
Pathways for Cultivating Positive Psychological Qualities of College Students under the Perspective of “Five-Education” Integration

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Abstract: Contemporary college students navigate the rapid currents of societal change, facing multifaceted pressures from academic demands, career challenges, and interpersonal relationships. Cultivating positive psychological qualities can help shape well-rounded personalities and moral sentiments, foster resilience, refine aesthetic sensibilities, and realize personal value and life purpose. Grounded in the “Five-Education Integration” strategic framework, this study examines the synergistic role of moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education in shaping students’ positive psychological traits. It analyzes the unique contributions and interconnections of these educational components to develop an integrated “Five-in-One” cultivation pathway that combines value guidance, cognitive empowerment, physical conditioning, emotional nurturing, and practical skill development. The research aims to provide theoretical foundations and practical models for innovative mental health education in higher education institutions, supporting holistic student development and fostering qualities such as optimism, perseverance, and proactive responsibility.

Keywords: college students; positive psychological qualities; integrated development of the five educations; cultivation pathways.

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1. Introduction

Contemporary society is undergoing profound transformations. Against the backdrop of rapid economic growth, structural shifts in social systems, diversified value systems, and information overload, the younger generation faces unprecedented opportunities and challenges. As the backbone of national development, college students grapple with academic pressures, employment pressures, and challenges in self-awareness, interpersonal relationships, and emotional management during their formative years. Higher education institutions must prioritize guiding students to establish sound worldviews, life philosophies, and value systems while fostering positive psychological resilience. China’s national education policy explicitly emphasizes comprehensive implementation of the Party’s educational guidelines, prioritizing moral education as the fundamental mission while advocating balanced development across moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education (the “Five-Education Approach”). This strategic framework provides clear direction for college education in the new era.

2. The Connotation of Promoting the Five Educations in Parallel

The “Five-Education Integration” framework constitutes the core philosophy of China’s national education policy, emphasizing the interconnectedness and mutual reinforcement of moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education to foster students’ holistic development. Moral education focuses on cultivating ethical character and value systems, serving as the foundation for building a well-rounded personality. Intellectual education emphasizes nurturing scientific literacy and innovative thinking to enhance knowledge acquisition and problem-solving capabilities. Physical education promotes healthy lifestyles and teamwork through physical fitness and willpower development. Aesthetic education aims to refine artistic sensibilities and creative abilities, enriching spiritual lives and cultivating emotional intelligence. Labor education centers on developing practical skills and social responsibility, guiding students to respect labor and create value through hands-on experience. This integrated approach not only prioritizes knowledge acquisition but equally values personality development, mental resilience, emotional cultivation, and social accountability. The synergistic effects of diversified educational practices provide fertile ground for nurturing positive psychological traits such as self-confidence, optimism, perseverance, self-discipline, and teamwork, laying a solid foundation for students to meet future challenges, realize personal potential, and contribute to society^[1].

3. The Role of Cultivating Positive Psychological Traits in College Students

3.1. Cultivating sound personality and moral emotions to enhance social adaptability

Cultivating positive psychological qualities plays a vital role in shaping college students’ well-rounded personalities and deepening their moral sensibilities, enhancing their adaptability in complex environments. Core elements of a complete personality—self-esteem, confidence, empathy, and responsibility—guide individuals to develop positive self-perception while shaping their attitudes toward others and the world. Students with noble moral values naturally demonstrate a pursuit of fairness and justice, along with compassion for others, driven by intrinsic motivation. This fosters sound worldviews and values, enabling them to become socially responsible members of society. When these qualities are fully developed, students exhibit superior problem-solving strategies and interpersonal skills when facing social interactions, teamwork, and environmental changes. They not only better understand and respond to others’ needs to build harmonious relationships but also integrate into groups with optimism. Such positive transformation from within not only lays the foundation for academic achievement and personal growth but also provides strong motivation for navigating complex challenges and continuous progress in future careers, equipping them to confidently face the trials of changing times.

3.2. Enhancing psychological resilience and cultivating tenacious willpower

College students often face academic pressure, complex interpersonal relationships, and uncertainty about future choices during their growth journey. Developing psychological resilience and strong willpower becomes crucial for them to withstand challenges and achieve self-transcendence. Psychological resilience enables individuals to quickly recover from setbacks, avoid easy giving up, learn from adversity, and transform failures into growth opportunities. Students with high psychological resilience tend to view adversity constructively, proactively seek resources and support, effectively manage negative emotions, and demonstrate proactive problem-solving attitudes. Resolute willpower drives individuals to overcome inertia, maintain focus and commitment during prolonged endeavors, and persistently pursue goals despite repeated challenges or tedious training. This internal motivation not only ensures academic progress and personal potential realization but also cultivates a positive mindset to navigate life’s ups and downs, laying solid psychological foundations for future careers and life journeys. Ultimately, individuals leverage these psychological resources to maintain emotional stability and decisive actions in dynamic environments, continuously stimulate intrinsic motivation, and achieve self-actualization^[2].

3.3. Cultivating aesthetic sensibilities to promote emotional regulation and inner harmony

College students are at a critical stage of physical and mental development as well as value formation. While characterized by active thinking and rich emotions, they are highly susceptible to emotional fluctuations and inner conflicts caused by multiple pressures. In this context, cultivating positive psychological qualities in students helps refine aesthetic sensibilities, enhance emotional regulation, and foster inner harmony. The inherent emotional regulation capacity of aesthetic experiences allows individuals to temporarily detach from daily worries during moments of beauty immersion, achieving mental tranquility and joy. This effectively alleviates anxiety and depression while promoting positive emotions. Long-term exposure to aesthetic influences enables students to develop a more balanced and optimistic mindset, strengthen emotional management skills, and learn to approach challenges with creative perspectives. Ultimately, this internal harmony and sense of equilibrium transform into stable and resilient psychological traits.

3.4. Achieving self-worth and life meaning, strengthening cultural confidence and sense of belonging

College students with positive psychological qualities typically excel at identifying their strengths, setting goals aligned with societal values, and maintaining accurate self-perception. Through serving communities and contributing to society, they experience profound sense of achievement and purpose, achieving harmony between personal growth and social impact. Cultivating these traits often integrates with cultural enrichment—such as inheriting revolutionary heritage through cultural education—helping students deeply understand China’s historical development, strengthen cultural identity and pride, and build unwavering cultural confidence. This culturally rooted confidence transforms into a powerful sense of belonging, enabling individuals to maintain composure in multicultural environments, clarify their roles, and face life challenges with optimism and proactive attitudes. Such mental resilience provides essential spiritual support for holistic development and fulfilling contemporary responsibilities.

4. Pathways for Cultivating Positive Psychological Qualities in College Students from the Perspective of Integrated “Five Educations” Approach

4.1. Guided by moral education, laying a solid foundation for positive personality development

In fostering positive psychological qualities among college students, moral education can transform grand value concepts into concrete daily behaviors and intrinsic character traits. Universities should integrate socialist core values education through vivid case studies and thematic discussions. For instance, courses like “Ideological Morality and Rule of Law” could incorporate authentic stories of contemporary scientists, grassroots contributors, or outstanding alumni, organizing student discussions on the value logic and personal strengths behind their choices to guide students in developing clear moral judgment and sense of responsibility through critical analysis. Practical components must be strengthened by encouraging continuous participation in community service, rural revitalization research, or specialized public welfare projects, deepening students’ social understanding and enabling them to directly experience achievement, belonging, and self-efficacy through solving real-world problems and helping others. Moral education should also be closely coordinated with mental health initiatives, incorporating specialized modules such as “Stress Management and Resilience Building” and “Constructing Positive Interpersonal Relationships” into ideological and political theory courses, teaching specific emotional regulation techniques like mindfulness practices and cognitive restructuring, as well as communication skills. A supportive campus micro-environment should be created, with counselors, class advisors, and subject teachers focusing on character development during academic guidance and career planning while integrating character evaluation and motivation mechanisms ^[3].

4.2. Cultivating growth mindset and learning ability through intellectual education as a vehicle

In intellectual education, teachers should prioritize reforming teaching methodologies. For instance, systematically integrating Problem-Based Learning (PBL) into specialized courses involves organizing group discussions around real-

world complex interdisciplinary challenges in designing sustainable community solutions. This approach enables students to independently define problems, conduct literature searches, and collaboratively develop solutions, effectively cultivating critical thinking and knowledge integration skills. Curriculum evaluations should emphasize formative assessment through tools like “Learning Journals,” which require students to regularly reflect on learning strategies and perspectives on challenging tasks. Teachers can guide students to view challenges as opportunities for growth rather than intellectual judgments, thereby fostering growth mindset. Skill development programs should include specialized workshops teaching techniques such as Cornell Note-taking Method, literature management tools, and efficient academic database utilization strategies to enhance self-directed learning efficacy. Platforms like undergraduate research projects and innovation competitions should be established to encourage practical application of theoretical knowledge. Through iterative cycles of trial and error, students can experience overcoming challenges through persistent effort and methodological refinement, strengthening learning resilience. Creating supportive learning environments is crucial in intellectual education. Teachers should not only impart knowledge but also serve as “learning coaches,” providing personalized feedback and role modeling to build students’ confidence in self-directed learning capabilities. This approach helps cultivate lifelong learners adept at navigating uncertainties and continuously updating their knowledge systems.

4.3. Utilizing sports as a platform to cultivate willpower and team spirit

Integrating sports into the psychological development framework for college students enables simultaneous growth in physical and mental health, laying a solid foundation for future social integration and societal contribution. Universities should establish a comprehensive “curriculum + activities + competitions” system: At the academic level, challenging sports like skiing, swimming, rock climbing, and orienteering can be introduced with tiered difficulty levels, allowing students to progress according to their abilities and directly fostering self-challenge motivation. For extracurricular activities and competitions, events such as intercollegiate ball games, 24-hour relay races, and outdoor survival training camps should be organized. These activities require students to learn physical stamina management, emotional regulation, and teamwork under extreme conditions. For instance, in long-distance team relays, participants must overcome fatigue and avoid giving up, precisely calculate paces, execute baton passes, and continuously monitor teammates’ performance to cultivate responsibility, resilience, and collaborative awareness. In team sports like basketball and soccer, emphasis should be placed on tactical execution through complex drills such as full-court press defense under high-pressure scenarios, helping students grasp the importance of effective communication, real-time feedback, and mutual support. Post-game debriefings should guide rational analysis of technical errors and psychological fluctuations (e.g., nervousness during critical moments), transforming emotional experiences into rational resilience and emotional regulation skills. The sports-developed qualities—including rule adherence, respect for opponents, accountability for shared goals, and confidence and control gained through physical training—will naturally transfer into academic and daily life as intrinsic resources for facing future challenges ^[4].

4.4. Enhancing Emotional Expression and Creativity through Aesthetic Education

Aesthetic education, as a profound spiritual nourishment, can enrich college students’ emotional expression and stimulate their creative thinking. Universities should establish structured art education courses such as “Art History and Modern Visual Expression,” “Fundamentals of Music Composition,” and “Theater Workshops,” while regularly hosting practical lectures and workshops led by artists and designers. These programs must transcend mere knowledge transmission, focusing on hands-on creative engagement. For instance, painting or digital media courses should require students to create portfolios centered on personal emotions or social issues, while theater workshops employ improvisation and role-playing to help students identify and express complex emotions. This “learning by doing” approach directly trains students’ ability to transform inner feelings and abstract thinking into tangible forms. Systematic campus art initiatives like “Experimental Art Open Exhibitions,” semester-long themed concerts, and intercollegiate short play competitions should be organized with low entry barriers to encourage students’ deep involvement as creators or curators. Providing channels for stress

relief and positive emotional experiences through collaborative projects helps develop communication skills, teamwork, and problem-solving abilities. Campus environments should emphasize interactivity and daily immersion through student exhibition walls, interactive installations, and original short videos, integrating aesthetic education into daily life to continuously nurture emotions and imagination ^[5].

4.5. Implement labor education to cultivate a sense of responsibility and achievement

In daily teaching management, universities should strengthen labor education to enable students to gain authentic experiences through hands-on participation in various labor activities. For routine campus maintenance, clearly defined responsibility zones should be established, with student cleaning teams assigned to each dormitory building to regularly maintain corridors, public spaces, and surrounding green areas. This allows students to directly observe the environmental improvements resulting from their efforts, fostering a sense of collective responsibility. Professional courses must integrate labor components deeply: engineering majors should require students to collaboratively design, procure, and construct physical models; agronomy programs should establish campus experimental fields where students manage the entire process from sowing to harvesting; art and design majors should undertake practical projects like creating campus cultural murals and event posters, allowing these hands-on experiences to enhance problem-solving skills and deliver a strong sense of accomplishment. To expand practical platforms, universities can establish open workshops, planting bases, or simulated companies, providing tools and venues to support innovative production activities. Off-campus partnerships should include regular community engagement programs such as elderly assistance services and environmental cleanup initiatives, one-week “Rural Revitalization Practice Camps” involving agricultural product packaging and cultural promotion, as well as corporate collaborations offering short-term internships. These experiences enable students to understand the social value of labor through real-world workplace dynamics. A systematic reflection and incentive mechanism should also be established, requiring students to maintain labor diaries documenting specific tasks, encountered difficulties, and solutions. Each semester, an exhibition of labor achievements should be held, featuring physical works, service records, or internship reports. Teachers should guide students through group discussions to summarize the impact of labor on personal perseverance and teamwork.

5. Conclusion

The “Five-Education Integration” philosophy embodies the essence of contemporary educational principles. Through moral education’s value guidance, intellectual education’s cognitive stimulation, physical education’s physical and mental development, aesthetic education’s emotional enrichment, and labor education’s practical cultivation, college students can gradually develop positive self-awareness, healthy coping mechanisms, and sustainable growth momentum through multidimensional educational immersion. Higher education institutions must continuously deepen theoretical exploration and practical innovation by breaking disciplinary barriers, integrating educational resources to establish collaborative and efficient training mechanisms, and institutionalizing these practices. This approach will cultivate more psychologically resilient, holistically developed individuals capable of shouldering the great mission of national rejuvenation, providing society with pillars of strength equipped with psychological resilience and innovative vitality, thereby achieving synchronized resonance between personal happiness and national prosperity.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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