

Analysis of the Practice of Positive Psychology in China's Middle School Education

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Abstract

Mental health education plays a very important role in the future development of secondary school students. Integrating the concept of positive psychology in secondary school students' mental health education helps secondary school students learn to use their own positive psychological factors to stimulate and cultivate their own potential, mobilize the initiative of learning, and promote the progress of learning and the improvement of comprehensive literacy. Starting from the current situation of secondary school mental health education, we analyze the guiding significance of the positive psychology concept to secondary school mental health education and propose the integration path in light of the current practical problems.

Keywords

Positive Psychology; Middle School; Mental Health.

1. Introduction

Positive psychology is basically a new trend in psychology represented by the more refined experimental methods and measurements of current psychology, which examines propositions about human strengths and virtues that have been less addressed by psychology in the past. To summarise, there are three main perspectives in positive psychology: firstly, the psychological value of achieving balance Positive psychology is distinct from pathological psychology in that its aim is to focus on the good in people and to work to give them strength. Secondly, it emphasises the need to study the positive forces in each individual, to tap into individual potential and to give full play to it. Secondly, it advocates the need to focus on the development of students' potential in the educational process. Thirdly, it advocates the use of positive attitudes to explain problems, and divides personality into positive and negative explanatory styles.

Positive psychology research has been fruitful in both theory and practical application: first, it involves the fields of education, management, clinical and counselling as well as psychotherapy; positive education, as a concrete manifestation of positive psychology in the field of education, has also become an important topic. seligman et al. (2009) [1] define positive education as education that teaches traditional skills and transmits happiness. Secondary school students are in their adolescence, their physical and psycho-emotional changes are great and they are prone to various psychological problems. Under such circumstances, secondary school mental health education is particularly important. However, most schools in China are still exploring mental health education, and there are still many shortcomings. The main manifestations are: insufficient attention; single content; and lack of an effective evaluation system. These are not conducive to the development of students. It is a formality and has little effect. Faced with the above situation, teachers should make use of the advantages of positive psychology to intervene and guide secondary school students' mental health, help them stabilise their emotions and promote their healthy physical and mental development.

The Guideline for Mental Health Education in Primary and Secondary Schools clearly states that attention to students' mental health education, humanistic care and psychological guidance should adhere to the basic principles of combining development, prevention and crisis intervention, one of which is indispensable. However, at present, the educational work in primary and secondary schools is basically superficial, and although there are psychological consultation rooms, they are in name only, so much so that most psychological safety education work is at the stage of coping. Psychological safety education has always been a key issue in the education of primary and secondary school students, as mental illnesses and psychological education are dealt with in an "after-the-fact" manner, rather than in advance. Good psychological education can guide students to adopt positive ways and means to deal with problems, tap into the positive psychological elements of students, stimulate students' awareness of psychological self-prevention, not focus on the emergence of mental illness and other problems, repairing defects, but fundamentally establish the external early warning mechanism of secondary school students' psychological crisis, in order to truly sound students' psychological safety barrier [2].

2. Literature Review

2.1. Current Status of Positive Psychology Research

2.1.1. Development of Positive Psychology and its Current Status

The earliest domestic research on positive psychology can be traced back to ancient philosophers' discussions of the desire for a good life and good moral character. In recent years, behavioural scientists have conducted research on positive topics such as altruistic behaviour and strength of character, and in this sense positive psychology encompasses the study of positive factors in general psychology. Lopez et al (2009) [3] argues that positive psychology focuses more on the positive aspects of life and less on the problems that arise in life. Seligman (2000)[4] starts from the breadth of human experience and points out that human health is not only limited to the absence of disease, but also to a sense of well-being in life, arguing that the meaning of a happy life is to actively explore the positive qualities of human life in a scientifically rigorous way and make people gain positive influences such as happiness, gratitude, wisdom, courage and optimism, with the aim of enhancing people's sense of well-being in life and safeguarding psychological health. Held (2004)[5] found that positive lifestyles promote healthy physical and mental development, while pessimism affects people's ability to lead a normal life. From 2012 to 2021, the most frequent themes in *The Journal of Positive Psychology* and *The Journal of Happiness Studies* include happiness, joy, gratitude, life satisfaction, strength of character, meaning of life, and positive emotions. It is therefore important to identify people's positive potential in positive factors and to actively cultivate their qualities to help them achieve more happiness.

2.1.2. Current Practice of Positive Psychology in International Secondary Education

Foreign scholars' research on positive education began in the early 21st century and includes two main areas: pilot exploration and systematic practice. The representative achievements of pilot exploration include The Penn Resiliency Program (PRP) and The Strath Haven Positive Psychology Curriculum (SPPC), which mainly focus on training and improvement of their own abilities. The systemic and practical representation is the positive education practice of Geelong Grammar School in Australia.

2.1.3. Pilot Exploration

The PRP aims to guide students to think about problems from multiple perspectives, train students' self-confidence, creative thinking, and thus improve their decision-making and stress abilities. Brunwasser, Gillham (2009) [6] concluded that the PRP achieves the effect of helping

students to prevent depression by enhancing their ability to deal with everyday processing matters. brunwasser, Gillham Gillham & Freres (2007) [7] and others have also found that PRP programmes can enhance happiness levels, increase positive and optimistic attitudes and have a significant effect on preventing depression. It has a preventive effect on pathological depression and anxiety and reduces anxiety in daily life (Roberts, Kane, Bishop, Matthews, & Thompson, 2004) [8].

Although the PRP program has been shown to be effective in reducing anxiety and preventing depression in primary and secondary schools, the focus is limited to psychological resilience compared to the Strasbourg Positive Psychology program. Wesson & Boniwell (2007) [10] suggest that positive traits can increase self-confidence, enable students to be cooperative and self-controlled when faced with problems, and increase the individual's ability to perceive his or her own identity and to realise his or her potential.

2.1.4. System Exploration

Unlike the PRP and Strathclyde, which focus on the development of students' abilities and the use of positive qualities, the Geelong Grammar School presented in this section aims to integrate positive psychology with the school ecosystem and to integrate positive education into all aspects of schooling, thus building an integrated application of the school ecosystem and positive education in a synergistic way. The system. As the stresses of life increase, students' anxiety grows exponentially to the point of self-harm, depression and substance abuse, causing great concern to parents and teachers. The original educational model is unable to adapt to the rapidly changing mission of youth education in this new era. green, Palmer (2018) [11] propose to unfold positive psychology education, to experience joy in learning and more truth in life, and to integrate positive psychology training into education. With the strong support of Professors Seligman and others, Geelong Grammar School has taken another pioneering step in having a very good quality of education, thus laying the foundation for the establishment of a positive education theory framework, the development of key reference and assessment criteria, and the future development of positive education theory.

2.1.5. Current Practice of Positive Psychology in Chinese Secondary Education

Over the past five years, there has been an increasing amount of scholarly research on positive psychology and positive education, and the practice in Chinese education reflects a progression from academic introduction, conceptual recognition, and exploration. Liang Tao (2011) [12] argues that a good goal of positive education can benefit more people and actively guide them to actively seek development, that positive psychology makes traditional education more universal, proactive and developmental, and that cooperation between family, school and society to actively implement mental health education will achieve better results. Ni Jing (2012) [13] argues that positive education is more systematic than traditional education, that the concepts of positive interest, positive achievement and positive purpose have greatly enriched the content of education, and that the effectiveness of positive education depends on the construction of an adaptive environment. Cai Weilin (2014) [14] points out that high-level mental health classes are coupled with psychological counselling and guidance to actively integrate the development of psychological qualities fully throughout school education.

2.2. Problems of Positive Psychology Research

Based on real-life experience and taking into account the ultimate goal of mental health education, the study concluded that the following deficiencies exist in our existing research.

(1) Mental health education in secondary schools is only conceptual and formal, and has not formed a practice in secondary education. (1) Mental health education in secondary schools is only conceptual and formal, and has not been incorporated into the core curriculum of secondary education.

(2) The focus of mental health education in junior high schools is mostly on putting out fires afterwards, but rarely on preventing them beforehand. Although Chinese research on the construction of mental health education programmes in secondary schools has the advantage of diversity of perspectives and some research findings are more comprehensive in terms of local "characteristics", there is a clear tendency for the motivation of research to focus on putting out fires after the fact.

(3) Positive psychology has not been studied in depth and specifically in China. Looking at the literature and monographs available, it is clear that the research on positive psychology in China has focused more on theoretical discussion and value verification than on the practical application of this approach. Even if there is some research based on this perspective, the results are mostly fragmented and less applicable to the actual situation in schools.

3. Approaches and Suggestions for the Practice of Positive Psychology in Chinese Secondary School Education

3.1. Introduction to Chinese Secondary Schools

3.1.1. Mental Health Status of Teachers

Zhao Yunlong et al [15] The mental health status of primary and secondary school teachers showed a decreasing trend year by year in the 1990s, with the overall mean score of the Self-rated Symptom Scale for Teachers (SCL-90) remaining around 1.50-1.60 and rising to 1.60-1.70 in the twenty-first century. This study also shows that with the continuous innovation and development of the times and social culture, teachers are under more and more pressure, especially in After the changes in education in China, the original traditional way of education is no longer suitable for the development of society, and further professionalization and standardization of teachers are needed to make the development of education more superior. Yao Baojun [16] et al. also used the SCL-90 scale to assess the psychological health of primary and secondary school psychology teachers in China, and their total scores on Depression, Anxiety were higher than the domestic normative level. From the above two research papers, we can clearly see that contemporary teachers have some problems with their mental health, which will inevitably have an impact on their work performance, and such negative emotions are likely to infect students' mental health and even endanger their physical and psychological growth, which is detrimental to the overall growth of our youth.

3.1.2. Mental Health Status of Secondary School Students

Liu Maohang and other scholars [17] conducted a random sample of secondary school students in a large city to test their mental health status, and the data obtained showed that the scores on the SCL-90 scale, especially on Obsessive Compulsive, Interpersonal Relationship, Hostility The scores on the SCL-90 scale, especially on Obsessive Compulsive, Interpersonal Relationship and Hostility, were higher than those of the general population, clearly reflecting the psychological problems of secondary school students. The above study shows that students are under a lot of stress and that the occurrence of various negative events in their lives or individual factors add to the stress of secondary school students and have a serious impact on their mental health development.

3.1.3. Status of Secondary School Education

Early schooling in China focused on students' subject grades and examination abilities at the expense of their mental health, resulting in some students feeling that academic performance was more important than their personal moral character, and that they only knew how to achieve higher grades through rote memorisation, ignoring the basic ability to communicate with others and society. Although schools have become concerned with the moral character of their students due to the current social environment, there are many external temptations and

the general improvement in the economic environment of families, resulting in students being unmotivated to study and significantly less motivated to learn. Both of these situations have resulted in a failure to effectively improve the fundamental issue of education and to enable students to fully understand the meaning of learning and the mindset in which individuals should approach their studies.

3.2. Application of Positive Psychology in Secondary Education

Positive psychology advocates that individuals learn to think positively so that they do not have too many negative thoughts that can lead to negative emotions such as pain, bitterness, sadness, etc., which can then lead to bad behaviour. This is also true for students, who are better equipped to deal with their inner turmoil if they are able to apply some of the basic techniques of positive psychology. The basic truisms of positive psychology also emphasise the need for individuals to learn to self-reflect and self-learn so that people can get further to the root of their problems and become easier and happier. Teaching can be oriented towards positive psychology self-reflection, teaching this group of students to try to find the deeper reasons why their achievement scores are consistently in the middle of the pack. Perhaps it is because they only see their studies as work and do not want to pursue advanced academic knowledge, thus staying at the same level and not appreciating the true meaning and purpose of learning. Positive psychology also focuses on changing the container of the individual, rejecting filler teaching and encouraging teachers to integrate the similarities between subjects so that students can deepen their understanding and absorption of knowledge and stimulate their interest in learning. If students can fundamentally change their perceptions of other subjects and change their mindset, rather than being pressurised by the curriculum, they will find every lesson exciting and enjoyable and motivating.

4. Conclusion

The article begins with a brief overview of the origins of positive psychology and its main arguments, followed by a brief review of the reality of positive psychology as applied to school education in China. Finally, based on the three pillars of positive psychology and other branches of psychology, this article analyses the key aspects of positive psychology practice in Chinese secondary schools and proposes three strategies and specific implementation plans for these three key aspects, including replacing the "complementary" model with the "cultivation of excellence" model and increasing social practice. These include replacing the "complementary" model with "cultivating excellence", increasing social and physical activities, enhancing teachers' empathy, and creating a culture of good school management. Only by taking into account the context of the times in which Chinese education is situated, and by emphasising systems and innovation while emphasising 'bringing in', can we gradually build a framework for positive educational practice that is adaptable to Chinese educational traditions and operable.

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