

Research on difficulties and strategies of public English teaching in higher vocational colleges under the background of curriculum ideology and politics

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Abstract: Curriculum-based ideological and political education is a new measure to implement the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education. It is an important component of socialist education with Chinese characteristics for a new era and a significant direction for educational and teaching reform in colleges and universities. This paper elaborates on the significance of integrating curriculum-based ideological and political education with public English teaching in higher vocational colleges. It analyzes the current dilemmas faced by public English teaching in higher vocational colleges from the perspectives of teacher philosophy, teaching methods, teaching resources, and teaching evaluation. Furthermore, it explores the implementation strategies of curriculum-based ideological and political education in higher vocational English courses from the aspects of improving literacy, innovating teaching methods, enriching teaching resources, and improving the evaluation system. Finally, it provides some suggestions on the specific measures of the implementation strategies, aiming to provide assistance for the curriculum-based ideological and political education in English courses in higher vocational colleges.

1. Introduction

In May 2020, the Ministry of Education issued the Guiding for Ideological and Political Construction in Higher Education Courses (hereinafter referred to as the "Guiding"), emphasizing that "ideological and political education in higher education courses should be integrated into classroom teaching construction, serving as an important component of curriculum setting, syllabus approval, and lesson plan evaluation[1,2]. It should be implemented in all aspects of course objective design, syllabus revision, textbook compilation and selection, and lesson plan and courseware preparation, and run through all stages of classroom teaching, teaching seminars, experiments and practical training, and assignments and papers." As a fundamental public course, College English should not only impart foreign language knowledge and hone students' foreign language skills, but also focus on cultivating students' ideals and beliefs, and moral sentiments. College English teaching should closely adhere to the "Outline's" requirements for public courses in

fostering virtue through education, integrate new approaches, make top-level designs in curriculum settings, deeply explore ideological and political elements in teaching content, and make ideological and political elements explicit in learning evaluations[3,4].

In recent years, research and practice on ideological and political teaching reform in College English courses have gradually increased. According to searches on CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure), research on ideological and political teaching reform in vocational college public English courses began in 2019, with related research showing an upward trend in quantity and taking ideological and political education as a starting point, with diversified perspectives[5]. As the ideological and political teaching reform of public English courses in vocational colleges gradually deepens, various vocational colleges have gained considerable experience, able to abandon the outdated idea that English courses can only impart language knowledge and are of no benefit to moral cultivation[6]. And the colleges deeply recognize the positive role of College English courses in cultivating students' cross-cultural communication skills and sense of identity with Chinese culture, and focus on cultivating students' ability to tell Chinese stories to the world. At this stage, relevant research on ideological and political teaching in public English courses in domestic vocational colleges has achieved considerable results, but there is less research on the teaching models of ideological and political education in public English courses in vocational colleges. This paper explores how to effectively integrate ideological and political education into vocational college public English teaching, providing a reference for the ideological and political teaching reform of public English courses in vocational colleges.

2. Significance

2.1. Cultivating Students' Cross-Cultural Communication Skills

Under the new circumstances, implementing the teaching objective of "people-oriented" education carries significant practical importance. Therefore, in public English course teaching in higher vocational colleges, in addition to imparting basic English knowledge to students, it is even more important to emphasize cross-cultural communication training and enhance their humanistic qualities. Based on this, combined with the construction of curriculum-based ideological and political education, introducing ideological and political content into the English classroom can not only expand students' knowledge scope but also improve their cross-cultural communication skills in English. For example, in the teaching process, teachers can use various methods to present Chinese traditional culture, geographical features, human landscapes, and other content to students, allowing them to appreciate the charm of Chinese traditional culture and the spirit of the nation.

2.2. Enhancing Students' National Consciousness and National Pride

In addition to focusing on English language skills training, higher vocational colleges should place greater emphasis on cultivating students' national consciousness and national self-esteem. This is also a key focus of moral education in higher vocational colleges. During English language teaching, students should develop a deep understanding of our nation's development history, comprehend our nation's history and social environment, and be able to express their views on the modernization process of socialism with Chinese characteristics in English. Simultaneously, instructors should introduce the cultures of various countries around the world during classroom instruction and connect them with current international situations and hot topics. This will enable students to more comprehensively and objectively understand the world's political systems and economic development, thereby enhancing their national self-esteem and sense of responsibility, and better preparing them to strive for the future of the country and its people.

2.3. Guiding Students to Form Correct Values

In public English teaching in higher vocational colleges, positive examples and topics that embody socialist core values, traditional Chinese culture, international perspectives, and intercultural communication skills can be integrated. This allows students to receive value education while learning the language. Furthermore, using exemplary deeds of prominent figures, both domestic and international, and historical events as teaching cases allows for the analysis of the values they embody. Students should be encouraged to draw positive energy from these examples and establish correct views on life, the world, and values. For example, when teaching intercultural reading modules, one can start with traditional Chinese festivals, analyzing them from historical and cultural perspectives. This can increase students' enthusiasm for learning and help them form sound views on life and values.

3. Current situation and challenges

3.1. Fixed Mindsets of Teachers

Foreign language teachers are key implementers of the new concept of integrating ideological and political education into foreign language courses. However, due to limitations in their disciplinary backgrounds, some teachers lack systematic theoretical knowledge of ideological and political education, making it difficult for them to effectively identify and integrate ideological and political elements in their actual teaching. Some teachers with overseas experience may not have a deep understanding of the constantly developing and improving Socialism with Chinese Characteristics[7]. This leads to an inadequate understanding of the importance and connotation of integrating ideological and political education into courses. They may believe that foreign language disciplines are far removed from ideological and political education, making it difficult to find suitable points of integration, thus creating a sense of difficulty. English has a humanistic nature. When foreign language teachers impart language knowledge to students, they also transmit certain Western ideologies and values, which can lead to "cultural clashes." If English teachers' ideological and political literacy is not high, they may not be able to guide students to establish correct socialist core values, and may even lead students to blindly worship Western culture, failing to deeply recognize the fundamentals of China's excellent traditional culture.

3.2. Outdated Teaching Methods

In addition, some teachers' teaching methods are outdated, making it difficult to stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning English, which affects the effectiveness of English classroom teaching. In the teaching process, insufficient consideration is given to students' individual differences and learning needs. There is a lack of student-centered teaching design, which fails to effectively mobilize students' enthusiasm and creativity, affecting the cultivation of students' independent learning abilities. When organizing teaching, emphasis is placed on teachers lecturing and students passively listening, lacking interaction and practice. This "spoon-feeding" teaching method makes it difficult to stimulate students' interest and initiative in learning, leaving students in a state of passive acceptance. This kind of indoctrination cannot meet the needs of modern vocational education. The new curriculum standards for higher vocational colleges place higher demands on teachers of public English courses, namely, to transform traditional teaching methods and explore new teaching methods that are more flexible, practical, and can stimulate students' interest, thereby improving classroom efficiency. However, most higher vocational colleges still use the "lecture-based" teaching method for public English courses, with the teacher as the core,

resulting in the loss of students' subjectivity.

3.3. Insufficient Teaching Resources

In past educational systems, the relative lack of emphasis on integrating ideological and political education into foreign language courses has led to a corresponding deficiency in the development of teaching resources. First, there is a shortage of multimedia materials related to ideological and political education. Resource libraries for ideological and political education contain a wealth of textual materials, such as policy documents and theoretical discussions, but there is a scarcity of vivid and intuitive foreign language images, videos, audio, and other diverse multimedia resources. In actual teaching, these materials may struggle to capture students' attention and stimulate their interest, failing to meet diverse teaching needs. Second, traditional foreign language textbooks contain insufficient ideological and political content. Traditional foreign language textbooks lack contemporaneity; the selected materials may be outdated, and the content may be disconnected from current social realities and hot topics, making it difficult to stimulate students' reflection on contemporary Chinese social phenomena and values, which is unfavorable for integrating ideological and political education content with contemporary characteristics. These issues may make it difficult for vocational college public English teachers to skillfully integrate ideological and political elements with course teaching in actual classroom teaching, and may even lead to forced or repetitive preaching.

3.4. Imperfect Evaluation System

The public English evaluation system for vocational colleges refers to a set of assessment and evaluation mechanisms established for public English courses in higher vocational colleges. It aims to comprehensively and objectively evaluate students' progress and learning goals achieved in the English learning process, while promoting teaching quality and improving students' language application abilities[8]. Currently, there are two main problems with the public English course evaluation system in higher vocational colleges in China: first, course evaluations lack diversity and dynamism, especially in evaluation indicators, which often only regard classroom scores as a criterion for judgment, while ignoring attention to students' abilities and qualities in other areas; second, the evaluation method is simply based on grades, which mainly focuses on students' mastery of English knowledge and their exam scores, while ignoring the various abilities and qualities demonstrated by students in the learning process.

4. Implementation Strategies

4.1. Enhancing the Ideological and Political Awareness

Vocational college public English teachers are the direct practitioners of ideological and political education in foreign language courses. Their ability to accept and implement the new concept of ideological and political education and adapt to its new requirements is crucial to building a new pattern of moral education. In particular, foreign language teachers with many years of overseas study experience need to strengthen their political theory learning and enhance their own ideological and political awareness. Only in this way can they infect students with their own noble character and correct political stance, effectively explore the cultural connotations carried by the language, stimulate students' patriotism and cultural confidence, and thus influence students' critical thinking and behavioral habits. Foreign language teachers should also actively participate in ideological and political education training, seminars, and academic lectures organized by the

college, exchange experiences with colleagues, learn from successful cases and teaching methods, and deeply explore the integration path of foreign language courses and ideological and political education, so as to improve their research ability and practical level. In addition, foreign language teachers can conduct extensive teaching and research activities with professional teachers of ideological and political courses through interdisciplinary cooperation, such as mutual class observation, learning the methods and strategies of ideological and political teachers in explaining ideological and political content, and conducting after-class communication and feedback.

4.2. Innovating Teaching Methods

In traditional vocational college public English teaching, teachers mostly adopt a "spoon-feeding" teaching method, focusing only on imparting professional knowledge and skills to students, while ignoring ideological education, which is not conducive to the all-round development of vocational college students. From the perspective of ideological and political education, vocational college public English teachers should innovate teaching methods and actively use various teaching means and methods to stimulate students' interest in learning. For example, when teaching new unit content, teachers can use multimedia to display pictures, video materials, and other resources related to the unit theme to create a context and allow students to learn in a real-world scenario. This can not only liven up the classroom atmosphere but also allow students to have a deeper understanding of the theme content. Teachers can also stimulate students' interest in learning English through questioning and group discussions, enabling them to learn English knowledge in a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere.

4.3. Enriching Teaching Resources

In practical teaching, foreign language teachers can enrich ideological and political education resources in foreign language courses by focusing on setting teaching objectives and optimizing teaching content. The objective setting for ideological and political education in foreign language courses should consider both explicit and implicit levels. In vocational English teaching syllabi and course design, teachers should clearly articulate specific teaching objectives, which should include ideological and political content, such as cultivating students' cultural confidence, patriotism, and international perspective, and present them in a clear and measurable manner. Simultaneously, explicit objectives should be broken down into specific teaching tasks and knowledge points, ensuring that teaching activities have a clear ideological and political education direction and focus. Teachers should fully explore the ideological and political elements contained in the teaching content, grasping the moral education connotation and direction of ideological and political education in courses. During the teaching process, teachers should reasonably optimize the teaching content, so that ideological and political elements are integrated subtly and imperceptibly. For example, in the lesson preparation stage, teachers can select foreign language film or television clips with ideological and political education significance as an introduction, play them in class, and organize students to conduct group practice activities, such as English oral discussions and analyses, guiding them to think about the ideological and political concepts conveyed therein, and naturally transition these concepts to the unit theme scope of professional courses, before proceeding to the next step of knowledge and skill learning. In addition, teachers can use network technology to create ideological and political cases including pictures, charts, audio, and other elements, consciously integrating excellent traditional Chinese culture and local characteristic culture, subtly integrating ideological and political elements into the teaching content, and enhancing the attractiveness and appeal of teaching.

4.4. Improving the Evaluation System

Under the concept of ideological and political education in courses, public English teaching in vocational colleges needs to construct a scientific and reasonable evaluation system, so that students can continuously improve themselves and achieve self-perfection in the evaluation process. Specific evaluation methods include: classroom quizzes, group cooperative learning, English speeches, English debates, etc., through which students' comprehensive abilities can be comprehensively assessed. In addition, a comprehensive quality assessment of students is also needed, which can combine their usual classroom performance and final exam scores for comprehensive evaluation, so as to more comprehensively understand students' achievements in English learning. At the same time, an ideological and political education teaching evaluation system can also be established to conduct questionnaire surveys on teachers' teaching content and teaching abilities, and to supervise teachers to improve their teaching abilities through students' evaluations and feedback, thereby promoting the improvement of the quality and level of public English teaching.

5. Conclusion

Implementing curriculum-based ideological and political education (Ideological and Political Education in Curriculum, or "Ideological and Political Education") in vocational college public English courses is a requirement of the times and a necessity for cultivating high-quality, skilled talents. However, current vocational college public English teaching faces numerous practical difficulties that affect the effectiveness of implementing Ideological and Political Education in vocational college public English teaching. Therefore, it is necessary to accelerate the reform of English teaching in higher vocational colleges by optimizing teaching content, innovating teaching methods, and improving assessment mechanisms. This will ensure the enhancement of students' practical English application skills while simultaneously improving their ideological and political awareness, further strengthening the teaching objective of fostering morality and cultivating people. The ultimate goal is to truly achieve the organic integration of vocational college public English and Ideological and Political Education, cultivate high-quality talents with good English language skills, profound ideological and political literacy, and strong professional abilities, and make greater contributions to cultivating socialist builders and successors with both moral integrity and professional competence.

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