" is a good phenomenon or not depends on

various practical situations. If parents and their children are ambitious about their future, then “Rat Race” provides a well competitive environment and help them evaluate their current ability and get the idea about how to overcome their drawbacks. On the contrary, supposing that the children intend to “lying flat”, the literal translation of Chinese slang “tang ping”, means the mind of giving up for hard work and life without ambition, excess competition will damage their health both physically and mentally. “Rat Race” may occur in various countries or areas and it is possible to have similar effects. Therefore, balancing competition and all-around development of individuals is essential consideration in dealing with the cons that is related to English education “Rat Race”.

5. Uncovering the Implications of “Rat Race”

This section is associated with the suggestions of Chinese English education “Rat Race” and intend to prioritize reasonable competition and English education functions. For exploring relative measures that can be taken to tackle with intense competition, there are two levels of thinking factors, namely, macro level and micro level. Macro level is about how the government, society and organizations can do to change it. Micro level is concerned with educators, students and their parents. There are invisible and pivotal English education issues although the policy of “Double Reduction” already get improvement.

5.1 Macro Implications of “Rat Race”

In the first place, reconstructing English education system and break down the internal barriers. More specifically, meritocracy need be delay and cancel the distinction between “key schools” and “unimportant schools”, accelerating the development of quality English education. Encouraging a curriculum that give up rote memorization and place importance on fostering students’ aptitudes and interests. What’s more, it is also necessary for government to promote English education equity and build a sound learning atmosphere. Schools, family and society need provide English education environment together. In other words, schools have the responsibility to pass on by knowledge and skills to students, and foster their quality. While families are supposed to nurture their children and teach them correct and powerful values. Besides that, society are responsible for directing good social customs and social rules. Only when schools, families and the whole society cooperate together, can students obtain positive learning feedback.

Meanwhile, it is essential to promote the establishment of local government accountability systems for English education. Changing English teacher evaluation models in primary and secondary schools should also be taken into account. Because English teachers’ teaching style and methods will also influence students’ learning attitude. The way to evaluate English teachers should be comprehensive, not only from their teaching plan but also from their teaching attitude. The government In addition to this, converting the evaluation method towards students is of great importance. Specifically, lower the ratio of scores-oriented exams and paying more attention to formative assessment as well as reinforcing the evaluation towards students’ sentiments, attitudes, behaviors and values. Last but not the least, promoting social distribution and cultivating talented students and prioritizing English education

reform. Giving every individuals equal opportunities and resources so that they are able to achieving self-actualization. What's more, encouraging innovation, facing challenges and difficulties and embracing the future are pivotal for the development of students. Last but not the least, the whole society need indoctrinate that the value of becoming the person who have high social status and well-paid jobs should be changed. There is no sole standard or criteria to evaluate individuals, and it is more pivotal to assess someone from different angles since everyone has their shining points. The importance is to find their advantages and values so that they are able to get achievement as well as servicing to the society. To sum up, from macro implications level, the government, English education organization and the society need endeavor to assist students to have a sense of benign competition and help students to realize how to improve themselves.

5.2 Micro Suggestions of "Rat Race"

For students themselves, there are some suggestions for students to recognize "Rat Race" and deal with it. To begin with, students need refuse meaningless "Rat Race", since this kind of competition is totally waste their time and energy. What's more, they need enhance the recognition of distinguishing the difference between "Rat Race" and "Valid Competition", finding their own positions and do not be a follower. Secondly, students are expected to be more confident to plan their future and possess a sense of secure along with giving up invalid consumption. Thirdly, students are supposed to get out of the "circle", and it means to embrace the competition and attempt to be more outstanding. Continuous reflection plays an important role in competition, because competition only focus on the quality of achievements rather than the quantity of accomplishment. Lastly, learning to cooperate with others is necessary. Because competition is not the only way to survive in society, and sometimes cooperation can be more effective and more quick. Cooperation allows individuals or groups to further develop their knowledge, skills and abilities. By working together, they can converge all innovative and creative opinions together and enhance work efficiency and productivity. Besides that, cooperation cultivates mutual support and synergy among groups and a positive and relaxed environment can help them to grow. It is undeniable that cooperation enables people to build interpersonal relationships and create a sense of harmony. Through sharing resources and knowledge, individuals or groups can learn from each other and make a progress together. From the learners' point of view, jumping out of "Rat Race" does not mean "lying down", but rather avoiding excess consumption of time and energy in unnecessary fields. Success has varied definitions, and finding the aspect that you are good at and delve into it then u can be equally rewarding.

At the level of educators, they have to courageously take the responsibility of shaping the students' personality and foster the students' creativity rather than following the current of "Rat Race". Different students have their own learning style, thus English teachers should take them into account when they are teaching. Pooling students' potential based on the theory of multiple intelligence is of the importance. At the same time, when students make mistakes, the English teachers should not depress or condemn. The best solution is to tell them the mistakes and the relevant solutions as well as

encouraging them face the mistakes and pay close attention to the improvement. For one thing, individuals need focus on personal enhancement instead of chasing scores or rankings and set realistic or practical goals. The goal need suitable for their aspirations and capabilities. Divide big goal into small parts and follow manageable steps, then you will get achievements step by step. For another thing, defining your own success based on your passions, principles and values allow you live better since success is not a one-size-fit-all concept. English education is not to criticize people or condemn others, and it is a journey of exploring new things and broaden horizon. For parents, they need set a good example, paying more attention to their children's holistic development and focus on their mental state. In addition to this, parents are supposed to recognize and praise children's unique merits, talents and abilities. Avoid comparing them to other children especially much more outstanding than their own children. Try not to advise them to follow a specific path but try to encourage and support them in finding their own advantages. Collaborating with educators are also essential. When they maintain a stable and positive relationship, it is easier for parents to get informed about their children's progress or challenges. All in all, parents need always support their children and encourage them to find their own path to success.

6. Conclusion

This paper aims to unveil the phenomenon of Chinese English education "Rat Race" from the perspective of Social Darwinism. With the principles of Social Darwinism: survival of the fittest and natural selection, we get to know how ranking system and the pursuit of meritocracy works, namely students strive for behaving excellent in academics so as to embrace a brighter future. Through analyzing how Social Darwinism influence the "Rat Race" in Chinese English education, we are able to realize that standardized testing culture and intense competition put much pressure on students to excel. However, by exploring the reasons, effects and implications of the "Rat Race", it is important to comprehend that "Rat Race" is a double-edged sword. Schools, families and society need take the responsibility of creating sound learning environment. The government is supposed to shape the English education system that reduce students' academic pressure and well-being as well as implementing an effective and meaningful assessment methods, and pay more attention to English teachers' professional development. However, it is common knowledge that no reform can answer all kinds of English educational problems, and the answer should be included the cooperation of government, society and English educational organizations. For English educational organizations, they are expected to focus on students' well-being and recommend effective and valid study strategies. In addition to this, educators also need adjust their teaching style according to students' learning state. The students themselves need clear their future direction and find their own shining point. One thing we need notice is that we need analyze Social Darwinism with critical thinking. Because some of its principles do not fit for current English educational situation and only valid and positive competition should be advocated.

The negative effects of the “Rat Race” illustrate the demand for change in the Chinese English education system. At present, the most important thing is to balance competition with a focus on students’ all around development. Taking measures to decrease academic stress and changing assessment standards and principles. To sum up, the “Rat Race” in Chinese English education has special and significant implications for the society, families and students. Apart from that, the application of Social Darwinism should be based on the theory of analyzing specific problems in a specific manner. The occurrence of Chinese English education “Rat Race” reflects a great deal of social situations, and the reasons may include economic, political and cultural elements. Just like “every coin has two sides”, when we encounter some setbacks or difficulties, we are able to promote ourselves based on the lessons or experiences that we learned from those obstacles. We are the only one who can decide our futures and sometimes against the current is more valuable than “lying flat”. Because there is no such thing as a smooth life, and predicaments or dilemmas are shortcuts to success. There is an old saying in China: “It is impossible for pie to fall from the sky”. Life without struggle is meaningless.

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Notes

Note 1. The Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. (2017). *National English Curriculum Standards for General High School*.

Note 2. Hofstadter, R. (1992). *Social darwinism in American thought* (Vol. 16). Beacon Press.

Note 3. Ravetz, J. R. (2020). *Scientific knowledge and its social problems*. Routledge.

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Note 6. NAGC Makes Gifted Learners a National Priority (EB/OL).
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Note 7. Cornell, D. G., Callahan, C. M., & Loyd, B. H. (1991). Socioemotional adjustment of adolescent girls enrolled in a residential acceleration program. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 35(2), 58-66.

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篇名: Examining the Chinese Education "Rat Race" through the Lens of Social Darwinism

作者: Luo Qian

检测类型: 学术出版

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检测结果

去除本人文献复制比: 1% 去除引用文献复制比: 1% 总文字复制比: 1%

单篇最大文字复制比: 0.7% (高中英语文化教学中的课程思政情况调查研究)

重复字符数: [411]

单篇最大重复字符数: [278]

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1.9% (311)	1.9% (311)	Examining the Chinese Education "Rat Race" through the Lens of Social Darwinism_第1部分 (总16464字)
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