

Pathways for Constructing the Educational Framework of "Integrated Moral and Mental Cultivation & Four-Dimensional Collaborative Development"

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Abstract: In modern society, the all-round development of college students has gained increasing attention. As two vital components of talent cultivation, ideological and political education and mental health education exert an irreplaceable effect on cultivating students' comprehensive literacy and facilitating their sound physical and mental growth. Nevertheless, conventional educational models usually separate the two fields and neglect their inherent links and mutually reinforcing relationship. Therefore, it is necessary to construct a dual-core talent cultivation system driven by ideological and political education and mental health education to realize their organic integration. Meanwhile, researchers should explore the collaborative construction of a new talent cultivation framework from four dimensions, namely philosophy, environment, implementation path and evaluation. Such exploration can provide solid support for advancing the all-round development of college students.

Keywords: Ideological and Political Education, Mental Health Education, Collaborative Education.

1. Introduction

Education constitutes a fundamental undertaking for the country and the Party. As General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out in the Report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, we must "develop education on a people-centered basis"^[1]. To cultivate talents in colleges and universities in the new era, educators should thoroughly study and implement the spirit of the 20th Party Congress and fulfill the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education.

The existing talent cultivation system integrating traditional ideological and political education with mental health education is plagued by the prominent problem of "separation of moral cultivation and psychological cultivation". We should integrate the two types of education to jointly resolve this dilemma. Furthermore, beyond the dual-core driving force of moral and psychological education, practitioners ought to provide supporting guarantees for the construction of a new talent cultivation landscape from four dimensions: philosophy, environment, implementation path and evaluation.

2. Moral Education and Mental Health Education

2.1. Moral Education

Ideological and political education plays a pivotal role in cultivating college students' ideological and political literacy, moral concepts and sense of social responsibility, and guides them to develop a correct outlook on the world, life and values. Its core educational objective is to foster a new generation of young people endowed with firm ideals and convictions and sound personality. Essentially, its developmental evolution represents a paradigmatic shift from heteronomous normative restraint to autonomous value recognition.

Early models were dominated by "disciplinary moral education," which emphasized the rigid internalization of social norms through institutional directives; their underlying logic stemmed from instrumental rationality's quest to shape

"qualified members of society."^[2] Although such a model guaranteed ideological stability in specific historical periods, it fell into the dilemma of the separation of knowledge and practice due to the neglect of students' subjectivity. A typical example lies in the controversies over formalism triggered by the quantitative assessment of moral education^[3].

Marxist anthropology emphasizes that "the essence of man is the sum total of all social relations,"^[4] and that moral development must undergo a dialectical process of "being-in-itself – being-for-itself – freedom". By upgrading individual cognition with value guidance, moral education conforms to Marxist theories on people's free and all-round development. It also fulfills the practical requirements of values education in the new era, realizing the transformation from superficial acceptance to inner recognition, and provides solid support for fostering outstanding young talents for the new era.

2.2. Mental Health Education

Mental health education centers on individual all-round development. As an educational field, it explores self-perception, interpersonal communication and social adaptation. It enables educators to conduct in-depth analysis of the physiological and psychological mechanisms behind students' cognitions and behaviors, thereby offering a brand-new analytical perspective for collaborative talent cultivation. Mental health education focuses on students' inner mental state, helping them develop positive mindsets and promoting their harmonious physical and mental development.

Early models centered on a "problem-oriented" approach, utilizing the SCL-90 scale to screen for psychological disorders and carry out psychological crisis intervention. Although treatment-oriented mental health education has yielded prominent outcomes in lowering the incidence of psychological disorders, it fails to accommodate students' developmental demands across their life cycles.

With the rise of positive psychology, educational goals have gradually shifted toward fostering character strengths, emphasizing the enhancement of psychological capital through practices such as emotional regulation. The

Guidelines for Mental Health Education in Institutions of Higher Learning issued by the Ministry of Education of China clearly stipulate that education should be prevention-oriented and integrate developmental education with crisis intervention^[5]. This demonstrates that mental health education plays an extremely important role in the educational system.

2.3. Integration of Moral Education and Mental Health Education

As two pivotal pillars within the educational system, ideological and political education and mental health education both adhere to the people-oriented principle. They are committed to elevating individuals' ideological cognition and advancing the all-round sound development of human beings. Fundamentally, their in-depth integration takes the all-round development of human beings as the value foothold, and establishes a new educational paradigm through the dual coordination of internalizing social norms and accumulating psychological capital.

Mental health essentially refers to the process of self-affirmation of humans as social beings, which shares an inherent isomorphic relationship with the value objective of ideological and political education to cultivate "political persons". The internalization of values relies on the support of psychological mechanisms, and value identification requires the joint function of emotional experience and cognitive reconstruction.

Merely relying on moral education alone tends to lead to the dilemma of "knowledge without genuine belief", for which mental health education can provide an effective path for emotional identification. The dual driving force formed by value guidance from ideological and political education and emotional cultivation from mental health education can realize the goal of integrated cultivation of morality and mental wellness.

3. Four-Dimensional Collaborative Development

3.1. Focus on Our Philosophy

Some scholars point out that "Psychological education in colleges and universities in the new era takes Marxist theory of the all-round development of human beings as its theoretical guidance. On the basis of respecting the laws governing students' growth and their psychological development, it integrates psychological principles and methods into the whole process of university education and attaches importance to humanistic care and psychological counseling for students."^[6]

It is evident that psychological education and moral education are intrinsically linked, reflecting the inherent unity between "nurturing the mind" and "nurturing virtue". Building a new educational framework requires the joint efforts of moral and psychological education. By adhering to the fundamental principle of fostering virtue and cultivating talent, we can uphold a people-centered approach to education, promote students' all-round physical and mental development, and achieve the goal of holistic education.

3.2. Construct Diversified Educational Environments

To promote the development of the education system, the construction of the field is indispensable, mainly focusing on

the systematic reconstruction of spatial carriers as the core. The talent cultivation process driven by the dual core of ideological and political education and mental health education demands the functional allocation of professional, practical and virtual fields. Relevant field construction for the new talent cultivation framework shall be advanced from physical space, social space and cyberspace, thereby forming an all-time and all-space immersive talent cultivation network.

First of all, in terms of the construction of the professional field, namely the physical teaching space, we should take teaching venues as the core, give full play to the functions of classrooms for ideological and political theory courses and school psychological counseling rooms, and build integrated teaching scenarios featuring "value guidance and psychological counseling". Such arrangements enable students to receive systematic theoretical learning within professional learning sites. Through interdisciplinary knowledge integration, the coordinated cultivation of students' values and psychological literacy can be realized. Talent cultivation hinges on teachers, who play a dominant role in classroom instruction. The delivery of specialized education relies on a strong teaching faculty. As pointed out, "The quality of teaching faculty directly determines a university's capacity and educational standards."^[7] Ideological and political education instructors must learn basic psychological techniques, while psychology instructors should study ideological theory, thereby developing a dual competency structure of "value guidance" and "psychological support."

Secondly, regarding the construction of the practical field, namely social space, we should focus on the "transformation of knowledge into practice". Contextualized and embodied activity design shall be adopted to advance the behavioral externalization of values and psychological literacy, so as to realize the effectiveness of practice-based education. Classrooms should be extended outdoors and integrated into practical activities.

Finally, in terms of constructing the virtual field, or virtual space, digital technologies should be leveraged to break physical boundaries. Digital platforms such as MOOCs and Xuexi Qiangguo, together with online mental health communities and other cyberspaces, can be utilized to build an educational matrix unrestricted by time and space. This offers cross-temporal and cross-spatial learning support for developing the talent cultivation system driven by the dual core of ideological and political education and mental health education.

3.3. Implementation Path

Ideological and political theory courses constitute the key courses for fulfilling the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education. At the Forum for Teachers of Ideological and Political Theory Courses in Schools, General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out, "We should promote the reform and innovation of ideological and political theory courses, continuously enhance their ideological nature, theoretical depth, affinity and pertinence, and uphold the unity of explicit education and implicit education."^[8] Against the backdrop of diversified educational environment construction, the implementation path should adopt the mode integrating explicit and implicit curricula and unifying knowledge and practice. Through the development and delivery of targeted curriculum systems, we can align teaching objectives with practical educational outcomes.

In terms of explicit curricula, we should highlight the

leading role of the core curriculum cluster covering ideological and political theory and mental health education. We need to adopt the collaborative mode of “Ideological and Political Courses + Psychological Courses” to foster college students’ identification with core socialist values and their basic psychological awareness, and give full play to the guiding effect of the curriculum system. In terms of curriculum design, educators can construct a three-tier value system covering the country–society–individual dimensions within ideological and political education. Patriotism and psychological resilience shall be embedded into core classroom teaching sessions to realize the coordinated development of value guidance and psychological literacy cultivation. In terms of implicit curricula, we launch integrated projects combining psychology with ideological and political education. Students can strengthen their political identity and psychological resilience through cultural edification.

Meanwhile, relying on platforms such as student activity centers and social practice bases, we design activities that help students internalize and practice core values and improve their psychological literacy, encouraging them to integrate knowledge with practice. We also combine thematic ideological and political learning with extensive social practice, and establish a home-school-community linkage mechanism to build a cross-departmental collaborative education system.

3.4. Optimize the Evaluation System

The effectiveness of education needs to be verified via a sound evaluation system, which covers three major dimensions: knowledge mastery, value internalization and behavioral performance.

In terms of knowledge acquisition, we should focus on students’ construction and mastery of knowledge systems including Marxist theory and general mental health knowledge, and adopt a combination of coursework and examinations for assessment. In respect of value internalization, evaluation ought to center on students’ recognition of core socialist values as well as the development of their self-confidence. As for behavioral externalization, emphasis should be placed on examining students’ performance in voluntary services, mental health mutual-aid practices and other relevant activities.

Meanwhile, schools should establish growth portfolios for each student based on their performance in knowledge acquisition, value internalization and behavioral externalization. The portfolios should record students’ growth trajectories along a timeline to analyze their developmental changes, so that timely feedback and corrective guidance can be provided. In addition, institutions ought to advance collaboration among families, schools and society to construct a comprehensive three-in-one evaluation system. It is necessary to build a linkage mechanism connecting evaluation outcomes with curriculum improvement. The curriculum system shall be dynamically adjusted in response to evaluation feedback to facilitate the optimization and iteration of top-level design. Through such iterative cycles of practice and adjustment, the goal of promoting construction via evaluation and realizing mutual advancement between evaluation and construction can be effectively achieved.

4. Conclusion

Ideological and political education guides individuals’ social development with core socialist values, while mental health education unlocks individual potential through the cultivation of psychological capital. Despite certain disparities in their specific talent cultivation objectives, both disciplines uphold the people-oriented philosophy, strive to improve individuals’ comprehensive literacy, and advance the all-round development of human beings.

Such intrinsic consistency creates a solid foundation for the integrated advancement of ideological and political education and mental health education. Accordingly, we should construct a “dual-core and four-dimensional” talent cultivation framework centered on the organic integration of the two educational systems. Proceeding from four dimensions including educational philosophy, educational environment, implementation path and evaluation system, we ought to eliminate barriers resulting from the separation of moral education and mental health education, give full play to the synergistic effect of value guidance and psychological empowerment, and ultimately realize integrated cultivation of morality and mental wellness so as to advance the holistic development of college students.

On this basis, continuous exploration and practice of this framework will help higher education institutions better respond to diversified developmental demands of contemporary college students and offer sustainable support for fostering high-caliber talents with sound moral attainment and healthy psychological quality.

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