



Research on Reforming the Training Model for Government-Funded Normal Students from the Perspective of Psychological Education: Diagnosis and Path Construction at Zhaoqing University

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Abstract: Using literature review and case study methods, this paper examines the weak integration of psychological education in the training of government-funded normal students at Zhaoqing University. In view of current policies and the growing mental health needs of rural students, it argues that improving the psychological education competence of future rural teachers is urgent. The study identifies four major problems: a fragmented curriculum, disconnected teaching content, insufficient practice, and unclear evaluation. On this basis, it proposes a “three-dimensional, dual-oriented, multi-level” reform model and a three-step implementation path. The study aims to provide an operable framework for improving the training quality of government-funded normal students and the psychological education capacity of rural teachers.

Keywords: psychological education; government-funded normal students; training model; teacher education

1. Introduction

The Outline of the Plan for Building a Leading Country in Education (2024–2035) stresses the need to build a teaching force in the new era. Government-funded normal students are an important source of future rural teachers in China, so the quality of their training directly affects rural education and teacher development. Psychological education is a key part of teacher competence. It affects not only teachers’ own professional adaptation, but also their ability to understand, support, and guide students. At the same time, the Report on the Development of Chinese Residents’ Mental Health (2023–2024) shows that students in underdeveloped rural areas face high mental health risks. However, the traditional training model for government-funded normal students emphasizes subject knowledge more than psychological literacy. As a result, many students are not well prepared to handle their own adjustment or the mental health needs of pupils in rural schools.

Under these conditions, reforming the training model from the perspective of psychological education has become an urgent task. It is also an important step in building a high-quality rural teacher workforce and supporting the national strategy of strengthening education. This study has three goals: to identify the main problems in the current cultivation of psychological literacy among government-funded normal students, to construct a reform model centered on theory, practice, and emotion, and to propose a phased implementation path with operational value.

The study focuses on three aspects: the current situation of psychological education training for government-funded normal students at Zhaoqing University, the structure of the “three-dimensional, dual-oriented, multi-level” model, and the phased strategies and support conditions for reform.

2. Research Methods

2.1 Literature Research

This study reviews policy documents, academic research, and representative practices related to teacher psychological literacy, normal student training, and curriculum integration. These materials provide the theoretical basis for the analysis and model construction.

2.2 Case Study

Zhaoqing University, a typical local application-oriented university, is selected as the case. Data were collected through document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and participatory observation. Materials such as training plans and course outlines were examined; administrators, teachers, students, and graduates were interviewed; and relevant teaching activities were observed. These methods were used to diagnose the weak integration of psychological education in the training of government-funded normal students.

3. Current Situation and Problem Diagnosis

3.1 Fragmented Curriculum and Marginalized Psychological Education

Psychological education has not been fully integrated into the training system of government-funded normal students. At Zhaoqing University, College Student Mental Health Education is offered as a public compulsory course, while more specialized psychology courses mainly belong to the Applied Psychology major. In teacher education modules, courses such as Foundations of Psychology, Moral Education and Class Management, and Foundations of Pedagogy include only limited psychological education content. In addition, government-funded normal students and regular normal students receive almost the same curriculum, without a clear distinction in training goals or content.

Psychological education knowledge is also scattered across different courses without strong coordination. The public mental health course focuses more on general theory and the classification of psychological problems than on future teaching practice. Relevant content in pedagogy and class management courses is often unsystematic. Moreover, psychological education has not been effectively connected with subject teaching courses such as Chinese or mathematics pedagogy. As a result, students lack opportunities to learn how emotional education or supportive teacher-student interaction can be embedded in classroom teaching. This fragmented arrangement leaves psychological education in a weak position.

3.2 Disconnected Teaching Content and Weak Local Relevance

The current teaching content does not sufficiently match the future needs of government-funded normal students, especially in rural schools. Practical teaching content is often general, outdated, and weakly connected to local problems. It does not adequately address issues such as the emotional needs of left-behind children, the shortage of mental health resources in rural schools, or the identity anxiety of rural adolescents in the AI era.

In addition, the content lacks forward-looking design. Students receive limited training in using digital tools to identify and respond to psychological risks in school settings. Because the teaching content is not deeply rooted in local educational realities, students often lack practical understanding of the environments in which they will work. This weakens their readiness to respond to future challenges.

3.3 Insufficient Practice and a Gap Between Knowledge and Action

Practice should connect theory with real work, but this link remains weak. Educational observation and internship still focus mainly on subject teaching. Student teachers are usually required to prepare lessons and teach well, while psychological education tasks are rarely included in a clear and formal way. Internship schools, especially rural schools, often lack mental health education resources, and many mentors are subject teachers without sufficient ability to guide related practice.

As a result, student teachers have few chances to observe counseling work, participate in student crisis response, or design mental health activities. Psychological education practice usually lacks task requirements, supervision, feedback mechanisms, and assessment standards. Under this model, students may understand concepts in theory, but they cannot easily turn them into practical competence.

3.4 Unclear Evaluation and Invisible Educational Effects

A sound evaluation mechanism is necessary for effective reform, but psychological education remains difficult to measure in the current system. Student assessment still focuses mainly on subject knowledge and teaching performance. Psychological quality, emotional stability, empathy, communication ability, and confidence in handling students' psychological problems are rarely included in formal evaluation.

This creates a negative cycle. Because these qualities are not clearly assessed, students and teachers often have limited motivation to invest in them. Because outcomes are not visible, administrators may also find it difficult to allocate resources or build supportive policies. As a result, psychological education stays at the edge of teacher education rather than becoming a core part of it.

4. Construction of the Reform Model: A “Three-Dimensional, Dual-Oriented, Multi-Level” Framework

4.1 Core Framework

4.1.1 Three-Dimensional Content Modules

The proposed model consists of three dimensions: theory, practice, and emotion.

The theory dimension integrates developmental psychology, educational psychology, basic counseling knowledge, and the psychology of rural children. Its purpose is to help government-funded normal students understand students'

developmental characteristics, common psychological problems, and the specific mental health challenges faced by rural adolescents.

The practice dimension turns knowledge into applied ability. Through observation, internship, simulated counseling, thematic class activities, and crisis intervention drills, students learn to use empathy, group guidance, and home-school communication skills in real teaching situations. This dimension emphasizes the transition from understanding to action.

The emotion dimension focuses on internalizing professional values and strengthening teacher identity. By combining curriculum ideology, general education, narrative methods, educational films, and local cultural experiences, it helps students develop educational commitment and emotional connection to rural communities.

4.1.2 Dual-Oriented Design Principles

The model follows two design principles.

The first is theory orientation. Teaching content must be based on scientific knowledge rather than reduced to fragmented experience or simple skill training. This helps students develop scientific thinking and professional judgment.

The second is application orientation. Teaching should be problem-based and case-based, closely connected to real rural educational situations, such as communicating with families of left-behind children or responding to emotional breakdowns in class. In this way, students learn knowledge while solving practical problems.

4.1.3 Multi-Level Implementation Path

The model is implemented at three levels.

The foundation level targets the first and second years. It strengthens psychological education within general education by adding modules such as professional psychological preparation for normal students and characteristics of rural students' psychology to the public mental health course. Elective courses such as psychology in educational films can also be offered.

The advanced level targets the second and third years. During professional education, a mental health education module can be established as a restricted elective or optional direction. This module may include two or three core courses, such as school mental health education practice, for students who need more systematic training.

The practice level targets the third and fourth years and is the key link in the reform. Psychological education tasks should be built into observation and internship. For example, students may be required to complete psychological observation records, organize a class meeting with a mental health theme, and interview a student with special needs under guidance. These tasks should be assessed with the same seriousness as subject teaching practice.

4.2 Support System for Implementation

4.2.1 Curriculum Resources

Localized curriculum resources should be developed, including a case database based on anonymized cases from western Guangdong primary and secondary schools, skill-oriented micro-courses, and online virtual simulation programs for crisis scenarios.

4.2.2 Faculty Integration

An interdisciplinary teaching team should be formed by bringing together psychology teachers, subject pedagogy teachers, and experienced primary and secondary school mentors. Joint lesson planning and collaborative design of practical tasks should become regular practice.

4.2.3 Practice Base Collaboration

Universities should work closely with internship schools to build a psychological education practice community. Partner schools can appoint relevant mentors to guide and assess student practice together with university supervisors, while universities provide training and teaching resources in return.

5. A Three-Step Strategy for Reform

5.1 Step One: Pilot and Foundation

During the first one to two years, the university should establish a leading group for psychological education reform for government-funded normal students. Relevant departments should work together to design plans and coordinate implementation. One or two majors with a relatively good foundation, such as primary education, can be selected as pilots. At the same time, the university can develop several exemplary micro-courses, strengthen teacher training in pilot majors, and begin to design evaluation standards for students' psychological literacy.

5.2 Step Two: Integration and Promotion

During the third and fourth years, mature micro-course modules should be formally included in the revised talent

training program with fixed credits. Psychological education should also be integrated more deeply into subject pedagogy courses. For example, Chinese teaching courses can explore emotional education through literary works, while mathematics teaching courses can address students' confidence and anxiety in learning. In addition, demonstration practice bases can be established, and the results of psychological literacy assessment can be included in students' comprehensive evaluation, internship assessment, and related incentive systems.

5.3 Step Three: Systematization and Normalization

From the fifth year onward, the university can extend the verified model to all government-funded normal student majors and establish regular, institutionalized operation. Through continuous practice, psychological education can gradually become recognized as a core competence of teachers. On this basis, Zhaoqing University can summarize its experience into a replicable reform package, including mature models, curriculum resources, and standardized evaluation tools, and then share these achievements with similar institutions through academic exchange and regional cooperation.

6. Conclusion

Psychological education is an essential part of the training of government-funded normal students and an important support for the high-quality development of rural education. Taking Zhaoqing University as a case, this study identifies four central problems in the current system: fragmented curriculum, disconnected content, weak practice, and unclear evaluation. In response, it constructs a "three-dimensional, dual-oriented, multi-level" reform model and proposes a three-step implementation path of pilot building, integrated promotion, and long-term institutionalization. The study provides a practical framework for improving the psychological education training of government-funded normal students in local universities and offers a reference for strengthening rural teacher education more broadly.

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