

Life-oriented Moral Education and Its Practice

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Abstract—As the educational concept “life-oriented” becomes more and more popular, life-oriented moral education is also increasingly sought after by educators. The author firstly expounds the connotation of life-oriented moral education and its four characteristics: sociality, practicality, authenticity and validity. Then the focus moves to the practice of life-oriented moral education and starts from its goal setting as well as methods and approaches, in which the former points out the problems that should be paid attention to determining the goal of life-oriented moral education and the latter includes experience, mutual contract, practical exercise, discussion or debate and so on.

Keywords—*life-oriented moral education; characteristics; practice; methods and approaches*

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, “life-oriented” has become an important concept of educational reform. The life-oriented theory is the thinking result of modern philosophy under realistic social conditions. Thus, the life-oriented theory based on school education is the result of educational theory’s ideological exploration under the background of modern education, and the inevitable demand of educational reform. Therefore, in the real life, whether from the perspective of moral education or teaching, people have put forward the proposition of “life-oriented”.

II. THE CONNOTATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE-ORIENTED MORAL EDUCATION

Life-oriented moral education means that educators should start from the actual life of the educatees and pay attention to their real needs, letting them realize the realistic value of morality through life and improving their ability of social life.

The concept of life-oriented moral education fully shows that the fundamental purpose of moral education is to make the members of the society (or future members of the society) have a good and harmonious life through having a good moral personality. Moral character is formed in the process of life, at the same time, it is mutually beneficial to life, which embodies the character of moral education that is based on life. Therefore, life-oriented moral education has the characteristics of sociality, practicality, authenticity and validity.

- **Sociality.** Life-oriented moral education means that the mode of moral education changes from closeness to openness in time and space and it uses life itself to educate students. Life is everywhere, so social life itself is a broad field of moral education. Moral education in schools should have presupposition, but cannot only depend on presupposition; instead, relevant workers should adjust the contents and methods of moral education according to the changes in social life at any time and place.
- **Practicality.** Life-oriented moral education means that the process of moral education is not only a process of learning theory, but also a process of practical activities. Through contacting with lots of social life events and practice, the educatees realize the value of morality indirectly or directly, from which they can grasp the attitude to life and form good social behavior habits.
- **Authenticity.** Life-oriented moral education means that every educator should look for the content of moral education from what happens around him, letting students understand the social value and life value of morality in real social relations and learn to judge and choose in social life. At the same time, educators should pay attention to the development of students' ideological and moral character at any time, understand the real requirements of social life for students' ideological and moral character, and combine the two aspects into students' specific moral education goals and contents, helping them form moral qualities expected by the society.
- **Validity.** Life-oriented moral education means that educators should not only change some old ideas, such as "vigorous activities are indeed moral education activities", "trivial things in life have no value of moral education" and so on, but they should also attach much importance to the development of students' personality and understand their growing background and personalities. These kinds of practices are different from the traditional preaching, so it will inevitably bring students a new sense of life, and trigger their certain spiritual touch and ideological resonance, as well as the identity of moral requirements.

III. THE PRACTICE OF LIFE-ORIENTED MORAL EDUCATION

When the theory of life-oriented moral education has become the trend of modern moral education reform, we should not only stay on the understanding of the theory, but also explore how to transform the theory of moral education into effective practice, especially, how to transform the concept of life-oriented moral education into the behavior of all educators through effective management. Only in this way can the idealized educational theory be transformed into social reality.

A. The Goal Setting of Life-oriented Moral Education

Setting scientific goal is the foundation of moral education because the goal of moral education is not only the starting point and destination of moral education activities, but also the standard and basis to measure the effect of moral education. Life-oriented moral education requires educators to clearly realize that the fundamental goal of moral education is to prepare for the personalities needed in life, so as to promote the social members (or future members of the society) to establish harmonious relations in social life, and then adapt better to the development of society. Therefore, educators should proceed from the development of the educatees and social needs and set practical goals of moral education according to the level of physical and mental development of the educatees. The closer the goal of moral education is to life, the closer to the needs of the educatees and the needs of the society, the easier it is to be accepted by the educatees, and the easier it is to reach the desired state and level of moral education. Therefore, in the practice of moral education, some negative factors should be avoided in the process of determining moral education goals.

Firstly, the goal of moral education should not be an empty politicized goal. The goal of moral education is not equal to the goal of politics; if there is a certain connection between the goal of politics and the goal of moral education, the goal of politics is only a part of the goal of moral education, not the whole. Moral education should serve the whole development of society. Excessive politicization of the goal of moral education will make moral education deviate from the moral starting point and moral characteristics. The emergence and existence of morality lie in the coordination of all kinds of social interests, and its object is to cultivate men's conscience, while politics emphasizes the restriction and application of power much more. Therefore, the politicization of moral education's goal will strengthen the role of power and ignore the cultivation of conscience and conduct, and the so-called moral education will be gradually isolated from the moral characteristics.

Secondly, the goal of moral education should not be abstract personality. In the past moral theory and practice, people always regard "altruism", "dedication" and "self-sacrifice" as the core of morality and strive to achieve such moral level. This kind of transcendent moral requirement makes moral education difficult to achieve in real society, and makes the educatees at a loss, for these "altruistic", "dedication" and "self-sacrifice" are often unconditional and

unlimited, lacking a fair kernel. In ideal social conditions, cooperation between people should be equal, voluntary and mutually beneficial, not compulsory and unequal. Morality is an important mean to regulate the interpersonal relationship and ensure the equal and mutually beneficial cooperation between people. With the present socialist market economy, if the principles of equivalence and fairness are destroyed, the balance of rights and obligations must deviate from the essence of morality. The goal of moral education is just to promote social members (or future members of the society) to make their lives harmonious and maintain social stability through the cultivation of social quality. Therefore, the goal of moral education should be positioned at a level acceptable to the public, and help the ordinary people obtain the promotion of their personality through education. And only such moral education can be effective and universal.

Thirdly, the goal of moral education should not be a bureaucratic task. Because of the management mechanism, historical culture and other reasons, in the actual education practice, moral education managers often use some specific digital indicators to measure the effectiveness of moral education, and even take it as the only content of management. For example, the effectiveness of school moral education can be seen by reducing the juvenile crime rate, and the quality of school moral education can be measured by the number of advanced units' honorary titles or competition results. These are the embodiment of the effect of school moral education, but if they are regarded as all the indicators of moral education, some educators will overemphasize the rise and fall of these figures and neglect the cultivation of students' personalities. Then moral education will only focus on the students with problems or who are apt to get high scores, while neglecting the progress and growth of most students.

B. The Methods and Approaches of Life-oriented Moral Education

The theory of life-oriented moral education does not deny the moral education methods used in human history. Any moral education method has its own value and function, thus any effective moral education method should be the appropriate one. Of course, any moral education method has its advantages and disadvantages, and an excellent educator should make full use of the advantages of different moral education methods to achieve the educational goal according to his own characteristics, the educational situation and the situation of the educatees. In contemporary society, in the face of teenagers' increasing awareness of the subject, the increasing complexity and diversity of social information and the diversification of social value orientation, moral education workers should also keep pace with the times, update their ideas and concepts, innovate the means of moral education and take life-oriented methods and approaches to carry out moral education activities, pay attention to the students' subjective consciousness and meet their psychological needs. These methods and approaches can be as follows.

1) *Experience*: Experience is one of the most effective ways to mobilize and utilize students' subjective

consciousness to obtain moral cognition, moral emotion and moral will, and sense the result of moral behavior. Experience can be divided into direct experience and indirect experience.

So-called direct experience refers to the process of mental activities that educators create moral situations to enable students to understand the moral requirements and moral consequences of social reality in the process of activities, and experience different moral roles and moral relations, so as to develop the moral cognition and moral emotion. Direct experience is acquired by the students themselves. The advantage of direct experience is that students are directly in a relatively real social relationship, have a deeper understanding of moral relations, and have a personal understanding of certain moral rules. The disadvantage is that it takes more time, manpower and material input to carry out such activities, and the process of activities is difficult to control.

While indirect experience is the process of mental activities that through the narration of others' life stories, educators enable students to understand the moral requirements and moral consequences of social reality in the experiences of others, and experience different moral roles and moral relations, so as to develop the moral cognition and moral emotion. The advantage of indirect experience is that the activity process is easier to control, the content of the activity is convenient to design and arrange, and the time can be long or short. Its weakness is that if the students' thoughts and emotions are not integrated into the others' story scenes, it may lead to indifference and the influence on the students will be greatly diminished. Meanwhile, indirect experience also requires that the person who narrates stories should be honest, the storytelling should be fluent, and the content should be true and somewhat targeted and instructive to students' present thoughts and behaviors. Indirect experience can be beautiful, touching and everlasting stories or they are linked to people and events happen around us; sometimes they tend to be bad social events that, if well guided, can bring unexpected educational results.

2) *Mutual Contract*: Mutual contract is a kind of moral education method advocated in recent years, which is suitable for students with strong subjective consciousness, and is also helpful to the development of students' self-control ability. Mutual contract means that the educatees and the educators jointly define each other's rights and obligations in order to promote each other to consciously restrain their behavior and abide by the agreed behavior rules, so as to cultivate students' understanding of equality and honesty and develop students' self-restraint ability.

Mutual contract is based on equality and good faith. Making a contract with the educatees reflects the respect for the educatees, which helps them to build up their self-confidence, stimulate their needs of self-growth, and make them learn to adjust their own behavior consciously so as to meet the moral requirements. In primary and secondary education, mutual contracts can be made between schools and students, between students and teachers, or in groups of students. Mutual contracts can be expressed as the

formulation of various rules and regulations, or the agreement between teachers and students. The specific practice depends on the actual situation.

3) *Practical Exercise*: Practical exercise is the basic method of moral education, mainly because moral practice is the condition of moral formation and the basic goal of moral education. The formation of moral character mainly depends on the transformation of knowledge, emotion, meaning and action. And practice is the indispensable factor to promote the transformation. Practice exists as a bridge between perceptual knowledge and rational understanding, a catalyst to intensify moral emotion and a platform for forming moral will.

Generally speaking, the practical exercise of moral education in primary and middle schools mainly refers to all kinds of explicit educational activities, including social activities, labor, class team activities, volunteer activities, expansibility training and various activities organized by schools. In fact, moral education should also make use of hidden practical factors to promote students' moral growth. These factors include daily interpersonal communication, daily life behavior, study behavior and so on. The family is also an important place for moral practice. Educators should wisely use all these factors mentioned above to improve the moral quality of students.

4) *Discussion or Debate*: Discussion or debate is a kind of moral education method advocated by value clarification school, which has been widely used in many schools in recent years. Because it can fully involve the students and its process is competitive and interactive, it is welcomed by students. However, in the practice of moral education in schools, using the method of discussion or debate may lead to some unexpected problems. For example, the result of discussion or debate is inconsistent with the original goal of the educator, and students are not interested in the content of the discussion or debate, etc. As a result, educators should pay more attention to the following points in adopting this approach.

First of all, the topic itself is debatable. It should be the basic judgment of the common understanding. Otherwise, the final topic is either lack of contradiction or is not the focus of attention. When designing the topics, the teacher should choose the ones able to arouse students' clash of ideas, which requires the teacher to be equipped with enough knowledge and precise logic.

In the next place, teachers should make full presets for the discussion or debate. Some teachers may think that the discussion or debate mainly involves the students, and the teacher only needs to give the topic, so the process of discussion or debate lacks any further consideration. Actually, discussions or debates in primary and secondary schools differ from those of adults or university students in many ways. The discussion or debate requires teachers to design carefully and give full consideration to the problems that may exist in each step. Only in this way will it be possible to achieve the desired purpose. It is important to

stress that the presupposition here is just the presupposition of process, not the presupposition of value or result.

Last but not least, teachers should effectively guide the process of the discussion or debate. Passionate language, real examples, seemingly contradictory arguments are all the ingenious elements taken by educators to lead the discussion or debate to the deeper layer. The younger the student, the more he needs the teacher's effective guidance.

IV. CONCLUSION

Life-oriented moral education starts from problems in daily life and contacts with real life. It combines moral education with life, and uses it to lead people to pursue truth as well as kindness and choose meaningful, valuable and moral life, making everyone enhances his/her living moral traits through the experience of present life and pursuit of future life. Nowadays, the tendency of life-oriented moral education has become an inevitable choice of school moral education. Only by building a close relationship between the improvement of students' moral cognition and their real life and having students sense the reality of moral education, can moral education really achieve its actual effects.

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