

The Influence of Zhu Xi's Self-Education on China's Contemporary Self-Education

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Abstract—This paper mainly deals with Zhu Xi's self-education impact on modern education. Through the introduction to Zhu Xi's self-education processes and methods, the paper then comes to the development of self-education in modern education, and the impact by Zhu's theory in modern self-education.

Keywords—Zhu Xi's self-education; modern self-education; impact

I. INTRODUCTION

Self-education means that individuals can evaluate, adjust and correct themselves consciously with the educators' inspiration and guidance during the learning process, which can improve the ideological level and cognitive ability. It is a shortcut for us to improve the quality of education as soon as possible while we advocated the quality-oriented education. Self-education has a long history, whether the Confucius, Mencius and Zhu Xi or in modern education, self-education plays an important role in a people's development.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Self-education is an old topic. Along the history, as the mainstream of the traditional Chinese culture, Confucian culture emphasizes great importance to the self-cultivation. Confucian emphasized self-communion in education and explored a set of systematic self-education methods, which had oriental features. Additionally, Confucius clearly came up with the idea that human behavior was the result of people's consciously choices and they stressed the theme of self-education. With regard to The Neo-Confucianism led by Zhu Xi, Wang Yangming, it inherited Mencius' thoughts. Zhu Xi considered that people can not only consciously understand all things and master their temperament. It shows that from Confucius to Neo-Confucianism, they had concerns about people's inner enlightenment, which reflected the Confucian main self-affirmation. On the one hand, they reflected the Confucian's concern about individual inner spiritual world, on the other hand, it reflected the basic way of thinking. The inward-thinking method is preferred to return to their intrinsic value.

III. ZHU XI'S SELF-EDUCATION

Zhu Xi is a master of Confucianism education in southern Song Dynasty. His theory plays a particular role in the education field and they are the main content of the official education during that period. Zhu Xi's self-education

thoughts are the important part of the education system, which contains his deep thinking and some unique ideas in political ethics education.

A. Self-education Process

Zhu Xi's self-education process is divided into four parts. Although these four parts are different but related. Zhu Xi has made a comprehensive elaboration about the theory.

- Zhi

Zhi refers to moral cognition. Namely, it refers to the objective existence of the moral phenomenon, moral relations and the rules when dealing with these relations. It includes the accumulation of moral experience, the learning of moral theory and the improvement of moral judgments. Zhu Xi emphasizes the moral cognition, which mainly includes Ren (humanity), Yi (justice), Li (ceremony), Zhi (wisdom).

- Qing

Qing refers to moral emotion. Moral emotion is an important part of individual character. It has accompanied people's moral cognition. Its appearance is the emotional reflects about moral conducts, custom and social moral evaluative standards.

- Yi

Yi refers to moral will. Zhu Xi stressed that it is important to set a clear and firm goal while you are cultivating moralities to chasten your moral will. It can make people externalize their moral consciousness, moral feeling and moral belief into moral behavior, which can help people, control their own behavior and emotions, as a result, overcome all the difficulties of internal and external barriers consciously.

- Xing

Xing refers to moral practice. It is an action that people have a certain moral cognition, moral emotion and do something under the domination of moral will, which can help people control their behavior and emotions consciously. Finally overcome all the difficulties of internal and external.

B. The Method of Self-education

Self-education is an education activity which was carried on conscientiously by learners. From his long period of precious experiences of educational practice, Zhu Xi has

drawn up a series of effective self-education and accomplishment method.

- Self-discipline

In every sector of self-education, Zhu Xi attached a great deal of value to self-discipline through which the goal of self-education was arrived at. Moral self-discipline means the self-regulation, self-discipline and self-adjustment of individual's behavior and thoughts according to their innate moral principles. Once self-discipline was accomplished, individuals would achieve at self-adjustment and self-selection actively.

- Self-communion

Self-communion means self-reflection, or self-questioning. Zhu Xi believed that in the process of individuals self-education, the improvement of their morality depends on the accomplishment of their self-supervision, self-analysis and self-evaluation, and their thoughts and conducts should be examined at all times. The method of examining one's thoughts and conducts is one of the internal powers of self-exploration, self-awareness, self-affirmation and self-development. Only those who have the willingness of self-fulfillment can have a clear mind of their excellences and shortcomings through the method of self-examination. The purpose of individuals' moral behaviors is not only for self-fulfillment; moreover, it is for the individuals' social responsibility.

- Keep Conscience and Maintain Good Human Nature

Zhu Xi's proposal about "keep conscience and maintain good human nature" is the inheritance and development of the serious self-discipline methods which were claimed by Mencius. The essence of this method is that one should keep the virtue of patience and maintain the human good nature of kindness. "If one can cherish this moral excellence and natural kindness majestically without being disturbed, he can make great progress; much less if one can probe further into study, his improvement would be beyond measure!"

- Conduct Oneself Respectfully

In Zhu Xi's theory, conducting oneself respectfully emphasized the single-minded and constant attitude which were held throughout the whole period of self-education. "The art of respect is the first meaning of holy doors, from the beginning to the end, it should not be stopped in a moment."

C. *The Effective Elements of Self-education*

Confucius said: "One should cultivate himself". He concerned much about those "who ignore their morality cultivation as well as their learning. Another ancient Chinese educator Mencius emphasized "self-accomplishment", too. The older generation of revolutionaries in our country also laid stress on self-cultivation. Liu Shaoqi wrote a book named *On the Self-cultivation of Communist*; Peng Dehuai said that he reflected on himself several times a day; Zhou Enlai set seven specific self-cultivation principles for himself, and he became the role model of the people. Hence we can see that no matter scholars or revolutionists in history, they all regard self-cultivation as an important part in education. On the

other hand, from the view of the development of Chinese modern society and individuals' improvement, the role of self-education can not be ignored, too.

- Parents and Teachers Teach and Self-education

Parents and teachers teach can improve individual's ability of self-education. Zhu Xi pointed out that individuals should possess certain moral knowledge, then, they can grasp the nature of moral relationship, and be provided with certain moral judgment. Thus, they would have rational guidance on their activities, and realize their own moral behavior through the moral evaluation of social activities. If one was lack of certain moral knowledge, he will have no moral activities from his consciousness; therefore, their behaviors will be aimless. Accordingly, it is vital important for parents and teachers to provide them systematic, integrality, and premeditated moral knowledge and training experiences.

- Natural Beauty and Self-education

Natural environment is the objective environment for human to live, and beautiful natural environment can cause response and resonate with human race. Zhu Xi believed that the beauty of nature influences self-education of human race by its vividness, vitality and intuitiveness.

IV. THE EFFECT OF ZHU XI'S SELF-EDUCATION ON MODERN SELF-MORAL EDUCATION

A. *Society*

According to Zhu's theory, every social member should reach an all-round development in order to make contribution for families and countries. It is clear that China's development is based on the contribution of every citizen. As a result, how to educate qualified citizens and how to fully realize one's potential means a lot to China. We can still find out what Zhu Xi advocates in self-education of citizens in modern times.

China's political system determines our ideology, Marxism. However, people's all-around development and self-education in Marxism mainly falls into several parts. The "cognition" of Zhu's theory equals to one of the most convincing principle of Marxism, namely, adheres to the law of development and makes right judgments. Only in this way can we move onto the discussion of practice. Just like what the citizens' moral cultivation planned, every social member must have a basic moral conception and form a correct outlook on world, life and values in the development of social morality. The "emotion" means moral emotion. Because of the huge population, every citizen must be understandable and embraceable with regard to different religion, area and custom. The "will" refers to moral consciousness. During the process of social development, material progress and cultural and ideological progress should be in the same pace. Additionally, modern times' advancement has already been reflected on the development of cultural and ideological progress. Moral cultivation decides the development of cultural and ideological progress. The nation encourages every person to develop moral consciousness, follow their own plan and finally realize their dreams. With regard to students, they are asked to build up a concept that knowledge is so powerful that it could change their fate. Meanwhile, students are expected to be confident

enough to have their dreams come true. The “action” refers to practice. As the first three elements of moral cultivation are prepared, the crucial step is to put them into practice.

Mr. Cai Yuanpei, one of the greatest educators in Chinese education history, advocated that all-around development of moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetics and labor education when he ran Peking University, with an eye to promote the importance of moral education. It is clear to see Zhu Xi’s theory of self-education. The society advocates that each citizen should learn to appreciate the beauty of nature. Mr. Cai Yuanpei’s moral education is an extension of Zhu Xi’s theory of personality model of self-awareness and self-discipline. In order to improve citizens’ quality and nation’s comprehensive strength, the society emphasizes moral education of both individuals and groups.

B. School

There are many methods and ways to let students use self-education. School plays an important role in helping students educate themselves. Self-education in school is mainly shown in moral education. Moral education can be seen in every aspect of teaching that are cognition, emotion, will and action. As a way of school moral education, self-education asks teachers to offer help to learners in light of the latter’s psychological and physical development, in order to fully awaken their awareness and turn the teachers’ acquirement into their own needs. Furthermore, it helps students find out what is right and what is wrong. In a school, there are many organizations offering a platform for students to self-education and self-management, leading to a better future of self-education.

Sukhomlinskii, the famous educator from Soviet Union, firmly believed that, “It can not be considered as education only it inspired students to self-education”. In learning society nowadays, it is especially important for individuals to learn by themselves. Meanwhile, self-education in schools is of great importance for cultivating individuals’ ability. Herbert Spencer, the great English philosopher, believed that school education should leave sufficient time and space for children to develop their ability to self-education. On the other hand, teaching students to read and learn themselves is an effective way to increase their self-education abilities.

C. Personal and Family Education

Zhu Xi thinks that self-education is through personal introspection, that is to say, they constantly rethink, reflect and evaluate their behavior and then continuously improve their individual moral cultivation. Next is self-discipline which is the self-regulation of their own behavior and thinking, self-discipline and self-regulation in order to achieve self-discipline. Therefore, for the individuals, the social code of ethics is no longer external things, but a proactive self-choice and self-regulation. Absolutely, fostering children’s ability to self-education still needs parental education which is in respect of children and to stimulate a child’s self-education.

For individuals, the self-education is, in fact, the so-called “a self-education process”. Only when a student turns his educational requirements which are derived from educators into self-demands and put it to fruition, can his educational purposes become to realize. The individual’s self-education is completed through introspection, self-discipline, and only when a person continues to reflect

and critique their own behavior, and strictly to constrain their behavior, can the first step of self-education be completed. The family members also play a very important role in personal introspection of an individual’s self-education, and family education should focus “Cun yang” and “natural beauty” education. Cun yang is to keep the children with good virtues, so parents should always make use of wonderful sentiment to educate their children, and to form their ability to find, feel and create beauty, so as to promote children’s development.

V. CONCLUSION

Zhu Xi’s self-education has rich ideological content. We can learn from the ways of self-education which he advocated, especially in the sense of modern civic moral education. In the modern society, the topic of self-education is no longer carried out in the community, schools, families and individuals theoretical education; it should be implemented into the classroom, because the main education place is in school.

This article concludes a basic overview of Zhu Xi self-education ideas and modern self-education from the macro level. However its limitation is: we did not combine Zhu Xi’s self-education ideas with specific classroom teaching situation. In the future, we can attempt to explore Zhu Xi’s self-education ideas from the view of the school curriculum, such as increasing the number of self-education practice lessons, setting up some self-education seminars by parents and students participating in. These are aspects for us to research in the future, as well as it is conducive to the personal development of self-education.

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