

On Construction of Teenage Gratitude Education Environment

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Abstract: Gratitude education environment is the practical condition of implementing teenage gratitude education, as well as the premise and guarantee of cultivating teenage gratitude quality. Teenagers grow up under the interaction between and changes in education and environment. However, the utilitarian and diversified trends of value orientation and evaluation criteria resulting from the change of circumstances pose a huge challenge for the cultivation of teenage gratitude quality. It is urgent to build a positive, extensive and rich gratitude cultural context. The construction of Teenage gratitude education environment should be based on the Marxist environmental theories and social learning theory, stick to the basic principles of systematicness, motivation, hierarchy and guidance, and take building a gratitude-type family, school, and society as its main approach.

Key words: teenagers; gratitude education environment; construction; principle; approach

I. INTRODUCTION

Teenage gratitude education environment is a teenager-gratitude-education -centered environmental system which plays a restrictive and regulatory role in the start, existence and development of teenage gratitude education. The relationship between teenage gratitude education and environment is, in fact, the relationships among educators, teenagers, education activities and

environment. They are mutually related, restricted, and dialectically united. On the one hand, the implementation of the teenage gratitude education is virtually inseparable from the environment, whose restriction on the education cannot be altered by one's will. On the other hand, teenage gratitude education is not a simple adaption to the environment, but a way to choose even improve the environment. Meanwhile, it can react subjectively and initiatively to the environment through education activities. Therefore, environment is the practical condition of implementing teenage gratitude education, and teenagers grow up under the interaction between and changes in education and environment. However, the teenage gratitude education environment is changing constantly. Especially the realities resulting from social transformation that value orientation and evaluation criteria tend to be utilitarian and diversified, can easily trigger teenagers' adverse self-awareness, and pose a huge challenge for the cultivation of teenage gratitude quality. Therefore, it is urgent to build a positive, extensive and rich gratitude cultural environment, and give full play to the education resultant force generated by the school, family and society. Only in this way can teenagers' gratitude quality be cultivated. " The responsibilities for strengthening and improving education work, should not only be taken by schools and education department, but should be concerned and supported by the family and all

quarters of society jointly as well. Only by strengthening comprehensive treatment to form a social environment which benefits teenagers' physical and mental health development, can the young generation thrive." said Jiang Zeming.^①

II. Theoretical Basis for Teenage Gratitude Education Environment Construction

Gratitude consciousness cannot come into being spontaneously in teenage brains. A gratitude education environment is the premise as well as the guarantee of cultivating teenage gratitude quality. Construction of teenage gratitude education environment has its own philosophical and psychological foundations.

A. Philosophical Basis: Marxist Environmental Theory

Marx pointed out, "Humans create the environment and vice versa." Marxist environmental theory holds that the environment can determine the implementation of gratitude education, as well as educators' working initiative, creativity and outstanding achievement. Meanwhile, educators and teenagers can also alter the environment proactively and build an environment suitable for the implementation, all of which are unified in the practice of gratitude education. Marxism classic writers have been analyzing and criticizing various environmental theories at all times and all over the world, and provide solid and powerful theoretical basis for us to understand the relationship between teenage gratitude education and the environment scientifically, and to construct teenage gratitude education environment.^②

B. Psychological Basis: Bandura's Social Learning Theory

Bandura, a representative of neo-behaviorism school, whose social learning theory systematically explains the relationship between human mentality, morality, action and environment, holds that there exists an interactional process between organism and environment--the human influence the environment while the environment influences the human at the same time. And he puts forward the reciprocal determinism. Academics believe that social-learning theory is a personality theory about how environment influences human and their morality.^③ Teenagers can improve their gratitude through observational learning, self-regulation and so on.

III. The Basic Principles of Teenage Gratitude Education Environment Construction

Marx said, "The materialistic theory about the environment and the education made an error: environment is altered by humans, and an educator himself must have been educated." ^④ The environment affects teenage gratitude education and it optimizes the environment instead. In order to construct the teenage gratitude education environment, the following basic principles are required to be adhered to :

A. The Systemic Principle

The teenage gratitude education environment is a complex environmental system. To construct the environment, the systemic principle should be firmly adhered to. According to the systemic principle, teenage gratitude education environment should be optimized and constructed as a whole, and the relationship and influence among all the factors should be emphasized. To adhere to the systemic principle, it is necessary to attach great importance to the relationships among school, family and social environment, and realize the effective combination and functional complementation of the school, family and society. Only by adhering to the systemic principle, can we create a good atmosphere for teenage gratitude education and enhance the effect of gratitude education.

B. The Incentive Principle

Organizational behavior holds that encouragement is a psychological process in which human internal motivation is prompted so that a person moves towards the expected goal. Incentive process is, in fact, a process to mobilize the enthusiasm of the people. Establishing incentive mechanism and creating a motivational atmosphere of teenage gratitude education environment, can motivate educators to devote themselves to teenage gratitude education, and to find ways to promote its quality, thus to promote educators' professional development, satisfy their achievement needs, and enhance their consciousness, initiative as well as creativity. Moreover, it can not only effectively stimulate the learning enthusiasm of the teenagers, and enable them to accept the gratitude knowledge actively, but also cultivate their gratitude consciousness so as to take gratitude action.

C. The Hierarchical Principle

The hierarchical principle of the construction of teenage gratitude education environment is to build a hierarchical progressive education atmosphere for it. Marx said: "Since the person's character is determined by the environment, the environment set must conform to the humanity." ⁵ According to the age level, personality development and teenagers' differences, to make teenagers of different levels involve in gratitude education, the goal of education can be attained by setting the hierarchical gratitude education targets, and adopting progressive education way. Gratitude education requires us not to use the same standard to measure all the teenagers, but to classify them on the basis of their moral understanding, and set the layered progressive goals in accordance with the possibility of teenagers of different levels. And we should start with cultivation of the gratitude consciousness so as to teach them gratitude, kindness, and mercy step by step by using scientific education method, thus to achieve great improvement of gratitude education.

D. The Orientation Principle

The guidance principle of constructing teenage gratitude education environment refers that the environment plays interventional, directional and adjustive roles in making the value orientation of teenage gratitude education exert positive energy. Teenage gratitude education requires us to carry forward the socialist core values in order to cultivate comprehensive adolescents with aggressiveness, morality, and social responsibility. Adhering to the principle of guidance is to grasp the regulation of the influence on teenage gratitude education, build and optimize the atmosphere of gratitude education in school, family and society full of positive energy, which makes teenagers form gratitude consciousness and show their gratitudes consciously. Thus teenagers' gratitude consciousness and behavior can be fully developed and shaped.

III. The Main Way to Teenagers' Gratitude Education Construction

Teenage gratitude education is essentially about inspiring teenager's desire for their self-development, retrieving their human nature and accelerating their subjective education, in which teenagers' self-reflection from inside is regarded as a point of penetration and

breach. It is aimed at helping teenagers to learn to put themselves in other people's shoes by building up an educational context for them. And only this can shape their morality and give them an access to learning, realizing, understanding, helping and caring. Thus, gratitude education is a long-term systematic project, which needs collaborative efforts from schools, families and the society instead of being simply regarded as school affair. According to the system theory, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Therefore, we can say, that the way to construct a good education environment would be improving teenagers studying and living conditions and speeding up the building of the gratitude-type family, school and society, so as to make the most use of the school-family-society-in-one.

A. Construct Gratitude-type Family by Building and Optimizing the Environment of Behavior Model

Family is the first school in the teenagers' life. "The family education is the foundational education which is the foundation project in the growing process of one's life. Furthermore, social influence on children's work is often achieved by family education." said professor Zhao.⁶ Therefore, the first thing to do is to keep a good family emotional environment in order to build and optimize the environment of family and to play emotional role in gratitude education. Family environment quality has a decisive influence on the physical and mental health of the adolescents, which the special feelings between parents and children relationship make children more easily to accept the education from their parents and to achieve good results. At the same time, the good relationship between husband and wife is also crucial for the teenage gratitude education. If the relationship is not harmonious, it is hard for the children to feel the love from their parents and to enjoy the happiness from family. As a result, it is bound to affect the smooth progress of family education because of the teenagers' rebellious attitude towards their parents and the sense of rejection to the family. If couples often quarrel, get angry and talk billingsgate, it will make the children get the emotional stress, feel hostile to others and it will be difficult for them to form the friendly feelings towards other people. It not only hinders the development of children's normal emotion, but also makes the children feel depressed, even

commit a crime or other extreme actions. Obviously, the harmonious family environment and the couple's good relationship are very important for gratitude education. Secondly, build a moral behavior demonstrational environment. Bandura said: "The vast majority of observational learning takes place by accidental and intentional observation to others' actions in daily life."⁷ So others' action demonstrations effect the teenagers' moral learning greatly. As the first teachers of their children, parents should try to set a grateful example for their children, such as taking on family responsibilities and obligations, respecting seniors and filial piety to parents, which help guide their children to gratitude. And children are encouraged to face life with gratitude, feeling of happiness. At the same time, parents can let the child participate in the housework, to feel the responsibility of the parents and their hardships, and create the grateful chance for their children. Couples must be good at appreciating children to love Thanksgiving, lead them to concentrate on learning, being frugal and pious and to maintain filial piety and repay parents, which make them understand what is the most thoughtful, and the most emotional practice of repaying.

B. Construct Gratitude-type Schools by Building and Optimizing the Environment of Love Education

The school, as the main body of current teenage education, should build an atmosphere of thanksgiving education for youth, which makes teenagers form gratitude consciousness and be grateful unconsciously. Campus, as the main position of gratitude education for school teenagers, should take the socialist core values education as the breakthrough point, guide and shape adolescents' gratitude consciousness by taking the advantage of many cultural factors such as the moral idea of the school culture, and the aesthetic taste. Those can teach them filial obedience parents, respect teachers, care about others, and learn thanksgiving, gratitude, and propagandize it in an all-round, multi-angle way, which creates a strong atmosphere of thanksgiving education by conducting love education.

Carefully build a caring education environment. School is another important place for teenagers to learn and to live. Over the years, the school education has been more focused on the rates of the graduation and of the

employment. Thus it is the only pursuit for school to improve teaching school achievement, which even dominated the school's survival and development. As a result, thanksgiving education is difficult to be into the scope of the school education teaching substantially. So it will become the premise of implementing gratitude education to build a kind of positive, vast campus spiritual culture environment. First of all, carry out the Thanksgiving education by various channels. The school gratitude education should be to infiltrate the moral education and infiltrate into all subjects in the education teaching. Thanksgiving education content could be turned into entry exam to recite. Secondly, schools should strive to build a kind of equality, tolerance education environment instead of the old-fashion ways of education teaching. There should be an equal dialogue between teachers and students, which can form a harmonious relationship, open the door of the juvenile mind of the teenagers and let them be educated gradually. All those will build up a basic thanksgiving education environment. In the end, schools should timely and widely develop the second classroom activities, building the platform for young people to feel grateful and kindness.

Give full play to the teacher's leading role. Teachers should fully promote thanksgiving ideas and practice gratitude. Schools should vigorously set an example for teenagers by promoting teachers gratitude because of the teenagers' immaturity in the physical and mental development. If teachers can put gratitude examples in life into his teaching process, the teenagers will be imperceptible to develop themselves in the direction of the true, the good and the beauty. Therefore, teachers should dialogue with the youth on equal mind by using their own personality charm, and pay attention to teenagers' emotional communication and their life experience. When teenagers have doubts, have a difficult time, teachers should help them to solve those problems in time and let teenagers feel more care. Attach a great importance to the adolescent emotional cultivation and concern the youth with the moral education emotion in order to make the youth have a grateful heart.

Give full play to peer's positive role. What's important to teenage gratitude emotion, healthy growth, and success is that good peer-relationship and positive

peer groups. Performing outstandingly in study and life, the one of peers often become not only the center of teenage attention but also the example of them and play the role of model and guide, resulting in making them hear and feel the noble moral sentiment. Therefore, the school should improve content and method of gratitude education, start with the propaganda and education of small things around teenagers, awake their gratitude consciousness, attach great importance to the influence of values and behavior orientation from their peers, protect positive peers actively in order to make the use of peer-positive education; also set up advanced model in the peer groups, praise the advanced examples, resulting in typical "reference" for their thoughts and actions, and induce students to the positive direction.⁸

Strengthen thanksgiving education based on filial piety culture. Tao Xingzhi once said: "Only by applying education to life, can education reflect its power and become true education".⁹ Dewey put forward that education is life. "The education that can develop the ability to effectively participate in social life, is the moral education."¹⁰ Gratitude is from social life and exists in social life. It's blended with human emotions and qualities. Consequently, teenage gratitude education must be based on teenagers' life, start from the actual life, lead the youth to understand, care about and be filial to parents in the colorful real life, which makes gratitude education promoted from emotional level to rational level, so as to motivate teenage to practice gratitude. Society advocates us to be grateful for parents, teachers, school, society, party as well as the state, revolutionary martyrs and nature, which is both the responsibility for a physically and psychologically healthy adolescent, and a basic point of filial piety. Therefore, the school should take the filial piety culture as the basis to strengthen thanksgiving education, make efforts to change the old homiletic and inculcation education, combine gratitude education with excellent traditional culture education, and internalize it into cognition, in order to make teenagers get into the habit of gratitude.

Establish an effective mechanism of gratitude practice. The purpose of education is to make teenager appreciative, and to foster a sense of gratitude, but the most important thing is to make teenagers internalized it

into their hearts, externalizing it into their behavior. Therefore, the school "Should not only attach importance to the classroom education, but also pay more attention to practical education, experimental education, as well as nurturance education, care more about the self-conscious practice, independent participation, guide the minors to learn morality and follow the morals consciously at the same time".¹¹ Establish a gratitude practice mechanism. Schools should work hard to practice gratitude, such as conduct gratitude-oriented educational activities, make them volunteered to go to welfare homes and to help children in poverty-stricken areas, and so on. As a result, teenagers get involved in it as main part. This kind of experience can make teenagers learn about society and gratitude to society, the influence on teenagers also can be more powerful and durable.

C. Construct Gratitude-type Society by Building and Optimizing Gratitude and Harmonious Environment

The environment of gratitude is the premise of gratitude quality and security. Lenin once said: "If learning, education and training were only restricted to school, which were separated from the real life, we would not be trusted."¹² Thanksgiving education not only relies on the family and school, but also depends on the society as a whole. The knowledge in the school cannot be applied to life away from the society, therefore, it is not conducive to moral education."¹³ Contemporary youth is in the social big changes of reform and opening up, it is very difficult for the traditional spoon-feeding education mode to work nowadays. We should choose selective education mode, create gratitude atmosphere in all of society, lead adolescents to feel and think and make them inspired and educated gradually in that atmosphere.

First, the government should increase public opinion propaganda. Social moral opinion is the common citizen moral view and comment. It is a psychological tendency that people manifest when they engage in a moral activity or value an objective moral phenomenon. Therefore, governments at all levels must shoulder the responsibility of shaping society moral education environment. The governments should strengthen the construction of the thanksgiving moral opinion by using the mass media such as broadcast, television, newspaper and network. Promote the whole society to establish the state of feeling grateful

and construct a social atmosphere by media supervision. Expose and criticize the phenomenon, such as the cold, not knowing thanksgiving, devoid of gratitude while promptly affirm and appreciate gratitude. Guide people to form a correct thanksgiving idea and behavior, carrying forward the lofty sentiments of gratitude.

Second, inherit and carry forward the fine thanksgiving traditions of the Chinese culture. Gratitude is the traditional virtue of the Chinese people. Implementation of Thanksgiving Education for young people can be combined with carrying forward the fine traditional culture of the Chinese nation. Promote Thanksgiving Education for teenagers by creating a harmonious social environment and atmosphere of Thanksgiving. Vigorously promote the excellent traditional virtues of the Chinese nation, and gradually form the habit of thanksgiving feelings. At the same time, in order to form the moral consensus gratitude in the whole society ,carry out gratitude education by using Chinese traditional festival ,such as the Spring Festival, the Mid-Autumn festival, National Day and the double ninth festival est..

Lastly, optimize community gratitude circumstances. Society is a big classroom for civil moral education. As the saying goes “ten years of school education cannot compete to three minutes of social influence.” Therefore it is significant part of promoting teenage gratitude education that creating thanksgiving and harmonious social atmosphere. Public should create a social atmosphere full of help, respect, and morality, strengthen the construction of civil virtue, and disseminate moral model. At the same time, we also should publicize legal system, make full use of mass media orientation such as TV, broadcast, newspaper, the internet and so on, set an example of gratitude as well as repay, raise their gratitude consciousness, cultivate noble moral sentiment and make them have a heart of gratitude.

All in all, to carry out gratitude education, we must enhance the openness of it. “We must combine family education, school education, institution education with social education, resulting in interaction”^[3], and construct a reconcilable education circumstance. Only in this way, can we influence, impel adolescents even make them identify with morality, act with kindness, which means

that their gratitude consciousness and action can be fully developed and shaped.

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