

Capacity Building and Reshaping of University Teachers' Roles in Psychological Education from the Perspective of "Sanquan Education"

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Abstract: As the "Sanquan Education" concept transitions into practice, psychological education plays a foundational role. Nevertheless, university faculty currently encounter challenges including unclear role cognition, ambiguous rights and responsibilities, and insufficient relevant capabilities in psychological education work. To address these challenges, this study proposes a role differentiation model categorizing faculty into three core agents—professional course teachers, counselors, and class teachers—with distinct leading, interactive, and collaborative functions in psychological education. Based on this framework, the paper further develops a competency system tailored to different roles, aiming to provide actionable recommendations for enhancing systematic, specialized, and effective implementation of psychological education in universities.

Keywords: Sanquan Education; Psychological education; University teachers; Role differentiation model

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1. Introduction

1.1. Problem proposal

As we all know, "Sanquan Education" refers to education involving all staff, the entire process, and all aspects. In the development of higher education in the new era ^[1], it has transformed from a mere policy or slogan into a practical activity that must be carried out in various teaching processes. To realize it, we must do a good job in mental health education. Meanwhile, the development of mental health education also needs "Sanquan Education" as a driving force. China's understanding of adolescent mental health work has continuously deepened, and requirements have gradually become more stringent. To further implement the spirit of the *Education Power Construction Plan Outline (2024–2035)* and the National Education Conference ^[2], the Ministry of Education issued the *Ten Measures for Further Strengthening the Mental Health Work of Primary and Secondary School Students*. With the wisdom of "taking education as the foundation and nurturing the mind as the key," it promotes psychological education to gradually become a core content running through all links of education and teaching in primary and secondary schools and universities.

Yet, despite such strong policy backing, does psychological education work proceed smoothly in practice? In fact, it is not the case. There are numerous obstacles from policy formulation to implementation. Taking universities as an example, many college students' psychological development is still in a developmental stage, and their psychological status is easily affected by many external unstable factors, leading to the emergence of mental health problems ^[3]. Although some universities emphasize the importance of psychological education, they have not truly assigned responsibilities to every education participant, resulting in educated individuals not receiving systematic mental health education. Professional course teachers may focus on knowledge transmission and overlook changes in students' psychological states; counselors, burdened with multiple roles, may struggle to meet the psychological needs of all students; class teachers may lack professional psychological counseling skills in daily management; family and social forces are often absent in many cases, leading to the dispersion of psychological education responsibilities. Moreover, some educational subjects lack the enthusiasm to participate actively or are willing but unable—they do not know how to participate in the process of psychological education based on their own educational identities. As a result, the psychological education work in universities often falls into a passive response dilemma: it can neither promptly prevent the occurrence of students' psychological problems nor form an effective intervention force when crises arise.

1.2. Research status

Since the proposal of the “Sanquan Education” concept, it has gradually developed into a relatively complete system. Initially, people mainly understood it from the perspectives of management, teaching, and services. Later, it evolved into a common goal of education involving all staff, the entire process, and all aspects, and was incorporated into the overall layout of ideological and political work in universities ^[4]. Many previous studies have mostly focused on interpreting policies, emphasizing significance, or describing certain practical practices, which are often relatively macro. There is a lack of in-depth and systematic analysis on how to coordinate the internal concepts of the “Sanquan,” how to implement them in different situations, and how to establish a long-term mechanism, and the theoretical level needs to be further deepened.

In the practice of mental health education in universities, the roles played by teachers have received increasing attention. Existing studies generally point out that teachers' responsibilities are not limited to knowledge transmission, but also need to assume the important task of guiding students' mental health development. Relevant discussions mostly focus on the basic qualities that teachers should possess, such as understanding basic psychological knowledge, enhancing interpersonal communication skills, and having sensitivity to identify psychological crises. In addition, the education sector also advocates comprehensively improving teachers' professional level in mental health education by establishing training mechanisms.

However, current research still has some deficiencies. On the one hand, many achievements are only descriptions of objective phenomena or summaries of experiences. They do not systematically and clearly position teachers' roles in psychological education within the framework of “Sanquan Education,” nor do they provide specific designs for their growth paths. On the other hand, current discussions often regard teachers as a unified group. In fact, professional course teachers, counselors, and class teachers have different responsibilities in their work ^[5]. Their roles in psychological education, the capabilities they need, and how they cooperate with each other should be distinguished. Precisely because roles are not clearly defined, existing suggestions are often general and difficult to truly implement in specific work.

2. The inherent coupling between “Sanquan Education” and psychological education

2.1. A systems theory interpretation of “Sanquan Education”

The origin of “Sanquan Education” can be traced back to the 1950s. In December 1957, Mao Zedong pointed out in *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People*: “Ideological and political work should be the responsibility of all departments. The Communist Party should take charge, the Communist Youth League should take charge, the competent government departments should take charge, and the presidents and teachers of schools should especially take charge.” This theory explicitly emphasizes the importance of multi-subject participation, which can be regarded as the germination of the idea of education involving all staff^[6]. In 1981, the “Five Merits and Four Virtues and Being a Model for Others” activity was carried out among educators nationwide, which later developed into the “Three Education Activities” of integrating teaching with education, serving with education, and managing with education. In 2017, the Party Leadership Group of the Ministry of Education issued the *Implementation Outline for the Quality Improvement Project of Ideological and Political Work in Universities*, clearly proposing to “form an educational pattern involving all staff, the entire process, and all aspects,” and the “Sanquan Education” concept was officially established.

Thus, the “Sanquan Education” concept seems to originate from the Party’s consistent requirements for the cause of higher education at different stages of China’s development. Moreover, education involving all staff, the entire process, and all aspects actually constitutes an interacting ecosystem.

The General Secretary pointed out at the National Conference on Ideological and Political Work in Universities that we should adhere to taking moral education as the central link, integrate ideological and political work into the entire process of education and teaching, realize education throughout the whole process and all aspects, and strive to create a new situation in the development of China’s higher education cause. The three aspects of “all staff,” “entire process,” and “all aspects” of education support each other and are organically unified, forming a closed-loop educational system. Education involving all staff is the foundation, breaking the subject limitations of previous education, covering teachers, staff, students, parents, and social forces, forming a collaborative educational pattern where everyone is an educator, and laying a solid subject foundation for moral education. Education throughout the entire process is the key, running through all stages of students’ growth, from enrollment enlightenment to graduation and success, connecting classroom teaching, campus life, social practice, and other links, and aligning moral education with the growth trajectory. Education in all aspects is the guarantee, integrating multiple scenarios such as classrooms, campuses, families, and society, truly breaking spatial barriers, and building a relatively three-dimensional platform for moral education. From this, we can clearly see the different roles played by the “Three-All.” Since their roles are different, only through synergy can we achieve an effect greater than the sum of individual parts, integrate moral education into all aspects of education, and cultivate era-ready talents with all-round development of morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics, and labor.

2.2. Psychological education as the hub of “Sanquan Education”

In the “Sanquan Education” system, psychological education actually plays the role of a hub and bridge. Why? We have to admit that the growth of students in any aspect of morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics, and labor cannot be achieved independently of their healthy psychological state. As a carrier, mental health permeates all educational goals and supports their realization. When a student is troubled by anxiety, depression, or interpersonal relationship problems, they will feel powerless in many aspects: they may be more hesitant in making moral judgments, their efficiency in learning knowledge decreases, they lack motivation to exercise,

their perception of beautiful things becomes dull, and their enthusiasm for participating in labor practice fades. Therefore, promoting students' mental health is actually cultivating the spiritual soil for their all-round development of morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics, and labor.

From this, we can also understand why normal university majors all require learning developmental and educational psychology. Whether it is teachers transmitting knowledge and values, or managers enforcing rules, all external educational behaviors or resource inputs will ultimately undergo complex transformations in students' cognition, emotions, and willpower. Only through this psychological process can educational content be truly accepted and absorbed by students and transformed into stable personal qualities. Therefore, psychological education is actually a link running through the practice of "Sanquan Education."

Specifically, "education involving all staff" requires every teacher and manager to possess certain psychological awareness and communication skills, so that their teaching, management, or service methods are more in line with students' psychological characteristics. In "education throughout the entire process," it emphasizes providing continuous and gradual guidance and support according to students' different psychological development needs from enrollment to graduation. In the "education in all aspects" model, more emphasis is placed on integrating psychological cultivation elements into various scenarios such as classrooms, research, campus culture, network environments, and daily life, striving to create an immersive, positive, and healthy growth atmosphere. In this sense, mental health education is like a circulatory system. Although it is not always externally visible, it provides necessary nutrition and vitality for the overall organic whole of "Sanquan Education," maintaining its vitality and effectiveness, and is an indispensable part.

3. The triple misalignment of university teachers' roles in psychological education

In the process of promoting and implementing the "Sanquan Education" concept, university teachers need to assume more comprehensive educational responsibilities. Mental health education is an important part of this. However, when teachers play this role in practical work, they generally encounter three problems: cognitive deviation, unclear structure, and insufficient capabilities, which affect the actual effect of mental health education.

3.1. Misalignment in role cognition

Under the influence of traditional educational concepts and evaluation systems, a mindset still prevails where teaching and education are mechanically separated, and professional teaching and psychological care are regarded as two unrelated things.

Some teachers believe that their work is to impart professional knowledge and train students' academic skills. In other words, "teaching" is their main responsibility, while educational work including psychological care is more like an additional, soft task. Some teachers even think that this should be mainly the responsibility of specialized personnel, such as ideological and political counselors. This idea invisibly draws a boundary of responsibility, resulting in psychological education being excluded from the role definition of many teachers.

This problem is also reflected in the one-sided understanding of the relationship between "professionalism" and "psychology." Some teachers fail to fully recognize that students' learning motivation, thinking modes, innovative spirit, teamwork spirit, and even academic integrity are actually closely related to their psychological states. The psychological states mentioned here include learning motivation, emotional management, pressure resistance, self-cognition, and so on. In real life, we find that anxious students struggle to engage in in-depth

learning, while self-doubting students often refuse or fear academic challenges. Psychological barriers prevent students' abilities from being truly improved. In fact, the process of imparting professional knowledge itself is a continuous psychological interaction process with students.

However, if teachers only focus on the logical system of knowledge and ignore the psychological state of the "people" who learn this knowledge, educational behaviors are likely to deviate from students' psychological reality, making it difficult to touch students' hearts, let alone stimulate their true motivation for growth. Precisely because of this cognitive disconnection, psychological education has not become a conscious action of all educators.

3.2. Misalignment in functional structure

In the actual operation of university organizational work, mental health education often encounters problems in system design, such as unclear division of rights and responsibilities and poor coordination between departments, which often place teachers in an awkward position in practical operations^[7]. Some things seem to be no one's responsibility, while others may lead to chaos because each department assumes similar responsibilities.

When psychological education is defined as everyone's responsibility, but it is not clear who is responsible for what and how each link is connected, the result may be that no one is responsible. The good original intention of "full participation" can easily evolve into the dispersion of responsibilities. Professional teachers may feel that their psychological knowledge is insufficient and that the counseling center can solve this problem in a more professional way. However, professional counselors have limited energy. If all problems are pushed to them, it will form a backlog of responsibilities. When students have common psychological problems, relevant departments are likely to fall into a state of evading responsibilities or passing the buck, forming a blank area where no one is responsible, but the problem must be addressed, thus missing the best opportunity to provide early support and intervention.

When dealing with complex psychological crisis cases, hasty handling or conflicting instructions may occur due to poor communication or unclear responsibilities of the leading department. Teaching departments may prioritize continuing education, student affairs offices emphasize safety and stability, psychological centers focus on clinical intervention, and students' families may have their own ideas and needs. Therefore, multiple departments need to cooperate. Without an inter-departmental coordination mechanism and information sharing platform, actions taken by all parties based on their own positions cannot form a synergistic effect, and may even interfere with each other. As a result, students in distress and their families feel deeper confusion and helplessness, and front-line teachers also feel confused and powerless.

3.3. Misalignment in capacity support

Even if many teachers have the enthusiasm to care for students and are willing to assume the responsibility of psychological education, the third practical dilemma—insufficient capacity support—will immediately emerge in the implementation process. For the vast majority of teachers without a psychological background, how to accurately identify students' psychological distress, how to grasp the appropriate degree of communication for guidance, how to distinguish the boundary between psychological support and professional work, and how to correctly seek professional help in case of crises are all problems they face. A common sense of professional awe and the resulting lack of confidence in their own psychological education capabilities make many teachers choose to avoid psychological topics with students. They are worried that they will "do more harm than good"

or overstep their boundaries accidentally.

Why do they feel capacity anxiety? In the final analysis, it is because there is too little systematic support and training available. Teachers receive significantly insufficient relevant training both before and after employment. In normal university education and new teacher training, courses involving developmental psychology, educational psychology, and basic psychological counseling skills account for a very small proportion, and these courses are mostly theoretical explanations, lacking practical operation training for common psychological scenarios on campus. In addition, the continuous and effective professional support system within the school is not sound. When teachers encounter specific difficulties in psychological education in daily work, it is often difficult for them to obtain timely and targeted guidance, team support, or clear work guidelines from professional psychological personnel in the school. Of course, there are very few cooperation platforms that allow psychology to dialogue with other professional disciplines. Psychological education should have promoted such interdisciplinary exchanges to jointly explore how to integrate the cultivation of psychological literacy into professional teaching, but such teaching and research mechanisms are not common in practice.

Due to their insufficient capabilities, some teachers may adopt overly simplistic solutions, such as dialogue. However, in the process of communicating with students, due to the lack of necessary listening and empathy skills, the effect of such communication is limited, and they cannot identify students' psychological problems from subtle aspects like professional counselors. At the same time, when some teachers notice students' psychological problems, they may directly refer them to the psychological center, ignoring the importance of establishing trust relationships and providing emotional support in the early stage. The lack of such a support system often leads to the beautiful vision of all staff participating in mental health education being stuck at the last mile of teachers' individual professional capabilities, making it difficult to truly implement.

Perhaps only by gradually eliminating these problems can psychological education truly evolve from a simple concept into a widely practiced educational method and become a natural, conscious, and confident educational behavior of every teacher.

4. Shaping a system of university teachers' psychological education based on role differentiation

Teacher Party branches are the grassroots and foundation for doing a good job in ideological and political work and teaching work in universities. They are not only the core of organizational life that unites Party member teachers, but also the core of ideological education work facing students to achieve moral education. As an important carrier of organizational education, the exertion of teachers' psychological education functions covers various tasks such as education, scientific research, management, and services, involving multiple aspects such as value shaping, knowledge transmission, and capacity building, and has strong expansibility and flexibility in breadth and depth. This requires us to break through the "Sanquan Education" from different angles, break group boundaries, work boundaries, and time-space boundaries, promote the linkage of all elements of educational work, and build an integrated educational system, so as to give full play to the "fortress role" of ideological and political work in universities ^[8].

4.1. The principles of reshaping professionalism, complementarity, and synergy

Professionalism requires us to respect the advantages and working methods of different roles. It is unrealistic to expect all teachers to become psychological counselors, which will not only place excessive pressure on teachers

but also be more like a “moral abduction.” The different main functions of each position can precisely serve as specific entry points for psychological education, ensuring that educational work takes root in real educational scenarios. Secondly, we need to achieve complementarity. We must recognize the inherent differences in the psychological education functions of different roles and consciously connect these differences to achieve complementary capabilities, forming a support network covering various needs of students’ development.

A differentiated role system must have core operating principles to avoid chaos. On the basis of division of labor, universities need to establish systematic communication, referral, and linkage mechanisms. Through information sharing, clear processes, and regular communication, they can achieve synergy, integrating scattered individual efforts into organic organizational actions, so as to ensure that any alarm issued by students at any stage can be promptly identified, effectively responded to, and properly handled in a closed-loop system.

4.2. A role function positioning model for “three types of subjects”

Based on the above principles, we can construct a role positioning model with clear functions and mutual support around the three groups in universities that have the closest contact with students—professional course teachers, counselors, and class teachers.

Firstly, professional course teachers. As Rousseau mentioned in “Emile”: “The best education is education that does nothing: students do not see the occurrence of education, but it actually affects their minds and helps them develop their potential. This is the best education in the world.” In the daily teaching process, professional course teachers cultivate students’ psychological qualities in an imperceptible way through knowledge transmission. Through academic training, they stimulate students’ intrinsic learning motivation. In guiding students to solve problems and participate in scientific research practices, they cultivate students’ systematic thinking and innovative courage. When students encounter academic difficulties or experimental setbacks, the teachers’ own teaching process actually trains students’ concentration and adaptability. In addition, when teachers mention academic norms and professional ethics, they can also guide students to establish a sense of integrity and teamwork spirit.

It is worth noting that professional course teachers interact frequently with students in class, which gives them a natural advantage in observing students. They are more likely to detect subtle changes in students’ cognitive states, emotions, and behaviors. Therefore, professional course teachers should assume the important responsibility of early identification and be able to quickly detect signals that may indicate psychological pressure. When students’ learning enthusiasm suddenly declines, their emotions remain low, or they exhibit abnormal behaviors, they should respond in a timely manner.

Secondly, counselors. Counselors are the backbone responsible for students’ ideological education and daily management, and their role in psychological education is more comprehensive and requires stronger coordination capabilities^[9]. Counselors provide developmental psychological support for all students, and through interactive activities such as lectures, they provide direct guidance to freshmen on common issues such as adaptation and planning. At the same time, counselors are mainly responsible for the prevention of students’ psychological crises and the coordination of daily interventions, maintaining a good early warning network from the class level to the college and university levels. In addition, counselors also play the role of information hubs. They need to receive feedback on students’ situations from professional course teachers, class teachers, etc., make judgments, and effectively coordinate resources from various parties such as the school’s psychological center and families to ensure that students in need can receive timely and appropriate professional help.

Thirdly, class teachers. Class teachers are usually part-time professional course teachers. Through long-

term and stable class management and daily interactions, they establish deep emotional connections with students and create a strong sense of trust. In the continuous class life, class teachers understand each student's personality characteristics, growth background, and daily changes by participating in class activities or individual conversations, becoming the first person students are willing to talk to and seek informal help from when encountering life difficulties, interpersonal conflicts, or emotional fluctuations^[10]. The trusting relationship established by class teachers through daily care, patient listening, and emotional support is precisely an important foundation for students to obtain social support, relieve psychological pressure, and be willing to accept further help. It can be said that the work of class teachers is a very important emotional buffer zone between professional psychological services and students' daily study and life.

4.3. Joint efforts of three parties to establish an information-sharing collaborative workflow

Merely clarifying the division of roles is not enough. Without effective collaboration mechanisms, everyone is likely to work independently and fail to form synergy. Therefore, we must establish a closed-loop collaborative workflow that allows information sharing, smooth process connection, and timely result feedback.

Specifically, how can this be done? This can be achieved by leveraging teacher Party branches or college-level student work groups to institute regular educational work exchange meetings. These meetings will serve as a fixed communication platform wherein professional course teachers, counselors, and class teachers can regularly exchange information and discuss specific cases. Concurrently, to enhance procedural compactness, it is essential to design a psychological care early warning information form that explicitly lists students' behavioral performances requiring attention and outlines the channels for information submission. This ensures that observations made by teachers during daily work are promptly transmitted to the corresponding grade counselors.

After receiving this information, counselors are responsible for initiating a preliminary assessment and implementing hierarchical response measures. If students only have general psychological problems, counselors can contact class teachers and ask them to pay more attention to the students every day. If professional intervention is needed, counselors should immediately contact the mental health center for referral and determine whether it is necessary to maintain necessary communication with the students' families according to the actual situation. Throughout the process, all parties should continuously update information and provide feedback until the students' conditions stabilize or the problems are properly resolved, forming a complete work cycle from discovery, assessment, intervention to feedback.

Through such a closely connected and continuously advancing collaborative process, the different roles of teachers can be truly unified, transforming psychological education from a static responsibility norm into a dynamic and organic collaborative process in reality.

5. Conclusion

As "Sanquan Education" deepens from concept advocacy to practice, psychological education is no longer an additional task attached to ideological and political work, and the construction of the psychological education system in universities has entered a critical stage. How to integrate the role model into the teacher development system, how to establish a normalized professional support and supervision mechanism, and how to design an incentive-compatible evaluation system will directly affect the practical effect of psychological education. However, it is certain that only when every teacher can find confidence and ease in education with a clear positioning can psychological

education truly become a daily nutrient nourishing students' growth, and "Sanquan Education" can ultimately realize its original intention of "education involving all staff, the entire process, and all aspects." This is not only an inevitable requirement for universities to implement the fundamental task of moral education, but also the ultimate expectation for education to return to the all-round development of people^[11].

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