Innovating the Mode of Moral Education: Barriers and Strategies

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Abstract

This paper first investigates into the three basic features for school moral education modes and social moral education modes respectively, then analyzes in-depth the source of barriers for school moral education based on clarifying the relationship between moral education mode and moral education barriers, and finally proposes the fundamental strategies for elimination of the barriers.

Key words: Moral; Education mode; Social education; School education

INTRODUCTION

In general education researches, method and mode are two confusing concepts (Tan, 2007). "'Method' comes from the Greek word 'metodos', which originally means to go forward along a fixed path, namely to conduct activities by fixed modes or procedures to achieve one's aims." (Tan, 2007) In this sense, method and mode share the same point that they are related to achievement of predetermined goals, and it is the adoption of various methods and modes that facilitates the achievement of goals (Sato, 2006).

The essential features of method are shown as follows: a) Method is the tool adopted to achieve one's goal. b) Method is limited by the object and adapted to the operation of the object, that is to say, method is limited by content. c) Method is based on and guided by theory. d) Method is a system of rules which is directive. e) Method has its structure.

The difference between method and mode is that method is a system of rules which is directive and lies at the abstract and conceptual level, while mode is the form of specific operation carried out to achieve one's aims. In school education, the various modes are restricted by the corresponding method system.

In mainstream educational researches, the scholars state their own opinions in discussing the relationship between "teaching method" and "teaching mode". (Gu, 1998) *Education Dictionary* indicates that "Teaching mode is the detailed representation of teaching method, and the specific activity status in the process of teaching manifests the actual form of teaching activities." (Gu, 1998) Li (2001) holds that "Teaching method is the aggregate of active modes that interact teaching with learning adopted by teachers and students to achieve teaching aims and complete teaching tasks in the teaching process." (B. Li & D. Li, 2001) Wang (1985) takes it that "Teaching method is an activity conducted to achieve teaching aims, implement teaching contents and apply teaching tools, which is guided by teaching principles, contains a set of modes and interacts teachers with students." (Wang, 1985) Some scholars hold from the perspective of moral education that

In the vivid and concrete moral education process, moral education methods can be dissolved into a series of specific activity details or components which we call moral education modes. Moral education methods can be understood as reasonable combination of specific moral education modes.

It can be concluded from the opinions of the above-mentioned scholars that in school education, the methods are applied via specific modes, and the modes will become meaningless if they are not guided and organized according to the methods.

1. TWO FORMS OF MORAL EDUCATION MODES

Education is a fundamental activity in human life, and education mode is the form of this activity adopted by the subject to organize various tools and contents in developing the activity toward its target state. Specifically both educational activity and any other social activity, are the unity of content and form. The difference between the form and the mode lies in that the mode can be regarded the sub-concept of the form because the form of this activity can also be a mode when the subject carries out this activity to achieve the purpose associated with the form. Likewise, when the purposeful activity of the subject has any educational impact on others, the mode of the subject's activity in the whole education can be called an education mode. The education model in this paper refers to the form of the activity that is implemented conscientiously by the educational subject and has impacts on the educational object.

1.1 Basic Features of School Moral Education Modes

Generally, school education is a purposeful, organized and planned educational activity. Constituting the basis for formation and development of school education, purposefulness has been integrated into all aspects of school education. It is this basic orientation of school education that restricts the organization and application of school moral education modes in the framework set around purposefulness.

1.1.1 Intention

In school moral education, the educator is not only the organizer and executor of the education mode, but also a part of it. The peculiarities of the educator determine the basic features of the education mode. The intention of the educational mode, after all, can be said to be the intention of the educator in selecting specific contents for moral education, time and space, categories of activities, and intensity of moral education and limiting the number of educatees. Nevertheless, the intention of the educator does not represent his subjectivity. As the main element of school education, the educator performs activities in the all-along guidance of the general target framework of school education. The intention of the education mode, as a consequence, is on the one hand resulted from educator's work, and on the other hand arranged according to the general school education system.

In school education, there is neither purposeless method nor purposeless mode, and the moral education so organized has presupposed a form that demonstrates purposefulness in all activities.

1.1.2 Explicitness

In school moral education, the aim, the method and the mode of education are logically related to each other in a tight manner, which is the uniqueness of school education as well as the inevitable requirement to display the function of the general target framework. The aim at the macro level must rely on the method system at the medium level to act on the operation the micro level. The explicitness of school moral education mode is originated from the coordinated and progressive relationship structure of the three levels.

The aim, the method and the mode of school moral education form the three aspects of an inter-related unity, in which the method and the mode are not only the intermediary agents or tools to achieve the goal, but also the embodiment of particular aims themselves. This gives full expression to the path of the specific mode featuring the initial epistemological assumption, to relevant knowledge-based view, to method construction and then to concrete problem solving modes.

1.1.3 Directness

In school moral education, the educator tends to influence the educatee directly. For one thing, the planned and organized school education and the formulation of the general target framework have offered conditions for such an action mode. For another, the indirect action modes are ignored intentionally or unintentionally, or placed at a subordinate position considering the difficulties in controlling and assessing them.

This mode of school moral education immerses the educatee in the supervision and intervention of external moral forces. The educator selects and organizes moral content in advance to directly act on the educatee, which can promote the educatee's growth of moral knowledge and improvement of moral judgment through his repetitive understanding and exercise.

1.2 Basic Features of Social Moral Education Modes

Social education refers to a form of education not divorced from daily life yet, which people deliver and receive naturally. People have not realized the difference of such education from other activities, let alone its features. In this form of education, the education mode appears with the educational activity instead of being organized according to the education method. In social education, the aim, the method and the mode are potentially and indirectly correlated to each other instead of being obviously correlated, differing from the one-to-one correspondence in school education.

In this form, moral education acts on the individual in a natural manner. The daily life process integrates fully with moral education. The ways of behaving by people who have received particular education are gradually internalized into individuals' concepts and conduct codes.

1.2.1 Unintentional

The Unintentional of moral education, for one thing, means that the educator expresses the moral contents out of confirmation and belief only. For another, it means that

the educatee can feel the unique influence of such random expression and this moral education mode can reserve the subjectivity of the educatee.

1.2.2 Flexibility

In social moral education, the potentiality of aim results in failure to form the method system similar to that of school education. The model developing from aim to method and to concrete mode in school education can't be used to account for social education. In practice, a unique education mode is formed corresponding to social education although its aim is inexplicit. The characteristic of the education mode is that the educatee is affected and edified in the self-expression of the educator. He acquires a series of cultural symbols that are not directed to him as well as the value and emotional patterns in flexible activities.

1.2.3 Indirectness

In social moral education, the significance demonstrated by the aim and mode of education and their relationship is different from that of school education. The aim of social moral education is randomly made, and the educator is not intentionally and explicitly to guide the educatee. Seen from the unity and consistency of educational results, it can be claimed, however, that social education has an inexplicit aim to guide the educatee to inherit particular culture. Under the subtle influence of social education, individuals become carriers of particular culture, and culture presents itself through daily activities of individuals. In the intentional or unintentional interaction between different people, culture passes from one person to another and from one generation to the next. In social moral education, each individual, as the carrier of particular culture, is not only the educator, but also the educatee, because the shared education content for them all is culture. People always interact with others that are present by the way of educating and being educated in their daily life, and in this process, the corresponding moral aims are also achieved.

2. BARRIERS OF SCHOOL MORAL EDUCATION AND ITS SOURCE

The education of human being has experienced different stages of development in the long process of historical changes. As modern school education comes into being, education is divided into two forms of far-reaching significance, which have their own unique structures and rule systems. Social education which formerly functions in the form of daily customs has been incorporated into school education, and an education mode with strict design and control has substituted the mode that works in a natural manner. Some essential attributes of moral education are intentionally or unintentionally ignored in this process of transformation, bringing a lot difficulty for development of school moral education.

2.1 Barriers for Current School Moral Education Modes

2.1.1 Difficulty in Improvement of Moral Education Effects

The effects of moral education are hard to assess, but can be judged roughly from my own experiences and observation of facts. For example, we went to conduct field survey with our tutor to investigate into a village in a high mountain. When we completed and returned, we met several women who carried heavy objects on their back, coming toward us. As soon as they saw us, they gave way to us by standing at the side, while we, the doctoral candidates having received elite school education, just passed by one after another. By this case, I want to say that it is social education that cultivates the women with appreciated moral characters, instead of exploring why the doctoral candidates just ignore the women with heavy objects, or why they take the women's giving way to them for granted. Although this is only one of the many cases that demonstrate the effects of school moral education, we can still find out that the effects of school moral education are to be further improved.

2.1.2 Passivity of Moral Education Participants

Both the educator and the educatee, as the participants of school moral education, are in a passive sate. The passivity of the educator is caused by the fact that the general target framework is guiding the behavior of the educator who only stays at the level of operation. In spite that he has a choice in the cohesion and change process, the general direction is predetermined. Why the educatee is passive is because that the contents of the whole school education is finely selected and planned, and the educatee only needs to maximize his absorption and storage of these contents without the need to experience, judge, take and quit them on his own, thus causing deteriorating creativity and vitality of school education participants.

2.1.3 Poor Self-Education Ability

Self-education ability is of key importance to moral education that plays a large role in training self-education ability. The key of self-education ability lies in its driving force rooted in the moral self of every individual. Moral self has the same nature with dream, so it can become the basis for self-improvement, self-shaping and self-direction. The poor self-education ability is an urgent problem that the school moral education should solve.

2.2 Analysis on Source of Barriers for School Moral Education

2.2.1 Insufficient Overall Participation in School Moral Education Modes

First, the overall participation in moral education refers to that people should devote all aspects of its life, including perception, emotion and will, to shaping and improvement of moral that is regarded as the embodiment of the general spiritual outlook of human being. Second, school moral

education overemphasizes a single aspect of perception, emotion and will by isolating them, so that the educatee cannot engage in moral education in all aspects. Third, moral is the embodiment of the general spiritual outlook of human being instead of the embodiment of just perception or emotion, so the integrity of moral requires the moral education subject to participate in it with all aspects of his life to gain real effects.

The intention, explicitness and directness of school moral education urges the educator and the educatee, to certain extent, to become the tool that supports the operation of the general target framework, and therefore, they are not expressing, feeling and judging with all aspects of their life. Such an education showing purposefulness in every aspect does not fit in with the essential attribute of moral education. Plan and purpose should not be overemphasized in moral education, or it may lead to the fact that school moral education keeps development in an unexpected manner.

2.2.2 Insufficient Situatedness in School Moral Education Modes

The Unintentional and overall participation in moral education determine its situatedness. Moral education should not be isolated from events and contexts in specific situations. That is to say, vivid situations and educational activities should not be separated from each other. Education separated from situations cannot integrate perception, emotion and will. Such a state of separation may have little influence on pure mind training and knowledge memory, but it is an unfavorable way of act for moral education intended to improve the general spiritual outlook of the educatee. Considering that the forms of moral aspects for both individual and culture are situated, moral can only be recognized and grasped in concrete situations.

The intention, explicitness and directness of school moral education destroys the completeness and continuity of the whole moral education process, splits real moral content and its situations into inflexible principles and judgments, and eliminate the concrete situations for the educator and the educatee to behave themselves. As a consequence, it is hard for moral education to influence the educatee materially.

2.2.3 Deficient Exemplary Characteristics in School Moral Education Modes

We can conclude from the above analysis that moral education influences the educatee mainly through its random expression in concrete situations, which derive another attribute of moral education, namely exemplary characteristics. The self-awareness of human being enables an individual to know himself from the perspective of others. By imagining views, values and behavioral modes of celebrities, he can shape and improve his own moral self. Therefore, the quality and cultivation of celebrities are of key importance in improving self-

education ability. School moral education pays too much attention to imparting of moral contents and training of behaviors without rendering due considerations to educational function of moral models, thus obstructing the educatee's shaping of moral self.

3. STRATEGIES FOR INNOVATE OF MORAL EDUCATION MODES

Moral education has existed before people began to think about moral problems. People have been achieving all functions of moral education via the social education form of customs. Becoming a virtuous man is to become a man accepted by the society, so moral has always been an essential aspect of human existence since ancient time. Social moral education is a precious resource gradually formed in the long history of human being, but in face of fast changes in modern society, social education is also lagged behind. In view of that, school education should display its own advantages to update and improve social education modes in order to form school moral education modes gearing to social development in the future.

3.1 Balance of Intention and Unintentional

The educatee in the past school education, as a passive recipient, failed to participate in educational activities as an independent subject. The educational contents intentionally selected and organized by the educator are separated from the educator, because an individual can only express his real moral self in an unintentional natural state. Only the expression consistent with one's own cultural values and ideals can act strongly on other individuals so that the educatee can absorb the moral contents in particular culture. On the contrary, the embedding of specific intention will change the form of the whole education. Regardless of whether it is noble and what its source is, it will transform the educator and the educatee into a tool in some sense. Ideal moral education modes, therefore, should not only display its intentional and unintentional advantages, but also avoid its defects by achieving balance.

3.2 Balance of Explicitness and Flexibility

In school moral education, corresponding spaces should be spared to explicitness and flexibility of education modes in that explicitness is conducive to selection of culture and reasonable allocation of educational resources, while flexibility is beneficial to the educator's moral improvement and life growth. School moral education should not emphasize any one aspect of them because only with appropriate balance of them can school moral education improve s its general quality.

3.3 Balance of Directness and Indirectness

In social moral education, the educator has no explicit or intentional aim of directing at the educatee, so the

educatee does not need to respond to these goals and expectations through active perception and training. The educatee devotes all aspects of his life to feel the concrete moral situations, and therefore shapes and improves his moral quality in a natural manner. In the past school moral education, the direct action of the target framework puts the educator and the educatee into nervous opposition, bringing forth difficulties for the educatee to manifest and train his subjectivity. To sum up, the ideal moral education mode should be dominated by indirectness and supported by directness.

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