



## UNDERSTANDING SELF AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN EDUCATION

**Anita Belapurkar, Ph. D.**

*H.G.M. Azam College of Education, Pune*

### *Abstract*

*Self-understanding is the key to the successful resolution of any emotional problem. Self understanding has important aspects as; self concept, self esteem and ideal self. This study focuses on these importance aspects in detail. It also gives strategies of understanding self and improving our self. It tells us about the importance of teacher's role in improving self esteem of students and helps them in understanding themselves.*



*Scholarly Research Journal's is licensed Based on a work at [www.srjis.com](http://www.srjis.com)*

### **Introduction:**

‘The self is not something that one finds; it is something that one creates ‘One should understand himself truly for realistic, satisfactory and truly optimistic life. Our self should be developed in a right direction from early years of age so as to develop our personality. In this respect understanding self is crucial in education.

### **Self Understanding:**

“Self understanding is awareness of and ability to understand one's own actions.”

"Self-understanding is the key to the successful resolution of any emotional problem"

The various aspects of self that we consider are;

### **Why Self Understanding**

Benefits of self understanding:

- Knowing exactly what is bothering you instead of feeling bad without knowing why. This in turn will allow you to take the first step towards **happiness**
- Not feeling lost because you will know exactly where you fit in life. Whether it's a career or a relationship.
- A solid understanding of others, the more you understand yourself the more will you understand others.

Understanding self can be focused mainly as;

### **1. The physical self**

Who you are physically is important to many people, and being physically fit and strong is a big part of how they define themselves.

### **2. The social self**

'A' doesn't have a lot of friends, but those she does have are very close to her. She likes to spend time with her friends and get to know them deeply. This is part of her social self; that is, how a person relates to others.

'B' is different from A here, too. She has lots and lots of friends and is always surrounded by a bunch of people. She likes to spend time in the midst of a party crowd. Her social self is still part of her self-concept, but it is different from 'A's.

### **3. The competent self**

**Competence** is the ability of a person to provide for their basic needs.

### **4. The inner self**

Also sometimes called the psychological self, is made up of the feelings and thoughts that a person has deep inside them. (Simply Psychology)

**While understanding about self one can get three important aspects of self, they are;**

- **Self concept**- picture or concept of ourselves
- **Self esteem**- feeling we have about ourselves
- **Self ideal**- the way we would like to be

### **Self Concept**

Baumeister (1999) defines **Self Concept** as;

"Self Concept is individual's belief about himself or herself, including the person's attributes and who and what the self is".

Self Concept is an important term for both social psychology and humanism. Lewis (1990) suggests that development of a concept of self has two aspects:

#### **(1) The Existential Self**

This is 'the most basic part of the self-scheme or self-concept; the sense of being separate and distinct from others and the awareness of the constancy of the self' (Bee, 1992).

The child realizes that they exist as a separate entity from others and that they continue to exist over time and space.

#### **2) The Categorical Self**

Having realized that he or she exists as a separate experiencing being, the child next becomes aware that he or she is also an object in the world.

**Purkey suggests that self concept is**

- Learned
- Organized
- Dynamic

**Carl Rogers (1959) believes that** the self concept has three different components:

- The view you have of yourself (**self image**)
- How much value you place on yourself (**self esteem** or self-worth)
- What you wish you were really like (**ideal self**)

**Self Esteem**

Self esteem refers to the extent to which we like accept or approve of ourselves or how much we value ourselves. Self esteem always involves a degree of evaluation and we may have either a positive or a negative view of ourselves.

**High Self Esteem** i.e. we have a positive view of ourselves. This tends to lead to

- Confidence in our own abilities
- Self acceptance
- Not worrying about what others think
- Optimism

**Low Self Esteem** i.e. we have a negative view of ourselves. This tends to lead to

- Lack of confidence
- Want to be/look like someone else
- Always worrying what others might think
- Pessimism

There are several ways of measuring self-esteem.

Even though self-esteem might fluctuate, there are times when we continue to believe good things about ourselves even when evidence to the contrary exists. This is known as the perseverance effect.

Miller and Ross (1975) showed that people who believed they had socially desirable characteristics continued in this belief even when the experimenters tried to get them to believe the opposite. Does the same thing happen with bad things if we have low self-esteem? Maybe not, perhaps with very low self-esteem all we believe about ourselves might be bad.

Argyle (2008) believes there are 4 major factors that influence self esteem.

**1) The Reaction of Others. 2) Comparison with Others. 3) Social Roles. 4) Identification.**

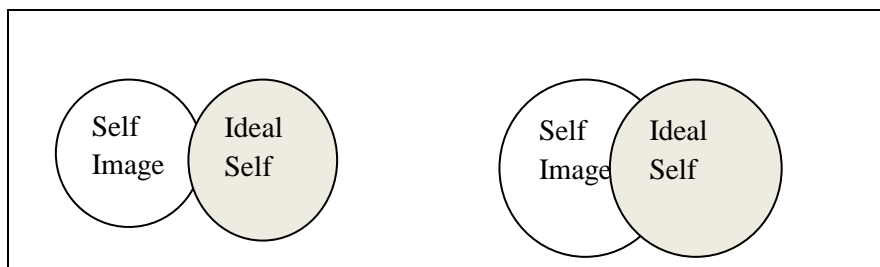
**Ideal Self**

**(What you'd like to be)**

If there is a mismatch between how you see yourself (e.g. your self image) and what you'd like to be (e.g. your ideal self ) then this is likely to affect how much you value yourself.

Therefore, there is an intimate relationship between self-image, ego-ideal and self-esteem. Humanistic psychologists study this using the Q-Sort Method.

A person's ideal self may not be consistent with what actually happens in life and experiences of the person. Hence, a difference may exist between a person's ideal self and actual experience. This is called incongruence.



**Figure1: Ideal Self**

Where a person's ideal self and actual experience are consistent or very similar, a state of congruence exists. Rarely, if ever does a total state of congruence exist; all people experience a certain amount of incongruence. The development of congruence is dependent on unconditional positive regard. Michael Argyle (2008) says there are four major factors which influence its development:

- The ways in which others (particularly significant others) react to us.
- How we think we compare to others
- Our social roles
- The extent to which we identify with other people

**Self esteem = success/prentensions**

Increasing self esteem results when success is improved relative to expectations.

**Individual level analysis of the self**

There are two levels of analysis that one can look at self and identity. One level of analysis is the self on the individual level for example: self-states, self-motives self-esteem, self motives, self efficacy, etc. Self-states are self-process that include unbiased self awareness. However, self-motives are more serious impulses to action, something that is innate and universal to all.

**Societal or cultural analysis of the self**

The other level of analysis is on the societal or cultural level for example: the cultural conception of a person, cultural arrangements that make the person who they are and the cultural concept of self. Self and identity is highly contingent upon culture.

| Self Concept built by   | Self Concept destroyed by  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Finding a good role model</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Comparing yourself to others</li></ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Praise &amp; compliment</li></ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Putting yourself down</li></ul>        |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Focus on positive</li></ul>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Drug abuse</li></ul>                   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Keep criticism minimum</li></ul>    |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Set &amp; achieve goals</li></ul>   |  |

**Table 1: Self Concept**

### **How to understand self**

**1-Get an objective assessment** – from people you know, personality tests, how you interact with people, career tests, learning styles etc.

**2- Character writing exercises:** Try answering the following questions to get an idea of what this is like:

- How would you describe yourself in one sentence?
- What is your purpose in your life's story?
- What is the most important thing that has ever happened to you? Etc.

**3-Evaluate your strengths and weaknesses:** You can come to a better understanding of who you are and what is most important to you by thinking about your strengths and weaknesses. Importantly, you'll want to compare your perception with your strengths and weaknesses to the strengths and weaknesses identified by your friends, family, and coworkers.

**Examine your priorities.** What you think is most important in life and in your day-to-day interactions can tell you a lot about yourself. Think about your priorities, compare them to the priorities of other people you respect, and think what your conclusions say about you.

**Look at how you've changed.** Look at your past and think about how what has happened to you over your lifetime has affected how you act and think today. Looking at how you've changed as a person can reveal a lot about why you act the way that you do, because our current behaviors are built on our past experiences.

**Check yourself when you experience strong emotions.** Sometimes, you'll find yourself getting really, strongly angry, sad, happy, or excited. Understanding what sets off these stronger-than-normal reactions, what their root cause is, can help you understand yourself better.

**Watch out for repression and transference.** Repression is when you don't want to think about something so you help yourself to forget it even happened. Transference is when you emotionally react to one thing, but what you're really reacting to is something else. Both of these behaviors, which are very common, are unhealthy and finding out why you do them and finding ways to handle those emotions in a healthier way will make you a much happier person

**Notice how and when you talk about yourself.** Do you turn every conversation you have into a conversation about yourself? Do you make jokes at your own expense whenever you talk about yourself? you should pay attention to extremes and think about why you go to those extremes.

**Look at how and why you interact with others.** When you interact with people, do you tend to put them down? Maybe you've noticed that you only choose to spend time with people that have more money than you. Behaviors like this can also teach you things about yourself and what is really important to you.

**Write your biography.** Write your biography in 500 words in 20 minutes. This will require you to type very fast and think less about what you will include, helping you to identify what your brain thinks is most important when defining who you are. **See**

**Look at the way you react in tough or new situations.** When things get really tough, Think about how you've reacted in the past when the tension has gotten high. Why did you react the way that you did? How do you wish that you'd reacted? Would you be more likely to react that way now?

**Examine your influences.** The things that have an influence on how you think and how you see the world can say a lot about you, whether you actually conform to what they teach or not. In seeing where your influences have shaped your behavior, you can better understand the root of the behaviors you do have.

### **Opening yourself to reflections**

**Let go of your defensiveness.** If you're more open to discussion, criticism, and change, then other people can really help you understand and improve yourself.

**Be honest with yourself.** there's no point in lying to you. Even if you discover truths about yourself that you really don't like, this only gives you the opportunity to take those problems head on instead of just pretending like they don't exist.

**Listen to what others say to and about you.** Think about what people have said in the past and ask for some new opinions about your behavior.

**Give advice.** Giving advice will often give you a great opportunity to think through your own problems and reevaluate them from the outside.

**Take time and experience life.** The best way to really get to know yourself, however, is to just experience life. Just like getting to know another person,

**Conclusion:**

Understanding yourself takes time and you'll learn far more through experiencing life than by interviewing yourself and taking tests.

As a teacher one should help the students to understand themselves at every level of education through various strategies, Accept students, their feelings, their background, and their behavior. It is important for teachers to explicitly teach children how to set realistic expectations of themselves and their skills.

**References:**

- Barry, K. & King, L. (1998) Beginning Teaching and Beyond, Social Science Press, Australia*
- Baumeser, R. F. Ed (1993) Self-Esteem - The Puzzle of Low Self-Regard, Plenum Press, New York*
- Joseph, J.M. (1994) The Resilient Child: Preparing Today's Youth for Tomorrow's World, Insight Books, New York*
- Loomans, D. & Loomans, J. (1994) Full Esteem Ahead - 100 Ways to Build Self-Esteem in Children & Adults, H. J. Kramer Inc*
- Rijers, Kell et al, "The Role of Self Understanding in the Prediction of Behavior." University of Chikago.*
- Solomon, R. (1992) Full Esteem Ahead - Keys To Strong Personal Values and Positive Self-Esteem, Kincaid House Publishing, Newport Beach, California*
- Van Ness, R. (1995) Raising Self-Esteem of Learners, Phi Delta Kappa Education Foundation, Indiana*