

# *A Study on the Infiltration of Positive Psychological Qualities in Subject Education in Primary and Secondary Schools*

Liao Caizhi, Yang Yiting, Zeng Linling\*

Chengdu University, Chengdu, 610106, China

\*Corresponding author

**Keywords:** Primary and Secondary Schools; Subject Education; Positive Psychological Qualities

**Abstract:** In 2021, the General Office of the Ministry of Education issued the Notice on Strengthening the Management of Mental Health for Primary and Secondary School Students, explicitly stating the need to "vigorously cultivate students' positive psychological qualities and fully leverage the important roles of physical education, aesthetic education, labor education, and campus culture to comprehensively promote the mental health development of students." This paper explores the current status of the infiltration of positive psychological quality cultivation in subject education in primary and secondary schools and analyzes existing issues such as limited teacher cognition, narrowed teaching objectives, and monotonous teaching methods. Through research, targeted strategies are proposed: establishing correct cognitive concepts, adopting diverse teaching methods, employing reasonable infiltration strategies, and expanding psychological knowledge to implement comprehensive teaching infiltration. These strategies aim to cultivate students' positive psychological qualities through subject education, thereby promoting their comprehensive development.

## **1. Research Background**

In current primary and secondary education, due to the relative scarcity of high-quality educational resources and the exam-oriented selection system still predominantly used for admissions, the educational format remains dominated by exam-oriented education. Excessive emphasis is placed on subject teaching in primary and secondary education, while relatively insufficient attention is given to cultivating students' positive psychological qualities such as emotion regulation, resilience in the face of setbacks, and adaptability to the environment. This has resulted in many students lacking effective coping strategies when faced with academic pressure, social difficulties, and emotional fluctuations, which in turn affects their mental health and academic development. In 2023, the Ministry of Education and 16 other departments issued the "Notice on Printing and Distributing the Special Action Plan for Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving Student Mental Health Work in the New Era (2023-2025)," which points out the importance of cultivating students' psychological qualities such as loving life, cherishing life,

self-esteem, self-confidence, rationality, peacefulness, optimism, and the willpower qualities of relentless struggle, unperturbed by honor or disgrace, and perseverance<sup>[1]</sup>.

Positive psychological traits refer to the relatively stable and positive psychological characteristics formed through the interplay between an individual's innate potential and environmental education. These psychological traits influence or determine the positive orientations of an individual's thoughts, emotions, and behavioral patterns, thereby laying the foundation for a fulfilling and successful life<sup>[2]</sup>. The primary and middle school period represents a crucial stage for personal growth and the shaping of psychological traits, during which students undergo rapid development in interpersonal relationships, emotional cognition, collective integration, and learning adaptability. Actively cultivating positive psychological traits among primary and middle school students, and providing guidance and support in terms of behavioral habits, thinking patterns, interpersonal interactions, emotion regulation, and personality shaping, can help them learn self-management and emotional control, facilitate their comprehensive development, and establish a solid foundation for both their present and future.

Instruction within academic disciplines is the primary pathway for students to receive education, and the infiltration of positive psychological traits education in primary and secondary schools serves as a vital means for conducting mental health education. The cultivation of various psychological traits in students also primarily occurs during the process of academic instruction, making it a significant pathway influencing the development of students' psychological traits<sup>[3]</sup>. Through curriculum-based cultivation, students' positive psychological traits and mental health status can be notably improved<sup>[4]</sup>. Currently, the integration of mental health education with academic instruction in primary and secondary schools has emerged as an important trend in educational reform. By incorporating mental health education content into academic education, students' positive psychological traits can be more effectively nurtured.

## **2. Current Status of Subject-Infiltrated Education for Positive Psychological Traits in Primary and Secondary Schools**

In school education, subject instruction occupies a central position, and the content of subject education serves as an indispensable vehicle for the cultivation of positive psychological traits. The most prominent feature of subject instruction infiltration is its implicit and indirect approach to enhancing students' psychological qualities<sup>[5]</sup>. In classrooms and activities, every teacher should strive to evoke students' positive emotional experiences and guide them in establishing active thinking patterns. By leveraging the uniqueness of each subject, teachers should consciously explore materials related to positive psychological traits and innovative teaching strategies to facilitate the development of students' positive psychological traits and enhance their mental health levels.

Analysis of existing research reveals two primary characteristics of discipline-infused education promoting positive psychological qualities in primary and secondary schools: firstly, it adheres to the objective laws governing students' physical and mental development; secondly, the method of infusion is comprehensive, primarily focusing on content-based infiltration.

### **2.1 Adherence to the Objective Laws of Students' Physical and Mental Development**

The positive psychological traits infiltrated in the same teaching subjects across different grades should align with students' growth and changes. In other words, this follows the principles of gradual progression and deepening, cultivating students' psychological qualities in a targeted and phased manner. Taking the infiltration of Chinese language teaching in primary schools as an example, when teaching different age groups, the teaching content and cultivation requirements of

Chinese language courses have their own focuses. For instance, in second-grade Chinese textbooks, teachers introduce role-playing and situational experiences as means of mental health education to cultivate specific positive psychological traits such as creativity, sincerity, and leadership that are lacking in lower-grade students. These activities can also be extended to cultivate other excellent qualities such as gratitude and fairness<sup>[6]</sup>. Fourth-grade Chinese language teachers, on the other hand, use comparisons between different units of the curriculum to remind students that the world is not always peaceful; many places are wracked by war and suffering, motivating students to learn to be grateful for the present<sup>[7]</sup>. In junior high school Chinese language courses, students are helped to cultivate noble personalities, specifically covering aspects such as wisdom, benevolence, and filial piety, enabling junior high school students to form correct values and enhance their self-cultivation<sup>[8]</sup>.

Furthermore, the cultivation of the same positive psychological trait aligns with the sequence of students' psychological development. Regarding the quality of thinking and observation, junior high school students primarily rely on abstract logical thinking, with their mathematical thinking becoming more generalized. This manifests in students summarizing and organizing the knowledge they have learned according to teachers' instructions, making the knowledge more systematic and conducive to identifying the essence and laws of things<sup>[9]</sup>. In high school, students' dialectical logical thinking, developed from abstract logical thinking, dominates, with significant enhancements in the speed, flexibility, depth, originality, and criticality of their thinking. The development of their observational skills exhibits new characteristics, including stronger purpose, more pronounced persistence, improved accuracy, and enhanced generalization<sup>[10]</sup>. Therefore, the teaching of thinking qualities in junior high school should focus on cultivating abstract thinking qualities, such as using themed activities in writing assignments to train and develop critical thinking<sup>[11]</sup>. Upon entering high school, the cultivation of thinking qualities places greater emphasis on the training of innovative thinking, for example, by guiding students to think and discuss chemical experiments in chemistry classes to develop their innovative thinking abilities<sup>[12]</sup>.

## 2.2 Comprehensive Infiltration with an Emphasis on Content Infiltration

The original intention of subject infiltration is to naturally and orderly integrate relevant knowledge points from other subjects based on a particular subject, breaking down disciplinary barriers, cultivating students' comprehensive qualities, and promoting the integration and application of knowledge. The infiltration of the cultivation of positive psychological qualities within subjects should be a comprehensive infiltration, involving teaching content, teaching methods, teaching evaluation, and other aspects. However, in practical teaching, the most attempted and easiest method is content infiltration, primarily utilizing teaching resources from textbooks and reference books to infiltrate the cultivation of positive psychological qualities. This is because subject curricula themselves contain extremely rich resources for mental health education<sup>[13]</sup>. For instance, social science courses, such as Chinese language courses, possess distinct humanistic, comprehensive, and practical characteristics, closely related to people's social experiences, emotional experiences, and individual needs<sup>[14]</sup>. They contribute to cultivating psychological qualities such as cherishing life, learning to love and be grateful, cooperating, and being sincere. History courses contain patriotic sentiments like Huo Qubing's "How can I have a family when the Huns are not destroyed?", loyalty to duty exemplified by Zhuge Liang's "Devoting oneself heart and soul until death", and social responsibility exemplified by Dayu's "Passing his home three times without entering"<sup>[15]</sup>. Natural science courses, such as mathematics and physics, involve cognitive activities like observation, memory, attention, and imagination, requiring learners to hold a rigorous

attitude towards learning. They help students establish scientific thinking and concepts while shaping them into meticulous, patient, persistent, and down-to-earth individuals. Arts and sports courses, such as music, art, and physical education, involve artistic images and knowledge about them, involving psychological qualities such as the ability to perceive and create artistic beauty, promoting the development of image thinking qualities, aesthetic sense, and moral sense[16]. Whether it is explicit resources directly presented in textbooks' texts and images or hidden implicit resources, they have a more emotional impact than abstract theories and empty preaching[17].

### **3. Issues in Infiltrating the Cultivation of Positive Psychological Qualities through Subject Education in Primary and Secondary Schools**

Although the concept of subject infiltration has a long history, there are prevalent issues such as the neglect of the preventive function of mental health education, akin to "treating disease before it occurs"[18], and the wastage of mental health education resources within subject teaching. Both the efforts of teachers to cultivate students' positive psychological qualities through infiltrating mental health education and the beneficial effects students receive from daily teaching infiltration are very weak[19]. The underlying reasons for these issues include the following:

#### **3.1 Limitations in Teachers' Cognition**

In educational practice, teachers' cognitive frameworks determine how they integrate knowledge instruction with students' psychological development. A lack of awareness and capacity in mental health education can hinder teachers from incorporating positive psychological qualities into subject teaching. This makes it difficult for them to identify suitable infiltration points and teaching methods tailored to students' characteristics, thereby limiting the effectiveness of cultivating positive psychological qualities. A survey report targeting junior high school teachers revealed that more than half of them have inadequate understanding of positive psychological qualities and struggle to actively seek methods to cultivate these qualities in students at different teaching stages[20]. Additionally, some teachers in subject education fields hold a misconception that cultivating students' positive psychological qualities primarily falls within the purview of psychology teachers or moral education teachers. Compared to taking remedial actions after students develop psychological issues, it is more crucial to focus on cultivating positive psychological qualities in students' daily lives, ensuring that their psychological resilience is appropriately enhanced and facilitating their healthy growth.

#### **3.2 Narrowing of Instructional Objectives**

In the practice of implementing the infiltration of positive psychological qualities in subject education, educators tend to narrowly define the objective as "correction of psychological issues"[21]. They mistakenly place the emphasis of subject infiltration on the identification and correction of psychological problems, while undermining the cultivation and development of students' positive psychological traits. Due to the lack of necessary professional skills in psychological counseling and guidance, teachers tend to focus more on students' negative psychological states rather than their positive psychological qualities during the teaching process. More troublingly, some teachers may adopt harsh criticism and punishment measures when dealing with students' psychological disturbances, hoping to regulate students' behavior through high-pressure methods. However, this approach not only violates the original intention of quality education but may also lead to rebellious psychology among students, hindering their ability to obtain positive energy from teaching.

### **3.3 Monotony of Teaching Methods**

In the practice of subject instruction, teachers are often constrained by limited classroom time or an inadequate understanding of teaching strategies, leading them to lean towards employing relatively homogeneous persuasive teaching methods. This approach fails to stimulate students' interest and enthusiasm in learning, resulting in students' inability to experience the importance of positive psychological qualities in practice and to learn how to apply the knowledge acquired to solve real-world problems. Although some teachers attempt to adopt diversified teaching modes such as situational teaching and cooperative learning, these modes still encounter numerous difficulties in practical application, including issues such as low student engagement.

## **4. Strategies for Infiltrating the Cultivation of Positive Psychological Qualities in Subject Education in Primary and Secondary Schools**

### **4.1 Establishing a Correct Educational Perspective**

Teachers serve as both knowledge transmitters and mental health guides, necessitating a correct educational perspective and mental health education skills to infiltrate this education into their teaching. Teachers' concepts directly influence student development; hence, educators should proactively cultivate students' positive qualities. Teachers cannot solely confine themselves to classroom instruction; instead, they should utilize the classroom as a base, guided by a broad educational perspective, and adhere to students' psychological development laws to promote their mental health and improve their overall personality<sup>[22]</sup>. Adhering to an educational philosophy of comprehensive development, teachers should not only focus on knowledge transmission but also pay attention to the cultivation of students' emotions, attitudes, and values. By designing enlightening teaching activities, teachers can stimulate students' inherent potential and cultivate their self-confidence, sense of responsibility, and teamwork spirit.

### **4.2 Adopting Diverse Teaching Methods**

Teachers should employ a variety of teaching methods, such as thematic teaching and situational teaching, to enhance students' sense of participation and experience. Through reflective activities in science classes and integrated practical classes, students can better accept others and understand interpersonal relationships. For instance, a frontline mathematics teacher, taking the lesson on "Multiplication Table of 9" as an example, changed the traditional method of compiling multiplication formulas and adopted a cooperative learning approach, allowing students to independently compile the multiplication formulas for 9, thereby cultivating their innovative ability. This ultimately yielded positive teaching outcomes<sup>[23]</sup>. Teachers can also create teaching situations close to students' daily lives to guide them to actively participate and explore, fostering innovative thinking and practical abilities. Modern teaching tools are diverse, such as multimedia teaching and online teaching. Teachers need to understand and correctly utilize these tools to enhance the effectiveness of teaching infiltration.

### **4.3 Emphasizing Reasonable Infiltration Strategies**

For discipline infiltration to be reasonable and effective, it must be strategic, not disorganized or arbitrary. Taking the Chinese language discipline as an example, strategies such as organic infiltration, subtle influence, flexible infiltration, and harmonious infiltration can provide lessons learned for infiltration in other disciplines<sup>[24]</sup>. The organic infiltration strategy emphasizes naturally



integrating the cultivation of positive psychological qualities into discipline teaching. The subtle influence strategy involves using the implicit educational factors in discipline teaching to affect students' psychological qualities. For instance, teachers should exemplify by their own actions and exert an influence on students' positive psychological qualities through subtle means<sup>[21]</sup>. The flexible infiltration strategy emphasizes flexibly adjusting teaching methods and means in discipline teaching according to students' learning situations and psychological needs, such as providing multiple solutions to a single problem. The harmonious infiltration strategy focuses on creating a harmonious and relaxed classroom atmosphere to provide a favorable environment for cultivating students' positive psychological qualities. Whether it is Chinese, mathematics, music, or physical education, creating a relaxed and enjoyable learning and psychological environment can enhance students' enjoyment of learning[25], self-confidence, and interest in learning[26].

#### **4.4 Expanding Psychological Knowledge**

Psychological knowledge is scientific and systematic. Using psychological knowledge to guide teaching can cater to students' psychological development and enhance the pertinence and effectiveness of teaching. For example, the Self-Determination Theory proposed by Deci and Ryan can be applied in the cultivation of positive psychological qualities. By providing support in autonomy, competence, and relatedness to meet students' basic psychological needs, this theory can stimulate students' intrinsic motivation for self-improvement in terms of qualities<sup>[27]</sup>, thereby empowering the cultivation of positive psychological qualities. Specifically, in practice, this can be embodied in designing challenging tasks to allow students to experience a sense of accomplishment, encouraging free choice of reading materials and sharing to gain a sense of autonomy, and organizing group cooperative learning and communication to enhance a sense of belonging, thereby effectively cultivating positive psychological qualities.

#### **4.5 Implementing Comprehensive Instructional Infiltration**

For any of the aforementioned suggestions to achieve significant effects, these measures must ultimately be implemented through comprehensive instructional infiltration. Advocating for comprehensive instructional infiltration returns to the original intent of discipline infiltration, where teachers should adopt a multi-angled approach: placing emphasis on the emotional and behavioral dimensions in teaching objectives, and explicitly identifying positive psychological qualities such as optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy as key areas of development, ensuring that every lesson becomes fertile ground for students' psychological growth. Teaching evaluation standards should be humanized<sup>[28]</sup>, employing diversified evaluation methods such as using performance-based assessments to observe students' attitudes and coping strategies when facing challenges, and utilizing peer evaluations to promote mutual understanding and support among students. In teaching activities, a positive classroom atmosphere should be created, where students learn communication, cooperation, and leadership through role-playing, team collaboration, and other forms, thereby enhancing their social adaptability and emotional management skills.

### **5. Conclusion**

Positive psychological qualities, such as optimism, self-confidence, and resilience, serve as crucial foundations for students to face future challenges and realize their self-worth. They are also internal resources that individuals can draw upon to cope with difficulties and crises, holding significant importance for the healthy development of primary and secondary school students. Infiltrating the cultivation of positive psychological qualities into academic education in primary

and secondary schools is a vital pathway to promoting students' comprehensive development and enhancing the quality of education. It requires educators to not only focus on students' mastery of knowledge and skills but also attach great importance to their mental health and character shaping. By revising teaching concepts, innovating teaching methods, and adopting reasonable infiltration strategies, teachers can integrate the cultivation of positive psychological qualities into the entire process of academic education. In this way, we can hope to cultivate more future pillars of society who possess a healthy mindset and the ability to take positive action. This is not only responsible for the individual development of students but also an important contribution to social harmony and progress.

## Acknowledgement

This research achievement is the research result of the project "Research on the Psychological Health Education System of Junior High School Students in the Perspective of Child Friendly" (Project No.: ETHH-2024-B05) by Chengdu Philosophy and Social Sciences Research Base and Chengdu Child Friendly City Construction Research Institute

## References

- [1] [http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A17/moe\\_943/moe\\_946/202305/t20230511\\_1059219.html](http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A17/moe_943/moe_946/202305/t20230511_1059219.html)
- [2] Wei Ping. Investigation, Analysis, and Educational Countermeasures of Positive Psychological Qualities in Primary and Middle School Students [J]. *China Special Education*, 2013, (12): 90-96.
- [3] Zhang Lanping. A Brief Discussion on Cultivating Positive Psychological Qualities in Primary and Secondary School Students [J]. *Reading and Writing (First Ten Days)*, 2018(3): 62-62.
- [4] Qin Yiwen. *Research on the Relationship between Positive Psychological Qualities and Mental Health of Primary School Students and Their Cultivation* [D]. East China Normal University, 2022.
- [5] Lei Ming. The Construction of Mental Health Education Psychology: Connotation, Research Objects, and Discipline System [J]. *Journal of Sichuan University of Science and Engineering (Social Sciences Edition)*, 2014, 29(03): 31-42.
- [6] Yang Aijia. *Research on Cultivating Students' Positive Psychological Qualities in Lower-Grade Chinese Language Teaching in Primary Schools* [D]. Hunan Agricultural University, 2021.
- [7] Wang Song, Fu Beiru. Cultivating Primary School Students' Positive Psychological Qualities in Subject Teaching [J]. *Reference of Basic Education*, 2018, 9(18): 69-71.
- [8] Bi Mingyuan. The Infiltration and Application of Positive Psychology in Junior High School Chinese Language Teaching [J]. *Asia-Pacific Education*, 2024(10): 21-23.
- [9] Lu Xiaohong. *Research on Cultivating Junior High School Students' Mathematical Thinking Ability* [D]. Central China Normal University, 2016.
- [10] Liu Zaihua. *Research on Cultivating High School Students' Positive Psychological Qualities* [J]. *China Special Education*, 2010, (11): 35-39.
- [11] Bi Jinggang, Dong Yuqi, Han Ying. An Empirical Study on Teaching to Promote the Development of Critical Thinking in Junior High School Students: From the Perspective of Learning Activity Design [J]. *Research on Electrifying Education*, 2018, 39(07): 83-90.
- [12] Wang Fei. How to Cultivate Students' Innovative Thinking Ability in High School Chemistry Teaching [J]. *Famous Teachers Online (Chinese and English)*, 2024(6): 50-52.
- [13] Ye Yiduo. Some Issues on Infiltrating Mental Health Education in Subject Teaching [J]. *China Educational Journal*, 2004, (03): 20-23.
- [14] Liu Yanru. New Trends and Implementation Paths of Infiltrating Education on Positive Psychological Qualities: Taking Junior High School Chinese Language Courses as an Example [J]. *Journal of Foshan University (Social Sciences Edition)*, 2024, 42(4): 107-112.
- [15] Zhao Jianxu. A Brief Discussion on the Necessity and Approaches of Infiltrating Mental Health Education into History Teaching [J]. *New Curriculum*, 2015, 0(26): 15-15.
- [16] Liu Ye, Xu Lifan. The Advantages and Methods of Infiltrating Mental Health Education into Subject Teaching [J]. *Journal of Shenyang Normal University (Social Science Edition)*, 2013, 37(06): 135-137.
- [17] Wang Song. Tapping Effective Teaching Resources to Cultivate Students' Positive Psychological Qualities [J]. *Primary School Teaching Research*, 2022(26): 27-29.

- [18] Lu Xue. *The Inspiration of the "Preventive Treatment of Disease" Concept for Mental Health Education in Primary and Secondary Schools* [J]. *Middle School Teaching Reference*, 2023, (27): 81-83.
- [19] Ma Junyi, Zhuang Yulu, Xiao Qianya, et al. *A Survey on the Infiltration of Mental Health Education in Middle School Subjects: Taking Nanjing and Zunyi as Examples* [J]. *Western China Quality Education*, 2024, 10(06): 119-123.
- [20] Jia Wenshuo. *Analysis of the Current Situation, Problems, and Educational Countermeasures of Junior High School Students' Positive Psychological Qualities* [J]. *Advances in Psychology*, 2023, 13(12): 6458-6468.
- [21] Xin Zhongyi. *Problems and Countermeasures in Infiltrating Mental Health Education into Subject Teaching* [J]. *Mental Health Education in Primary and Secondary Schools*, 2014, (14): 41-42.
- [22] Kang Cheng. *Effective Infiltration of Mental Health Education in Subject Teaching* [J]. *Journal of Changchun Education College*, 2021, 37(09): 70-75.
- [23] Liu Chenxu, Li Kai. *Cultivating Students' Positive Psychological Qualities in Primary School Mathematics Teaching* [C] // *New Curriculum Research Magazine. The Seventh Volume of Explorations in Curriculum and Teaching Reform under the "Double Reduction" Policy*. Tianjin Experimental Primary School; Tianjin University of Commerce Baode College; 2022: 3.
- [24] Zhao Wenjuan. *An Exploration of Infiltrating Mental Health Education into Chinese Language Teaching* [D]. Shandong Normal University, 2005.
- [25] Feng Suwen. *A Brief Discussion on Cultivating Students' Good Psychological Qualities in Primary School Mathematics Teaching* [C] // *Langfang Applied Economics Society. Papers on Coordinating and Promoting Basic Education in Connection with Beijing and Tianjin*. Nanfeng Town Primary School in Jiangxi Province; 2022: 3.
- [26] Gao Jian. *Research on Cultivating Primary School Students' Interest in English Learning* [J]. *Western China Quality Education*, 2015, 1(08): 108.
- [27] Zeng Panpan. *Cultivation Strategies for Positive Psychological Qualities of Primary and Secondary School Students from the Perspective of Positive Psychology* [J]. *Reference of Basic Education*, 2021, 12(1): 3-6.
- [28] Zhou Yanli. *Analysis of the Current Situation and Strategies for Integrating School Mental Health Education with Subjects in the New Era* [J]. *Cool Animation*, 2024(4): 231-233.