

Research on the Integration Mechanism of Physical Education Teaching and Mental Health Education in Colleges and Universities

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ABSTRACT

The integration of physical education teaching and mental health education in colleges and universities is supported by both theoretical and practical logics. The theory of physical and mental harmony and the lifelong education theory provide the theoretical foundation for their integration, and the increasingly prominent psychological needs of college students and the adaptation gap in current educational practice constitute the practical driving force for their integration. Based on this, this paper proposes five integration mechanisms of physical education teaching and mental health education in colleges and universities, namely goal coordination, content integration, teaching implementation, evaluation and feedback, as well as guarantee and support, aiming to activate the synergy of education, promote the all-round physical and mental development of college students, and provide reference for colleges and universities to implement the fundamental task of fostering virtue and nurturing talent.

KEYWORDS

Physical education teaching in colleges and universities; Mental health education; Integration

1 Introduction

In May 2023, the Ministry of Education and 16 other central departments jointly issued the “Special Action Plan for Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving Students Mental Health Work in the New Era (2023-2025)”, emphasizing the promotion of mental health through the integration of the “moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic and labour education” and integrating students’ mental health education into all aspects of teaching, management services, and students’ growth. Contemporary college students are confronted with multiple realistic pressures such as academic competition and employment choices, and their psychological problems are gradually becoming more prominent. Traditional physical education teaching mostly focuses on the cultivation of physical fitness, with insufficient connection to mental health education. Integrating mental health education into physical education teaching can not only broaden the implementation paths of mental health education by relying on the practical characteristics of physical education, but also deepen the educational effectiveness of physical education through targeted psychological guidance. It can precisely respond to the practical needs of students’ growth and development, and serves as an important practice for implementing the educational goals of the new era.

2 The Logical Basis for the Integration of Physical Education Teaching and Mental Health Education in Colleges and Universities

The integration of physical education teaching and mental health education in colleges and universities has its inherent theoretical and practical bases.

2.1 The Theoretical Logic of the Integration of Physical Education Teaching and Mental Health Education in Colleges and Universities

The human body and mind form an organic whole that is interdependent and mutually influential. Physical health can lay a solid foundation for mental health, and mental health can inject internal impetus into physical health. This theory of the relationship between body and mind is an important theoretical basis for the integration of physical education teaching and mental health education in colleges and universities. Contemporary education advocates focusing on all students, and promoting their all-round development of knowledge, ability, emotion and personality. Both physical education teaching and mental health education in colleges and universities take the all-round development of students as the fundamental starting point. The former optimizes physiological functions through systematic physical activities, while the latter improves psychological qualities through scientific educational interventions. The deep integration of the two is a practical implementation of the concept of quality-oriented education, and precisely meets the essential demand of education to “cultivate well-round-developed individuals” [1].

Furthermore, the theory of lifelong education further provides in-deep support for the integration of the two. One of the goals of college physical education teaching is to cultivate students’ awareness and ability of lifelong sports, while

mental health literacy is an indispensable important quality for an individual's lifelong development. The organic combination of the two enables students to learn to regulate their psychological state through physical exercise while mastering sports skills, gradually form a lifelong development model where sports promote health and health facilitates development, and achieve the long-term coordinated improvement of physical and mental health, thus laying a foundation for an individual's lifelong development.

2.2 The Realistic Logic of the Integration of Physical Education Teaching and Mental Health Education in Colleges and Universities

The psychological pressure faced by contemporary college students is showing a diversified and complex trend. The interplay of fierce academic competition, anxiety about career prospects, frictions in interpersonal relationships and confusion about self-identity, the limitations of traditional psychological counseling, as well as the insufficient coverage of a single psychological course make it difficult to fully respond to students' diverse psychological demands. As a public course covering all students, college physical education teaching boasts wide coverage, high frequency and prominent interactivity. It can naturally integrate mental health education into daily teaching scenarios, and enable students to imperceptibly improve their psychological literacy in a sports atmosphere. This regular support model align with the actual needs of students for psychological care.

From the perspective of the current educational situation, the college physical education teaching still has the problem of a narrow functional orientation. Some teaching practices only focus on physical training and skill proficiency, with a serious lack of attention to and guidance for students' psychological states. Therefore, the complete educational value of physical education teaching has not been fully released. Meanwhile, mental health education is also confronted with the practical predicaments of weak teaching staff, rigid educational forms, and low student participation willingness. There is an urgent need for more practical and interesting carriers to expand the scope of education. The integration of physical education teaching and mental health education in colleges and universities can achieve the complement of resources. On the one hand, the wide coverage of physical education teaching can effectively expand the reach of mental health education. On the other hand, the integration of mental health education can enrich the educational connotation of physical education teaching. Finally, it can maximize the educational value through complementarity.

3 Construct an Integrated Mechanism of Physical Education Teaching and Mental Health Education in Colleges and Universities

The integration mechanism of physical education teaching and mental health education in colleges and universities consists of five parts: the goal coordination mechanism, the content integration mechanism, the teaching implementation mechanism, the evaluation and feedback mechanism, and the guarantee and support mechanism.

3.1 Goal Coordination Mechanism

The goal coordination mechanism is the soul of the integration of physical education teaching and mental health education in colleges and universities. Only by clarifying the common direction and specific orientation of their integration can the integration practice always closely adhere to the main line of education. Colleges and universities should build a multi-level and three-dimensional target system based on the physical and mental development laws of college students. On the one hand, in terms of the overall goal, it should achieve a deep alignment between the physical education teaching objectives of "enhancing physical fitness, imparting skills, and fostering literacy" and the mental health education goals of "shaping personality, improving abilities, and promoting adaptation", and cultivate new-era college students who possess strong physiques, good exercise habits, healthy mental states, and high social adaptability. On the other hand, at the specific level, it is necessary to refine and implement the target system in combination with each link of physical education teaching. Firstly, cognitively, it guides students to establish a health concept of "body and mind as one", understand the intrinsic connection between physical exercise and mental health, and master basic mental health care knowledge and scientific exercise methods^[2]. Secondly, emotionally, it cultivates students' interest in physical exercise, and enables them to experience joy, a sense of achievement and a sense of belonging in sports, thus alleviating negative emotions. Thirdly, in terms of willpower, through sports challenges, it temers students' qualities of perseverance, courage to strive and fearlessness in the face of setbacks. Fourthly, in terms of social adaptation, it enhances students' communication skills, collaborative awareness and inclusive mindset through team sports and interpersonal interaction, thereby facilitating the formation of their positive interpersonal relationships.

3.2 Content Integration Mechanism

Physical education teaching and mental health education must achieve in-depth penetration in all aspects, so that physical education teaching can fulfill the basic functions of physical training and skill imparting, and naturally carry the value of psychological cultivation. First, in the selection of teaching content, it is necessary to balance scientificity, interest

and mental health. For students with relatively weak interpersonal communication skills, teachers can organize team collaboration activities such as basketball, volleyball, and relay races to guide students to learn to communicate, share and collaborate through group cooperation and collective problem-solving. For students with insufficient self-confidence and weak ability to resist setbacks, teachers can select challenging activities such as long-distance running, rope skipping, and rock climbing to enable students to accumulate successful experiences through gradual breakthroughs, and strengthen their self-confidence and resilience to setbacks by designing step-by-step goals. For students experiencing high stress and significant emotional fluctuations, soothing activities such as yoga, Tai Chi, and jogging can be introduced, combined with breathing regulation, meditation and relaxation methods to help them relieve stress and stabilize emotions^[3]. Second, in terms of the organization of teaching content, psychological education elements should be seamlessly integrated into all links of skill teaching. For example, during skill learning, when students feel anxious due to the difficulty of the movements, teachers can alleviate their fear of difficulty by breaking down movements, providing patient guidance, and offering encouragement and praise. In competitions, they can guide students to view victories and defeats rationally and cultivate a competitive mindset of neither being arrogant in victory nor discouraged in defeat. In the team collaboration session, teachers can design guide group tasks to guide students to listen to opinions, respect differences, and leverage their strengths, thereby enhancing their collaborative capabilities and interpersonal adaptability.

3.3 Teaching Implementation Mechanism

The construction of the teaching implementation mechanism should be based on the practical attribute of physical education teaching. Through the diversified innovation of teaching methods and the flexible adjustment of organizational forms, the natural infiltration of mental health education into the entire process of physical education teaching can be achieved. In terms of teaching methods, teachers can adopt heuristic teaching to guide students to actively think about the logic of collaboration and the path to resolving contradictions in team projects. They can also adopt interactive teaching to shorten the teacher-student distance, accurately capture students' psychological dynamics, and provide targeted guidance through two-way communication forms such as questioning, discussion, and sharing. Alternatively, they can use situational teaching to make students perceive psychological changes and master regulation methods in immersive experiences, by simulating real sports scenarios such as competition pressure and collaborative predicaments^[4]. In terms of teaching organization forms, teachers can first adopt small group teaching to cultivate team awareness and communication skills through group division of labor and mutual assistance for common progress. Second, they can use stratified teaching to set personalized goals and content based on students' physical fitness levels, skill foundations and psychological characteristics, so that each student can gain a suitable and successful experience to enhance their self-confidence. Third, they can introduce outdoor development teaching to step out of the traditional playground, and allow students to challenge themselves, support each other in an unfamiliar environment, and strengthen their adaptability and team cohesion through activities such as wild camping and quality development.

3.4 Evaluation and Feedback Mechanism

The integration of physical education teaching and mental health education in colleges and universities should also establish a diverse and comprehensive evaluation mechanism. Firstly, the multi-subject collaboration in evaluation is a crucial support. Teachers should coordinate students' learning situations and psychological fluctuations, and provide professional and targeted guidance from the perspective of teaching organizers and guides. Students can clarify their strengths and weaknesses and enhance their self-awareness through self-reflection. Through mutual observation and reflection, students can cultivate awareness of respect and appreciation, and gain insights for growth from others' feedback. Secondly, the evaluation content should balance specificity and operability. It should not only include hard indicators such as the mastery of sports skills and the improvement of physical fitness, but also cover learning attitude dimensions like classroom participation, practice enthusiasm, and teamwork performance. At the same time, the psychological quality development such as self-confidence cultivation, emotional regulation ability, resilience against setbacks, and interpersonal communication effectiveness should be incorporated into the evaluation scope. In addition, the selection of evaluation methods should achieve multiple complementarity. For instance, formative evaluation runs through the entire teaching process through forms such as classroom observation, daily records, group interaction tracking, and individual communication, promptly capturing students' learning status and psychological changes, and providing immediate feedback. Summative evaluation conducts a comprehensive review based on end-of-semester comprehensive tests, achievement presentations, and self-summaries. At the same time, quantitative evaluation and qualitative evaluation should form a synergy. Quantitative means such as physical fitness tests and skill scores should be combined with qualitative materials such as learning logs, personal reflections, and teachers' observation records to jointly understand the overall picture of students' development.

3.5 Guarantee and Support Mechanism

The guarantee and support mechanism is a prerequisite for the effective operation of the integration mechanism of

physical education teaching and mental health education in colleges and universities. Colleges and universities need to build a comprehensive support system from multiple dimensions such as systems, teachers, resources and culture to lay a solid foundation for the orderly advancement of the integration practice. At the institutional level, colleges and universities should formulate and improve relevant policy documents, define the integration goals, task divisions and implementation requirements, and incorporate them into the overall planning of educational and teaching reforms. At the same time, they should rationally allocate the class hour ratio of physical education courses and mental health education courses. establish and improve assessment and evaluation, teaching supervision and incentive mechanisms, and commend and reward teachers who perform outstandingly in integrated teaching, thus fully stimulating teaching enthusiasm and initiative ^[5]. In terms of faculty development, colleges and universities should not only enhance the mental health knowledge reserves and psychological counseling skills training of physical education teachers through thematic lectures, in-service training and other forms to improve their competence in integrated teaching, but also establish a collaboration mechanism between physical education teachers and mental health education teachers, and encourage psychological teachers to deeply participate in the teaching design, classroom guidance and after-class tutoring of physical education, thus forming a teaching synergy. At the level of resource guarantee, colleges and universities need to simultaneously strengthen the construction of both hardware and software, improve sports venues and facilities, equip necessary equipment for integrated teaching such as yoga, Tai Chi teaching props and outdoor development safety equipment, integrate on-campus mental health education resources including psychological counseling centers and psychological assessment systems, and develop integration-oriented textbooks, lesson plans and teaching videos to provide comprehensive support for teaching implementation. In terms of cultural support, they can disseminate the concept of body and mind as one, and popularize knowledge related to physical exercise and mental health through multiple channels such as campus radio, bulletin boards, and WeChat official accounts. They also can hold special activities such as sports culture festivals, mental health months, and fun sports meetings to provide students with platforms for sports experience and psychological communication, and guide teachers and students to establish a comprehensive view of health, foster a harmonious, healthy and positive campus atmosphere, thus providing a favorable cultural environment for the long-term operation of the integration mechanism.

4 Conclusion

The integration of physical education teaching and mental health education in colleges and universities is a concrete manifestation of the concept of all-round education in the higher education practice. This integration is rooted in the essential requirement of education to promote the all-round development of individuals, and also responds to the practical needs of contemporary college students for the coordinated development of their physical and mental health. The five mechanisms constructed in this article are conducive to resolving the respective development predicaments of physical education teaching and mental health education, and can achieve a synergistic effect of strengthening the mind through physical fitness and promoting physical fitness through mental health. In the future, research should be further deepened in conjunction with the development of the times, so that the integrated teaching of the two can better assist college students in growing into new-era talents with physical and mental harmony.

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