

Research on the Problems and Paths of the Development of Traditional "Minor" Courses

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Abstract: In the context of the current surge in demand for talent and the continuous progress and modernization of education, the issue of how to balance main subjects and side subjects has received widespread attention. This article analyzes the current situation of traditional side subject education in China. In China, the status of the main subject is often higher than that of the side subjects, but with the advancement of modernization development, this concept needs to be changed. This article analyzes that there are still problems with insufficient emphasis on side subject education in China, unreasonable allocation of teaching staff, inadequate curriculum design, and single teaching methods. In response to these issues, the following suggestions are proposed: adopting a diversified evaluation method, optimizing teachers and curriculum configuration, and improving teaching content to innovate educational methods.

1 INTRODUCTION

Under the background of the rapid development of times and the arrival of the knowledge economy era, the role of education is increasingly prominent. As the world's most populous and largest developing country, China continuously promotes the development of its education industry and contributes to poverty alleviation through education development (Guo et al., 2019). A comprehensive and balanced education system is also of crucial significance for cultivating compound talents who can adapt to the future society. In the Chinese education system, main subjects usually refer to subjects such as Chinese, mathematics, and English, which occupy a dominant position in school education, while so-called side subjects such as music, physical education, and art often do not receive equal attention. However, these traditional side subjects are equally indispensable for the all-round improvement of students, the development of innovation ability, and aesthetic emotions.

How to change the traditional educational concept and model that focuses on the main subject, advance the modernization of secondary subject education, and fulfill all-round improvement of students' abilities is one of the main challenges facing China's current education. Exploring the issues of traditional Chinese secondary subjects and their improvement

measures can help build a more balanced and scientific education system. By reforming the teaching of secondary subjects, students can be provided with a wider range of knowledge areas and richer learning experiences. To face this challenge and build a healthy China, China has introduced a series of policies such as the "Healthy China" plan as a national strategy (Weeng, 2021).

This article will focus on the research of the problems and paths in the development of traditional side subjects, and develop from three directions: the current problems, the importance and impact of the courses themselves, and suggestions.

2 THE PROBLEMS IN CURRENT SIDE SUBJECT EDUCATION

2.1 Deviation in Educational Philosophy

In the Chinese education system, the emphasis on side subjects is much lower than that on main subjects. This phenomenon stems from the examination-oriented and resource-allocation methods within the education system. The education model centered on exam scores has led schools and parents to tend to value subjects that have a relatively large proportion in entrance exams while ignoring the importance of

side subjects. In the eyes of parents, the most important subject is related to further education. Some students believe that they only need to have good performance in their main subject. In the consciousness of the homeroom teacher, the education of main subjects is much more important than that of side subjects. In the eyes of school leaders, just a small number of talented students in a particular field determines the quality of side subjects in school, and the level of other students is not important (Weng, 2021). This attitude and perspective of not valuing not only affects the quality of side subjects but also limits the development of students' creativity and aesthetic ability. In such an educational environment, students may lose the opportunity to explore their personal interests and diverse talents, which not only affects their personalized development but also hurts the cultivation of social and cultural diversity.

2.2 Shortcomings in Curriculum Design

In the curriculum arrangement of many schools, main subjects such as Chinese, mathematics, and English usually dominate, while side subjects such as music, physical education, and art are often marginalized, and the number of class hours and teaching quality cannot be guaranteed. Chinese ordinary school students spend more than half of their day sitting in the classroom, focusing on their main subjects, with only a few hours available for other activities. Da Costa et al. believe that class time is the portion of sitting time that lasts the most (Xie et al., 2024). Taking the three-year vocational college as an example, most vocational colleges and universities offer physical education classes for the first and second years, while the third year does not have physical education classes. According to relevant documents, the class hours for three-year vocational college students are 108 hours, but many schools have physical education class hours lower than this number (Xie, 2023). In rural places, Hastie et al. found that due to the factors of economic, cultural, transportation, and teachers, the implementation of side subjects such as PE is not optimistic (Fu et al., 2022). More than half of the schools are unable to complete the required courses. The insufficient setting of side subject class hours can lead to students' knowledge structure leaning towards the main subject, which cannot form a fully developed knowledge system and can also cause the loss of students' interest and motivation. Not only that, but it

may also affect students' physical and emotional health.

2.3 The Single Assessment Method

The traditional assessment and teaching methods for minor subjects in China are relatively single, which greatly limits the comprehensive development and interest cultivation of students. In many schools, the main subject usually only focuses on imparting theoretical knowledge, lacking practical and interactive elements, which sometimes leaves students confused. At the same time, the assessment methods often only evaluate students' learning outcomes through written exams or mandatory physical exams, ignoring the examination of students' actual skills and creativity, which further exacerbates the singularity of teaching models. The evaluation system for side subjects has problems such as incomplete evaluation indicators, unreasonable weights, and single ways of evaluation. Its evaluation content and perspective also have certain limitations (Li et al., 2022). Under such a model, it is difficult for side-subject education to achieve the expected teaching effects and educational goals.

2.4 Limited Teaching Staff and Difficult Allocation

The traditional side subjects in China face significant challenges in terms of faculty allocation and urban-rural resource allocation. Because side subjects are often not considered key subjects in the education system, they often do not receive sufficient attention and investment. At present, in the western region, especially in towns and villages, many primary schools only focus on student's academic performance and ignore the important significance that side subject education can bring to students' growth (Wang et al., 2022). In many schools, especially those in rural and remote areas, there is a relative shortage of full-time side subject teachers, and these subjects are often taught part-time by teachers from other subjects or completely ignored. There are significant differences between urban and rural children in terms of sports resources, such as sports facilities and music facilities. Children in rural areas also have fewer opportunities for side subject education than children in urban areas (Primo et al., 2023). Although the situation in urban schools is relatively good, there are still problems faced by side subject teachers, such as heavy teaching tasks, limited training opportunities, and limited career development space. This unequal allocation of

resources and teacher resources exacerbates regional differences in education quality and limits students' comprehensive development.

3 THE NECESSITY AND IMPORTANCE OF THE EXISTENCE OF MINOR COURSES

In today's society, the purpose of education is no longer limited to imparting theoretical knowledge, but to enable students to develop comprehensively. Traditional Chinese education emphasizes the all-around improvement of moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education, which has a long history and still has important guiding significance in modern society. These five aspects are important for cultivating students to become useful talents in society. Side subjects education is an indispensable part of these five aspects, mainly covering physical, aesthetic, and labor aspects. While pursuing academic excellence, it should not ignore the promoting role of these nonmainstream disciplines in physical education, aesthetics, and labor.

3.1 Physical Literacy and Labor Aspects: Strengthening Students' Physical and Mental Health

The side subjects play a crucial role in students' physical and mental health as well as aesthetic emotions. In terms of sports literacy, as an influential concept, sports literacy (PL) has rapidly developed and gained global attention and has been integrated into multiple sports and education policies (Ma et al., 2020). Participating in the study of subjects such as sports, music, and art can provide students with opportunities to relax and help alleviate the pressure of studying their main subjects. Sports and other side subjects enhance students' physical fitness, prevent diseases, and promote healthy growth through various sports projects. In addition, secondary education emphasizes practical and hands-on abilities, such as labor skills and handicraft courses, which can effectively cultivate students' labor awareness and labor skills.

Side subjects play an indispensable role in students' development, providing them with a platform to release stress, cultivate interest, and enhance physical fitness through art, sports, and practice. In side subjects education, students can find

joy in the tense study life, reduce the physical and mental burden caused by academic pressure, and thus be more conducive to their healthy growth.

3.2 Moral, Intellectual, and Aesthetic Aspects: The Development of Aesthetics, Moral Emotions, and Intelligence

Through courses such as music and art, students can enhance their aesthetic ability and cultural literacy, thereby achieving significant improvement in aesthetic education. More importantly, secondary education advocates interdisciplinary and comprehensive practical activities, which are conducive to students' ability to solve practical situations. At the same time, group projects and collaborative tasks promote the development of students' moral emotions, such as a sense of responsibility, empathy, and citizenship.

The promotion of aesthetic education, moral education, and intellectual education, helps to shape harmonious and balanced personalities, enabling students to achieve balanced development in all aspects of morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics, and labor.

4 IMPROVEMENT SUGGESTIONS

4.1 Optimize Teacher Allocation and Curriculum Design

Firstly, increase the recruitment of associate teachers and strengthen the talent cultivation and professional development of these disciplines in normal universities. Improve the treatment and social status of secondary teachers, and enhance social awareness of secondary education through policy incentives and media promotion. Furthermore, optimize the mechanism for allocating teacher resources, adopt flexible talent mobility policies, and encourage outstanding teachers to teach in areas with talent shortages. Simultaneously promoting distance education and online teaching, utilizing modern technology to narrow the education gap between urban and rural areas. In addition, it will increase the school's management efforts, enhance the importance of secondary subjects, and ensure the proportion and quality of secondary subject teaching in school education.

4.2 Update Teaching Content and Methods

In terms of teaching philosophy, secondary education plays an indispensable and prominent role in cultivating students' innovative and practical abilities. Early on, the content should keep pace with the times, integrate the latest technological, cultural, and social development achievements, and make the course content more relevant to students' lives and the times. In terms of teaching methods, adopt more interactive and experiential teaching modes, such as group cooperation and project-based learning. In addition, implement diversified teaching methods based on individual student and class situations (Zhang, 2023). Moreover, an interdisciplinary curriculum system can be established to encourage the integration and infiltration between secondary and main subjects, enabling students to master knowledge in the context of comprehensive disciplines and enhance the relevance and practicality of learning.

4.3 Improving Assessment Methods

To improve the quality of side subjects education and students' learning experience, diversified evaluation methods can be adopted. Not only based on final exam scores, but also attitude and progress, as well as comprehensive evaluation of specialized skills, physical fitness, and exercise (Xie, 2023). Traditional written and closed-book exams are not sufficient to comprehensively evaluate students' learning outcomes in minor subjects. Therefore, introducing performance evaluation, self-evaluation, and peer evaluation is not limited to a single exam score, but can more comprehensively reflect students' practical operational ability, creativity, and participation. At the same time, timely feedback and guidance from teachers during the evaluation process are also very important, as they can help students understand their progress and shortcomings promptly and promote their continuous growth. In addition, incorporating students' interests, level of effort, and progress into the evaluation system can better stimulate their enthusiasm for learning and their emphasis on sub-jects, making them aware of the importance of the learning process, not just the results. This comprehensive and diversified evaluation method is not only fair and reasonable, but also can better motivate students to develop comprehensively and reflect the value of side subjects education.

5 CONCLUSIONS

This article combines previous research and analyzes from three aspects: phenomena, impacts, and practices, and concludes that side subjects should have the same status as main subjects and should not be ignored or underestimated. To continuously modernize teaching methods and concepts, keep up with the times, and promote the development of side subjects education under government policies. This article also analyzes the insufficient emphasis on secondary education in Chinese education, as well as the relatively rigid and unbalanced nature of secondary education. Based on these issues, the significance of secondary education and its importance for students' comprehensive development are derived, and further suggestions for solving these problems are proposed. These issues reflect the shortcomings and progress direction of current education development in China. The suggestions proposed for these issues have certain reference values for the current modernization of education in China and the promotion of students' comprehensive development in morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics, and labor. These suggestions include optimizing curriculum design, increasing class hours, building a diversified evaluation system, improving teacher allocation, and updating teaching content and methods. In future research, more development directions can be explored by combining on-site investigation and case studies.

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