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Article

Exploration of the Integration of Primary School Physical Education Curriculum and Mental Health Education Curriculum

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Abstract: This paper explores the necessity, practical significance, and implementation strategies of integrating primary school physical education curriculum with mental health education curriculum. The paper points out that mental health is crucial to students' personal growth and social adaptability; however, current mental health education in primary schools faces problems such as insufficient professional competence and low student participation. The integration of physical activities with mental health education can promote the enhancement of students' emotional management ability and psychological resilience, and facilitate the formation of good habits. The paper proposes specific integration strategies, including cultivating students' emotional management ability, enhancing psychological resilience, and promoting mental health through group psychological counseling. Meanwhile, the paper also discusses the challenges in the integration process, such as insufficient professional competence of teachers and low student participation, and puts forward corresponding countermeasures, including improving teachers' professional competence, innovating teaching methods, and strengthening home-school cooperation. Ultimately, the paper emphasizes the importance of such integration for students' healthy development and provides a new educational model for educators.

Keywords: mental health education for primary school students; sports group counseling; integration of physical education and mental health education; integrated education

1. Introduction

In today's rapidly developing society, the mental health issues of primary school students have gradually become a focus of attention in the field of education [1]. Mental health is not only related to children's personal growth but is also the key to their future social adaptability. However, current mental health education in primary schools still faces numerous challenges; the existence of these problems not only affects students' academic performance but also poses a potential threat to their long-term development [2]. This paper aims to explore the necessity of integrating primary school physical education curriculum with mental health education, the existing problems, and the practical significance of such integration, with a view to providing new perspectives and strategies for promoting the comprehensive development of primary school students.

First, the importance of attending to the mental health of primary school students is self-evident. Mental health is an important component of students' comprehensive development; it not only affects children's

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emotional stability and behavioral performance but is also closely related to their learning efficiency, interpersonal relationships, and future quality of life [3]. A healthy psychological state enables students to better adapt to school life, actively face challenges in learning, and cultivate a positive and upward attitude toward life.

However, current mental health education in primary schools still has some problems. On the one hand, some teachers lack the professional competence required for mental health education and find it difficult to effectively identify and respond to students' psychological problems; on the other hand, students' participation in mental health education is not high. This is mainly related to the monotonous form and dull content of the curriculum. Traditional mental health education courses are mostly dominated by theoretical instruction and lack lively, interesting, and interactive teaching activities, making it difficult to attract students' attention and interest. In addition, some course content is disconnected from students' actual life experiences, making it difficult for students to resonate with it, thereby reducing their participation. For example, when explaining emotional management, some mental health education courses merely introduce theoretical knowledge without analyzing and discussing specific emotional problems that students may encounter in daily life and learning, leading students to feel that the course content is empty and impractical, thus rendering the educational effect unsatisfactory [1]. Moreover, the influence of the family and social environment cannot be ignored; poor parenting styles and social competitive pressure may have a negative impact on students' mental health.

Internationally, some countries have successfully integrated physical education curricula with mental health education and achieved remarkable results. For example, in some primary schools in the United States, physical education teachers and mental health education experts have collaborated to design a series of integrated courses. Through physical activities such as team games and outdoor adventures, these courses guide students to experience cooperation, competition, and challenges in activities, while integrating mental health education content such as emotional management and self-confidence cultivation into the activity process. Research has shown that students who participated in these integrated courses demonstrated significant improvements in emotional stability, teamwork ability, and psychological resilience. A long-term follow-up study of an integrated curriculum at a primary school in the United States found that students who participated in the integrated curriculum outperformed those who did not in subsequent academic achievement and social skills, and this advantage gradually expanded as the grade level increased.

Domestically, some regions have also begun to attempt to integrate physical education curricula with mental health education. A primary school in a certain city conducted a one-year integrated curriculum experiment. The experimental results showed that students who participated in the integrated curriculum demonstrated significant improvements in emotional management ability, psychological resilience, and teamwork spirit. Specific data indicated that students who participated in the integrated curriculum scored an average of 20% higher than those who did not in emotional management ability tests, 15% higher in psychological resilience tests, and 18% higher in teamwork ability assessments. These data provide strong support for the promotion of integrated curricula domestically.

Through an in-depth analysis of the background, significance, strategies, practical cases, and the challenges and countermeasures faced by the integration of primary school physical education curriculum and mental health education, this paper aims to provide educators with a new educational model to promote students' physical and mental health development. Through this integration, we can not only compensate for the deficiencies of traditional physical education curricula and mental health education but also better promote students' comprehensive development and lay a solid foundation for their future.

2. Background and Significance of the Integration of Primary School Physical Education Curriculum and Mental Health Education

2.1. Background of the Integration of Primary School Physical Education Curriculum and Mental Health Education

In an important speech at the National Education Conference, the General Secretary pointed out that the educational philosophy of "health first" should be established, helping students enjoy fun, strengthen their

physique, cultivate sound personalities, and temper their willpower through physical exercise. The 2024 National Education Work Conference proposed strengthening the simultaneous development of the "five educations" with physical and mental health as the breakthrough point. Physical and mental harmony and the integration of physical education and mental cultivation fully embody the essential characteristics of educating people through physical education.

In primary school education, the physical education curriculum and the mental health education curriculum each assume different responsibilities, yet both share a common goal in promoting students' healthy growth [4]. However, traditional physical education curricula often focus only on cultivating students' physical fitness and motor skills while neglecting attention to and guidance for students' mental health. Therefore, combining the physical education curriculum with the mental health education curriculum can not only compensate for the deficiencies of both in their respective fields but also better promote students' physical and mental health development.

2.2. Significance of the Integration of Primary School Physical Education Curriculum and Mental Health Education

At the primary school stage, students' bodies and minds are in a critical period of rapid development and formation. The physical education curriculum, through physical activities, can directly exert a positive impact on students' physiological functions, while mental health education, through psychological intervention and counseling, helps students establish a healthy mindset and emotional regulation ability. The combination of the two can promote students' comprehensive development from multiple perspectives.

2.2.1. Contributing to the Formation of Sound Personalities in Primary School Students

Through interesting physical activities, primary school students' emotions can be made positive and pleasant, allowing them to obtain more joyful emotional experiences, eliminate negative emotional states, and indirectly achieve effective control of their own behavior [5].

Psychological research has shown that self-awareness plays a regulatory, monitoring, and corrective role in the formation and development of personality. Children gradually develop self-awareness in the process of interacting with their environment, specifically manifested in three forms: self-cognition, self-experience, and self-regulation. Physical exercise can promote the development of children's self-awareness, thereby promoting the formation of sound personalities and enabling the realization of the integration of physical education and mental cultivation [6].

2.2.2. Contributing to the Formation of Good Habits in Students

In modern society, with fierce competition, primary school students' learning pressure gradually increases as they advance in grade. Appropriate physical education teaching activities can help students relax their bodies after studying and appropriately alleviate learning pressure, which is conducive to cultivating good daily routines in students, including regular studying, resting, and physical exercise [3].

2.2.3. Conforming to the Requirements of the Educational Philosophy of the New Era

The educational philosophy of the new era emphasizes students' comprehensive development and focuses on the enhancement of students' physical and mental health and comprehensive qualities. Combining the physical education curriculum with the mental health education curriculum can better embody this philosophy, enabling students to enjoy fun in physical exercise while also achieving growth in mental health education.

3. Strategies for the Integration of Primary School Physical Education Curriculum and Mental Health Education

3.1. Cultivating Students' Emotional Management Ability through the Physical Education Curriculum

Emotional management refers to an individual's ability to identify, express, regulate, and utilize their

emotions when facing different situations, so as to achieve the goals of adaptation, development, and achievement. In the primary school physical education curriculum, students' emotional management ability can be cultivated through the following strategies:

3.1.1. Utilizing Physical Activities to Stimulate Students' Positive Emotions

Physical activities are inherently interesting and competitive, and can stimulate students' positive emotions. For example, by organizing team projects such as relay races and tug-of-war competitions, students can experience the joy of success and the strength of teamwork in cooperation and competition, thereby enhancing their self-confidence and sense of well-being.

3.1.2. Teaching Students Emotional Regulation Techniques

In the physical education curriculum, teachers can teach students some simple emotional regulation techniques, such as deep breathing and relaxation training. These techniques can help students quickly adjust their mindset and remain calm and rational when facing negative emotions.

3.1.3. Creating Scenarios to Guide Students in Expressing Emotions Appropriately

In physical activities, students will encounter various challenges and difficulties, and at such times teachers can create scenarios to guide students in expressing their emotions appropriately [7]. For example, in a relay race, if a student feels frustrated because of a mistake, the teacher can pause the race, guide the student to express his or her emotions, and help the student recognize through team discussion that mistakes are part of the competition, encouraging them to adjust their mindset and continue to strive.

3.2. Enhancing Students' Psychological Resilience through the Physical Education Curriculum

Psychological resilience refers to an individual's ability to quickly recover and adapt when facing pressure, setbacks, and adversity. In the primary school physical education curriculum, students' psychological resilience can be enhanced through the following strategies:

3.2.1. Setting Challenging Goals

In the physical education curriculum, teachers can set some challenging goals to encourage students to strive to surpass themselves.

3.2.2. Cultivating Students' TeamWork Spirit

Teamwork is an indispensable element of physical activities. By organizing team projects such as football and basketball, teachers can cultivate students' teamwork spirit and sense of mutual assistance. In a team, students need to learn to support, encourage, and accommodate one another, which helps them maintain a positive attitude when facing setbacks and gain strength and support from the team.

3.2.3. Guiding Students to View Failure Correctly

In physical activities, failure is inevitable. Teachers can help students cultivate positive psychological resilience by guiding them to view failure correctly. For example, after losing a competition, the teacher can analyze the reasons for the failure together with the students, encourage them to learn lessons from it, and encourage them to continue striving for victory next time.

3.3. Promoting Students' Mental Health through Group Psychological Counseling

Group psychological counseling is an effective approach to mental health education, which can help students better understand themselves and others and cultivate positive interpersonal skills through group activities. In the integration of the primary school physical education curriculum and the mental health education curriculum, group psychological counseling methods can be introduced to promote students' mental health.

3.3.1. Designing Targeted Group Psychological Counseling Activities

According to the psychological characteristics and needs of primary school students, teachers can design targeted group psychological counseling activities. For example, activities such as "trust fall" and "blindfold square" can be organized to help students build a sense of trust and cooperation. At the same time, role-playing and scenario simulation activities can also be designed to help students learn to handle conflicts and problems in interpersonal relationships.

3.3.2. Establishing a Good Group Atmosphere

A good group atmosphere is the key to the success of group psychological counseling. Teachers can encourage students to actively participate in activities and express their feelings and thoughts by creating a positive, open, and inclusive group atmosphere. At the same time, teachers also need to pay attention to students' emotional experiences, provide timely support and guidance, and help them build positive self-cognition and emotional regulation ability.

3.3.3. Guiding Students to Reflect and Share

In group psychological counseling activities, teachers need to guide students to reflect on and share their experiences and feelings. Through reflection and sharing, students can better understand their inner world, recognize their strengths and weaknesses, and gain inspiration and growth from others' experiences and suggestions.

4. Practical Cases of the Integration of Primary School Physical Education Curriculum and Mental Health Education

4.1. Case One: Application of Emotional Management in the Physical Education Curriculum

In the physical education curriculum of a fifth-grade class at a certain primary school, the teacher designed an activity entitled "Emotional Relay Race." This activity combined the traditional relay race with emotional management techniques, aiming to cultivate students' emotional management ability through physical activities.

In the activity, the teacher divided the students into several groups, with each group selecting a captain. Before the race began, the teacher introduced emotional regulation techniques such as deep breathing and relaxation training to the students and required them to apply these techniques flexibly during the race. After the race started, the members of each group needed to complete tasks such as running, rope skipping, and shooting in sequence, and after completing the tasks, quickly high-five and pass the baton to the next member. During the race, if team members experienced negative emotions such as tension and anxiety, the captain could remind them to use emotional regulation techniques to adjust.

Through this activity, students not only exercised their bodies but also learned how to remain calm and rational when facing challenges and difficulties. They expressed that in future study and life, they would more actively apply emotional regulation techniques to maintain a positive mindset and emotional state.

4.2. Case Two: Cultivation of Psychological Resilience in the Physical Education Curriculum

In the physical education curriculum of a fifth-grade class at a certain primary school, the teacher organized an activity entitled "Back-to-Back Ball-Holding Relay Race." This activity aimed to cultivate students' psychological resilience and their ability to cope with difficulties.

In the activity, the teacher divided the students into two groups standing in vertical lines, with students paired up front and back. The first pair of students ran a shuttle run while holding the ball between their backs, and upon returning, passed the ball to the next pair, proceeding in sequence. If the ball dropped midway, they needed to return to the starting point and start running again. In this activity, some students faced the difficulty of the ball dropping right from the start, while others were too slow because their pace was not consistent with that of their partners. Facing many problems and challenges that needed to be addressed, with the encouragement and help of the teacher and classmates, everyone bravely faced difficulties and challenged

themselves with their own efforts and perseverance.

Through this activity, students not only exercised their bodies but also cultivated a spirit of perseverance and the courage to face difficulties. They expressed that in future study and life, they would more bravely face challenges and difficulties and continuously surpass themselves.

4.3. Case Three: Integration of Group Psychological Counseling in the Physical Education Curriculum

In the physical education curriculum of a fifth-grade class at a certain primary school, the teacher combined group psychological counseling activities with physical activities. For example, a certain combined course of psychological group counseling and physical activities took "Hand in Hand, Good Friends" as its theme, aiming to help students better understand themselves and others and cultivate positive interpersonal skills.

In the activity, the teacher divided the students into several groups, with each group selecting a group leader. Then, the teacher organized students to carry out a series of group games and interactive segments, such as "You Describe, I Guess" and "Relay Ball Passing." During the games, the teacher needed to guide students to actively participate in activities and express their feelings and thoughts. At the same time, the teacher also needed to pay attention to students' emotional experiences and provide timely support and guidance.

After the games ended, the teacher organized students to conduct a reflection and sharing session. Students expressed that in the games they had learned skills for cooperating and communicating with others, recognized their own strengths and weaknesses, and gained inspiration and growth from others' experiences and suggestions. Through this activity, students not only enhanced their awareness of teamwork but also cultivated positive interpersonal skills and emotional regulation ability.

5. Challenges and Countermeasures in the Integration of Primary School Physical Education Curriculum and Mental Health Education

5.1. Insufficient Professional Competence of Teachers

At present, some primary school physical education teachers lack sufficient professional competence in mental health education, making it difficult for them to effectively integrate the physical education curriculum with the mental health education curriculum. This leads to difficulties in accurately identifying students' psychological problems during teaching and in providing timely and effective intervention and guidance.

Schools can invite mental health education experts to give lectures and provide guidance to help teachers master the theoretical knowledge and practical skills of mental health education. At the same time, teachers should be encouraged to engage in communication and cooperation with one another, sharing teaching experience and insights, so as to jointly enhance their professional competence.

5.2. Teaching Methods Need to Be Improved

Teachers can innovate teaching methods and approaches to make the physical education curriculum and mental health education more lively and interesting: designing creative physical education games and activities; utilizing multimedia teaching approaches to present vivid and visual mental health education content; and introducing interactive segments such as role-playing and scenario simulation to enhance students' sense of participation and experience.

5.3. Influence of the Family and Social Environment

Students' mental health is affected not only by school education but also by the family and social environment. If the family and social environment are unfavorable—for example, overprotective parenting or fierce social competition—this may have a negative impact on students' mental health, thereby weakening the effectiveness of the integration of the school physical education curriculum and mental health education.

Schools should strengthen communication and cooperation with parents and jointly attend to students' mental health issues. Through parent meetings, home visits, and other means, schools should disseminate knowledge and methods of mental health education to parents, guide parents to view their children's

psychological problems correctly, and provide appropriate support and assistance.

6. Conclusions

In summary, the integration of the primary school physical education curriculum and the mental health education curriculum is of great significance and value. Through strategies such as emotional management, psychological resilience cultivation, and group psychological counseling in the physical education curriculum, students' mental health development can be effectively promoted.

The integration of the physical education curriculum and mental health education is not only an innovation in educational philosophy but also powerful support for students' comprehensive development. Through this integration, students' physical and mental health development can be better promoted, laying a solid foundation for their future.

In actual teaching, teachers should focus on innovating teaching methods, designing creative and interactive teaching activities, and enhancing students' participation and experience. At the same time, home-school cooperation should be strengthened to jointly attend to students' mental health issues and create a favorable educational environment.

In the future, with the continuous updating of educational philosophy and the continuous development of technological means, the integration of primary school physical education curriculum and mental health education will have broader development space. On the one hand, modern information technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) can be utilized to design more lively and interesting mental health education activities, enhancing students' sense of immersion and participation. On the other hand, the depth and breadth of home-school cooperation can be further expanded, and through the establishment of platforms such as parent schools and mental health education communities, a favorable situation of collaborative education among schools, families, and society can be formed, providing all-round support for the healthy growth of primary school students.

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