

Three Dimensions of Public Health Promotion and Education

Huang Xinghua, Ma Wanli

School of Marxism, Dalian University of Technology, Dalian, Liaoning, 116081, China

Abstract: *Public health promotion and education, as an essential and foundational component of public health, play a pivotal, comprehensive role in safeguarding public health, fostering hygiene practices, maintaining clean living environments, and preventing and controlling diseases, contributing sustainably to these objectives. With the historic changes in the global political and economic landscape, the emergence of new public health events, and the increasing frequency of global interactions and conflicts, public health promotion and education have acquired new dimensions. These significant changes mainly encompass three aspects: the collaborative synergy of diverse stakeholders, the enrichment and refinement of content systems, and the innovation and optimization of methods and approaches.*

Keywords: *public health promotion and education; diverse stakeholders; content framework; promotional and educational methods*

1. Introduction

Public health promotion and education is a systematic social activity led by one or more public entities, targeting the entire public, with the aim of encouraging the public to voluntarily adopt behaviors and lifestyles that align with modern health concepts and are beneficial to public health and individual well-being. This is done to prevent diseases, promote health, improve the quality of life, and benefit public environmental health. With the development of the economy and society, especially in recent times with the emergence of global high-impact public health issues such as COVID-19, H1N1 influenza, and monkeypox, the frequent occurrence and mutation of public health events have presented new challenges to the global public health sector.

As a pivotal, foundational, and comprehensive component of the public health sector, public health promotion and education have played a significant role in these sudden public health events by implementing organized and planned emergency assistance education, proactive preventive education, and long-term post-event guidance education for society as a whole. This has made a sustainable contribution to public health protection, the cultivation of healthy habits, the maintenance of a clean living environment, and disease prevention and control.

Public health education is a product of the development of modern public health and has evolved in tandem with modern public health initiatives. Some studies suggest that the earliest public health promotion and education in China originated from hospitals and clinics established by Western missionaries. This shift from disease prevention and control activities primarily led by hospitals to a collaborative effort involving government, society, schools, and families was prompted by the emergence of mutating diseases and their increasing harm[1].

With the historical changes in the global political and economic landscape, the continuous occurrence of new public health events, and the frequent global interactions and conflicts, public health education and public health have been imbued with new meanings. These significant changes primarily include three dimensions: the coupling and coordination of multiple stakeholders, the enrichment and improvement of content systems, and the innovation and optimization of methods and approaches.

2. Promoting the Coupling and Collaboration of Diverse Entities

The main driving forces for the development of public health promotion and education can be divided into three categories: government-led national forces, market-oriented social forces dominated by the pharmaceutical industry, and professional forces composed of healthcare professionals and

organizations. The synergy and coordination of these three types of forces have become the first dimension for observing the development of public health promotion and education.

In the diverse array of forces driving the development of public health promotion and education, the national government primarily plays a comprehensive role. From the perspective of the state and government, conducting public health promotion and education is aimed at disseminating health knowledge to the domestic public, thereby improving the national health environment, preventing and controlling infectious and epidemic diseases, fostering good hygiene habits among the population, and ultimately safeguarding the health of the citizens. This, in turn, contributes to protecting the workforce necessary for domestic production and development while maintaining normal foreign trade and interactions. Additionally, it also helps maintain the international image of the nation and promotes health, unity, and harmony in the international community. In some developing and even underdeveloped countries and regions, the government's comprehensive role in public health is particularly prominent. This is because, in these countries and regions, citizens living in poor sanitary conditions may have developed certain entrenched unhealthy hygiene habits to varying degrees. During such situations, public health promotion and education rely on the government's public authority, and the government needs to take a leading role in this field of public health promotion and education. However, public health promotion and education should not be entirely monopolized by the government. When organized solely by the government, public health promotion and education can appear to be dominated by official agendas, turning health communication into a tool primarily serving political interests and authority. Furthermore, government-led campaigns integrated into the administrative system often exhibit drawbacks such as a lack of sustainability, excessive official dominance, and limited citizen engagement. The effective execution and expansion of state functions require extensive involvement from the society. In the age of information technology, government-led public health promotion and education should actively reach beyond the confines of government offices, assuming more social responsibilities. This involves establishing a knowledge dissemination chain for public health that targets the entire society. Government agencies should proactively collaborate with social and professional forces to jointly cultivate public health awareness in the face of sudden public health crises. To achieve this, the government needs to leverage its functions fully, take the lead in providing authoritative public education, promote the development of health knowledge repositories, and utilize appropriate methods and technology to ensure precise and targeted public health education. Government-led public health promotion and education should achieve a leap from disease prevention to overall public health. To achieve such a leap, two key steps are necessary: First, it's necessary to focus on promoting the concepts of comprehensive health and well-being in public health promotion and education. This includes targeting major public health issues such as infectious disease prediction, early warning, and prevention and control technology applications, supporting key technologies for precise prevention through national funding, and identifying significant factors related to health, including environmental and occupational influences. Second, it is time to take the lead in deepening collaboration between market-driven social forces and professional institutions like disease control centers and occupational disease prevention institutes, based on the population, so as to emphasize the practical application of new theories and technologies in addressing significant public health issues.

Social forces play a fundamental role in driving the development of public health promotion and education among diverse stakeholders. In general, the relationship between market-oriented social forces and government-led national forces is complex. On one hand, they have a dual role as the governed and the governing, as well as the regulator and the regulated. On the other hand, they also have cooperative relationships in areas such as public health. While there may be some conflicts of interest and disagreements between national and social forces, their stance is generally aligned when it comes to promoting public health education and safeguarding public health. The changes that have occurred as countries transition to modern societies, including the increasing awareness of public health and changes in health behavior, are the result of the mutual efforts and collaboration of both parties. The involvement of social forces does not diminish the government's role; instead, the government can utilize and integrate these social forces to engage in more public welfare activities under its supervision, making a greater contribution to public health promotion and education. The activities of social forces in the field of public health, to a greater or lesser extent, receive support and tacit approval from local governments and higher-level society. Furthermore, while the active role of social forces may to some extent influence and weaken the authority and power of local governments, fundamentally, it does not harm the public interest. Their various public service initiatives are matters within the government's reach, serving to complement and enhance the government's administrative capabilities. They convey feedback to the government through their own influence, providing a practical basis for the formulation of government policies and the improvement of the administrative system. At the same time, the

activities of social forces in public health promotion and education can help local governments establish authority and a favorable image, and encourage good governance to continue steadily. This may lead to the establishment of a system or even the creation of a dedicated department for public health education to ensure that public health education for the general public is not affected by changes in officials.

Professional forces play a leading role among the diverse stakeholders driving the development of public health promotion and education. In the age of information, innovation is increasingly becoming a vital driver of national development, and talent is the wellspring of innovation. The field of public health promotion and education is no exception, as professional forces comprised of specialized individuals and organizations provide innovative leadership in this domain. With the continuous development of the social economy and healthcare industry, the demand for professionals in public health institutions is steadily increasing, requiring not only research-oriented talents but also specialized applied professionals. An article titled "The Future Public Health Practitioner" published in the American Journal of Public Health detailed five key competencies for future public health workers: systems thinking and methods, communication skills, entrepreneurial spirit, a shift in ethical perspectives, and policy analysis and advocacy capabilities[2]. Currently, countries worldwide face common challenges in their workforce for public health promotion and education, such as inadequate numbers, low overall qualifications, and an unreasonable distribution of personnel. A significant proportion of individuals engaged in public health promotion and education lack a background in public health. Furthermore, in reality, many organizations assign individuals without medical qualifications to engage in public health education for the general population. There are also numerous organizations that employ temporary personnel to fulfill the tasks of public health promotion and education, significantly diminishing the quality of these services[3]. To address this issue, major medical schools, public health institutions, and public health societies worldwide should collaborate with local governments to increase their focus on talent development in public health promotion and education. This should include strengthening training programs for professionals working in public health promotion and education, emphasizing interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral cooperation. Additionally, these institutions should adapt their professional training direction in response to local needs, transitioning from a sole focus on disease prevention and control to a broader development approach centered on preventing diseases, improving the environment, enhancing health, improving quality of life, and extending life expectancy.

By fully utilizing the methods mentioned above, it is possible to promote the synergistic coordination among government-led national forces, society-led pharmaceutical market forces, and professional forces composed of healthcare professionals and organizations. This will enable the abundant flow of resources conducive to the popularization of public health, collectively driving public health promotion towards informatization, intelligence, and humanization.

3. Promoting the Enrichment and Improvement of the Content System

The second dimension of examining the development of public health propaganda and education is the enrichment and improvement of the content system. The content system of public health propaganda and education mainly includes values and principles, policies and regulations, and health knowledge.

In the content structure of public health promotion and education, the guiding role of ideology and values is paramount. It determines the direction of development for public health promotion and education, as well as the target groups it serves and the beneficiaries of its outcomes. Public health is the foundation of societal progress and a vital indicator of the prosperity of nations and the strength of countries. It is a shared aspiration of people worldwide. Faced with the challenges of public health crises, no nation or individual can thrive in isolation. Therefore, spreading the values of universality, public welfare, and global significance in public health promotion and education, with the aim of instilling in the public a proactive involvement in health governance, raising awareness of health, and enhancing preventive measures for both routine and emergent diseases, is the most effective approach to fundamentally carry out public health promotion and education and address public health crises. From a more professional perspective, modern medical models have shifted from a focus on diseases to a focus on health, from a focus on individual patients to a focus on populations, and from a focus solely on medical treatment to an integrated approach that includes healthcare, prevention, and rehabilitation. The multidimensional factors affecting health require public health education to transition from the traditional biological domain to the ecological domain, with the ultimate goal of addressing public

health issues effectively being ecological health[4]. Hence, it is even more important to harness the guiding role of universal, public welfare, and global values in public health promotion and education.

The promotion of policies and regulations plays a protective role in the content system of public health propaganda and education. The development of public health requires, first and foremost, the improvement of public health legal systems. Health is a common aspiration of humanity, and public health is a crucial responsibility that governments worldwide are committed to in order to safeguard the health of their people. It is also a vital guarantee for a nation's social and economic development. The realization of public health goals is closely tied to legal safeguards. The promotion of policies and regulations through public health propaganda and education serves two main purposes. On one hand, it enhances public awareness of public health among the population. On the other hand, it increases the public's understanding of health and epidemic prevention policies and regulations. This, in turn, fosters greater public support for the introduction and implementation of public health policies by the government, thereby providing legitimacy for public health propaganda and education. Through the strong promotion of local health and epidemic prevention policies and regulations within the content system of public health propaganda and education, local governments can establish a comprehensive legal framework for public health development with the cooperation and supervision of the public. This framework guides the development of public health and provides support for various health policies. Moreover, it strengthens the administrative and enforcement functions of health authorities, reforms and enhances the health inspection and law enforcement system, increases and strengthens health inspection and law enforcement personnel, improves the conditions and technical means for inspection and enforcement, enhances technical arbitration capabilities, and resolutely combats and punishes various violations of health laws and regulations. Health education is a fundamental component within the content structure of public health promotion and education. The dissemination of knowledge related to health and disease prevention is a significant part of public health education, and strengthening efforts in this area can effectively increase public awareness of public health. In countries like China and the United States, the basic requirements for public health education have been specified and established in dedicated documents, playing a central role in public development[5]. The reason why public health promotion and education is one of the most economical, fundamental, and long-term aspects of public health is because it aims to instill healthy habits and health consciousness among the population. In the process of implementing education, the promotion of basic knowledge of health and disease prevention is often employed as a means, as a solid grasp of health knowledge forms the foundation for fostering public health habits and awareness. In today's society, with the expansion of the scope of public health services, the scope of public health promotion and education has also expanded. Its content now includes infectious diseases, chronic diseases, food safety, environmental health, mental health, health promotion, and more, which place new demands on the content of public health education. In the past, the exploration of public health promotion and education was evident in various methods used to disseminate disease and health knowledge to the general public and to conduct health campaigns. The flexibility of educational methods and the professionalism of hiring health experts and specialized health organizations are its main characteristics. With the development of the information age, public health promotion and education need to continuously enhance public health literacy and platform development. Faced with the diverse channels and multiple avenues of disseminating health science knowledge in society, it promotes the well-being of health education to benefit the general population. This transformation is conducive to promoting a shift in public health awareness and awakening public health consciousness, improving environmental hygiene, and enhancing the effectiveness of disease prevention and control.

4. Optimizing and Innovating Promotional and Educational Methods

The third dimension of the development of public health promotion and education is the innovation and optimization of educational methods. Public health promotion and education methods primarily include interpersonal communication, organizational communication, and mass communication.

Interpersonal communication refers to the exchange of information regarding public health between individuals. It is a communication system where two individuals connect with each other to transmit new information. Common forms of interpersonal communication include consultation, conversation, persuasion, and guidance. In comparison to mass communication, interpersonal communication is slower, involves relatively less information, but excels in its specificity. Both parties in the communication can act as both communicators and recipients. One of the most typical and widespread examples of interpersonal communication is the dissemination of public health knowledge between healthcare professionals and patients. This also includes the work of government health administration

personnel, such as those in the Japanese Environmental and Sanitation Management Agency, who communicate and educate their citizens about public health knowledge[6]. The most important aspect of public health promotion and education through interpersonal communication is for hospitals, healthcare workers, and environmental sanitation agency officials to use language that the public can understand, place the public at the center, and approach the public with a mindset of serving public health. This way, they can effectively communicate with the public and promote public knowledge.

In addition to interpersonal communication, organizational communication is also an important means of conducting public health promotion and education. Organizational communication refers to the exchange and communication of information related to public health among organization members and internal departments. One of the most typical examples is the establishment of specialized public health promotion agencies, equipped with staff, to provide the essential support for the implementation of public health promotion and education work. A typical example of public health promotion through organized communication is China. As early as the late Qing Dynasty, China established health schools to train epidemic prevention and health workers, integrating scientific knowledge into mass health campaigns and dispelling superstitious beliefs [7]. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, the National Health Education Office, which continues to exist to this day, as well as local health promotion and education organizations, have played a key role in conducting national public health promotion and education. They have been actively involved in disseminating health knowledge, mobilizing the public to prioritize hygiene, and preventing diseases. Additionally, these organizational structures can effectively engage with civil society, collaborate with public health professionals, promote diversity and mutual support, and contribute to the continuous development of the national public health education and promotion efforts. In the process of dissemination, it is possible to encourage various departments related to culture, education, science, news, and publishing to fully utilize their respective functions and employ different methods to disseminate the national health policies, guidelines, and general medical and healthcare knowledge to the public. In summary, through forms such as speeches, seminars, and discussions, public health promotion and education can be conducted, which not only spreads health knowledge to the general public but also strengthens the connection between the state and the people.

Finally, public health education can also be carried out through mass communication. Mass communication refers to the process by which a group of people use various mass media tools to disseminate public health information to the general public. The primary forms of mass communication include using newspapers, magazines, books, pamphlets, and other printed media to promote health policies, relevant news reports, and health knowledge. It also involves organizing health exhibitions, lectures, screening health films and promotional videos, utilizing radio, the internet, and other electronic media to convey modern health knowledge and conduct public health education. Generally, conducting public health education through mass communication reaches a wide audience, allowing the entire society to actively participate, ensuring that everyone can gain a certain level of health knowledge. This not only raises public awareness of their own health but also promotes the development of healthy habits and enhances the overall health of the population, ultimately strengthening the nation's capacity for development.

Public health promotion and education, as an essential component of building a "global community for health," are closely related to the public health levels of a country or region's population. It requires the collective participation of all members of society. In this regard, the precision and filtration of information dissemination are of utmost importance. In the era of new media, public health education activities have more channels for dissemination and have achieved some degree of success. However, there is also an issue of the proliferation of health information and the inconsistency of information quality. Therefore, regardless of the chosen mode of communication, efforts should be made to reduce the interference of harmful information. In line with the trends and needs of the national economy, society, and public health development, with a certain degree of cultural refinement as a foundation and a certain social stratum as the soil, we should drive the continuous advancement of the public health promotion and education sector.

5. Conclusion

Public health promotion and education, as a crucial component in constructing the "global community of health for all," are closely tied to the public health levels of the populace in a country or region. This necessitates coordinated efforts from various forces, enriched connotations within the system, and the active involvement of all members of society. Therefore, public health education

requires collaborative efforts driven by national, societal, and professional forces. Leveraging interpersonal communication, organizational dissemination, and mass media, it disseminates value concepts, policies, regulations, and health knowledge to the general public. Through practical communication, these messages are continually refined. Adhering to these universal principles, each country should adapt public health education to its economic, social, and public health development, respecting local social civilization and traditional customs. This will propel the continuous advancement of public health promotion and education, contributing to the collective progress of global public health communication efforts.

References

- [1] Wang Shaoyang, Yang Xiangyin. *An Exploration of Modern Public Health Education in China: From the Perspective of American Medical Doctor David Bide [J]. Journal of Zhengzhou University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 2015 (5): 143.
- [2] Erwin, P. C.&Brownson, R. C. *The Public Health Practitioner of the Future [J]. American Medical Journal Public Health*, 2017, 107 (8): 1227-1232.
- [3] Yang Yang. *Research on the Development Strategies of Public Health Education [J]. Medical Education*, 2015 (2): 34.
- [4] Thorp, A., Griffiths, S.&Jewell, T. *The Three Domains of Public Health: An International Retirement Basis for Public Health Education [J]. Public Health*, 2008, 122 (2): 201-210.
- [5] Huang Qian. *Comparative Analysis and Enlightenment of Public Health Education between China and the United States [J]. Modern Preventive Medicine*, 2023 (6): 296.
- [6] Wang Ziyang, Zhou Dan. *Research on the Classification and Recycling of Urban Domestic Waste in China: A Reference to the Experience of Urban Waste Classification in Japan [J]. Journal of Northeastern University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 2008 (6): 503-504.
- [7] Yu Xinzhong, Chen Siyan. *Between Medicine and Social Culture: A Review of Research on the Medical History of the Qing Dynasty over the Past Century [J]. Journal of Huazhong Normal University (Humanities and Social Sciences Edition)*, 2017, 56 (3): 111-128.