Problems and Countermeasures of Gender Equality Education in Junior Middle Schools

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Abstract. Carrying out gender equality education in junior middle schools is one of the significant objectives and tasks in the Development of Chinese Women (2021-2030). The adolescent stage is a crucial period for gender equality education. It is significant for teenagers to implement and promote gender equality education in junior high school. This paper starts with the current situation of gender equality education in junior middle schools in our country. It analyzes the existing problems of gender education from four aspects: school education policy, curriculum setting, teachers' gender education literacy, and classroom teaching. Based on the problem analysis, this paper concludes that schools and teachers should start by establishing gender equality consciousness, starting from campus activities, curriculum system design, and classroom teaching activities, and put forward corresponding suggestions and countermeasures.

Keywords: Gender education; Teenagers; School teachers; Classroom teaching activities.

1. Introduction

Gender education is related to the future comprehensive, complete, equal, and healthy development of young people and the direction of the future development of society. There is currently a severe lack of gender education in primary and secondary education in China, and there are misconceptions about the concept, content, and orientation. The Global Gender Gap Index published by the Global Economic Forum shows that China's GGGI in 2021 will be 0.682, ranking 107th out of 156 countries. It is the 13th consecutive year the ranking has fallen since 2008, reaching an all-time high of 57th. Furthermore, gender equality education is not formally in school curriculums, which inevitably leads to a lack of awareness of gender equality and personality development among the younger generation, and affects their later stability and balance in marriage and family life. Therefore, comprehensively promoting gender equality education in primary and secondary schools and focusing on cultivating a new generation with equal values for men and women are essential measures to implement the basic state policy of gender equality and are also essential elements and inevitable requirements throughout the implementation of the Fourth Plenary Session of the 19th CPC Central Committee to uphold and improve the institutional mechanism for promoting gender equality and the comprehensive development of women, and to promote the modernization of the national governance system and the ability to make efforts. The ministry of education requires all departments to actively carry out gender education activities of high quality and deepen home-school cooperation. Middle schools should fully integrate gender equality with all aspects of school philosophy, management mechanisms, teaching practices, team activities, and campus culture and actively promote the culture of gender equality education in primary and secondary schools.

As seen from the above, gender education is receiving more and more attention and focus from society and schools; from the initial status of gender equality, the issue has gradually transitioned to gender equality awareness development. As seen from the above, gender education is receiving more

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Existing scholars who have studied gender equality education have focused mainly on educational theory and educational management but not sufficiently on specific problem-solving and implementation [1]. Therefore, this study analyses the current situation and problems of gender equality education in primary and secondary schools in China and proposes corresponding strategies to deal with them. The study on the current situation, problems, and countermeasures of gender equality education in primary and secondary schools in China could help to systematically understand the level of gender relation awareness among students in primary and secondary school. It helps to constantly enrich and improve the construction of the school's moral education curriculum, which provides a new perspective and dimension to promoting gender equality education.

This study will analyze the current situation and problems of gender equality education at the junior secondary school level in China from the perspectives of both schools and teachers.

2. Existing Circumstances of Gender Equality Education in Junior Middle Schools in China

2.1 Policies Related to Gender Equality Education in Junior Middle Schools

In recent years, with the improvement of education policy and the continuous improvement of education level, gender education has been paid more and more attention. In December 1988, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China issued a notice of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on reforming and strengthening moral education in primary and secondary Schools. The notice made it clear that middle school was a period when students' bodies gradually developed and matured. Adolescent education should be in combination with physical and psychological health education [2]. Since then, the CPC Central Committee and The State Council have issued a series of policies related to gender equality in primary and secondary schools, and the State has attached great importance to gender equality education in schools. In August 2015, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance issued a notice on reforming and implementing the national training plan for teachers in primary and secondary schools and kindergartens. The notice pointed out that teachers' ethics education, legal education, mental health education, and information technology application were essential and compulsory elements of teacher training. Therefore, the overall educational level of practitioners in the education industry improved. In November 2016, the Ministry of Education, the Central Comprehensive Affairs Office, and nine other departments of the Ministry of Education on preventing and controlling bullying and violence among primary and middle school students. The guideline calls for implementing the Guidelines on Mental Health Education for Primary and Middle Schools (Revised in 2012) and training students' healthy personalities and positive psychological qualities. To carry out scientific and practical psychological counseling for students with psychological distress or problems to improve their mental health. According to the Law on the Protection of Minors revised in 2020, schools should carry out age-appropriate gender education for minors.

From 1984 to 2022, during the 38 years of China's social and historical development process, with relevant policies and programs issued by the government, secondary gender equality education support has made particular progress. Implementing gender education policies in primary and secondary schools has also met many challenges, including the backward concept of gender education, the lack of gender education class hours, the weak strength of gender education teachers, and the lack of gender education textbooks. Although the government promotes the education department to carry out the related policy, these only provide an education macro policy framework, which lacks more guidance and maneuverability in implementing the guidelines.

Primary and secondary schools are the crucial stage for the country to train talent. However, the specific curriculum of gender education in middle schools is still in its infancy, and its development lags behind its branch safety education. Presently, gender education in primary and middle schools

focuses mainly on abstinence sex education. Carrying out gender education for adolescents is conducive to helping students recognize gender role positioning and cognition and establish correct and healthy gender concepts to resist gender bias. Therefore, it is indispensable to carry out effective gender education in middle school.

2.2 Existing Circumstances of Curriculum Setting and Activities of Gender Equality Education in Junior Middle Schools

After analyzing the curriculum standards of compulsory education in China and the compulsory education textbooks of People's Education Press, it was clear that the knowledge of gender education in middle school textbooks in most courses is very scattered and lacks correlation with each other. From the national to the local level, there is a lack of authoritative and operable guidelines and standards for gender education, a lack of a complete gender education curriculum, unified, systematic textbooks and teaching programs, and a lack of evaluation standards for the implementation of sex education courses [3].

Taking N Middle School in Chongqing as an example, Xiang Zhili's survey shows that 41 students know about gender education, accounting for 24.12%; 97 people (57.06%) knew something about it, and 32 people (18.82%) knew nothing about it. It is clear that gender education has not reached the stage of complete popularization in this middle school and still needs to be improved. At the same time, it also provides a practical basis for implementing gender education in this school.

According to the questionnaire survey, 88.82% of the students and 71.43% of the teachers believed that gender education should be in the course content of mental health. At the same time, 92.35% of the students think it is necessary to carry out gender education in middle schools [4]. It shows that gender equality education activities and courses align with students' development needs. However, by summarizing the campus cultural activities held by this school, it is found that it does not pay enough attention to and lacks gender education. There are almost no themed activities related to gender education. In the school activities held, men and women have significant differences in survival choices, indicating the lack of corresponding school guidance and education.

2.3 Students' Cognition of Gender Equality Education

Due to the extreme shortage of gender education resources in schools, gender education in schools cannot meet the growing needs of teenagers, leading to the significant gender knowledge of teenagers from parents, classmates, and the Internet.

To take N Middle School in Chongqing as an example, according to XiangZhili's survey, the primary way for students in this school to learn gender knowledge is to ask friends of the same age. The number of students selected is 97, accounting for 57.06%. The second is to consult their parents. The number of students selected is 92, accounting for 54.12%. Then they acquire and learn gender knowledge according to the order of online media, teachers, doctors, netizens or strangers, and other ways. The number of online friends or strangers consulted was the least, which is 14, accounting for 8.24% [4]. Teachers in this school do not pay enough attention to gender education and lack knowledge about gender education for students. School is the primary field for students to acquire knowledge. The knowledge information obtained by students from other ways cannot guarantee its integrity and correctness. In the information era, all kinds of information are numerous and jumbled. The students at the junior middle school are in the stage of self-consciousness development, which is vulnerable to the impact of the external environment. If not standardized and guided, it is not conducive for students to establish a correct gender outlook, thus affecting the healthy development of students' psychology.

In addition, the gender concept promoted by the media, such as the Internet and magazines, contains much commercial hype. In contrast, the gender concept disseminated by students and parents unavoidably contained personal subjective elements. Therefore, it is difficult for teenagers to find a standard channel and platform to obtain gender equality education knowledge.

2.4 Teachers' Cognition of Gender Equality Education

Currently, most educators, including educational administrators, lack a sound concept of gender education, do not know what comprehensive gender education is, stereotype gender education, and even believe that gender education for adolescents is optional. Therefore, gender education teachers are seriously lacking. Lai Jinwen's survey shows a severe shortage of gender education teachers, and teachers' knowledge about gender education is very scarce. More than half of teachers believe that their access to gender education has nothing to do with professional education, and 26.5% believe that students' curiosity about gender will lead to their lousy development. Only 20% of teachers believe that gender education is the teachers' responsibility [5]. Most normal colleges and universities do not set up health education majors and lack gender education teachers trained professionally. Gender studies is an interdisciplinary field of study involving history, culture, anthropology, psychology, and other disciplines. This study covers a wide range of contents and is considered the most challenging educational problem. However, as for the theoretical knowledge of gender education, teachers mostly rely on their understanding or network information, which may lead to teachers' misunderstanding of the existing gender education content and carry a certain degree of subjective judgment in transferring knowledge to students. It is difficult for teachers to succeed in gender education without ideological transformation and professional training.

3. Major Gender Education Problems in the Implementation in Junior Middle Schools

3.1 Schools Ignore Gender Education

Nowadays, all kinds of mixed network information are everywhere, and teenagers often come into contact with unhealthy, dangerous information. Because they mostly lack basic gender-related common sense, teenagers are easily deceived and misguided by fake information. In addition, the middle school student's ability to distinguish is insufficient, quickly leading to the psychology of blindly following the trend and the final misdirection. As the prominent position of education, the school urgently needs to strengthen gender education for teenagers, help them understand the knowledge of education, enhance their understanding and cognition of themselves, learn to sort out the concept of gender equality and respect the opposite and get along with others equally. However, all junior high schools in our country have to consider the enrollment rate under the overall examination-oriented education system, resulting in schools still putting students' grades first. According to the needs for enrolment rate and the brand effect, lots of junior high schools have set up various extracurricular courses such as calligraphy art. However, gender education, a course with no practical effect, has not been paid much attention by the leadership of primary and secondary schools. Therefore, the school does not do well in curriculum planning, implementation, and campus activity resources. In addition, the gender education of the school department's responsibilities is unclear, so the buck chaos phenomenon is severe, and no organization or department to carry out the relevant gender education activities [6]. The school did not appoint a special department to take charge of this work, and the lack of support from all aspects made it difficult to achieve better educational and teaching effects. In addition, due to the lack of practical activities or lectures on gender education, primary and secondary schools in our country lack relevant experience in gender education [7]. Some schools have carried out individual activities or lectures to give students simple publicity and introduction. However, the contents are vague, and it is difficult for students to truly understand and master the knowledge and significance of gender education or stay on improving students' knowledge and literacy ability. The development of comprehensive education of students cannot receive continuous attention, which is not conducive to the systematic establishment of a correct gender outlook and healthy growth of the body and mind of students.

3.2 Teachers' Lack of Knowledge of Gender Education

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4. Suggestions For Gender Equality Education in Junior Middle Schools

4.1 Schools Create Awareness of Gender Education and Actively Implement Curriculum Reform to Guide Gender Education

Building a gender-equal school environment is a long-term and challenging task. It is partly dependent on the economic environment, so in areas where girls' enrolment is low, efforts to achieve universal compulsory education need to go hand in hand with socioeconomic development. Continuously promote greater inclusiveness in schooling and tolerance of differences in learning abilities among students. In a highly polarized society, it is essential to include family economic conditions and social status differences, but other differences. A tolerant and egalitarian school environment will be developed in which students respect each other, recognize their strengths, recognize gender equality, and respect the rights of sexual minorities.

The UNESCO Strategy for Advancing Gender Equality throughout Education (2019-2025) sets out to "make education systems more gender transformative and promote gender equality" and to "empower girls and women in education for a better life and a better future." Gender equality in school education is necessary for female students to become participants and agents of social development and a cornerstone for achieving gender equality. To update the gender perspective of all teachers in the school, to develop a gender-equal education of teachers in the school, and to create a gender-equal school climate. Students will be able to express their feelings about gender equality through writing and drawing and deepen their knowledge and understanding of gender equality. The middle school could organize these activities through class meetings, regular publication of information on gender equality education on the school website, handwriting competitions, debates, and a series of activities. To enable students to develop a correct perception of gender and to respect the equal value of boys and girls. Middle schools should take measures to reform curriculum in terms of the school curriculum system and adjust and revise the current teaching materials from a gender equality perspective.

The gender perspective is integrated into the teaching materials so that the school curriculum becomes a genuine vehicle for gender-responsive development. Gender differences exist, and a highly

inclusive school education enables each student to reach his or her full potential, have equal gender opportunities and equal gender values, and develop fully, freely, and comprehensively.

4.2 Teachers Develop a Correct Gender Perspective and Actively Create a Good Teaching Environment for Gender Education

With the development of society, gender equality in school education has become a social consensus. The realization of gender equality in education also depends on promoting educators' concept of gender equality. Teachers should see their role in promoting gender equality education from the perspective that "teachers are Intellectuals Transforming Society" [9], to perceive and learn from new ideas at the forefront of educational reform and teaching practice, and to permeate and implement the concept of gender equality awareness. In addition, through the leadership of experts, teachers actively infuse their knowledge and teaching activities with gender equality education in their teaching and research.

Teachers should develop a proper gender perspective. They understand the manifestations and causes of differences between male and female adolescents, the characteristics of gender roles in educational activities, and efforts to eliminate gender stereotypes. Strive to break free from the traditional gender culture and, on this basis, educate male and female adolescents according to their gender differences. In comparison, responding to young people's different needs and abilities and not creating and widening artificial gender differences in their development [9]. Actively create a positive teaching and learning environment for gender education and adopt the same rewards, punishments, and evaluation criteria for young people of different genders in the classroom to reduce gender differences to a certain extent. In addition, teachers should allow students to freely express behavior that differs from traditional gender roles, allowing young people to develop their maximum potential and nurture and shape a healthy and sound personality.

5. Conclusion

Through the analysis and research on the problem of gender equality education, it seems that there is a long way to go in the implementation and practice of gender education in junior high schools in China. Because of the current situation of gender equality education, schools, teachers, and parents make joint efforts to establish a gender equality education system by actively responding to the policy propaganda and guidance of the national government. Schools and teachers should establish a sense of equality, actively create a suitable environment for gender equality, implement the educational equality curriculum system, and examine the current teaching materials from the perspective of gender equality. The concept of gender equality is integrated into the teaching materials, making the school curriculum truly become the carrier to promote the development of gender equality, thus fully and deeply infiltrating gender equality education. Therefore, gender equality will positively impact the ideology of the youth and establish an equal consciousness and knowledge system for students.

This paper discusses the current situation and problems of gender equality education in junior high schools in China. It reflects on the interaction between the junior high school stage and gender equality. Schools need to deepen and develop gender equality in education to comprehensively promote the development of gender equality in education. It is significant to realize gender freedom, equality, and harmony development to provide opinions and suggestions on gender equality from formulating rules and regulations, decisions, and academic support for promoting gender equality for junior high schools in our country. The significance of the analysis on gender equality is to call attention to gender equality in junior middle school. Carrying out gender equality education in schools opens up new ideas for moral education in our country, and promotes the teaching practice of moral education in middle schools. The future development direction of gender equality research in junior high school should work together through multiple channels. The state, society, schools, families, and individuals work together to achieve gender equality among teenagers. Establish a system to evaluate school gender equality.

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