

Strategies for Cultivating Students' Key Competencies in Universities from the Perspective of Positive Education

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Abstract: For college students, students with good key competencies can achieve high levels of academic performance, promote better personal adaptation to the future world of work and social life, build competitive advantages for personal career development, become active and responsible citizens, and enhance their own sense of well-being and physical and mental health. The application of positive psychology in education focuses on students' mental health and motivation to learn. This study investigated the key competencies of college students and their benefits in positive education, and analyzed the correlation between the two. And the study designed teaching strategies to improve students' learning in positive education.

Keywords: College Students in China; Key Competencies; Positive Education; Positive Psychology

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of key competencies was proposed in the 1990s. In the long history of educational development, students' "Key Competencies" are the reflection on the fundamental question of "what kind of people to cultivate" in the corresponding stage of social and historical development, with distinctive characteristics and attributes of the times. Since talent cultivation in universities cannot be separated from the interaction and cooperation between institutions and students on the one hand, and on the other hand, the purpose of education is to create value for students and realize their growth, the theory of positive education is a reasonable theoretical perspective for exploring the process of talent cultivation in higher education. Positive education theory comes from positive psychology, which is a new field of psychology that emerged at the end of the 20th century and is "an applied science that reveals human strengths and promotes their functioning" (Ji Jing, 2021).

2. RELATED THRORES

Seligman defines positive education as an education that focuses on the acquisition of academic skills and well-being skills by students. Norrish(2023) deepened the theory by arguing that positive education is an education that combines the scientific theories of positive psychology with effective teaching practices to promote the holistic development of the individual, the school, and society as a whole.

While traditional education or psychoeducation usually focuses on repairing damage and treating illnesses, positive education transforms this negative perspective by focusing on stimulating students' strengths and awakening their positive personality traits, advocating that, instead of education's over-concern with academics and skills, equal attention should be paid to students' character and sense of well-being, and that problems should be prevented by boosting the students' own positive, active mental energy.

3. METHODS/PROCEDURE

In-depth interviews were conducted with a random sample of 30 students from sophomore and junior classes. This interview was used to determine the implementation of positive education, including the forms of positive education, the impact on the interviewees, the challenges to positive education, and the environment in which positive education is implemented. The table below summarizes the interviews according to their content.

Table 1

Defining Elements	Respondent Number
Mental Health Program, Out-of-School Practicum, Educational Internship, Arts and Physical Education.	#5
Universiade Volunteer Activities	#7
Safety education. For example, safe use of electricity in the dormitory, handling of emergencies.	#8

Table 1 shows the forms of positive education. The first major category is didactic, for example, students take such a positive psychology class once a week and learn some positive psychology methods. The second category is called penetrative. Teachers can use the principles of positive psychology in their own classes, and can penetrate into every class in the whole school. The third type is experiential. Positive education is extended from the school to the family and to the community. Students are able to experience the ever-present influence of positive psychology on them, and thus are able to develop a more vigorous mentality. Primary and secondary schools in Australian mainly divided into explicit and implicit courses. The explicit course requires students to receive positive education courses on a regular basis, with stage-by-stage learning contents and fixed class hours; the implicit course is implicit in the subject curriculum, which transfers the educational contents of the explicit course to the traditional subjects (Gu & Xie, 2022). Results showed that adolescent depression among Chinese students can be prevented by positive emotion interventions. (Zhao et al., 2019).

Table 2

Defining Elements	Respondent Number
Social responsibility, cognitive and behavioral skills, teamwork and collaboration, and creative skills are all enhanced.	#29
International Perspective. Through active education, I can combine my professional knowledge with social practice, use my language skills to help foreigners in volunteer activities, and introduce the cultures of various countries to elementary school students through off-campus practical training classes, etc.	#28
Key competencies for Interdisciplinary Learning to learn more about psychology. Raising Informational literacy is the ability of people to access information, we learn to find the information we need more efficiently.	#26

From Table 2, it can be concluded that the key competencies of the interviewees has been improved after receiving positive education. It includes the overall development of comprehensive competencies such as social communication skills, social responsibility, cognitive and behavioral skills, teamwork and collaboration skills, creative skills, international perspective, social practice skills, emotional attitude culture and moral literacy. This is in line with scholars' research on vocational education, which should first be based on the basic educational concept of nurturing people and return the center of attention to the subject of people themselves. Adhering to the concept of cultivation of key competencies, in addition to skills education, vocational education should also train students to improve their learning ability, adaptability, self-education, and career planning ability, etc., which can benefit students for life should be the ultimate goal of vocational education (Hong Dehui, 2019).

Table 3

Defining Elements	Respondent Number
Shortage of educational resources, such as teachers, funds, and equipment.	#8
Difficulty with time management, communication and collaboration with team members can lead to disagreements. Requires continuous learning and growth.	#9
Positive education does not fully suit everyone and may even have a negative effect on some students.	#30

According to Table 3, the challenges faced by active education in its current implementation include the following: First, the evaluation method is unscientific. Evaluation indicators are not sufficient to reflect core competencies, which can easily lead to incomplete and objective

evaluation of students, and unable to measure changes in students' emotions, attitudes, values, etc. An overly single evaluation subject cannot fully understand students' learning and living conditions, thus resulting in a one-sided understanding of students, which is not conducive to teaching students in accordance with their aptitude and the cultivation of core competencies (Qin Keyue, 2021). Second, the teaching methods and means are outdated, and students lack positive emotional experience. The teaching form is mainly theoretical teaching, which is difficult to stimulate students' interest in learning. New teaching methods such as project-based teaching and situational teaching are rarely used, and teaching is mainly based on traditional classroom teaching. Third, the issue of educational equity. China has also made active explorations in the field of education, striving to improve the level of educational equity by increasing financial investment and improving school conditions and teaching staff in rural areas. Forth, teach students in accordance with their aptitude. Positive education cannot fully adapt to everyone, and may even have a negative effect on some students.

Table 4

Defining Elements	Respondent Number
Family education is a supplement to school education. School education is undertaken by professionals in specialized institutions with strong purpose.	#14
School education is an important place to cultivate the all-round development of students.	#5
School education, the level of education a person receives determines the bottom line of his life development. Before entering the society, most of the time is spent in school. School plays an important role.	#7

Table 4 describes the environment for positive education to cultivate key competencies. According to the interviewees, there are four aspects. First, school education. School is the main place to improve key competencies. It is a concrete place to exert educational influence on people and cultivate people. The influence on people is formed invisibly, and the shaping of people is mostly abstract. Second, family education. Early family education has a profound impact on students, and plays a huge role in the formation of living habits, communication and social skills, and the cultivation of moral qualities. Third, the social environment. Many scholars emphasize that the formation of students' character is not only formed through language, writing, thinking and talking, but also requires the joint responsibility of family, school and society to cultivate it. Fourth, community education. The community is an important channel for cultivating children's positive psychology. Students' personality and quality are more important factors for their lives.

4. DISSCUSION

The Chinese education system should be consistent in their search for a paradigm shift in teaching from teacher-centered approach to a more inclusive student-centered learning and classroom. Positive emotion, engagement, accomplishment, purpose, relationships, and health should be integrated not only in Physical Education curriculum but also across all courses. Class activities in interpersonal literacy in communication skills, teamwork and collaboration, international perspectives, sense of social responsibility in cognition and behavioral skill areas should be consistently employed. The goal of promoting flourishing can be considered as it relates to multidimensional outcomes across multiple levels within the school system. Comprehensive program should be created to support staff wellbeing and help them to 'live' the skills taught within Positive Education and to act as authentic role models for students. Likewise, teaching staff should integrate mindfulness practices into their class routines and fostering a growth mindset in their students. Parents should be more involved in their students' positive education to help them understand positive education and personal growth. Schools and teachers can validate research findings to enhance students' learning about positive education.

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