



Education and Transformation of Underachievers in Colleges and Universities

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Abstract

Education and transformation of underachievers is one of focuses and difficulties in education and management of students in higher colleges and universities. Underachievers can be classified into four types of laggard ethic thought, laggard psychological quality, laggard behavioral habits and laggard academic performance. Formation of underachievers is not only due to themselves, but also is closely related to relations with the family, school and the society. Education and transformation of underachievers is a quite complicated and painstaking task, and it is required to mobilize a variety of power from the school, family and the society and to take some comprehensive measures of helping and educating with focus, institutional guarantee, driving by precursors and psychological assistance, etc, so that optimal effects can be achieved.

Keywords: Colleges and universities, Underachievers, Education, Transformation

In any organization or team, there always exist precursing and lagging. The issue of underachievers is the external subject in education, and is also a severe challenge for us to implement education for all-round development and to attempt to improve quality of education and teaching. Thus, lots of experts, scholars and teaching staff have made comprehensive and profound discussion and have put forward quite many opinions with original viewpoints and vivid measures. The author in this paper believes that, only if deep analysis is conducted in major types of underachievers, their performance, psychological characteristics and reasons underlying and only versatile, flexible and feasible educational measures are taken, can education and transformation of underachievers can put into practice.

1. Major types of underachievers

Underachievers refer to those students temporarily lagging behind in virtue, moral conduct or learning. There don't exist two completely identical individuals in the world, so existence of individual differences among underachievers is also a fact we have to be faced up with. According to personal characteristics and daily performance, underachievers can be classified into the following several types.

1.1 Underachievers lagging in ethic thought

In education for all-round development, ethic thought is the most important quality, and together with cultivation of scientific and cultural quality, such as knowledge quality, skill quality, psychological quality and physical quality, constitutes an organic whole of education for all-round development. A large majority of underachievers lag behind in their ethic thought. They lack a farseeing ambition, correct life goal and struggle direction, are biased in their philosophy of life and values, and are confounded with right and wrong, beauty and ugliness, good and evil, honor and dishonor. Some students are lacking in love, knowing a little about respecting the old and loving the young. Some students have serious trend of individualism, selfish, profiting themselves at the expense of others, unable to deal with relations between individualism and collectivism, individuals and others, and even between their parents and themselves. They are short of the most fundamental sense of responsibility and sense of obligation. Even some students are in defiance of morality, and violate law and discipline, which is often manifested in a desperate and dominated concept of the Hero, and concept of anarchic freedom and ungraceful concept of pleasure.

1.2 Underachievers lagging in psychological quality

Psychological quality usually refers to psychological traits in terms of emotion, will, interest and characteristics. Overall

condition of contemporary university students' personal psychological quality is healthy, but meanwhile, there also exist issues that cannot be neglected. Investigation and research on psychological health of university students in recent years indicate, quite a large majority of students have untoward effect and adjustment disorders in terms of psychology. The occurrence rate of psychological disease is up to approximately 30%, and continues to present an increasing trend, manifested as anxiety, coercing, terror, depression and neurasthenia, etc, obviously affecting health and growth of some students. For example, in dealing with relations with classmates, some students lay too much emphasis on emotion and are loyal to friends, so they usually fail to distinguish right from wrong, and act on emotion. Lability of affect exists among some students and they are often subject to changing moods. Some students have too serious inferiority complex, lacking in confidence, have no ambition at all, and always bow to superiority of others. Some students are too treasonous, keen on face-saving, so they fear and resist criticism from teachers and disdain from classmates, and have quite abnormal psychological reactance and psychological inversion.

1.3 Underachievers lagging in behavioral habits

University students have strong plasticity. At the beginning, a certain ill-natured behavior may be out of accident. However, with repetition of several times, this ill-natured behavior may become an ill-natured habit after being associated with certain need and satisfaction. Quite lots of underachievers frequently commit an error, which is caused by a certain ill-natured habit. Some students lack the concept of discipline, lax in life, fond of play, often late for school, leave early, even truant from school, and they learn to smoke, drink and even become addicted. Some students are indifferent to the concept of labor, without good work and rest habits, and pay no attention to hygiene. Some students are weak in will power, unable to control themselves, and often play computer games and become addicted to chat online. Some students violate school disciplines and regulations, haunt the playroom, video room, billiard room and song and dance hall. They often jumble together with disengaged persons in the society, stealing and fighting, and continually committing lapse.

1.4 Underachievers lagging in academic performance

Difficult learning is the most outstanding manifest among underachievers. Difficult learning means that academic performance goes down due to reasons of learning methods, learning motive, learning attitude and will, etc, although underachievers are normal in intelligence. Thus, their academic performance obviously lags behind that of other students, and causes them not to attain basic requirements stipulated by the school learning. Some students are lacking in a goal of their life, without exact learning motive and learning target, lacking in thirst for knowledge and curiosity, without any interest in learning, and lacking in learning motive. Some students don't grow up with perfect learning habits, without effective learning methods and their ability to learning is inadequate. Some students have no requirements on themselves, and they learn just to respond to the exams, their parents and teachers, without correct attitude and weary of studying.

The above four types are four manifest forms of underachievers, but there are no bright lines between them. One specific underachiever usually integrates several of the four types, centered with one or two types.

2. Realistic reasons for formation of underachievers

Reasons for formation of underachievers are extremely complicated, the following factors all contribute directly or indirectly to growth of students, such as, their psychological development process, growth experiences, learning and living background, family educational background, and interpersonal relation background ,etc. Even in the same learning and living environment, growth differences among students still exist objectively. An earnest analysis of reasons for formation of underachievers is the key to carry out the idea of "people oriented and to teach students according to their aptitude", to implement education and transformation and to facilitate healthy growth of underachievers. According to the author, the following four aspects have extremely importance significance on formation of underachievers.

2.1 Aspect of individual students

Individual conditions of students differ in thousands ways. Some students have physical handicap or psychological problems, and even if postnatal learning and living environment is quite favorable, their developmental potential is also restricted to a great extent. As time goes, disparity between them and other students become more and more obvious. Due to continual failure in learning, some students may feel inferiority complex; some may feel difficult to adapt themselves to the environment all at once as a result of dissatisfaction, so that a negative and idlesse feeling may be caused among them; some are weak in self-constraint due to addiction to play for a long time, lacking in perseverant patience and bullheaded self-control, etc. All these factors might lead to formation of underachievers.

2.2 Aspect of the family

Parents are the first teacher of their children, so their words and behaviors have an imperceptible influence upon their children. Quite lots of parents don't play a great role model for their children. Some parents are irritable, lacking in

patience in education on their children, and lack appropriate educational methods, so that psychological inversion is caused among children and education effect is greatly undermined. Some parents neglect communication with their children because they are involved in work, and they mistakenly believe that, it is enough to give the m financial support, and they know little and even nothing of conditions of their children. Then, “generation gap” is caused between parents and children, which makes it difficult to realize the significance of family education.

2.3 Aspect of the school

Formation of underachievers is closely interrelated with individual factors and family education. However, education and management of the school is also a reason that cannot be ignored. On one hand, after students are encountered with difficulties or commit an error, they will become underachievers soon if they don't get timely assistance and correction. And they even may “throw the handle after the blade”, and afterwards, are unable to recover after a set-back. On the other hand, ill-natured behavior and simple and crude teaching methods of part of teachers may also cause disdain feeling among students, which may cause them to be unable to learn without dedication.

2.4 Aspect of the society

The phenomena of deflection of general mood of the society, manufacturing the fake and fake traffic, cheating and pilferage overrun. And also, the phenomena of loss in weight, working exclusively for profit and putting money above everything else are widespread. In such a living environment, students mistakenly believe that it is useless to learn, and even if one has a diploma, as a matter of fact, he just ploughs the sand. Therefore, some students are short of correct philosophy of life, upward mobility, and even some cannot devote themselves to learning after they witness that some families profit a lot from producing a special product, so they begin to think about forsaking studies. Unhealthy phenomena in the society, such as, corruption and money worship, cause part of students to lose correct values and the idea of loving ease and detesting work is generated among them. Development of internet technology makes some harmful information widespread, and cause part of university students to be indulged, neglecting their studies.

3. Fundamental measures taken for education and transformation of underachievers

Education and transformation of underachievers is a quite tough and complicated task. According to teaching experiences for many years, the author believes that education and transformation of underachievers should commence with the following several aspects.

3.1 Concentration of power from the university, family and the society is the foundation for education and transformation of underachievers.

Influences of the family and the society on students are far beyond education in the university. For quite a long time, in terms of education on students, especially underachievers, integration of after-school education and intramural education is not adequate. The university earnestly admonishes positive education, whereas unhealthy ways and customers in the society have strong negative influences upon students. Therefore, to strengthen connection between the university, family and society and to concentrate power of the three is the important basis for education and transformation of students. On one hand, the university should take the initiative to communicate with parents, and regularly inform parents of students' conditions of learning, living and thinking by means of home visiting, written letter or telephone contact, etc. And especially, they should reflect behaviors of students in being late, absenteeism, and asking for leave, etc at the very first time. On the other hand, parents are required to send information back to the university about their basic conditions at home, so as to establish an effective channel to educate and manage students together by the university and the family. In addition, power of social education resources should be brought into full play, and such facilities as museum, science museum and patriotic education base should be utilized, also including model achievements of advanced individuals or groups of heroes and models, morality model and the disabled, which may generate impetus and influential effects on students, especially underachievers.

3.2 To heap and educate with focus is the basic measure taken for education and transformation of underachievers.

Here, there are two levels of connotation for help and education with focus. On one hand, the most laggard students among underachievers should be selected to help and educate, and on the other hand, major laggard aspects of underachievers should be helped and educated with focus.

George Elton Mayo, Founder of behavioral science, put forward in his Hawthorne experiment, “informal organization” exists in a formal organization, that is, a more complicated relationship system constituted by informal groups exist under cover of formal legal relations. As a matter of fact, the groups of underachievers tend to form several “informal organizations”. Leading characters in these organizations intensively reflect the common values and interests of a lot of underachievers, and enjoy high reputation and influencing force among underachievers. As an old saying goes, “To catch brigands, first catch their king”. In the process of education and transformation, leading characters of the “informal organization” constituted by underachievers naturally become the major targets of the work. Practitioners of education and management on students should, first of all, strengthen effective communication with “leading

characters” of this sort of students, lead them to studying hard, and pick off the cap of “leading” from underachievers, which will exert typical demonstration influence upon other underachievers, and will thoroughly collapse “informal organization” of underachievers.

Usually, obvious individual differences exist among underachievers, some lagging behind in academic performance, some in ethic thought and some are distempered in psychological quality, etc. Practitioners of education and management on students should bring out students’ strengths to make up for their weaknesses and should teach students based on their aptitude according to different characteristics of underachievers. As for students with defect in ethic quality and behavioral habits, the focus is to lead them to establish correct philosophy of life and values, to intensify the consciousness of abiding by discipline and social ethic concept, to learn self-discipline and self-management and to become students with civilized words and action, making forward progress and observe discipline. As for students laggard in academic performance, the focus is to lead them to correct their learning attitude, cultivate learning interest, often come to know their learning situation, strengthen supervision and check on their performance, and help them to improve their school performance. As for students with psychological problems and even psychological disease, the focus is to strengthen psychological and healthy education on them, cultivate their self-confidence, take appropriate measures of professional psychological regulation and intervening to rectify their ill-natured psychological condition and help them to surpass themselves, conquer themselves and reinvent themselves.

3.3 To play the precursing role is a powerful hand grip for education and transformation of underachievers.

If one sheep leaps over the ditch, all the rest will follow. Even underachievers have an onward prime motive at the bottom of their heart. Therefore, to carry forward uprightness, establish precursing examples and lead underachievers to learn from good examples with consciousness is a powerful hand grip for education and transformation of underachievers. Firstly, we should intensify construction of good class atmosphere and affect underachievers. To make clear the struggle target of the class and strive for “civilization class” and “example class”. To formulate acknowledged civilization behavior rules of the class and establish correct collectivism public opinions and concept of values. Students should be cultivated in their sense of group honor and sense of pride. They should be treated without any discrimination, and any class affair should be fair, open and just to avoid unhealthy practices and evil phenomena. It is proved, healthy class atmosphere can exert effective assimilation and edification effect upon underachievers, and can stimulate them to improve themselves and strive for progress. Secondly, to take as examples student pacesetters in learning and morality, and to bring their typical demonstration role into play. To propagandize their precursing examples to strengthen students’ concept of right and wrong, especially underachievers. To enable students to learn with direction, to pursue with target, to improve themselves with motive and to stimulate their upward mobility to change their current situation. Thirdly, to concentrate on exploring vivid examples of transformation and advancement among underachievers, and to intensify the persuasive force and infectivity of the examples. Especially, we should educate underachievers with examples of successful transformation of students surrounding them and students they are familiar with, enable them to come to realize their disadvantages, to realize the necessity and possibility of their behavior and to learn to overcome their defect and disadvantages.

3.4 To set up and amplify the system of help and education is a significant guarantee for education and transformation of underachievers.

Rules and regulations are procedures or behavioral principles required to followed by all, so institutional construction plays a more fundamental role in education and transformation of underachievers. Firstly, to establish obligation system of education and transformation of underachievers. After confirming the list of underachievers as the target of education and transformation, the school should appoint specific teachers and student practitioners to take charge of specific education and transformation task. Their obligations and tasks should be made clear, and they are required to come to a comprehensive understanding of students’ characteristics, disadvantages and advantages, to know about their manifest inside and outside the university, to conduct a deep analysis in their psychological and behavioral features, and to teach them based on their aptitude. Secondly, to establish a system of communication between leading cadre, student union officers and underachievers. Major leading personnel and all student practitioners in a college (department) should often talk with underachievers, and carefully keep records about a conversion. Through communication, they should understand underachievers’ thinking and psychological conditions, help them to come to deep recognition of themselves, reflect by themselves and to help them resolve their thinking perplexity and realistic problems. Thirdly, to establish a system of regular summary on education and transformation of underachievers. Each college (department) should track and investigate education and transformation of underachievers in a dynamic way, keep their archives carefully about the education and transformation, summarize experiences and feelings in communication about education and transformation of underachievers, improve disadvantages in the process and stimulate benign progress of education and transformation of underachievers.

3.5 To strengthen psychological assistance is the necessary means for education and transformation of underachievers.

To strengthen psychological and healthy education among university students is an important measure to carry out

education strategy of the CCP and to implement education for all-round development in a new situation, an important approach and means to promote overall development of university students and is a significant component of ethic education in higher colleges and universities. In education and transformation of underachievers, psychological and healthy education plays an irreplaceable role. Behavioral manifest of underachievers is usually closely related to their psychological conditions. Considering the objective situation of heavy psychological pressure and heavy thinking burden of underachievers, to strengthen psychological consultation for them, to cultivate their right personality and to improve their psychological quality is a necessary aspect for education and transformation of underachievers. Firstly, to apply means of test and investigation in psychological consulting, and to understand their psychological condition can provide evidence for education and transformation of underachievers. Secondly, to skillfully apply the skill of conversation in psychological consulting, and to improve effects of conversing with underachievers so as to effectively alter their thinking concept. Thirdly, to establish psychological archives of underachievers, to track their psychological consulting, to alleviate their psychological burden and pressure and to promote education and transformation of underachievers.

4. Several problems to be paid attention to in education and transformation of underachievers

According to Contemporary Educational Psychology, mutual respect is the most fundamental principle to improve all interpersonal relations. Only if educators really know and understand underachievers, respect their personality and treat each student equally, can underachievers deeply feel that, each word and action of teachers is out of their internal care and love, and is aimed to enable them to make progress continually and to improve their basic quality and comprehensive quality. Therefore, in the process of education and transformation of underachievers, we should pay special attention to the following several issues.

4.1 Underachievers should be treated with love.

Tao Xingzhi said, "The one who doesn't love his students cannot educate his students well." Love is the foundation and premise of education. Because underachievers have lots of shortcomings and defects, and assume heavy thinking burden, it is likely that they have an inferiority complex. Thus, education and management practitioners are required to love students from the bottom of their heart, without dislike, discrimination and alienating, and ask the collective to treat and help them in a correct way. Only if we cure the wound of their heart with warmth of our heart, rinse dirt of their spirit with nectar of our spirit, eliminate contrasting feelings of underachievers towards teachers, parents and classmates, can we carry out the transformation work. In daily life, I care about them in various aspects: in studying, I guide them with warmth; whenever they are faced up with difficulties, I always give them sincere help; whenever they have slight progress, I always encourage them in time; whenever they make a mistake, I always educate them with patience, so that they can feel love and care from the teacher and gradually put right mistakes and shortcomings. Self-esteem and collective sense of honor is an internal power for students to get forward and to attempt to overcome their shortcomings. The other side of underachievers' strong sense of inferiority is strong sense of self-esteem, with the two interweaving together. Educators should understand and respect personality and self esteem of underachievers and treat them with an equal attitude to let them feel respect and love from educators. From the perspective of psychology, if underachievers feel positive emotion, such as, happiness and trust in communication with teachers, they will be quite willing to listen to edification of educators, and to finish any task assigned by them. Otherwise, the opposite result will occur. Therefore, in the process of education and transformation of underachievers, educators should start from sincerely establishing and cultivating emotion with underachievers, go towards them, care about them and come to know them, and should especially pay attention to convincing people by emotion and sound reasoning to make them establish self-confidence and to combine education and self-education based on the basis of adequate understanding and trust.

4.2 Underachievers should be treated with patience.

In the process of growth and progress, it is normal for underachievers to repeat again and again. Since alteration of underachievers' thinking, improvement of their ethic quality and formation of their behavioral habits are similar to development of any other thing, which is a meandrous process, it is, by no means, a process of "reaching the goal in one move". One correct viewpoint can become one of students themselves only after repetition of several times, and one wrong behavior can also be corrected after criticism and education of several times. This requires us to be patient to our underachievers, to treat with repetition of the process of education of transformation in a correct way, to conduct further investigation into reasons of repetition, and to proceed with the work of repeated education with patience and perseverance.

4.3 Advantages of underachievers should be discovered and appreciated.

The American Psychologist William James says, "The most profound principle of humanity is to wish oneself to be appreciated". He also discovers that, one who hasn't been stimulated can only bring 20%-30% of his ability into play, whereas once he is stimulated, he can bring 80%-90% of his ability into play. Therefore, in the process of education and

transformation of underachievers, the significance of adequate commendation and stimulation seems extremely important. Student education and management practitioners should be good at seizing underachievers' "shining point" and trivial progress, and should give them affirmation, encouragement and praise in time to highlight their advantages and progress, to satisfy their self-esteem and normal psychological need, so as to overcome their inferiority complex, acquire courage and confidence to overcome shortcomings, and to create opportunities for education and transformation.

4.4 Different educational measures should be taken according to diversities of underachievers.

Acknowledgement of individual differences among students is a logic premise to carry out the principle of "people orientation". There doesn't exist a ready-made and fixed mode for education and transformation of underachievers. Thus, education and management practitioners should select flexible and effective educational measures, detect the breakthrough of education and seek for a key to unlock the soul lock to promote their education and transformation based on deep investigation, and considering age, personality, laggard aspects and degree and individual differences of consciousness, etc.

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