

Research on curriculum reform path of Mental health education in colleges and universities -- Based on the perspective of mental health literacy

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Abstract: The mental health education course in colleges and universities plays a vital role in the overall personnel training system and serves as a significant platform to fulfill the fundamental obligation of moral education. This article begins by addressing the challenges and obstacles encountered in mental health education. Additionally, it explores the reform path of the mental health education curriculum in higher education institutions, primarily focusing on teaching goals, curriculum content, instructional methodologies, and assessment techniques. Furthermore, it incorporates the two dimensions and three structures of mental health literacy to provide an in-depth analysis. The ultimate goal is to seamlessly integrate mental health and moral development, thereby cultivating college students as virtuous and talented individuals ready to thrive in the new era

Key words: mental health accomplishment; Moral cultivation; Curriculum reform

After the Ministry of Education emphasized in 2011 that universities incorporate mental health education in their talent training system, institutions across the nation have prioritized developing mental health education curriculum for college students. These courses aim to promote psychological well-being and health, and have effectively disseminated mental health knowledge. However, despite these successes, there remain some challenges in the implementation of these courses. According to Jiang Guangrong (2021), the current mental health education curriculum in universities only focuses on adapting and maintaining mental health during college, without considering how to prepare for a healthy life beyond college, and it solely emphasizes self-help without encouraging students to care for society and help others. Additionally, the curriculum only focuses on problem prevention and solution and does not emphasize quality training. Curriculum design lacks clearly defined objectives, the teaching content lacks structure, and the teaching process overemphasizes experiential learning over knowledge acquisition, resulting in a lack of student assessment and weak evaluation requirements. Therefore, it is necessary to reform mental health education in colleges and universities to encourage more empathetic learning, which will foster an environment where students can both improve themselves and positively contribute to society, while encouraging the development of ethical and moral values.

I. The importance of building a college mental health education curriculum system with mental health literacy as the goal

Redefining mental health literacy in the curriculum supports the implementation of the national health development strategy and the enhancement of national mental health literacy. Since 2001, colleges and universities have introduced mental health education courses for college students. The primary objective of these courses is to help students develop an awareness of mental health, acquire knowledge about mental health, learn self-regulation skills, and enhance their own mental well-being based on their individual psychological characteristics. However, the focus of these courses has mostly been on improving students' own mental health, with less attention given to understanding and addressing the mental health of others. In 2016, the national level introduced the concept of "mental health literacy," which recognized the cultivation of mental health literacy as a fundamental objective of national mental health services. Enhancing mental health literacy is an integral part of the national health development strategy, and education is considered the most suitable, effective, and scalable approach for achieving this goal in a systematic manner. By making mental health literacy the primary objective of mental health education courses in colleges and universities, the mental health literacy of college students can be effectively improved.

II. The connotation of mental health literacy

Jiang Guangrong (2020) defines mental health literacy as the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes, and behavioral habits that promote personal and collective mental well-being and aid in coping with mental illnesses. This encompasses an understanding of mental health concepts, knowledge about mental illnesses, and the development of positive attitudes and habits that support mental health promotion and illness management. In essence, mental health literacy encompasses the ability to both take care of one's own mental health and provide assistance to others. According to Jiang Guangrong (2020), mental health literacy can be characterized by two dimensions: promotion of mental health and coping with mental illness, and the relationship between self and others. This can be further broken down into three components: knowledge, attitude, and habit formation. The first aspect involves knowledge and concepts related to mental health, while the second encompasses knowledge and concepts related to mental illness. The third component focuses on attitudes and habits that promote one's own mental health, as well as those that support mental health promotion and coping with mental illness in others. Mental health literacy encompasses both self-help and other-assisting approaches. It goes beyond just teaching the content of mental health courses in college, and emphasizes cultivating helping qualities while also emphasizing the role of attitude and behavior habit formation. By effectively

supplementing the current mental health education, it can improve the mental health quality of college students, not only in terms of knowledge, but also in their overall attitude and behavior. Therefore, promoting mental health literacy is an effective way to integrate moral education and professionalism to cultivate individuals.

III. The new challenges of mental health education courses in colleges and universities under the new situation

1. Mental health education courses in colleges and universities face the new challenge of how to organically integrate curriculum ideology and politics

Teachers' comprehension and knowledge of curriculum ideology and politics require enhancement. Despite the significant importance placed on the construction of curriculum ideology and politics in domestic colleges and universities since its inception, initially, teachers did not fully comprehend the essential implication of curriculum ideology and politics, nor did they recognize that cultivating morality and individuals is a primary mission of universities. Rather, they regarded curriculum ideology and politics content as an additional topic in their teaching and did not seamlessly integrate it with their subjects. Consequently, course instructors should realize that education aims not only to impart professional knowledge but also to instill ethical and moral values in individuals, which constitutes the complete connotation of teaching and educating individual□

The integration of curriculum ideology and politics with the profession needs improvement. The integration of curriculum ideology and politics into professional courses is still in its early stages, resulting in a lack of experience among most professors. Additionally, there is a shortage of curriculum ideology and politics materials available, making it difficult for professors to effectively combine them with professional knowledge. Textbooks often focus solely on presenting professional knowledge and neglect to incorporate ideological and political elements. Teachers must proactively search for their own ideological and political materials, integrate them with the textbook content, and employ suitable teaching methods to impart these concepts to students. This calls for professional teachers to continually explore, be willing to experiment, and strive for the seamless integration of ideological and political elements.

The infusion of ideological and political elements into the curriculum is inflexible. Often when teachers conduct "curriculum ideology and politics" education, they concentrate mainly on explaining professional knowledge, with only a minimal amount of moral and ideological education content added on at the end of the course in order to elevate the curriculum's value. This type of "curriculum ideology and politics" teaching is too rigid and some of the methods used are superficial, dogmatic, formulaic, and overly preachy, failing to achieve the desired effect of seamlessly integrating ideological and political elements with the curriculum.

2. The new media era has put forward higher requirements for college mental health education courses

The rapid advancement of the new media era has significantly influenced the lifestyle, social interactions, and learning patterns of college students. With the advent of the new media era, college students have experienced enhanced convenience in daily life, broader social connections, and easier access to information and knowledge. However, excessive engagement in online socialization also hampers the socialization process of college students, leading to a decline in their cognitive, communication, and judgement abilities. Immersion in virtual realities often brings feelings of loneliness and powerlessness to college students. These emerging psychological traits require thorough exploration and detailed interpretation within the framework of mental health education, along with effective guidance for college students. However, the current content of mental health education textbooks is outdated and fails to address the psychological needs of college students born after the year 2000. The curriculum for mental health education in colleges and universities should be revamped and adjusted according to the physical and mental characteristics of these college students from generation Z.

Moreover, the advent of the new media era has facilitated the advancement of mental health education programs. The online availability of micro-courses, MOOCs, and high-quality courses has provided college students with easier access to mental health knowledge through the internet. This also presents new challenges for traditional offline teaching methods. In today's context, where students have greater access to psychological information online, it is crucial to examine what should be taught in offline psychology classes and how to effectively deliver the content. This requires comprehensive reforms in enhancing teacher competencies, designing relevant course materials, and adopting suitable teaching methodologies to adapt to the demands of the current new media environment.

IV. The reform path of college mental health education curriculum based on mental health literacy

Drawing from the key principles of mental health literacy, this article examines the strategies to revamp mental health education in higher education institutions by exploring four domains: curriculum objectives, course content, pedagogical methods, and assessment strategies. These insights are derived from the two dimensions and three structures of mental health literacy.

The curriculum objective aims to enhance mental health literacy comprehensively. The existing curriculum objective of mental health education primarily focuses on fostering self-awareness and mental health capabilities. This includes acquiring knowledge and fundamental concepts of mental health, gaining proficiency in self-regulation, and developing self-exploration skills. While these objectives promote self-help mental health literacy, they may neglect the cultivation of other supportive aspects of mental health literacy. A curriculum objective aligned with mental health literacy emphasizes both personal growth and aiding others. It underscores the cultivation of not only knowledge but also attitudes and behavioral habits. For instance, it emphasizes enhancing proficiency in assisting psychological knowledge, helping skills, and methods, fostering a willingness to assist students with psychological issues, and cultivating positive psychological habits and constructive thinking patterns.

According to the psychological characteristics of post-00 college students, the teaching content needs to be updated. The emergence of the new media era has led to unique psychological characteristics among college students from Generation Z, distinguishing them from previous generations. These characteristics include the impact of network stratification on their cognition and emotions, the challenges arising from online socializing and their impact on real-life interactions, and the significant psychological implications resulting from online fraud. To effectively assist current college students in resolving their psychological dilemmas, it is necessary to incorporate these topics into the curriculum and conduct thorough analyses.

Furthermore, the teaching content should explicitly emphasize the importance of helping others and developing positive attitudes and habits. Currently, the mental health education curriculum for college students lacks content related to enhancing others' mental well-being. Each module can address this deficiency by incorporating elements of promoting mental health literacy, such as knowledge points and attitudes toward supporting others' mental well-being. For instance, the module on interpersonal communication can include empathy training to enhance the ability to think from others' perspectives and consider problems empathetically. In discussions on love and emotions, college students can learn to navigate their friends' emotional troubles and provide support within their capabilities, such as offering a listening ear and companionship. Additionally, the module on mental illness should encompass topics like treating students with mental illness and providing them with support. By fostering a scientific, positive, and empathetic approach to helping others and enhancing their ability to do so, we can cultivate college students' moral character, instill correct values, and encourage the active application of these positive qualities in their actions.

The teaching approach must focus on developing a helping attitude and nurturing positive behavioral habits. Currently, mental health courses in colleges and universities employ various teaching methods such as case studies, flipped classrooms, experiential learning, and traditional instruction to encourage students to prioritize mental well-being and acquire psychological adjustment skills. However, in addition to these commonly utilized methods, it is essential to incorporate strategies that enhance psychological well-being and cultivate emotional attitudes and behavioral habits.

One approach is to utilize role-playing exercises to train empathy. This would allow students to understand and connect with others' perspectives more effectively. Additionally, direct contact methods can be employed to promote correct understanding of mental illnesses, increase students' willingness to offer assistance, and reduce stigmatization. By offering interaction with individuals affected by mental illness, students can develop a genuine desire to help and support others.

Furthermore, behavioral training can be implemented to cultivate self-help habits and encourage a proactive attitude towards assisting others. For instance, incorporating a 21-day positive thinking training program could prompt college students to identify one positive aspect of their lives each day and document it. This exercise would help cultivate a positive mindset centered on life's aspects worth appreciating.

In summary, incorporating teaching methods that promote the development of empathy, provide direct contact with mental health issues, and instill self-help and helping behaviors can effectively enhance students' psychological well-being and cultivate positive attitudes and habits.

The evaluation of moral conduct in assisting others should be incorporated into the assessment of teaching. Currently, mental health education courses in colleges and universities typically require students to write self-analysis reports, which focus primarily on self-reflection rather than knowledge acquisition, attitude training, and skill development. Some institutions also use separate exams to evaluate students' mastery of mental health concepts. In order to construct a comprehensive teaching evaluation index for mental health literacy, it is necessary to increase the assessment of students' mental health literacy, attitude, and behavioral habit formation in helping others. Mastery of mental health knowledge and skills can be evaluated through exams, but equal attention should be given to process evaluation through homework, practical teaching, and behavioral training. To assess college students' mental health literacy in assisting others, the "College Students' Mental Health Literacy" questionnaire can be administered before and after the course to measure the impact of the teaching.

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