

“Peer Mediation” Mechanism and Practice

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Abstract: Faced with the current situation of students' conflicts and campus bullying, this paper explains the mechanism of “peer mediation” and its practice in detail from the perspective of background, strategy, implementation process and effect. Through the development of “peer mediation”, students' conflicts and disputes can be solved at the very beginning, which can effectively avoid the occurrence of more intense conflicts and bullying. Participants can learn how to understand and how to communicate with each other; the whole class will become more harmonious and the school safety management will become easier. Through a series of training and practice to solve problems such as conflicts among students, “mediators” can acquire certain psychological knowledge and communication skills, exercise their ability to solve problems, and cultivate their sense of social participation and service.

1. Introduction

In recent years, bullying, violence and other incidents frequently occur in schools. Search “bullying on campus” in Baidu, we can get more than 18 million pieces of content. Moreover, in the daily life of campus, minor problems such as students' conflicts and contradictions are even more numerous. It can be seen that the safety of our campus and students has become an unavoidable and urgent problem.

2. Background of Peer Mediation

2.1 The Main Role is Not Obvious

According to the learning theory of humanism, learning should be student-centered. Teachers need to develop students' self-guidance ability, and emphasize learning from doing. Students are also the main body of students' contradiction and conflict. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a mechanism to solve these contradictions and let students play the main role.

2.2 Students Lack Knowledge and Skills to Solve Conflicts

Middle school students, according to Erik H Erikson's Theory of Personality Development ^[1], are in the development crisis of “identity and role confusion”. There are not psychologically mature; they are concerned about face-saving, and easy to impulse. There is great peer pressure for them, but they do not have enough skills to deal with interpersonal relations. They do not have enough self-development abilities, such as solutions to solve problems and the skills to deal with disputes and others. They lack skills which can solve disputes between people in modern society ^[2]. As a result, many conflicts between students and their classmates cannot be solved in time and effectively.

2.3 Learning from Excellent Experiences of Foreign Schools

Peer mediation is highly praised and widely promoted in the United States, Britain and other countries. “Peer mediation” focuses on prevention and discovery, and attaches importance to the growth of both the mediator and the mediated ^[3]. In fact, when there is a conflict among students, the students know the situation clearly. Other students can really help the party being bullied. The

early mediation or negotiation can easily solve the problem and prevent the escalation of tensions. As a result, many foreign media reported the mechanism many times, and many writers even wrote monographs about “peer mediation”, such as Cremin Hilary's Peer Mediation.

3. “Peer Mediation” Mechanism

The word “mechanism” originated from Greek, referring to the construction and working principle of machines. As far as peer mediation is concerned, it consists of two parts: composition mechanism and operation mechanism.

3.1 The Composition Mechanism

The components of “peer mediation” mechanism include, “peer mediators”, mediation objects, mediation trainers and the mediation room.

3.2 The Operation Mechanism

The operation mechanism of “peer mediation” has seven links.

First, publicity: the content is questionnaire, class meeting, posters and other ways; the purpose is to promote “peer mediation”, so that parents and students can understand and get their approval and support.

Second, selection: the content is to establish standards and strict procedures, and select quasi “peer mediators”. The aim is to cultivate the most important implementers.

Third, training: the content is to carry out training on psychological knowledge, communication skills, mediation information collection, mediation meeting organization, learning mediation manual, community mediation observation, simulation mediation and other subjects; the purpose is to train “peer mediators” to prepare for “peer mediation”.

Fourth, mediation: the content is to obtain information, understand the situation, formulate mediation strategies, hold mediation meetings, make records, and track the effect. The purpose is to make every effort to make the mediation parties reach understanding and solve problems.

Fifth, summary and reflection: the content is the summary and reflection of mediation cases and training strategies by “mediators” and trainers; the purpose is to promote the continuous growth of “mediators” and trainers.

Sixth, evaluation: the content is to evaluate and commend “mediators”, trainers or classes; the purpose is to improve the enthusiasm of “mediators” and trainers and promote the participation of all classes.

Seventh, report: the content is to report the events beyond the mediation scope and many mediation failures to the head teacher or the school authority and other relevant departments in a timely manner; the purpose is to understand the shortcomings of the mechanism and seek higher-level problem-solving methods.

4. Practice of the “Peer Mediation” Mechanism

Now take the practice of peer mediation in Jianyang Middle School of Sichuan Province as an example to show the process of peer mediation.

4.1 Promotion of “Peer Mediators”

“Peer mediation” is a relatively new thing in China; students and parents have hardly heard of it. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out some publicity.

4.1.1 Questionnaire Survey of Students

Through the questionnaire survey on conflicts and resolution among students, teachers can understand common contradictions and conflicts among students, whether students can solve these problems by themselves, how they solve them, whether the situation will get worse, and whether they know the peer mediation.

4.1.2 Questionnaire Survey of Parents

Through the investigation of parents, teachers can understand parents' views on conflicts among students in detail, know how parents usually educate and help their children to solve conflicts among students, and at the same time, they can introduce “peer mediation” to parents.

4.1.3 Publicize “Peer Mediation” on Campus and in Class

Teachers, usually head teachers, publicize and explain the advantages of “peer mediation” and being “peer mediator” through class meeting, and advertise the program to students through campus radio or posters of “peer mediation”.

4.2 Selection of “Peer Mediators”

“Peer mediators” can be self-recommended, selected by students or appointed by teachers. Because this is still a new thing in our campus, students may not understand it very well. They need teachers' participation, as well as the publicity and popularization.

4.2.1 Criteria for “Peer Mediators”

According to theoretical and literature study, investigation reports of parents and students, the cognition of head teachers to “peer mediators” and the practice for a period of time, the selection criteria of “peer mediators” are determined. They should be warm-hearted, have enthusiasm, patience, care and compassion; they need to have strong interests in psychological knowledge and be willing to accept new knowledge. They should be sincere, friendly and good at listening and observation, and have a certain appeal among students; they need to have good moral character and sense of responsibility, and no violation of discipline. They should have good self-awareness and good psychological quality, respect others and other people's privacy, have relevant experience in organizing group activities, as well as good organization and coordination ability.

4.2.2 Considerations in Selecting “Peer Mediators”

The selection should be open, extensive and publicized. Peer mediators can be recommended by others, self-recommendation or selected through other ways. We need to select students who have leadership and can serve the public.

Each class should organize selection, recommend 2-3 students to the grade, and form a “mediator” team.

The selection of peer mediators should take into account the proportion of boys and girls, class levels and other factors, and try to realize at least one mediator in each class.

For the students who have lost the election, teachers should use appropriate language to give timely comfort and explanation, so as to avoid hurting their feelings.

4.2.3 “Peer Mediators” Selection Process

Publicity - class registration / recommendation - interview - publication list.

4.3 Cultivation of “Peer Mediators”

“Peer mediators” must undergo necessary training in order to carry out “mediation” in class.

4.3.1 Training of “Peer Mediation”

First, through learning the theory of peer mediation, we know that peer mediation is a structured process initiated by a neutral third party among peers, which provides an opportunity for students who are experiencing problems, quarrels and conflicts to achieve mutually satisfactory results.

Second, the purpose of “peer mediation” is to help students solve problems and conflicts, to make up for each other again, and help teachers find some more serious campus bullying or violence at the beginning.

Third, the scope of learning “peer mediation” includes, improper use of words or swearing, tense relationship, rumour or gossip, cheating or stealing, damaging public property or other people's property, classroom or extracurricular disputes, primary bullying, beating, fighting and others. Of

course, there are some situations that are not applicable to “peer mediation”, such as sexual assault, suicide, drug abuse, knife possession and other criminal acts, which needs to be reported to teachers or schools.

Fourth, “Peer mediators” should be gradually familiar with the procedures of “peer mediation”.

Step one is getting information. “Peer mediators” should learn about students who are experiencing problems, quarrels and conflicts, as well as their personalities, hobbies, families and learning situation through themselves or other students.

Step two is to communicate separately. In order to carry out mediation smoothly, “peer mediators” should communicate with each party separately in special mediation rooms or public but private places on campus to understand the situation and their willingness to mediate.

Step three is to carry out mediation. With the consent of parties concerned, both parties shall be organized to mediate in the mediation room. Each party states his own story and feelings. “Peer mediators” help to sort out the context of things and provide some psychological comfort and solutions. Then the two sides put forward their own solutions. In this process, “peer mediators” guide and provide solutions in a timely manner.

Step four is bringing reconciliation. After the communication of both parties and the mediation of “peer mediators”, both parties sign the settlement agreement and sign for approval. Finally, they shake hands and make up.

Step five, “peer mediators” follow up and observe the mediation effect, make mediation records and make return visits in time. If mediation fails, they need to continue to communicate, repeat above steps or report to the teacher.

4.3.2 Coach “Peer Mediators” in Interpersonal Communication Skills

The peer mediators should be provided with interpersonal communication skills from the trainer, so that they can understand the best way to communicate, and learn certain communication skills, include listening, smiling, asking questions, empathizing, avoiding arguments and criticizing others, answering questions simply, expressing things clearly, repeating key points, and making their views clear. They should try to do their best to get the response from the other party. If they find that the other party has objections, mediators should ask for his opinions.

4.3.3 Develop Leadership and Problem-Solving Skills of “Peer Mediators”

The mediation trainer shall carry out training and lectures for students, cultivate the ability of “peer mediators” to organize meetings and control the pace, and provide reference methods for “peer mediators” to solve common students' conflicts and quarrels. Before and after mediation, teachers should timely follow up and help “peer mediators”; “peer mediators” should also think about, consult and discuss with each other.

4.4 Evaluation Index of “Peer Mediation”

“Peer mediation” mainly includes the cultivation of “mediators” and the practice of “peer mediation”. The value judgment of the whole process and results of the training and practice of “peer mediation” is an important content of the training and practice mechanism of “peer mediation”, an important way for the growth of “mediators”, a main method to test the practice effect of “peer mediation”, and an important link to improve the training strategy and practice effect.

Evaluation indexes of “peer mediation” include: curriculum setting, practice process, safeguard mechanism and evaluation method. There are 16 secondary indicators of mediator training, mediation knowledge and procedure, mediation observation activity, necessary mediation skills, mediation investigation and publicity, mediator selection, mediation information acquisition, mediation activity implementation, mediation effect, system guarantee, teacher guarantee, safety guarantee, self-evaluation and external evaluation.

5. Effect of “Peer Mediation”

5.1 Development and Quality Improvement of Students

Since 2015, 17 students have participated in the practice of “peer mediation”. In the whole training and practice process, they have increased their knowledge, improve their ability and quality, and found a peaceful solution^[4] to solve conflicts among students.

5.1.1 Promotion of Basic Cultural Literacy

“Peer mediation” comes from some secondary schools in the United States. Through this mechanism, students know that in cultural knowledge, they should learn from the essence of excellent Chinese and foreign cultures and use the achievements of human intelligence to solve practical problems.

5.1.2 Improvement of Independent Development Quality

Through special training of interpersonal communication, problem-solving and conference organization, students who participate in the practice of “peer mediation” have learned how to better communicate with others, how to deal with disputes, how to make the relationship between students more harmonious, how to improve the class, how to become more self-discipline and tolerant, and how to solve problems and disputes with good ability and leadership. The knowledge can produce great effect on students' self-development, recognition and development of self-worth, improve students' self-study and self-development ability and promote them to live a healthy life.

5.1.3 Improvement of Social Participation Literacy

“Mediators” participate in the maintenance of campus harmony and safety, and actively help students to solve conflicts, which enhances their awareness of social responsibility and voluntary service. In the process of mediation, their innovative spirit and practical abilities are improved.

5.2 Teachers' Development and Improvement

Through the practice of “peer mediation”, teachers have acquired practical knowledge, improved the level of moral education, responded to the call of the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, responded to the concern of the society and parents for campus safety, and formed a lifelong learning concept of “learning as soon as the practice needs”. At the same time, they found a way to resolve campus conflicts (even violence) from the very beginning. It explains the teachers' patriotism and affection for education.

6. Conclusion

Through the “peer mediation”, conflicts and disputes among students can be solved at the very beginning. Relevant students and “mediators” can learn how to understand and communicate with each other, which is conducive to build the harmonious and safety school environment.

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