

Development of a School-Based Mental Health Curriculum for Secondary Schools——Core Literacy Oriented

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Abstract: The organic integration of psychological health education with the cultivation of core competencies represents a prominent direction in the current reform of moral education in secondary schools. While promoting the dissemination of psychological health knowledge and strengthening students' psychological resilience, schools must also enhance students' abilities to apply psychological principles in addressing and resolving practical challenges in their academic and personal lives. This multifaceted approach aims to effectively improve the overall quality of students. Accordingly, the present study, in conjunction with practical considerations, examines the current state of psychological health education in secondary schools and investigates the development strategies for school-based psychological health education curriculum within the framework of core competency orientation.

Keywords: Core Competencies; Psychological Health Education; School-Based Curriculum

1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on the development of core competencies in basic education reform, as reflected in the systematic revision of primary and secondary school curricula. These revisions prioritize “moral education and holistic personal development” as the overarching mission, with “core competencies” at the forefront of curriculum reform goals. As the new curriculum reform progresses, various academic disciplines are increasingly emphasizing the cultivation of students' core competencies. However, current research on the integration of core competencies with academic subjects focuses mainly on traditional examination-oriented subjects such as Chinese, politics, mathematics, and English, while research on psychological health education, especially within school-based curricula, remains limited.

2. Current status and determinants of secondary students' psychological well-being

2.1 Current status

In 2020, the Institute of Psychology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences conducted a survey on the psychological competence of adolescents aged 10 to 19 through online questionnaires. The findings published in the “Blue Book on Mental Health”, indicated that only 14.24% of teenagers met the standards for psychological well-being, while 24.6% of them experienced various levels of depression.

2.2 Influencing Factors

The overall psychological well-being of secondary school students is of concern and is influenced by several complex and dynamic factors. This paper analyzes these factors primarily from four perspectives: the individual, the family, the school, and society.

On a personal level, secondary school students are experiencing a critical period marked by significant physical growth and heightened self-awareness, leading to internal conflicts. The first contradiction arises from the complex, fluctuating nature of their emotions, linked to cognitive advancement and increased life experiences. The second contradiction involves the conflict between independence and dependence in students' psychology. They desire autonomy but are constrained by social, life experience, and cognitive limitations, resulting in dependence on parents and teachers. The third major contradiction involves the dual nature of students' social interaction, which is characterized by both openness and concealment. They often record their thoughts in writing or online because they have difficulty finding appropriate social outlets. Concerns about self-esteem drive their desire for connection while they fear exposure.

Family is the basic cell of society and the first school of our life. Family education plays a key role in the development of an indi-

vidual's physical and mental well-being. Previous research consistently indicates a positive correlation between the quality of parent-child relationships and psychological well-being. Healthy and harmonious parent-child relationships serve as positive predictors of adolescents' psychological well-being, whereas negative and strained parent-child relationships negatively predict the psychological well-being of adolescents.

Schools, as places of learning and growth, have a significant impact on individuals. Driven by traditional, test-driven approaches, they prioritize academic knowledge over nurturing. Some schools lack dedicated mental health educators and use classroom teachers instead. In addition, some schools combine physical and ideological education with health studies, omitting specialized mental health courses. Some schools lack dedicated counseling facilities for students. Many educators haven't yet recognized the importance of psychological well-being in holistic education, neglecting its role in students' cognition, emotions, and behavior. They may also have difficulty distinguishing between psychological and ethical issues and lack the ability to scientifically address growing psychological challenges faced by students.

The Internet and online media have expanded students' access to social understanding and interaction. However, the clash of ideologies, cultural conflicts, and information overload confuse young people who lack resilience. According to social learning psychology, social norms work through conformity, with adolescents using social learning for socialization. As a result, they imitate aspects of lifestyle influenced by these norms, from trends in vocabulary and clothing to prevailing ideologies and behaviors. Positive and altruistic social norms lead to friendly, optimistic attitudes. Conversely, stagnation and opportunism in social norms can lead to listlessness and tension, fostering a negative mindset among secondary school students.

3. The Significance of School-Based Curriculum for Secondary School Mental Health Education

The "2022 Compulsory Education Curriculum Plan" emphasizes the three categories of curriculum: national, local and school-based. Amid the "14th Five-Year Plan" and education reforms, school-based curriculum development has gained prominence.

"What is school-based?" Jinzhou Zheng(2000) identifies its meaning as: "For the school", optimizing practices and raising standards to solve specific school problems; "In the school", promoting internal problem solving through collaborative efforts involving principals, teachers, parent committees, and applying solutions within the school; "Based on the school", starting from the school's reality and using its resources to enhance the school's potential.

The development of a school-based curriculum for psychological well-being in secondary schools mitigates the limitations of national and local curricula. Unlike national textbooks, it is aligned with students' physical and psychological development and teachers' expertise, tailoring content and methods to better meet teachers' and students' needs and enhancing core competencies.

Many schools prioritize enrollment and passing rates, neglecting students' psychological growth. A school-based wellness curriculum refocuses attention on students' mental health. Moreover, it enhances the school's educational research and collaboration. Collaboration among specialists, classroom and subject teachers, and school leadership will be helpful in increasing teachers' knowledge and students' psychological literacy.

4. R&D Strategies for Core Competency-Oriented School-Based Curriculum in Secondary School Psychological Well-Being

According to the "Guidelines for Psychological Health Education in Primary and Secondary Schools (Revised in 2012)," the work of psychological health education in primary and secondary schools is guided by a sixteen-point work policy: "Comprehensive promotion, highlighting key areas, categorized guidance, and coordinated development. It adheres to the basic principles of "combining scientific rigor with practical effectiveness; integrating development, prevention, and crisis intervention; addressing all students while recognizing individual differences; and combining teacher leadership with student autonomy. It is expected to be tailored to the unique needs of different regions, schools, and situational contexts.

In accordance with the above requirements, this paper will elaborate the development strategies for a core competency-oriented school-

based curriculum in secondary school psychological well-being, addressing the following aspects.

4.1 Collaborative Home-School-Health Approach

Psychological educators play a central role in current secondary school mental health education. However, relying solely on school-based mental health professionals is insufficient to meet the diverse needs of students. This is especially true for students with severe psychological problems who require assessment, intervention, diagnosis, and emotional support. To ensure comprehensive, systematic, and evidence-based psychological wellness education, family, educational, and medical professionals should be involved to form a three-dimensional alliance between families, schools, and health care. The exploration of a collaborative home-school-health model is of significant theoretical and practical value. Parents, as legal guardians, are the primary caregivers for adolescents and should guide their development. Research consistently links adolescents' psychological problems to parenting styles, family environments, and parental qualities. Establishing a "medical-educational collaboration" model with the family at its core, improving family education, and enhancing the family education environment are essential steps for school-based mental health curricula. This can include "parent classes," inviting family education experts to schools, organizing "parent open houses" to help parents understand the school environment, and "parent-child salons" to strengthen parent-child interactions. As part of this collaboration, mental health educators should receive professional and systematic training, including inviting psychiatrists to provide lectures, group counseling, and case supervision to improve the school's ability to identify and intervene in adolescent psychological and behavioral problems.

4.2 Multidisciplinary Integration in Psychological Education

Recent educational reforms in elementary and secondary schools emphasize interdisciplinary integration. The school-based psychological well-being curriculum should innovate the teaching system to maximize the value of interdisciplinary integration. Integration involves applying knowledge from subjects such as political ideology, psychological well-being, and various subject courses to real-life situations to enhance students' problem-solving abilities and to cultivate well-rounded, psychologically healthy individuals. Integration can take place with language and history, using classic literary works to analyze the psychological traits of characters. Art, music, and physical education can be used to develop self-awareness, emotional expression, and physical fitness. Biology can educate students about life and puberty, helping them adapt to the physical and psychological changes of adolescence.

4.3 Diverse Innovations in Psychology Education

To stimulate students' interest and motivation to learn, diverse and innovative methods should be used in the school-based psychological well-being curriculum. Traditional lecture-style teaching is no longer appropriate. Thematic lessons, icebreaker games, and "cosplay" psychological scenarios can be used to make psychological knowledge more relatable. Students should become active participants in the classroom, while teachers take on the role of host and organizer. In addition, using the school's cultural resources, extracurricular activities such as singing contests, knowledge quizzes, and cultural festivals can create a lively atmosphere and relieve students' academic stress. Teachers should strive to create a conducive educational environment and encourage students to actively participate in these activities.

References

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