

Research on the Impact of Experiential Education on College Students' Psychological Education and Countermeasures

Siyan Liu

Beihua University, Jilin 132013, Jilin, China

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Abstract: This article aims to explore the impact of experiential education on college students' psychological education and effective countermeasures, address the new demands of college students' psychological development in the digital age, and resolve the contradiction between traditional psychological education models and students' demands. In terms of methods, based on the connotation and characteristics of experiential education, its influence is analyzed from dimensions such as situational immersion and multi-dimensional interaction, and specific countermeasures such as constructing a psychodrama experience system and peer supervision projects are proposed. The results show that experiential education can promote the transformation of students' psychological defense mechanisms, activate the internal driving force for emotional regulation, and reshape self-perception, etc. From this, it can be concluded that experiential education, by innovating educational paradigms and integrating practice with reflection, provides a systematic and sustainable development path for college students' psychological education, which is conducive to cultivating students' psychological capital and enhancing the effectiveness of psychological education.

Keywords: Experiential education; College students; Mental health education

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1. Introduction

College students in the new era have grown up in an environment where digital technology is flourishing and social values are diverse and colliding. Their psychological development shows obvious characteristics of The Times, which puts forward higher requirements for the effectiveness of psychological education. Research shows that the traditional one-way psychological education model is difficult to meet the individualized and diversified psychological development needs of students, and there exists a structural contradiction between educational supply and students' psychological growth demands. Experiential education is an educational paradigm that highlights the dominant position of learners, attaches great importance to the creation of scenarios and the internalization of reflection, and mainly focuses on simulating real-life scenarios and organizing interactive practical activities. It can effectively activate the internal driving force for students' psychological development and shows unique advantages in enhancing the pertinence and appeal of psychological education. And provide an innovative solution to break through the current predicament of psychological education.

2. The connotation of experiential education

2.1. Definition

Experiential education is an educational paradigm that builds a cognitive system based on an individual's direct experience and emphasizes the internalization of knowledge through the two-way interaction of physical perception and psychological construction. The essence lies in breaking through the traditional single way of knowledge transmission in education, placing the learning subject in specific situations, and allowing individuals to learn through active participation, in-depth reflection, and meaning assignment, thus completing the spiral growth process from perceptual cognition to rational cognition. In this process, educators are no longer disseminators of knowledge but have become creators and guides of situations. Learners achieve independent construction of knowledge on the basis of embodied practical activities and self-reflection. Experiential education emphasizes emotional investment and the resolution of cognitive conflicts during the learning process, and by mobilizing individual subjective initiative, it internalizes external knowledge into transferable practical wisdom to form continuously developing learning abilities and thinking patterns^[1].

2.2. Characteristics

Experiential education has the characteristics of contextuality, reflection and subjectivity.

Contextuality is manifested as the reconstruction of the learning field, the creation of simulated or realistic practical scenarios, the concretization of abstract knowledge, and the cognitive impact on learners towards scenarios close to reality, etc. This scenario is an integration of physical space, social relationships and mental challenges, which drives learners to solve real-world problems and enhance their cognitive framework

Reflection permeates the entire process and is critically examined and refined by learners in practical activities. In-depth reflection after practice systematizes the sensory experience, dissects the cognitive logic, and identifies deviations and limitations. It is based on the active construction of metacognition, deconstructing and reconstructing experiences, and forming transferable strategies and guidelines, thereby achieving the qualitative change from experience to wisdom.

Subjectivity emphasizes the core position of learners and their ability to make independent choices, explore and develop. Experiential education gives learners decision-making power and the right to choose, allowing them to adjust their learning paths. The interaction with the environment and trial-and-error correction in independent exploration deepen the understanding of knowledge, promote the improvement of internalization efficiency, and lead education from "external shaping" to "internal growth".

3. The influence of experiential education on the psychological education of college students

3.1. Situational Immersion Builds a New Paradigm for Psychological Defense

In today's era of fragmented information, college students are confronted with complex psychological challenges, and traditional preaching-style psychological education is gradually being restricted^[2]. Experiential education uses the simulation of real scenarios such as workplace competition and social conflicts as a means to lead students to confront the sources of psychological stress in concrete scenarios. Individuals independently mobilize cognitive resources through situational immersion to implement emotional regulation and behavioral decision-making, promoting the transformation of psychological defense mechanisms from passive stress to active construction. This personalized learning model enables students to repeatedly practice psychological adjustment strategies in a safe and controllable environment, gradually forming a stable psychological resilience structure and building a dynamic defense system to deal with real pressure.

3.2. Multi-dimensional interaction activates the internal driving force for emotional regulation

Contemporary college students grow up in an individualized society, and there are generational differences in their ability to express emotions and regulate moods. Experiential education establishes a multi-dimensional interactive network

featuring two-way feedback between teachers and students and mutual assistance among peers, breaking through the limitations of one-way psychological intervention barriers. When working together to complete difficult tasks or resolve contradictory situations, students will construct their own metacognition in an emotional state by observing others' emotional responses and accepting momentary emotional responses. Based on real interpersonal interaction, emotional awareness can inspire students to actively explore appropriate emotional regulation strategies and internalize external psychological intervention as the motivation for internal emotional management, thereby achieving the goal of independently enhancing emotional intelligence.

3.3. Role Reconstruction: Reshaping the Self-awareness Coordinate System

College students are in a crucial period during the process of self-identity integration and are vulnerable to the impact of external evaluations and social comparisons. Experiential education creates a practical space for students to break away from their original identity labels through role-playing and project-led forms. After an individual acts as the leader of a simulated entrepreneurship team or takes on the role of a supporter in public welfare activities, the collision between behavioral performance and self-perception prompts the individual to reflect on their own strengths and limitations. The cognitive shock caused by this role reconstruction can break through the shackles of the fixed self-cognition framework, which is conducive to students positioning themselves from a more objective and diverse perspective and constructing a more adaptable self-concept system.

3.4. Goal-oriented cultivation of Psychological Capital Sustainability

In an uncertain future, college students urgently need to accumulate transferable psychological capital. The core of experiential education lies in the breakdown of phased goals and the visual presentation of achievements, transforming the process of psychological growth into a tangible sequence of accomplishments. From the completion of short-term team challenges to the realization of long-term individual breakthroughs, one will constantly receive positive feedback from students on the achievement of goals, and gradually form a psychological capital cluster containing confidence, optimism and hope. This goal-oriented psychological cultivation model liberates the cultivation of psychological qualities from a random and fragmented state, transforming it into a systematic and continuous process of capital accumulation, thereby laying the psychological foundation for a person's lifelong growth.

4. The Influence of Experiential Education on Effective Countermeasures for College Students' Psychological Education

4.1. Build an immersive psychodrama experience system and strengthen the cultivation of emotional perception and expression abilities

In the practice of psychological education for college students, teachers need to break away from the traditional preaching model and adopt systematic design to activate the links of students' emotional perception and expression. One can start by centering on the common psychological confusion among college students and taking academic pressure and interpersonal conflicts as topics to identify typical conflict scenarios. Then, integrate campus resources and collaborate with the drama club and the art college to break down the creative process of psychodrama into three stages: script incubation, scene construction, and improvisational performance. Teachers need to control the pace of the entire process well and help students face their inner conflicts in safe situations through suspense setting and emotional tension guidance, gradually establishing a smooth and accurate emotional expression system ^[3].

Based on this, in response to the problems of loneliness and self-perception deviation during the adaptation period of freshmen, teachers have planned an immersive psychological drama program called "Light and Shadow Monologue". During the initial preparation process, teachers collected students' real story fragments through anonymous questionnaires, extracted core questions such as "Breaking the Ice for social anxiety" and "The gap between Ideals and Reality", and

guided students to adapt these questions into short play scripts by freely combining them. For the scene construction section, multimedia technology is utilized to create a holographic projection classroom, three-dimensionally recreating campus scenes such as dormitories and canteens. Combined with lighting and sound effects, an immersive atmosphere is created. In the process of role-playing, the teacher employs the teaching strategy of “pause - think - speak again”. When a character’s emotions reach an explosive point, the teacher will pause the plot, guide the actor to analyze the behavioral motives from an outsider’s perspective, and try to reinterpret the character in different ways of expression. For instance, in the scenario of “roommate conflicts”, students initially choose to quarrel fiercely. Under the guidance of the teacher, they try to convey their thoughts through letters, not only maintaining the tension of the conflict but also demonstrating a more mature way of handling emotions. Throughout the process, teachers, through precise rhythm control, situational intervention and other means, enable students to gain a profound insight into their own emotions and efficiently enhance their expression abilities under dramatic experiences.

4.2. Design a stepped peer supervision program to improve the mechanism for building social skills and interpersonal trust

When designing peer supervision programs, teachers need to establish a hierarchical and progressive training framework to build a sustainable social support network. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a strict peer supervisor selection process, through a series of screening procedures such as empathy ability tests and communication skills simulations, to ensure that all members have good basic qualities. Based on this, a three-level training system consisting of theoretical training, case studies and practical exercises is designed to assist supervisors in acquiring core competencies such as listening skills and conflict mediation strategies. Teachers should attach importance to process guidance in teaching and regularly arrange for supervisors to review the situation. Role-playing exchanges and blind case reviews should be used to promote supervisors’ dynamic responses to complex social scenarios ^[4]. At the same time, a two-way feedback mechanism needs to be established. It is necessary to not only collect the requirements of the supervised individuals for the supervisors but also pay attention to the development requirements of the supervisors, so as to form a virtuous cycle.

Take the “Heart Bridge Project” peer supervision program as an example. The teaching team divides the program into three progressive levels: “novice observer - Junior supervisor - senior Guide”. For the dormitory relations of freshmen, teachers selected outstanding senior students as the first batch of supervisors for an 8-week specialized training. During the training process, we adopted the teaching strategy of “case retrospection and disk deduction”. Teachers selected real conflict cases from past student dormitories and transformed them into multi-angle scenario simulation materials. The supervisor analyzes the details such as the positions of people and the placement of objects on the sand table model, restores the full picture of the event, and formulates an intervention plan. In specific supervision activities, teachers suggest that supervisors adopt the method of “non-intrusive companionship”, such as organizing tea parties in the dormitory periodically, so as to guide members to freely express their views in a relaxed environment. In the face of intensified conflicts, the supervisor adopts the “story projection method”, sharing similar experience stories to guide students to independently reflect on behavioral patterns. For instance, when dealing with conflicts arising from “different living habits”, the supervisor, by sharing his own experience of adjusting the schedule, stimulates mutual understanding among students and ultimately prompts dormitory members to jointly formulate personalized living conventions. Teachers regularly hold meetings of the supervision team and collectively analyze typical cases, etc., to assist supervisors in optimizing intervention strategies through peer assistance and effectively improving students’ social skills and interpersonal trust levels.

4.3. Implement stratified wilderness survival training to enhance the level of environmental adaptation and psychological resilience building

In the experiential teaching of psychological education for college students, teachers need to break away from the traditional uniform teaching mode and accurately connect the current situation of different students’ ability foundations

and psychological development needs through the implementation of stratified wilderness survival training. Specifically, before training, teachers should comprehensively evaluate students' abilities and classify them into different grades based on indicators of physical fitness and psychological endurance. During the training period, differentiated task difficulties are designed based on different levels. Students' academic performance is closely monitored and guidance strategies are adjusted in a timely manner to ensure safety. Students are guided step by step to challenge themselves, thereby enhancing their environmental adaptability and psychological resilience.

In wilderness survival training, teachers divide students into three levels: beginner, intermediate and advanced when organizing such training. Among the primary-level students, teachers are assigned to areas with relatively flat terrain and complete supporting facilities. Their tasks include setting up simple tents, determining basic directions, and conducting simple foraging in the wild. When students are performing tasks, teachers follow up throughout the process and provide timely technical guidance, such as explaining the techniques for setting up and stabilizing tents, to help them build confidence in successfully completing the tasks. Among intermediate-level students, teachers choose slightly undulating mountain forests as training locations and arrange tasks such as setting up field camps, finding water sources and purifying, and making simple tools with natural materials. Teachers conduct remote observation and intervention at key nodes, guide students to consider solutions when they encounter difficulties, and urge them to actively embrace challenges. In more complex outdoor environments, advanced-level students are assigned tasks, which include long-distance orienteering, crossing complex terrains, and simulating emergency situations, etc. Teachers only provide necessary safety tips and task descriptions before the training begins, and encourage students to make independent decisions and solve problems during the training period, enabling them to temper their psychological resilience in the high-intensity training. This stratified wilderness survival training design is adopted to meet the growth needs of different students, helping them adapt to the environment while enhancing their psychological resilience.

4.4. Develop modular sand table simulation courses to deepen self-awareness and the ability to resolve psychological conflicts

To deepen college students' self-awareness and psychological conflict resolution abilities, teachers need to carefully develop modular sand table simulation courses. Teachers should break down the sand table simulation course into several thematic modules based on the common psychological problems and growth confusions among college students, and each thematic module should focus on specific psychological training goals. Teachers should play a guiding role in the implementation of the curriculum, set up immersive scenarios, and guide students to concretize their inner thoughts and emotions through the placement and combination of various elements in the sand table. Moreover, based on the observation and analysis of students' sand table works, they should have targeted conversations and provide guidance to help them understand themselves and explore effective methods to resolve psychological conflicts^[5].

In actual teaching, develop sand table simulation course modules such as "Interpersonal Relationship Handling", "Career Planning Exploration", and "Emotion Management". Take the unit "Interpersonal Relationship Management" as an example. Before the course began, the teacher set up scenarios and themes closely related to college students' lives, such as dormitory conflicts and differences in teamwork. In the sand table simulation section, the teacher provided the students with a variety of sand toys to encourage them to freely choose and construct the scenarios on the sand table to express their understanding of interpersonal relationships and their coping plans. After students complete their sand table creations, teachers do not rush to evaluate them. Instead, they guide students to tell the stories behind the sand table scenes through open-ended questions, such as asking students, "Why did you choose this sand tool to be placed in this position?" or "What thoughts does this scene reflect about you?" Through in-depth communication, teachers help students clarify their thinking patterns and behavioral habits when handling interpersonal relationships and guide them to identify their own problems. Then, the teacher organizes the students to adjust and reconstruct the sand table scene, stimulating them to think about ways to solve interpersonal relationships from different perspectives. During this process, students gradually deepen their understanding of the relationship between themselves and others through continuous reflection and exploration, promoting

the resolution of psychological conflicts.

5. Conclusion

Against the backdrop of the deep interweaving of educational innovation and social psychological demands, experiential education breaks the one-way transmission pattern of traditional psychological education and reshapes the psychological education ecosystem through personalized practice and in-depth reflection. It realizes the growth process of psychological education from theoretical indoctrination to individual active construction through multi-dimensional paths such as scenario creation, interactive collaboration and role reconstruction, enabling the cultivation of psychological qualities to make a crucial transition from fragmentation to systematization and from external-driven to endogenous. This educational paradigm not only conforms to the laws of cognitive development of contemporary college students but also brings lasting vitality to psychological education in the new era. It plays an irreplaceable and significant role in promoting the accumulation of individual psychological capital and the development of social adaptability, with the aim of providing an innovative paradigm and practical guidance for the construction of a mental health education system oriented towards the future.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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