

The Balancing Strategies of Collective Spirit and Individuality Development of Primary School Students in Class Management

Yanfang Xiong

Wuhan Research Institute of Jiangnan University, Wuhan 430056, Hubei, China

Email: 168142783@qq.com

Keywords: Class Management; Primary School Students; Collective Spirit; Individuality Development; Balancing Strategy

Abstract: Class management, as the core field of primary school education, faces the inherent tension between cultivating collective spirit and promoting individuality development. The traditional management model often falls into the dilemma of "emphasizing discipline while suppressing individuality" or "advocating freedom while losing order", which restricts the all-round development of primary school students. Based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory and Dewey's progressive education theory, this study adopts the methods of literature review, case study and questionnaire survey to explore the balancing path of collective spirit cultivation and individuality development in primary school class management. The research finds that the imbalance between collective spirit and individuality in current class management is manifested in three aspects: the alienation of collective goals, the lack of individual participation channels, and the one-sidedness of evaluation criteria. To solve these problems, this study proposes a "three-dimensional balanced strategy system" including environmental support, process guidance and evaluation guarantee, and verifies the effectiveness of the strategy through specific case analysis. The research shows that the organic integration of discipline and empowerment can not only shape a positive class collective, but also stimulate the individual potential of students, thus realizing the educational goal of "Lide Shuren".

1. Introduction

Primary school is a critical period for the formation of students' values, personality traits and social adaptability. Class, as the basic unit of primary school education, is not only a place for knowledge teaching, but also a field for students to participate in collective life and develop individual characteristics. Collective spirit, as a kind of group consciousness that condenses the strength of the class, is the guarantee for the orderly operation of the class; while individuality development is the core requirement of quality education and the inherent need for students' personalized growth. However, in the practice of class management, there is often a contradictory relationship between the two: some class teachers overly emphasize the unity and order of the

collective, and use unified standards to restrain students' individual behaviors, resulting in students' lack of initiative and creativity; other class teachers blindly cater to students' individual needs, ignoring the construction of collective norms, leading to the disorder of class order and the weakening of collective cohesion. This kind of imbalance not only affects the quality of class management, but also hinders the comprehensive and healthy development of primary school students.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory points out that human needs are divided into five levels: physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, respect needs and self-actualization needs [1]. For primary school students, the class collective is an important place to meet their social needs. The sense of belonging brought by the collective meets their love and belonging needs; the recognition and respect from the collective and classmates meet their respect needs; and the space provided by the collective for individual display and development helps them move towards self-actualization. This theory shows that the cultivation of collective spirit and the development of individuality are not contradictory. A good class collective should not only satisfy students' collective belonging, but also provide conditions for students' individual needs. Class management should take students' needs as the starting point, through reasonable discipline to create a safe and orderly collective environment, and through effective empowerment to meet students' individual development needs, so as to promote the overall improvement of students' needs.

Dewey put forward the educational concept of "education is life, school is society", emphasizing that education should be integrated with students' real life, and students should be placed in the center of education [2]. He believes that the class collective is a "small society", and students' participation in collective management is an important part of their socialization. In this process, students not only learn to abide by collective norms, but also develop their own problem-solving abilities and creative thinking. Dewey's theory emphasizes the importance of student autonomy. He opposes the traditional rigid management model that regards students as passive objects, and advocates that class management should give students sufficient autonomy, so that students can develop their individuality while participating in collective construction. This provides a theoretical basis for the balance between collective spirit and individuality development in class management: collective construction needs the participation of each student, and individual development is also realized in the process of collective participation.

Foreign research on class management and the relationship between collective and individual started earlier. Durkheim, the founder of sociology, believed that the core of education is to cultivate students' "collective consciousness", and class management should take the inheritance of collective values as the main task. However, with the rise of humanistic psychology, Rogers put forward the "student-centered" teaching theory, emphasizing that class management should respect students' individual differences and pay attention to the emotional needs of students. In recent years, foreign scholars have paid more attention to the interactive relationship between collective and individual. For example, Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development" theory points out that the collective can provide support for individual development, and individual development can also promote the progress of the collective [3]. Some foreign primary school class management models, such as the "positive behavior support model" and "student autonomy management model", all reflect the concept of balancing collective norms and individual needs [4, 5].

Domestic research on this issue is closely combined with the background of curriculum reform. Many scholars have pointed out the problems existing in current class management. For example, Li (2020) found in his research that many primary school teachers still adopt the "authoritative management" model, which restricts students' individuality development [6]. Zhang (2021) believes that the lack of collective participation channels for students is an important reason for the weakening of students' collective sense and the suppression of individuality [7]. In terms of solving

strategies, Wang (2022) proposed to construct a "democratic class management system" to realize the co-governance of teachers and students [8]; Zhao (2023) put forward the "differentiated management strategy" according to students' individual differences, and realized the balance between collective and individual in the management process [9].

Both domestic and foreign studies have recognized the importance of balancing collective spirit and individuality development in class management, and have put forward some valuable strategies. However, most of the existing studies are either focused on collective construction or individual development, and the research on the organic integration of the two is not in-depth enough. Especially the research on the combination of discipline and empowerment to realize the balance is relatively scarce. This study will focus on this gap and explore a more systematic and operable balancing strategy. It takes primary school class management as the research object, focuses on the balance between collective spirit and individuality development, and explores the practical strategies of discipline and empowerment. On the one hand, it enriches the theoretical system of primary school class management, and on the other hand, it provides practical guidance for primary school class teachers, which has important theoretical and practical significance.

2. Current Situation and Dilemma of Balancing Collective Spirit and Individuality Development in Primary School Class Management

In order to understand the current situation of balancing collective spirit and individuality development in primary school class management, this study conducted a questionnaire survey and case interview. The results can be seen in Figure 1. In many primary schools, the collective goals of the class are often formulated by the class teacher alone, and the content is mostly focused on "obeying discipline", "winning honors for the class" and other aspects, ignoring the individual needs of students. For example, in the survey, 65% of the students said that the class rules are "made by the teacher, and we just need to abide by them"; 70% of the students said that when their personal interests conflict with the class collective activities, they must "give up personal interests to meet the collective needs". This kind of "collectivism" with alienated goals makes the collective become a "tool" to restrain individuals. Students cannot feel the care and respect from the collective, and their enthusiasm for participating in collective activities is gradually reduced. At the same time, the suppression of individual needs also makes students lose their personality and creativity. Some students said that "in order not to be criticized by the teacher, I dare not express my own ideas, and can only follow the crowd".

The construction of collective spirit requires the active participation of each student, and the development of individuality also needs to be realized through participation in collective affairs. However, the survey found that students' participation in class management is seriously insufficient. In terms of class management participation, 80% of the students said that they "never participated in the formulation of class rules"; 75% of the students said that the class cadre selection is "decided by the teacher". Students are in a passive position in class management, and they can only accept the management of teachers and class cadres passively. This kind of passive obedience not only makes the collective lose the vitality brought by individual participation, but also makes students' individuality unable to be displayed in the collective. A class teacher interviewed said: "I am too busy with daily teaching, so I can only manage the class by myself. I don't have time to listen to every student's opinion." This kind of "teacher-centered" management model makes students' individual voices unable to be heard, and the balance between collective and individual naturally cannot be realized.

Evaluation is an important link in class management, which has a guiding role in students' behavior. The survey found that the evaluation criteria in current primary school class management

are relatively one-sided, mostly based on "obedience to discipline" and "academic performance" as the core, ignoring students' individual strengths and personality characteristics. For example, in the evaluation of "excellent students", 90% of the classes take academic performance as the primary indicator, and students with good performance in art, sports and other aspects are often ignored. This kind of unified evaluation standard makes students tend to pursue "conformity" in order to obtain good evaluations, and their individual characteristics are gradually erased. At the same time, the one-sided evaluation also makes students' understanding of the collective stay in "obeying the rules", and cannot truly form a sense of identity and belonging to the collective.

Primary School Class Management Balance Survey Results

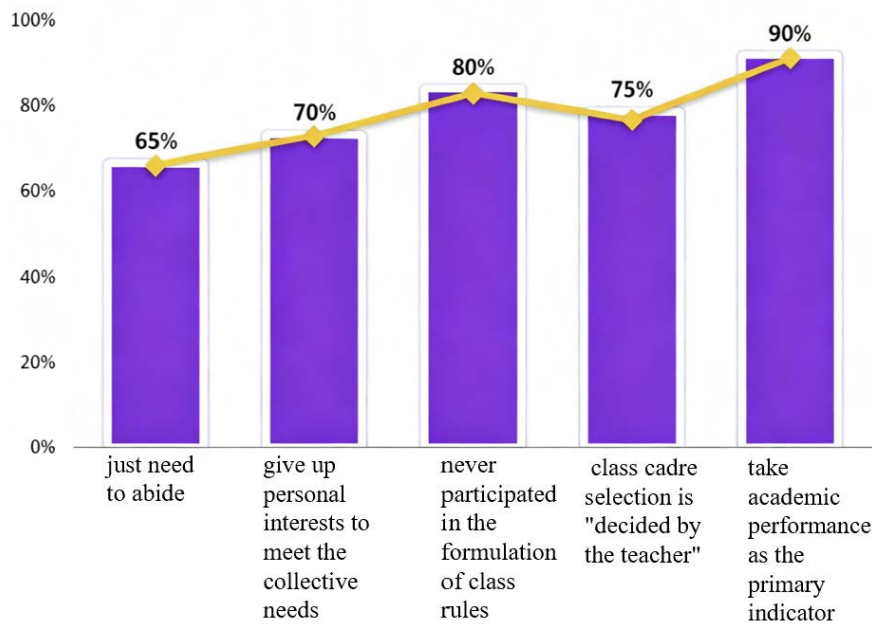


Figure 1. Primary School Class Management Balance Survey Results

3. The Three-Dimensional Balanced Strategy System of Discipline and Empowerment

Based on the above research, this study constructs a "three-dimensional balanced strategy system" of discipline and empowerment, including environmental support, process guidance and evaluation guarantee. This system takes "student development" as the core, takes discipline as the boundary, and takes empowerment as the driving force, and realizes the organic integration of collective spirit cultivation and individuality development through the interaction of the three dimensions. The specific content of the strategy system is shown in Figure 2.

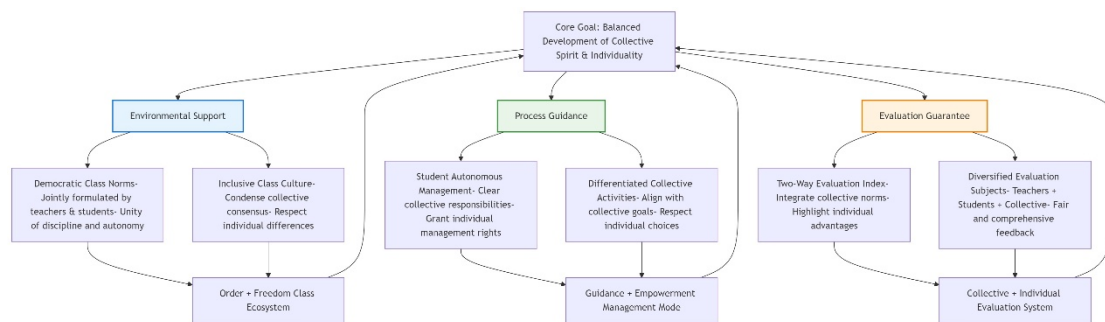


Figure 2. Schematic of the Three-Dimensional Balanced Strategy System

3.1 Environmental Support: Creating a Class Ecosystem of "Order + Freedom"

The class environment is the foundation of class management, which includes material environment and spiritual environment. A good class environment should be both orderly and free, providing a platform for the cultivation of collective spirit and the development of individuality.

Class norms are the embodiment of discipline, but also the guarantee of collective operation. To avoid the alienation of collective goals, class norms should be formulated through democratic procedures. The specific steps are: first, the class teacher puts forward the core principles of class norms (such as respect, cooperation, responsibility); then, students are divided into groups to discuss the specific content of the norms according to their own life experience and needs; finally, the whole class discusses and votes to determine the final class norms, and jointly sign the "class convention". In this process, students not only participate in the formulation of norms, but also have a deeper understanding of the meaning of the norms. The norms formulated in this way are not only binding, but also in line with the individual needs of students, realizing the unity of discipline and autonomy. For example, a class in a primary school stipulates in the class convention that "each student can choose a personal display time every week to show their hobbies and specialties", which not only maintains the order of the class, but also provides space for students' individuality development.

Class culture is the spiritual core of the class, which plays an important role in cultivating students' collective spirit. A good class culture should be inclusive, which can not only condense collective consensus, but also respect individual differences. In terms of collective consensus, class teachers can organize collective activities such as "class motto collection", "class flag design" and "collective birthday party" to enhance students' sense of belonging to the class. In terms of respecting individual differences, the class can set up "individual display areas", such as "calligraphy corner", "painting exhibition", "sports star wall" and other columns, to show the individual strengths of students. At the same time, teachers should guide students to respect each other's differences, let students understand that the richness of the collective comes from the diversity of individuals. For example, in a class, a student who is not good at learning but is good at singing is invited to lead the class to sing the class song, which not only enhances the student's self-confidence, but also makes other students realize the value of each individual in the collective.

3.2 Process Guidance: Implementing the Management Mode of "Guidance + Empowerment"

The process of class management is the process of interaction between teachers and students. To realize the balance between collective and individual, it is necessary to change the traditional "teacher management and student obedience" model, and implement the management mode of "teacher guidance and student empowerment", so that students can develop their individuality while participating in collective management.

Student autonomous management is an important way to realize empowerment. Class teachers can divide the class management affairs into multiple modules, such as study, discipline, health, culture, etc., and set up corresponding "autonomous management teams". Students can choose the management team they are interested in according to their own strengths and hobbies, and take on specific management responsibilities. For example, students who are good at communication can be responsible for the organization of collective activities; students who are careful can be responsible for the management of class health. In the process of autonomous management, the class teacher only plays the role of a guide, providing help and support for students when they encounter problems. This kind of management mode not only makes students clarify their collective responsibilities, but also gives them the right to manage, so that their individuality can be displayed in the management process. The survey shows that after implementing student autonomous

management, 85% of the students said that their sense of responsibility for the class has been significantly enhanced, and 78% of the students said that they have found their own value in the class.

Collective activities are an important carrier for cultivating collective spirit. However, traditional collective activities often adopt the "one-size-fits-all" model, which cannot meet the individual needs of students. To solve this problem, class teachers can carry out differentiated collective activities. The specific method is: determine the theme of the collective activity according to the collective goal, and then design multiple activity plans for students to choose freely. For example, in the collective activity with the theme of "love the motherland", the class can design three activity plans: "patriotic poetry recitation", "patriotic story speech" and "patriotic painting creation". Students can choose the activity form that suits them according to their own strengths. In this way, students can participate in collective activities actively, and their individuality can be displayed in the activities. At the same time, the collective goal is also realized in the process of students' active participation.

3.3 Evaluation Guarantee: Establishing a Multi-Dimensional Evaluation System of "Collective + Individual"

Evaluation has a guiding role in students' behavior. To realize the balance between collective spirit and individuality development, it is necessary to change the one-sided evaluation standard and establish a multi-dimensional evaluation system that combines collective performance and individual performance.

The evaluation index should include two aspects: collective performance and individual performance. The collective performance evaluation mainly focuses on students' compliance with collective norms, participation in collective activities, and contribution to the collective; the individual performance evaluation mainly focuses on students' individual strengths, progress and creativity. For example, in the evaluation index, "participation in collective volunteer activities" can be set as a collective performance indicator, and "independent innovation in learning methods" can be set as an individual performance indicator. The weight of the two types of indicators should be balanced to avoid the one-sidedness of the evaluation.

The traditional evaluation is mainly dominated by teachers, which is easy to be subjective. To make the evaluation fairer and more comprehensive, it is necessary to adopt a diversified evaluation subject, including teachers, students themselves, classmates and the class collective. Teacher evaluation mainly focuses on students' overall performance; self-evaluation helps students understand their own strengths and weaknesses; peer evaluation promotes mutual learning and respect among students; collective evaluation focuses on students' contribution to the collective. For example, in the "excellent student" evaluation, the final evaluation result is determined by combining 40% of teacher evaluation, 20% of self-evaluation, 20% of peer evaluation and 20% of collective evaluation. This kind of diversified evaluation not only pays attention to students' individual performance, but also pays attention to their role in the collective, which is conducive to guiding students to balance collective interests and individual needs.

4. Case Analysis: The Practice of Balancing Strategy in Class A of Primary School X

To verify the effectiveness of the "three-dimensional balanced strategy system", this study selected Class A of Grade 4 in Primary School X as the experimental class, and carried out 1-semester practice research. Class A has 42 students, and the original class management has problems such as weak collective cohesion and suppressed students' individuality.

First, the class teacher organized the whole class to discuss and formulate the "Class A Convention". During the discussion, students put forward many valuable suggestions, such as "setting up a 'creative corner' to display students' handmade works", "allowing students to choose their own seats according to their learning needs" and so on. These suggestions were adopted and incorporated into the class convention. Then, the class built a "inclusive class culture wall", which includes "collective honor area" to display the honors obtained by the class, and "individual shining point area" to display the individual strengths of each student. At the same time, the class holds a "collective sharing meeting" every month, where students share their learning experience and life insights.

The class set up 5 autonomous management teams: study team, discipline team, health team, culture team and activity team. Each team has 8-9 students, and the team leader is elected by the team members. The study team is responsible for organizing learning discussions and helping students with learning difficulties; the discipline team is responsible for supervising the implementation of the class convention; the health team is responsible for the cleaning and maintenance of the class environment; the culture team is responsible for the design and update of the class culture wall; the activity team is responsible for the organization of collective activities. The class teacher regularly holds a "management work meeting" to listen to the work report of each team and provide guidance. In terms of collective activities, the class carried out activities such as "class talent show", "environmental protection public welfare activity" and "reading sharing meeting", and each activity designed multiple forms for students to choose.

The class established a multi-dimensional evaluation system combining collective and individual. The evaluation indicators include collective contribution (30%), individual performance (30%), peer evaluation (20%) and teacher evaluation (20%). Collective contribution mainly evaluates students' participation in collective activities and management work; individual performance mainly evaluates students' academic progress, individual strengths and creativity; peer evaluation and teacher evaluation focus on students' daily behavior and moral performance. At the end of each month, the class carries out the "Star of the Month" selection activity, including "Collective Contribution Star", "Individual Progress Star", "Creative Star" and other awards.

After 1 semester of practice, great changes have taken place in Class A. In terms of collective spirit, the class cohesion has been significantly enhanced. The number of students actively participating in collective activities has increased from 45% to 90%, and the class has won the title of "Excellent Class Collective" in the school's sports meeting. In terms of individuality development, more and more students begin to show their own strengths. 12 students have won awards in school-level art, sports and other competitions, and the number of students who dare to express their own ideas in class has increased from 30% to 80%. The questionnaire survey shows that 92% of the students are satisfied with the current class management, and 88% of the students believe that they have made progress in both collective sense and individuality development. The case shows that the "three-dimensional balanced strategy system" of discipline and empowerment can effectively solve the imbalance between collective spirit and individuality development in class management, and promote the all-round development of students.

The cyclical mechanism of the balanced development of collective spirit and individuality in Class A is shown in Table 1. Democratic norms and inclusive culture provide a good environment for students' development; autonomous management and differentiated activities promote students' participation in collective construction and individuality display; multi-dimensional evaluation provides guidance and motivation for students' development; the progress of students further promotes the optimization of class environment and management mode, forming a virtuous circle.

Table 1: Outcomes of the "Three-Dimensional Balanced Strategy System" in Class A (Pre- vs. Post-Practice)

Dimension	Metric	Pre-practice	Post-practice
Collective Spirit	Active participation in collective activities	45%	90%
Individuality Development	Students winning school-level competition awards	0	12
	Students daring to express own ideas in class	30%	80%
Class Management Effect	Student satisfaction with class management	62%	92%
	Students reporting progress in both collective & individual development	71%	88%

5. Conclusion

Balancing collective spirit and individual development is essential in primary school class management, yet current practices often suffer from alienated collective goals, limited participation channels, and one-sided evaluations. Guided by Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Dewey's progressive education theory, this study proposes a three-dimensional strategy system—incorporating environmental support, procedural guidance, and evaluative safeguards. Practical implementation in Class A of Primary School X demonstrates that this approach successfully integrates discipline with empowerment, strengthening both collective cohesion and students' individual growth. The findings emphasize that collective and individual development are not a trade-off but mutually reinforcing elements.

To achieve this balance, homeroom teachers must adopt student-centered approaches and develop skills in democratic discussion, autonomous student guidance, and differentiated activity design. Schools should empower teachers with greater autonomy, establish incentive mechanisms, and foster an inclusive campus culture. Additionally, parents play a critical role by supporting collective activities and respecting individual interests. Strengthened home-school collaboration through parent meetings and communication can further align efforts to nurture well-rounded student development.

References

- [1] Maslow, A. H. A theory of human motivation [J]. *Psychological Review*, 1943, 50(4): 370-396.
- [2] Dewey, J. *Democracy and education* [M]. Free Press, 2001.
- [3] Vygotsky, L. S. *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes* [M]. Harvard University Press, 1978.
- [4] Rogers, C. R. *Freedom to learn for the 80's* [M]. Merrill, 1969.
- [5] Durkheim, E. *Education and sociology* [M]. Free Press, 1956.
- [6] Li. M. The dilemma and countermeasures of collective spirit cultivation in primary school class management [J]. *Primary School Education*, 2020, (8): 45-47.
- [7] Zhang. H. Research on the path of individuality development of primary school students in class management [J]. *Journal of Educational Research*, 2021, (12): 78-81.
- [8] Wang. Q. Construction of democratic class management system in primary schools [J]. *Modern Primary and Secondary Education*, 2022, (5): 23-26.
- [9] Zhao. Y. Differentiated management strategy in primary school class management [J]. *Education Exploration*, 2023, (3): 56-59.