

Exploration of the Reform of the Mental Health Education to College Student Curriculum in Normal Universities from the Perspective of Positive Psychology

Guo Ting, Zhan Xin, Meng Jidong*

School of Foreign Languages, Chongqing Normal University, Chongqing, China

*Corresponding author

Abstract: *The Mental Health Education to College Student curriculum is a crucial platform for nurturing and shaping the mental well-being of college students. To enhance the effectiveness of this curriculum in normal universities, this paper investigates and analyzes the Mental Health Education to College Student curriculum from the perspective of positive psychology. It identifies current issues within the curriculum at normal universities and proposes corresponding strategies for curriculum reform based on the principles of positive psychology. The strategies encompass teaching objectives, content, methods, and evaluation, aiming to establish a positive curriculum framework that emphasizes the development of students' psychological potential and the cultivation of positive personalities. Ultimately, this approach aims to enhance the practicality of mental health education.*

Keywords: *Positive psychology; College student mental health education; Curriculum Mental Health Education to College Student; Course*

1. Introduction

The 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China made a significant judgment that "socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era," pointing out that the principal conflict facing Chinese society has evolved into the contradiction between unbalanced and inadequate development and the people's ever-growing needs for a better life^[1]. In the current context of abundant material life, the need for a better life primarily constitutes psychological requirements. As a reserve force for teachers in China, it is particularly important for normal university students to have self-esteem, self-confidence, rationality, and a positive and upward mindset. Hence, elevating the mental health level of college students in normal universities and enhancing their self-management capabilities are pressing concerns. The *Mental Health Education to College Student* curriculum serves as a pivotal approach for providing psychological education. Reform and exploration of the *Mental Health Education to College Student* are paramount as they enable college students in normal universities to better adapt to the rapid development of contemporary society, fostering their psychological well-being from a professional perspective.

The *Mental Health Education to College Student* curriculum is a significant means of enhancing college students' psychological qualities, addressing psychological issues, and promoting their mental health development. Additionally, it is a vital component of ideological and political work in higher education^[2]. However, due to factors such as curriculum content and instructional nature, the curriculum's implementation and emphasis vary among different normal universities. As post-05s generation college students enter these institutions, it becomes imperative to further optimize and innovate the objectives, content, teaching methods, and evaluation of the *Mental Health Education to College Student* curriculum in normal universities. This adjustment is aimed at better catering to the personalized needs of contemporary college students, enhancing the effectiveness of education, and promoting students' physical and mental health development.

2. Problems in the Mental Health Education to College Student Curriculum in Normal Universities

2.1. Lack of Positive Teaching Objectives

The teaching objectives of the *Mental Health Education to College Student* curriculum are divided into preventive objectives, corrective objectives, and developmental objectives. Both preventive and corrective objectives are problem-oriented, using methods such as psychological assessment, counseling, and therapy to address students' psychological issues and alleviate distress. Developmental objectives, on the other hand, focus on students' potential, cultivating positive psychological qualities and a sound personality, enhancing their resilience, and promoting comprehensive development. Currently, the primary purpose of most normal universities in offering the *Mental Health Education to College Student* curriculum is to alleviate and regulate students' psychological problems and prevent mental illnesses. As a result, the teaching objectives of the curriculum primarily emphasize achieving preventive and corrective goals, focusing on issues that arise during students' adaptation to university, interpersonal communication, self-awareness, and emotion management. By explaining the problem, analyzing the problem, analyzing the case, and finally providing a solution^[3]. This problem-centered teaching approach overlooks the attainment of developmental objectives. Positive psychology suggests that the curriculum objectives of *Mental Health Education to College Student* in normal universities should not solely focus on preventing and correcting issues. Instead, they should foster positive indicators such as honesty, optimism, strength, courage, and self-efficacy in teacher candidates, indicating a lack of positivity in the objectives of the *Mental Health Education to College Student*

2.2. Lack of Systematic Teaching Content

The content of the *Mental Health Education to College Student* curriculum mostly comprises theoretical and academic courses, primarily explaining psychological health knowledge to students, including how to identify psychological problems and prevent mental illnesses. The content is often theoretical and cognitive in nature, lacking experiential and practical elements. Research results indicate that the offerings of the *Mental Health Education to College Student* curriculum vary across different normal universities, with most of them targeting only freshmen students^[4]. For normal university students, each stage of university life comes with psychological challenges: adaptation issues in the first year, interpersonal problems in the second year, academic pressure and romantic relationships in the third year, and employment pressure in the fourth year. Each stage requires understanding of corresponding mental health knowledge and skills. Thus, the current teaching content and arrangement lack systematicity and specificity, failing to meet the psychological needs of students from different grades and majors.

2.3. Lack of Diversity in Teaching Methods

Currently, the common teaching model for the *Mental Health Education to College Student* curriculum in normal universities involves: Case analysis, problem identification, problem analysis, and problem solving. The main teaching method during problem-solving is theoretical instruction. This "cramming method" teaching approach results in students lacking a sense of classroom engagement, failing to manifest their agency, and struggling to generate initiative and enthusiasm for learning. This instructional method centered on "problem focus" only equips students with understanding and mastery of solutions for similar issues. However, it fails to help students address and handle different types of problems, severely impeding the cultivation of students' positive psychological qualities. Furthermore, contemporary normal university students have grown up alongside the development of internet and information technology. The internet has significantly impacted their learning habits and living environment. However, the current *Mental Health Education to College Student* curriculum in normal universities lacks teaching methods that integrate information technology. Consequently, the curriculum's teaching methods lack diversity.

2.4. Lack of Scientific Teaching Evaluation

According to surveys, the evaluation methods for the *Mental Health Education to College Student* curriculum in most normal universities are consistent with those used for other professional courses. This oversight ignores the uniqueness of the curriculum, leading to a lack of scientific rigor in the evaluation process^[5]. Many schools adopt a teacher-centric evaluation system, wherein teachers implement teaching based on evaluation standards, placing students in a passive and evaluative role. This approach neglects students' inner experiences and subjective perceptions. Consequently, evaluation results fail to reflect

students' genuine thoughts, undermining the value of feedback and improvement. Moreover, many evaluation systems predominantly show teachers' teaching and students' learning, neglecting to measure various indicators of students' progress and disregarding the unique characteristics of normal university students. Currently, the evaluation methods for *Mental Health Education to College Student* primarily rely on methods such as assignments, essays, and exams. These assessment methods not only fail to accurately reflect the true effectiveness of course instruction but can also demotivate both students and teachers. In summary, the teaching evaluation of *Mental Health Education to College Student* in normal universities currently lacks scientific validity.

3. Recommendations for Reforming the Mental Health Education to College Student Curriculum from the Perspective of Positive Psychology

3.1. Develop a Positive Mental Health Education Curriculum

The *Mental Health Education to College Student* curriculum is a primary avenue for conducting psychological education in normal universities. When viewed through the lens of positive psychology, a mental health education curriculum should adhere to the principles of positive psychology. It should aim to cultivate positive personalities in college students as the teaching objective, focusing on self-experience in content and methodology, fully leveraging students' initiative and creativity, and shaping their positive psychological qualities in contemporary contexts^[6].

3.1.1. Teaching Objectives: Cultivating Positive Personality Traits

As stated in the document titled *Opinions on Further Strengthening and Improving Ideological and Political Education for College Students* ([2004]No. 16) issued by the State Council, Central Committee of the Communist Party of China: "We should attach importance to mental health education, in accordance with the characteristics of college students' physical and mental development and the laws of education, focus on cultivating college students' good psychological qualities, self-esteem, self-love, self-discipline, and self-improvement, and enhance their ability to overcome difficulties, withstand tests, and endure setbacks^[7]." Therefore, cultivating positive personality traits in college students is a core objective of the *Mental Health Education to College Student* curriculum. The *Mental Health Education to College Student* should be based on the theories of positive psychology, while simultaneously addressing developmental objectives alongside preventive and corrective goals. While addressing students' mental health issues, emphasis should also be placed on prevention, tapping into students' positive psychological potential, enhancing their positive psychological qualities, and fostering positive personalities. The *Mental Health Education to College Student* curriculum should target all students in normal universities, implementing psychological education for every student. It should optimize teaching objectives, integrate the principles of positive psychology, and enhance teaching quality through knowledge objectives, skill objectives, and emotional objectives.

3.1.2. Teaching Content: Cultivating Positive Psychological Qualities

Positive psychology asserts that every individual possesses positive psychological potential and the capacity for self-improvement. This perspective offers new insights to mental health education, enriching the content of the "Mental Health Education to College Student" curriculum. Consequently, the *Mental Health Education to College Student* should focus on shaping positive psychological qualities in college students at normal universities, including kindness, sincerity, courage, tolerance, etc. It should also cultivate students' creativity, insight, and enhance their sense of well-being. Furthermore, based on the psychological characteristics of students at different grades and majors, the curriculum should include systematic and targeted mental health education content. For instance, teaching content for freshmen could address adapting to university life, while sophomores and juniors could focus on topics such as academic pressure, emotion management, interpersonal relationships, romantic psychology, and career planning. Seniors could delve into areas like employment pressure, graduation education, and coping with setbacks.

3.1.3. Teaching Methods: Experiencing Positive Psychological Emotions

Positive psychology emphasizes that experiencing positive psychological emotions is a crucial pathway to developing a positive personality. Therefore, teaching methods should advocate diverse approaches, integrating experiential, modern, and traditional teaching methods, allowing students to fully experience positive psychological emotions during classroom instruction. To achieve optimal teaching outcomes, instructors should choose a variety of methods that most effectively engage students'

enthusiasm, initiative, and participation. These methods could include group activities, role-playing, cooperative learning, and group discussions, ensuring that every student is actively involved. Through diverse activities, students can cultivate positive subjective experiences and positive self-awareness through shared learning, thus fostering positive behavioral habits and ultimately forming positive psychological qualities.

3.1.4. Teaching Evaluation: Establishing a Scientific Evaluation System

Positive psychology proposes that the construction of a scientific and reasonable teaching evaluation system can better promote curriculum development^[8]. Thus, the evaluation system should emphasize the scientific nature of indicators and objectively reflect the patterns of college students' psychological development. First, the guiding direction of evaluation indicators should align with course objectives, focusing on cultivating positive personality traits and positive psychological qualities in college students; Second, the evaluation system should encompass the entire teaching process, including textbooks, teaching methods, teaching proficiency, student attributes, teaching outcomes, and post-class activities; Third, the structure of evaluation indicators should be optimized to most accurately reflect classroom teaching effects. The teaching evaluation system should emphasize positive feedback for students, allowing them to continuously experience positive psychological emotions in class, comprehensively understand, accept, and elevate themselves, ultimately fostering a positive personality in students.

3.2. Cultivating an Upbeat and Proficient Faculty

Teachers serve as the creators and implementers of mental health education courses, with their professional competence and personal charisma directly influencing students' cognitive behaviors^[9]. Mental health education instructors should possess a background in psychology, along with relevant professional knowledge and skills. At the same time, instructors should also proficiently master relevant knowledge of positive psychology. Normal universities should also focus on the mental health education of teachers, fully tapping into their positive energy, cultivating their positive qualities, and enhancing their positive emotional experiences. Positive emotions felt by teachers themselves can influence students, who can then provide positive feedback on classroom effectiveness, ultimately elevating the quality of teaching. Besides possessing basic professional competence and teaching skills, teachers should proactively stay informed about cutting-edge knowledge in their field, engage in research and innovation, and continue to learn and grow professionally. This proactive approach will allow teachers to effectively address the learning and developmental needs of modern-day college students.

4. Conclusion

This paper focuses on the current state of the *Mental Health Education to College Student* curriculum in normal universities, providing an objective analysis of the array of issues present in its current implementation. These issues include lack of positive teaching objectives, lack of systematic teaching content, limited diversity in teaching methods, and shortcomings in scientific teaching evaluation. These factors collectively undermine the quality of instruction and hinder the achievement of desired teaching objectives. Therefore, reforms to this curriculum are indeed necessary. Drawing on the theories and practical achievements of positive psychology, a thorough investigation into how normal universities can reform their "Mental Health Education to College Student" curriculum has been conducted, offering guidance towards creating a positive mental health education curriculum. Through the lens of positive psychology, the curriculum reform for mental health education can effectively assist normal university students in adopting positive attitudes towards people and events around them, enhance their positive psychological qualities, and shape positive personality traits. Meanwhile, it urges teachers to continually explore and innovate, updating teaching methodologies, and laying the groundwork for cultivating high-quality comprehensive talents.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the Quality engineering of ideological and political education of College students of Chongqing Normal University (Grant No. 19SZZL07).

References

- [1] *Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era -- Reports of the 19th National People's Congress of the Communist Party of China*. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2017.
- [2] Party Leadership Group of the Ministry of Education of the Communist Party of China. Notice on Issuing the Guideline of College Students' Mental Health Education 2018-07-06) [2020-09-01]. http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A12/moe_1407/s3020/201807/t20180713_342992.html
- [3] Li Huanling. *Research on the Role of Psychological Health Education Curriculum in Cultivating Positive Psychological Qualities of College Students*[D]. Guilin: Guangxi Normal University 2014
- [4] Fan Zhaoxia. *Exploration and Establishment of the Curriculum System for Mental Health Education to College Student*[J]. *University Education*, 2019 (2): 115-117,184.
- [5] Zhang Bo. *Research on the Evaluation System of Mental Health Education to College Student Curriculum—Based on the Perspective of Positive Psychology*[J]. *Journal of Shandong Radio and TV University*, 2021(1): 56-59
- [6] Yin Qiuyun. *The Dislocation and Development of Psychological Health Education Curriculum from the Perspective of Positive Psychology*[J]. *Heilongjiang Researches on Higher Education*, 2010(12): 166-168
- [7] Liu Yuan. *Research and Cultivation of Positive Psychological Qualities of College Students*[D]. Shaanxi: Xidian University, 2013.
- [8] Zhu Xiaoman. *Problems and Challenges in Education: Responses of Thought*[M]. Nanjing: Nanjing Normal University Press, 2000.
- [9] Zhang Yanxia. *Development of Implicit Curriculum of Psychological Health Education from the Perspective of Positive Psychology*[J]. *Journal of Changchun Education Institute*, 2015 (22): 142-143.