

## A Brief Discussion on the Self-education Method of Ideological and Political Education Methods

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**Abstract.** Self-education is an indispensable link in the process of Ideological and political education, and it is also an important and commonly used method in the method of Ideological and political education. This paper studies the self-education method from its concept, characteristics, basis, steps and other aspects, in order to better apply in the ideological and political education process and improve the effectiveness of education.

### The Concept and Characteristics of Self-education Method

**Concept Interpretation.** Suhomlinski pointed out: "Education is a unity of education and self-education. Only education that can stimulate students to conduct self-education is the real education." [1] The self-education method is a method for individuals to continuously improve their moral quality and ideological and political quality by means of self-knowledge, self-reflection and self-regulation on the basis of self-consciousness, in accordance with the requirements of Ideological and political education and self-development.

The method of self-education, in a literal sense, is self-education itself. Its internal operating mechanism is the contradictory movement of the differentiation and unification of the subject and the object. The differentiation of "self" means that the self is both the educator and the educated, and thus divides me into the subject and the object. For example, "I feel that I have this ability", the former "I" refers to the Lord I, the knower and observer, while the latter one refers to the guest I, who is known to be myself, including my physical condition, appearance, physical health, psychological perception, emotional ability, personality and temperament. Self-education is possible only when the subjective self and the objective self are separated and always in contradiction.

**Main Characteristics.** Self-education includes two categories of "self" and "education". "Education" has the commonness with general education, and the limitation of "self" to education makes it have a unique personality. The basic characteristics of self-education method are mainly reflected in subjectivity, self-control and lifelongness.

First, subjectivity. In general education, the educator is in the position of subject, and the educated person is the object, receiving the educational content relatively passively. In self-education, the educated person's initiative and creativity are greatly brought into play, the self is not only the educatee, but also the educator, realizing the direct unity of subject and object. According to their actual situation, the individual independently put forward educational goals, chooses educational content and actively accepts education through thinking and analysis, inner experience and life practice, in order to solve the contradiction between subject self and object self, ideal self and realistic self, and achieve better development of themselves. From this point of view, self-education is not only beneficial to the individual to get knowledge and ability, but also conducive to the cultivation of individual inner qualities. Second, self-control, that is, self-regulation. Self-regulation refers to actively adjusting their behavioral motives and psychological conflicts by actively mastering their own psychology and behaviors, in order to achieve the goals set by oneself or make their behaviors meet the requirements of social norms. Unlike the general education process in which the educatee as the object is recognized, regulated and controlled by the educator, the self-educated individual is the unity of the subject and object of education. In the process of realizing the ideal self, the individual always encounters

difficulties and setbacks. There is often a certain degree of deviation from the intended target. Individuals need to constantly correct their behavior through self-observation and introspection, and eliminate internal and external interference to better overcome themselves and improve themselves to achieve good educational effect. Third, lifelongness. School education is an important part of individual education, but it is temporary. The knowledge acquired by individuals is limited. The lifelong nature of self-education refers to the persistence and permanence of education, which can effectively make up for the shortcomings of school education. People's needs are eternal, realistic self always lag behind ideal self. When a self-education process ends, whether the expected goals are successfully achieved or not, it will turn to the next cycle, or adjust the original expected goals and action plans, or put forward higher requirements for themselves on the basis of the expected goals.

### **The Basis and Tradition of Self-education Method**

**Theoretical Basis.** First, the dialectical relationship between the internal and external causes of Marxist philosophical dialectics. Materialistic dialectics of Marxist philosophy holds that internal causes are the basis for the change and development of things, external causes are the conditions for the change and development of things, and external causes can only play a role through internal causes. As Mao Zedong said: "The eggs are turned into chickens because of the proper temperature, but the temperature does not make the stones into chickens, because the basis of the two is different." [2] The formation and development of people's ideological and moral character must be understood and recognized by the educatee internally and displayed in external behavior after internalization, which is the purpose of education. What we call the "infusion method" in modern ideological and political education methods usually only plays an important role in the cognitive field of human beings, but emotions, wills, etc. are more difficult to cultivate through external indoctrination. The transformation of behavior depends more on the educatee's ability to internalize the educational requirements. The ultimate goal of any education, especially ideological and moral education, is meaningful only when it is embodied in action. Otherwise, it is useless to master a great deal of theoretical knowledge. Therefore, in terms of the whole process of Ideological and moral transformation, we need not only the transmission of knowledge in the cognitive field, but also the acceptance and transformation of relevant requirements by educatees. Self-education is indispensable in Ideological and political education.

Second, the subjective initiative of Marxist epistemology. The object of Ideological and political education is human. As an object with subjective initiative, human is obviously different from the object of nature. Firstly, people have clear self-consciousness ability. For animals, there is no question of the relationship between the subjective and the objective. Animal activity and initiative are the same as their life activities, and there is no subjectivity. And people can not only consciously realize their own existence, have an understanding of their physical and mental state, but also have a clear understanding and conscious attitude towards their relationship with the world around them. Secondly, people have self-driven practical ability. People's consciousness activities are purposeful, planned, creative and selective. Under the guidance of consciousness, people can actively transform the world. They not only transform the natural world and make the surrounding environment become "human nature", but also transform society and make human history present a magnificent picture. At the same time, they transform the subjective world and produce the best flower of thinking in the world. Thirdly, people have the ability of introspection. Mankind not only knows and transforms the outside world, but also takes himself as the object of understanding and self-examination. No animal will take its own psychological activities, ideology and other subjective world as the object of self-reflection, but people can recognize and evaluate their thoughts, feelings, interests, hobbies and behavioral motivations, and recognize and evaluate their status and role in social life. Therefore, this ability of self-examination is a necessary condition to make self-education possible.

**Historical Tradition.** In China's historical tradition, the spirit of struggle of "The universe keeps

moving, and gentlemen should strive constantly for self-improvement", the noble spirit of "Don't waste when you are rich, don't change your will when you are poor, don't change your attitude when you are powerful", the holism of "the rise and fall of the country, everyone is responsible", the dedication spirit of "Worry before the world, Joy after the world", the position of "Never surrender to the enemy, and be willing to bow down to the orders of the people like cattle", these concretions have always been the personality strength of the Chinese nation's spirit, which comes from the following enlightenment that man is a moral and rational thing. This is different from the western traditional value orientation which tends to be extroverted in that it emphasizes moral cultivation, pays attention to personality perfection, and pays more attention to personal introspection in moral practice. For example, from the point of view of good human nature, Chinese Confucianism holds that introspection and seeking truth are the way to achieve the goal of real and holy man. Therefore, it regards self-cultivation as the basis for people to live in the world and realize their own values. China's unique moral practice has created many rational personalities with noble qualities and firm moral integrity, which has played a tremendous role in the cultivation of national character and social spirit. Of course, this kind of self-cultivation in Chinese traditional culture is characterized by thinking behind closed doors and introspecting from social practice, but if we remove its idealistic shell, absorb the subjective initiative emphasized in these methods, and pay attention to mobilizing the initiative and participation of the subject, it is very helpful to enrich the way of self-education. In the history of the development of the Communist Party of China, mobilizing the masses to carry out self-education is not only an important method but also an important principle. For example, in the early years, in implementing the resolution of Gutian Conference, our Party put forward that "cadres should learn to mobilize soldiers to educate themselves and manage themselves". In the process of leading the Democratic revolution, the Communist Party of China has created many forms of self-education for the masses, such as recalling bitterness and thinking sweet, discussing and negotiating, criticizing and self-criticizing. In particular, criticism and self-criticism have become a remarkable symbol of the difference between Marxist political parties and any other political parties, as well as a basic method to solve the contradictions within the Party and among the people. As the method of self-education created by the Communist Party of China pays more attention to the emotions of the educatees, respects the subject status and democratic rights of the educatees, it has greatly mobilized people's enthusiasm and initiative, enabling them to consciously put the interests of the Party above their own interests, to endure hardships before enjoyment, and to be willing to contribute, be courageous to sacrifice and form an indestructible revolutionary force. The spiritual core of self-education has existed for a long time as a factor in the development of human history and educational activities, and has been generally accepted. It guides people to constantly self-examine, self-reflect and improve their political and moral levels with advanced ideas, which is conducive to improving the effect of Ideological and political education.

### **The Implementation and Application of Self-education Method**

**The Basic Steps.** First, self-awareness. Self-education begins with self-awareness. There is no objective understanding of the subjective self, and self-evaluation and self-education cannot be discussed. However, people's understanding of the nature of self is not an easy task. People are in various relationships. Others' opinions about themselves and their own views on themselves are intertwined. It is necessary to have the ability to distinguish between right and wrong in various public opinions, in order to recognize the "original face of the self." Self-knowledge is a dynamic evolutionary process, which is gradually maturing. It is bound to be limited by personal experience and narrow perspective. It is inevitable to know oneself in the complexity of others, external environment and social relations, which is superficial, one-sided and subjective. Therefore, self-knowledge is gradually approaching the right in the extension of space-time span. Second, self-evaluation. Self-evaluation is the deepening of self-knowledge, as well as an emotional experience and judgment attitude towards one's own morality, thoughts and behavior. When

conducting self-evaluation, "I" is decomposed into the subject me and the object me. The appraised me appears as an object, and the appraiser's I appears as a subject. The correctness of self-evaluation is not based on the evaluation of the subject, but on whether the subject is consistent with the object. The evaluation that reflects the true appearance of the object is the correct evaluation. There are four kinds of self-evaluation, that is, evaluation in accordance with objective reality, too high evaluation, too low evaluation, and more wrong evaluation under certain specific conditions. The actual level of evaluation and self-experience are in harmony. They can not only see their own strengths, but also know their own shortcomings. They can accurately evaluate their strengths, but also discover their inner defects. In the affirmative self, the negatives should be negated, and in the negation, the affirmative self should be affirmed. This kind of evaluation is a positive evaluation, which promotes self-improvement. Excessive and low self-evaluation is deviatory evaluation, which plays a negative role. Third, self-shaping and self-improvement. Self-awareness and self-evaluation reflect the reality me, self-shaping and self-improvement are somewhat romantic. The logical development of self-education is the transition from reality self to "romantic" self. People are not born to be what kind of people, or not what kind of people. In addition to genetic genes, human nature and human perfection are acquired and created. From the common people to the great, from the weak to the able, from the mediocre to the scholar, and so on, people in society are creating themselves. In the process of self-shaping and perfection, we need to have strong willpower to regulate and control. In practice, we need to use self-education methods suitable for our own personality and constantly hone ourselves, so that the ideal can become reality.

**The Specific Method.** "The realization of the best effect of ideological and political education is based on the fact that the educated consciously internalizes the educational content into their own inner moral norms and ideals, and consciously externalizes the formed norms and beliefs into their own behaviors." [3] The realization of this goal requires individuals to have appropriate self-education methods. The methods of self-education vary from person to person. All kinds of self-education methods are choices made by people's subjective consciousness in a certain environment. In the rich library of self-education methods, only by choosing the most effective self-education methods pertinently can we achieve the goal of self-improvement. Here are some of the most commonly used methods of self-education.

First, demonstration method. In social group activities, people have a psychological tendency to imitate each other in behavior, which is the demonstration effect. Demonstration effect method is to set up the image of oneself to imitate and study ideal characters in psychology, so as to educate oneself. "See the wise and think alike" is one of the most commonly used self-education methods with demonstration effect. Second, the analysis method. Everyone has its own contradictions. There are contradictions between right and wrong, new and old in thought, psychological contradiction between perfection and disorder, balance and imbalance. There is a contradiction between public and private, collective and individual in moral consciousness. Personal development has contradictions between social needs and personal needs, smoothness and frustration. People exist and develop in contradictions. Analysis is to analyze their own objective contradictions, overcome negative aspects, develop positive aspects, and promote their own progress. Third, the introspection method. Zeng Zi said that "I reflect on my words and deeds many times a day" is the method of introspection. Introspection is a type of self-criticism. Mao Zedong pointed out "the method of criticism and self-criticism is the basic method of self-education". [4] This kind of self-criticism is a kind of inner reflection without pressure and supervision. This kind of introspection, of course, is not a closed-door thinking, but a self-conscious self-cultivation method based on the interests of the people and practice. Fourth, the method of "cautious independence". "cautious independence" was originally the Confucian method of moral cultivation and the noble moral realm expected to achieve. Today, it can still be used for self-education. Whether in the open or in the dark, in the crowd or alone, no one hears or witnesses, but also self-restraint. Fifth, motto method. It is the most common and easy way to choose your favorite motto, epigram in order to encourage and educate yourself.

## Key Points and Difficulties of Self-education Method

First, we should pay attention to the correct grasp of the principle of "subjectivity" in the process of self-education methods. Subjectivity is the most remarkable characteristic of self-education which is different from other education. That is to say, the subject initiative and creativity of the educatee are brought into full play, focusing on the development of positive personality traits and pursuing self-development and self-realization. It is a kind of developmental self-education. Just as the ultimate goal of modern ideological and political education is to "seek to improve human ability to understand the world and transform the world, and promote the free and all-round development of human beings",[5] True self-education must conform to subjectivity. The process of self-depreciation and self-repression, which simply interprets self-education as self-review, self-criticism and self-reflection, is not real self-education.

Second, pay attention to the combination of self-education and education. In the implementation of Ideological and political education, education and self-education are two aspects of unity of opposites. Education lays the ideological foundation for self-education. Ideological and political education begins with education. It determines the nature of Ideological and political education. Without this kind of education and guidance, there will be no correct direction of self-education. Self-education reflects the effectiveness of Ideological and political education, is the necessary condition for achieving educational effect, and is the necessary extension and expansion of education. Self-education is not spontaneous education, nor laissez-faire education. Therefore, we must correctly guide self-education. As a stage or a way of self-education in Ideological and political education, self-education should be carried out under the management and suggestions of Ideological and political educators.

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