

Recommendations for Optimizing Mental Health Curriculum Materials for Primary and Secondary Schools Based on Student Needs

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Abstract: Mental health education curriculum has become an important way for schools to carry out mental health education. As the carrier of the curriculum, teaching materials play an important role in the effective development of the curriculum. The content and quality of mental health teaching materials affect the quality of mental health education in primary and secondary schools to a certain extent. However, there are some deficiencies in the current mental health textbooks in terms of value orientation, personality characteristics, content pertinence and timeliness, operability, structural system, and logic. Based on the actual needs of students, this paper puts forward targeted optimization suggestions for the above problems, in order to promote the continuous improvement and innovation of mental health education curriculum, so that the teaching materials can better meet the psychological needs of students, improve the effectiveness of mental health education, and promote the all-round development of students.

Keywords: Mental health education; Primary and secondary schools; Teaching materials; Student needs

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1. Introduction

Primary and secondary school students are at a critical stage of physical and mental development. They often face various psychological challenges in self-cognition, emotional management, interpersonal communication, and employment. Mental health education plays an irreplaceable role in improving the psychological quality of primary and middle school students and promoting the healthy and harmonious development of their body and mind. This is not only the internal demand of students' healthy growth, but also the inevitable choice to comprehensively promote quality education. China attaches great importance to mental health education in primary and secondary schools, and the mental health education curriculum has become an important way for schools to carry out mental health education. As the carrier of the curriculum, teaching materials play an important role in the effective development of the curriculum. The content and

quality of mental health teaching materials affect the quality of mental health education in primary and secondary schools to a certain extent. The *Guidelines for Mental Health Education in Primary and Secondary Schools (revised in 2012)* ^[1] pointed out that it is necessary to strengthen the management of mental health education materials, take students' development as the foundation, follow the law of students' physical and mental development, and carry out mental health education in primary and secondary schools. Students' growth and development needs are the core of teaching activities, and teaching should serve students' growth and development needs ^[2]. Whether the compilation of textbooks reflects "student-centered" and considers the development needs of students is a theoretical and practical issue that needs to be addressed in the construction of a high-quality education system ^[3]. At present, there are misplaced ideas and biased content in mental health textbooks ^[4] and poor timeliness ^[5]. In order to meet the actual needs of primary and secondary school students, the mental health curriculum in primary and secondary schools needs to achieve the desired results ^[6,7].

Therefore, from the perspective of students' actual needs, this paper analyzes the problems existing in the compilation of current mental health education textbooks and gives optimization suggestions, promotes the continuous improvement and innovation of mental health education courses, enriches and improves the theoretical system of mental health education textbook construction, so that mental health textbooks can better meet students' psychological needs, improve the effectiveness of mental health education, and promote students' all-round development.

2. Mental health textbook compilation orientation

The compilation orientation of mental health textbooks in primary and secondary schools in China is mainly psychological, educational, life-oriented, and problem-oriented.

2.1. Psychological orientation

Psychological orientation refers to the orientation of strengthening the psychological basis of textbook construction, making psychological education textbooks adapt to students' psychological structure and psychological needs, so as to enhance learners' psychological development, which has become the common trend of textbook construction in today's era. As far as the compilation of psychological education textbooks is concerned, it should reflect the guiding ideology of people-oriented at the macro level, with the promotion of students' psychological development as the core, focusing on the overall development of students' psychology and the overall improvement of each student in the development. In the specific operation process, it is necessary to understand the current situation of students' psychological development, study students' psychological needs, design relevant activity programs, and provide psychological interaction, psychological experience, and psychological construction. The scene makes the psychological education textbook the best entry point for promoting the overall development of students.

2.2. Educational orientation

Mental health education belongs to a subset of the category of education, with a common structure of general education. Although psychological education is based on human psychology and aims to promote psychological development, it is an educational problem that improves students' psychological quality through scientific and effective education. Therefore, it is a more accurate positioning to characterize

psychological education as an educational issue. In the compilation of teaching materials, this orientation advocates that according to the general law of students' psychological development, through the design of flexible and enlightening educational activities, give full play to the main participation of students and the leading role of educators, establish a relationship between teachers and students with equal personality and democratic interaction, promote the continuous improvement of students' psychological "zone of proximal development," emphasize the systematic synergy of teaching materials, and advocate the organic combination of mental health education and other five education, especially moral education. The education-oriented psychological education textbooks are easy to integrate with school education and teaching work, so they are easier to be accepted, grasped, and used by the first-line psychological educators in primary and secondary schools.

2.3. Life orientation

"Returning to the life world" has become a common trend of modern education, and the construction of psychological education textbooks for primary and secondary schools should also demonstrate this concept. The life-oriented orientation advocates starting from the psychological reality of students, selecting typical materials that fit their psychological characteristics in the life world, and guiding students to promote the development of psychological quality through independent cognition, experience, reflection, and introspection with the help of life-oriented activity situations. It can be seen that the life-oriented psychological education textbooks pay attention to the design of psychological life scenes and the creation of situations, aiming to present students with a psychological space full of modern life. For example, the primary school experimental textbook "Mental Health" in Yunnan Province, the seventeenth lesson of the fifth grade of the textbook takes "learning to care" as the theme and adopts "group performance" as the activity mode. Its content and activities are based on specific activities in the real-life world.

2.4. Problem orientation

Mental health education is not equivalent to psychological knowledge education. One-sided emphasis on the teaching of psychological knowledge may hinder the mental growth and personality improvement of children. Therefore, the compilation of psychological education textbooks should not simply follow the knowledge system and scientific logic of psychology, but should follow the psychological logic and life logic of primary and secondary school students, reflecting the problematic compilation orientation. This orientation requires textbook writers to select typical situations, typical events, typical activities, and typical problems as the basic content of psychological education textbooks on the basis of fully grasping the psychological characteristics of students of different ages, starting from the main psychological problems and life development issues faced by students at this stage. For example, the psychological education textbook "Modern Juvenile" written by Beijing Normal University focuses on the psychological problems faced by adolescent students. Starting from the universal and special psychological problems faced by students of different ages, the textbook is appropriate and readable ^[6].

3. Problems in the compilation of mental health textbooks

3.1. Deviation of value orientation of textbooks

The deviation of textbook value cancellation is mainly reflected in three aspects ^[4]. First of all, the

compilation of textbooks is mostly teacher-centered and adopts a third-person perspective, ignoring the dominant position of students, which leads to the disconnection between textbooks and students' actual needs. Secondly, in the compilation of mental health textbooks, most of them adopt subject-based or social-based value orientation, fail to take students' needs as the center, ignore students' subjective status, and fail to fully consider the subjectivity of students' psychological development. Finally, there is a deviation between the current school mental health textbook compilation concept and teaching purpose. The textbook pays more attention to the adjustment of students' negative mentality, pays too much attention to students' negative psychological adjustment, and ignores the cultivation of students' positive psychological qualities such as optimism and self-confidence.

3.2. Lack of personality characteristics of teaching materials

First of all, in the process of compiling many mental health textbooks, there is a phenomenon of mechanically applying the logic of textbook compilation in other disciplines, which fails to be compiled based on the uniqueness of mental health disciplines. This makes it difficult for textbooks to achieve the organic unity of scientificity, practicability, and operability, and ignores the key links such as activity participation, experience, and practice of primary and secondary school students in the learning process. At the same time, the textbooks as a whole lack flexibility and openness, failing to highlight the "personality" and characteristics of psychological education textbooks^[6]. Secondly, China has a vast territory, and different regions have formed their own unique cultural background and value system in the long-term development process. However, some mental health textbooks do not fully consider this regional cultural difference, but adopt a unified writing mode and content, which makes the textbooks lack regional characteristics and fail to reflect school-based characteristics^[8,9]. Finally, in the context of the accelerating process of globalization, the culture that primary and secondary school students are exposed to is increasingly diversified. However, in contrast to the existing mental health textbooks, the multicultural elements are relatively scarce, and there is a lack of in-depth discussion and effective guidance on mental health problems in different cultural backgrounds.

3.3. Lack of pertinence and timeliness in textbook content

Cui^[6] pointed out that there is a clear bias in some current mental health textbooks, that is, excessive focus on the cultivation of non-intelligent psychological quality of primary and middle school students and the achievement of personality development goals, but to a certain extent, neglect the cultivation of students' intelligent quality and the excavation of psychological potential. Xin^[4] from another point of view, mental health textbooks have problems of lack of pertinence, timeliness, and operability in terms of themes. The specific performance is that the "suitability" of the textbook is not good enough to accurately meet the actual needs of students; the "applicability" of the content also needs to be improved, and it is difficult to play its due role in actual teaching, which makes it difficult to effectively transform the ideal effect expected by the textbook into practical results. Zhao^[10], Wei^[11], and Tang^[12] pointed out that many problems have been exposed in the compilation of mental health textbooks for primary and secondary schools in China. First, there is an extreme tendency of "or heavy theory, or heavy practice" in the compilation of mental health textbooks for primary and secondary schools. Those who emphasize theory are often obscure and divorced from reality; too much emphasis on practitioners lacks theoretical support and is difficult to form a systematic

knowledge system. Second, primary and secondary school mental health textbooks “lack system and logic”; the content of each chapter is not closely connected, and the distribution of knowledge points is scattered, which is not conducive to students’ construction of a complete mental health knowledge framework. Third, the content of mental health textbooks in primary and secondary schools is inconsistent with the actual needs of students’ lives. The selected cases are out of touch with students’ daily life, and it is difficult to arouse resonance and interest. Fourth, the case content of primary and secondary school mental health textbooks lags behind the times and fails to reflect the new situation and new problems of the current society. Fifth, primary and secondary school mental health textbooks do not highlight the characteristics of nationalization and localization, and it is difficult to meet the cultural needs of students in different regions. Sixth, the knowledge content arrangement of primary and secondary school mental health textbooks lacks balance, and the content arrangement has the phenomenon of favoring one over another, which fails to fully cover all dimensions of primary and secondary school students’ mental health. In addition, Zhao ^[10] also pointed out that the content of the textbook failed to keep up with the pace of development of the times and timely reflect the current hot issues of social concern, such as Internet addiction and juvenile delinquency. This makes the teaching materials lack a sense of the times and pertinence, and it is difficult to effectively guide students to correctly deal with practical problems, thus affecting the actual effect of mental health education.

3.4. Lack of operability of the content of the textbook

Mental health education curriculum has both professional and experiential characteristics. As a professional course, the content of its teaching materials must be based on the theoretical knowledge of psychological science as the cornerstone, and to guide other content, to lay a solid theoretical foundation for the course; at the same time, it is also an experiential course. Knowledge teaching is not the core goal. “Improving the psychological quality of all students, cultivating their positive, optimistic and healthy psychological quality, fully developing their psychological potential, promoting the harmonious and sustainable development of students’ body and mind, and building a solid foundation for their healthy growth and happy life” is the main pursuit. In view of this, in the process of textbook compilation, we must properly handle the relationship between professional theory and experience activities. However, under the influence of the dual characteristics of mental health curriculum, there are two extreme tendencies in the teaching materials of mental health education for middle school students at this stage. First, the content of the teaching materials is too theoretical, which leads to the complexity and obscurity of the teaching content, which in turn dampens students’ enthusiasm for learning and is not conducive to the achievement of the goal of mental health education. Secondly, it is completely based on activity experience. On the surface, students are immersed in various psychological activities throughout the class. The classroom atmosphere is warm, and the enthusiasm for participation is high. However, it is often difficult for students to know what they have learned after class ^[5]. It can be seen that the lack of practicality and operability is a problem that is easily exposed by many current mental health education textbooks.

3.5. Lack of systematic and logical textbook structure

The problems existing in the systematic and logical aspects of mental health textbooks are mainly reflected in the two dimensions of the arrangement structure of the textbook content and the update and revision mechanism.

In terms of content arrangement, mental health textbooks are mostly presented in the form of activity modules and cases, but often ignore the construction of internal logic and systematic coordination. This arrangement leads to the scattered distribution of knowledge points, and it is difficult for students to sort out a clear knowledge context, thus unable to form a complete knowledge system^[10]. In addition, there is a lack of complete and effective cohesion and coherence between the content of textbooks in different grades, which fails to follow the law of students' cognitive development, showing a gradual progressive relationship from simple to complex, from basic to advanced. There is an obvious lack of continuity in the updating and revision of textbooks. Many textbooks stagnate after the publication of a version, and no longer follow up with updates and improvements; even if it is revised, it is often a complete negation and complete overthrow of the previous version of the content, lacking reasonable inheritance and development of the original content^[5].

4. Suggestions for optimizing the compilation of mental health textbooks

4.1. Reflecting the core values of the country and the nation

The compilation of textbooks shoulders a major mission. Mental health textbooks for primary and secondary schools cannot be limited to the transmission of mental health knowledge. They must be carried out closely around this educational purpose and fundamental task to ensure that their content, orientation, and other aspects are highly consistent with China's educational policy. Only in this way can we play an important role in cultivating talents that meet the needs of the country and achieve the great goal of education power. On the one hand, the compilation of teaching materials should penetrate the excellent traditions and culture accumulated over thousands of years in China, and give full play to the social value and function of teaching materials; on the other hand, the integration of mental health textbooks and moral education related disciplines in primary and secondary schools can enhance the educational function of mental health textbooks and make mental health textbooks more scientific and standardized, so as to promote students to form a correct outlook on life, world outlook and values.

4.2. Optimizing the concept of mental health textbook compilation

On the one hand, attach great importance to cultivating students' positive psychological quality. The teaching materials should not only focus on the adjustment and correction of negative psychology, but also put the cultivation of students' positive psychological quality in an important position, such as optimism, self-confidence, anti-frustration ability, and other positive psychological qualities should be the focus of the training content, transfer the concept and goal of helping people to help themselves, and transform correction into prevention. Introduce the relevant theories of positive psychology and design a series of activities that are conducive to students' self-growth and development, so that students can gradually shape and improve their positive psychological quality in the process of participating in activities. On the other hand, unswervingly adhere to the student-centered concept. In the compilation of textbooks, students' first-person perspective should be adopted for content presentation. This means paying close attention to the actual needs of students, in-depth understanding of the various psychological conditions they face in their study and life, while paying attention to the psychological experience of students. In this way, the affinity of the textbook can be effectively enhanced, so that students are more willing to get close to the textbook and learn from the textbook. It can also improve the practicability of the textbook, ensure that the content of the textbook truly conforms to the actual situation of the students, and provide students with practical and effective guidance.

4.3. Functional objectives of balanced mental health textbooks

In the setting and presentation of textbook objectives, it is necessary to organically integrate developmental objectives with preventive objectives. As an important tool to guide students' growth, textbooks should not focus on one aspect, but should take into account both developmental goals and preventive goals. While paying attention to the prevention of psychological problems, they should also pay attention to the positive development of students' psychology and achieve a balance between prevention and development. Specifically, the textbook can carefully design a series of activities to prevent psychological problems. Through these activities, students can understand the psychological distress they may face in advance, enhance their psychological resilience, and reduce the probability of psychological problems. At the same time, the textbook should also provide correction methods for common psychological problems. When students have psychological problems, they can obtain effective coping strategies in time to promote the psychological recovery and healthy growth of primary and secondary school students.

4.4. Enhancing the pertinence and timeliness of the content of teaching materials

First, focus on the needs of students to carry out content design. Junior high school students are in the adolescence of rapid physical and mental development. At this stage, they are faced with many physiological and psychological puzzles, such as the anxiety caused by physical changes, the emotional fluctuations caused by the awakening of self-consciousness, etc. Therefore, the teaching materials for junior high school students should appropriately increase the guidance content of adolescent psychological problems, help them correctly understand and respond to these changes, and promote their mental health development. However, high school students are faced with the important tasks of career choice and further education, under great pressure from further education, and are confused and anxious about the future. The teaching materials for high school students should focus on increasing the content of career planning and stress response, guiding them to clarify their interests and advantages, formulate reasonable career goals, and master effective stress adjustment methods to meet the challenges with a positive attitude. Therefore, as an important guide for students' learning and growth, the content design of textbooks must be closely related to students' psychological development stage and actual needs. Due to the differences in gender, age, ethnicity, and other aspects of students, these differences will lead to differences in their psychological characteristics, interests, and problems. Therefore, the compilation of textbooks should fully consider these factors and teach students in accordance with their aptitude.

Second, timely introduction of hot issues of the times. Nowadays, with the rapid development of the times, the rapid progress of science and technology, and the complex and changeable social environment, students are facing various new challenges and temptations. Introducing hot issues of the times into textbooks, through in-depth analysis of the causes, hazards, and coping strategies of these problems, students can have a more comprehensive understanding of social reality and enhance their sense of social responsibility and ability to distinguish between right and wrong. At the same time, it can also guide students to learn to use the knowledge and methods to correctly deal with these challenges, improve their ability to solve practical problems, so that they can better adapt and develop in the future social life. As an important carrier of spreading knowledge and cultivating students' values, teaching materials should keep pace with the

times and reflect the hot issues of the development of the times in a timely manner.

4.5. Constructing a systematic and logical textbook structure

The arrangement of textbook content should take into account both systematicity and hierarchy. On the one hand, the content of the textbook should be systematic and hierarchical, and follow the principle of gradual progression from simple to complex, from basic to advanced. In terms of different learning stages, primary school textbooks can focus on the cultivation of basic psychological quality and lay a solid psychological foundation for students; the teaching materials in junior high school focus on the improvement of self-awareness and interpersonal skills, helping students better adapt to the physical and mental changes of adolescence and establish good relationships with others; high school textbooks can focus on the cultivation of career planning and psychological adjustment ability to help students cope with the pressure of further education and future career choices. On the other hand, the textbook should be arranged in a spiral way, so that the core content can be repeated in different grades, and gradually expanded and deepened with the increase of grade. This can strengthen students' understanding and mastery of core knowledge, promote the sustainable development of their psychological ability, and gradually realize the integration of mental health education in large, medium and small schools ^[13].

4.6. Promoting the transferability of mental health education effectiveness

In order to realize the effectiveness of mental health education, the key lies in the transfer of classroom learning to real life. The arrangement of textbooks should not only be composed of knowledge and activities, but also learn from the after-school practice mechanism set up by other disciplines to promote students' reflection and experience, and guide them to monitor and reflect on their own psychological feelings, emotional experience, behavior changes and their effects, so as to promote the process of self-evaluation and internalization, so that the methods and skills mastered in textbooks and classrooms can be extended to similar situations, so as to realize the connection between what they have learned and real life, and ultimately produce the migration effect of psychological development. Studies have shown that whether it is knowledge learning or emotional experience, individuals who are good at reflection and experience can usually master knowledge and skills more effectively and experience richer and deeper positive emotions. Therefore, in the process of compiling mental health education textbooks, the role of reflective experience in migration and maintenance cannot be ignored.

5. Conclusion

This study reveals that current mental health textbooks for primary and secondary schools suffer from value misorientation, insufficient pertinence and timeliness, poor operability, and weak structural logic. To address these issues, we propose a student-centered optimization framework that emphasizes positive psychological qualities, balances developmental and preventive functions, incorporates contemporary social issues, and adopts systematic, hierarchical content arrangements. Moreover, promoting reflective practice and real-life transferability is essential for maximizing educational effectiveness. These recommendations aim to align textbook design with students' genuine needs, thereby improving the quality of mental health education and supporting students' holistic development. Empirical validation of these strategies in actual school settings is encouraged for future research.

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