

Integrating Professional Ethics Education into English Teaching: A Narrative Study of Curriculum Planning and Instructional Practice

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Abstract: This study described the manner and process in which a faculty at the time of current study without philosophical expertise taught professional ethics offered by her Department of Applied Foreign Languages. The participants were undergraduate junior students majoring in Applied Foreign Languages. Qualitative data were collected from questionnaires, survey, individual interviews, and the researcher's teaching reflection. In this study the researcher primarily applied constructivist learning theory as the theoretical framework, bringing students varied learning access and opportunity. The results show that integrating curriculum planning and multiple both teaching and assessments methods not only develop students' understanding of professional ethics, but also increase students' competence of ethical judgment and ethical reasoning, thereby the students achieve effectively deep learning. The results also indicate that developing a holistic curriculum and instructional design significantly enhances students' professional ethics learning. Additionally, exposing students to diverse ethical discussions and readings improves their ethical sensitivity—a critical component for fostering self-reflection and change.

1. Introduction

I was appointed to teach the 'Professional Ethics' course for the first time in my career. When I received this teaching assignment, my first reaction was: "How can the professional ethics course be offered in the Department of Applied Foreign Languages?" The following reactions were "What is professional ethics? "Can professional ethics be taught?" "What students should understand by the time they complete the course?" And, How to teach?" Because my study field is curriculum and instruction in English teaching, and I am not professional in philosophy and ethicist, possessing philosophical background. Thus, the purpose of this study was to deliberately integrate professional ethics education into an English course. Using an action research approach, the study employed this course as the experimental project and the students enrolled in it as research participants. The aim was to investigate the incorporation of professional ethics education into the curriculum of the Department of Applied Foreign Languages. This study adopted constructivist learning theory as its theoretical framework, guiding the curriculum planning and instructional design. The focus was on examining the students' learning processes and outcomes in this context.

2. Research Method

This study used qualitative approach. The course was divided into two parts, one was curriculum planning. The other was instructional design and practice. During the course progression, I modified the curriculum content and instructional methods at any time based on the student's reaction and feedback, so this study also had the meaning of an action research.

2.1 Participants

The participants in this study were undergraduate junior students in the Department of Foreign Languages at a private university in Southern Taiwan, China, who took "Professional Ethics" course for a total of 16 students (15 females, 1 male) at the time. The study was period of 18 weeks.

2.2 The Course Description

2.2.1 Curriculum Planning

Albrecht and Sack (2000) used the accounting ethics course as an example, pointing out that if the curriculum lacks themes of values, ethics, and honesty, the course will be a criticized course. They both addressed that if students do not have the fundamental of ethical philosophy in advance, but the teacher directly teach accounting ethics in the classroom, then, whether or not the students can achieve the effect of expected learning is a question worthy to be considered. Base on this point, therefore, my curriculum "professional ethics" covered topics such as moral ethics, ethics norm, values, and integrity firstly, and then plan the progress based on the course objectives and teaching units and its content.

There are three professional feature programs in the Department of Applied Foreign languages: business English, tourism, and English teaching for children. Students in this department choose what feature as their future career at their third year. They take certain core courses for each area. Because the professional ethics was required course for all three areas of students, when I planned this course, I focused on business, tourism, and English teaching professions and ethics.

2.2.2 Instructional Design, Teaching Methods and Practice

The instructional design was also divided into two parts. The first part was from the first week to the thirteenth week. In the meantime, I divided my teaching into two stages. In order to conform to my curriculum planning of learning on morality and ethics, constructing the students' basic foundation of ethics and having them acquired ethical knowledge, at the first stage, my teaching methods were lecture, group discussion, case analysis, and a mode of student self-learning. In the classrooms, I mainly taught the English articles and engaged the students' discussion activities.

The learning assessment was not the focus of this study, but I also applied Wiggins and McTighe's (2005) theory as part of my curriculum planning and instructional design to understand my students' learning outcomes. They both provided six facets of understanding to help educators understand their students' learning consequences. I chose four of them: (1) Learners can explain what they have learned (can explain); (2) The learner can use the acquired knowledge to present in a performance manner (can apply); (3) the learner has a perspective on critical ethical issues (have perspectives); (4) the learner has a self-developed basis (have self-knowledge). In addition, the mid-term exam, writing reading reflections of articles, and student self-learning assessment were also used as basis for understanding the students' learning outcomes.

2.3 Data Collection

The data collected in this study were collected using questionnaires, survey, individual interviews, and teacher reflection notes.

2.3.1 Questionnaire and Survey

I designed questionnaires and survey conducted in different time. One was at the beginning and one was at the end of the semester. The questionnaire and survey were for the whole class. All students were anonymous. The content of the questionnaire was the students' viewpoints on the curriculum content design and teaching structure, as well as their learning results. The final survey was a five-stage scale (very satisfied, satisfied, ordinary, dissatisfied, and very dissatisfied). I also added a self-evaluation for the students in the final questionnaire having themselves to evaluate their learning outcome.

2.3.2 Individual Interviews

A total of two interviews were conducted in this study. The first interview was in the week before the midterm exam (eighth week). Six students were randomly selected and interviewed. The interviews questions included the opinions on curriculum content planning and teaching practice, and the opinion of using multi-teaching method and the method of assessment how these influenced their personal learning. The second interview was the same students again happened at the end of the semester which I wanted to know these six students' learning had changed or transformed at the end of the semester, and further understood whether or not the meaning of professional ethics they had comprehended after midterm to the end of the semester.

2.3.3 Notes on the Instructor Observations and Reflection

The reflections mainly were based on my observation to the students during my teaching action, and students' feedback to me.

2.4 The Data Collection Process

The questionnaire was conducted in the sixth week of the beginning of the semester. The purpose of this phase of the questionnaire is to learn from students' feedback, students' views and opinions on curriculum planning and instructional design so as to adjust my course content, teaching methods and structure. The first interview was conducted in the eighth week. At the beginning, the six students were very cautious in answering the questions. They protected themselves and did not say the true voice. The content of their answers were also very ambiguous. Therefore, each student I spent more time to complete. In the second interview, the students responded more positively and the content was more specific. Both interviews were recorded throughout the session so as not to miss any focus.

2.5 Data Analysis

The quantitative data obtained from the survey was presented in the form of a chart. As for the qualitative data, the main parts obtained from two interviews and the questionnaire. I analyzed the data and compared the learning of the students from their beginning to the end to understand my curriculum connotation planning and teaching implementation, as well as the students' response and suggestions for improvement. After the data was encoded, I briefly illustrated by a chart. The interviews were conducted in Chinese and translated into English by me. I applied a coding process

to the transcripts written as a verbatim draft, and sent it back to the interviewed students, having them to see if there were any errors to ensure the accuracy of the transcription. After the transcripts were checked and were correct, I organized and analyzed the data; encoded and classified them based on different themes.

3. Results

After 16 weeks of instructional implementation (excluding mid-term and final exams) and data collection, the results were as follows:

Table 1 Consolidated Questionnaire Results

Question	Response Category	Count
Q1: What is the biggest help for you in this class so far?	Unhelpful	6
	Helpful for English Reading Ability	3
	Helpful for Ethics Related knowledge	4
	Helpful for English Writing	1
	No Answer	2
Q2: What is the biggest learning obstacle for you in this class so far?	No Obstacle	4
	The Ethical Terminologies	4
	Too Many Reading Articles and It's Too Hard to Do	4
	The Assignments were Too Hard	3
	No Answer	1
Q3: What portion of this course is the most helpful for you to acquire learning motivation so far?	No Portions	3
	Obtaining the Ethical Knowledge	5
	Improving English Reading Ability	2
	Making Career Planning	2
	Increasing the Capacity of Dealing with Problems	2
Q4: So far, what is the reason that cannot promote your learning motivation?	No Answer	2
	No Reason	3
	The Course is Too Tough and Deep	3
	It's Boring	5
	My English Ability	1
Q5: As a student of Department of Applied Foreign Languages taking this course, what is the most important thing you need to work on?	Too Much Readings	2
	Not Filled Out	2
	Maintaining the Current Quo	2
	Self-improvement	1
	Strengthening English	6
Q6: Do the course design, teaching arrangements, and progress meet your expectations?	Doing the Student's Duties	3
	Still Learning	1
	Not Filled Out	3
	Yes	4
	No	7
Q7: Is the course content suitable?	Others ^{<sup>†</sup>}	4
	Not Filled	1
	Suitable	5
	Unsuitable ^{<sup>‡</sup>}	8
	Others ^{<sup>§</sup>}	2
	Not Filled	1

The results of the questionnaires administered in the sixth week revealed significant student challenges. As students had no prior exposure to theory-based courses, they struggled to adjust to this curriculum's theoretical foundation. Below is a consolidated summary of all questionnaire responses (Table 1), with response counts categorized by student answers.

The eighth question was open-ended. All students were asked to write down their opinions and

suggestions about this ethics course of professions. Doing so was to help myself to re-modify my course content and teaching design. Some students answered, some students did not respond. The students' suggestions are more noteworthy:

S3: Need to provide more real-world ethic issues and cases.

S2: Hopes the instructor's teaching can be more interesting and dynamic.

S8: Hope that the instructor can use a way of final report instead of mid-term and final exams.

S4: I hope the supplementary articles can be simple and easy to read because too much information will make the students have no idea how they should start reading.

Any innovative curriculum and teaching attempts are prone to situations in which students may be unaccustomed. In particular, this new attempts, the instructional design of constructive learning and thinking training that instructor could not endure the tension relationship between she / he and her/his students. Thus, during each class teaching, I paid more attention to the students' attitudes and reactions, so that I could reflect my feasibility of the course content and teaching practice.

In a sense, teaching practice includes caring, dialogue, and reflection that constitute a cycle; and these components are interrelated and connected. Noddings (1992) stated that caring teachers are always willing to listen and respond deferentially to their students. "How to help students learn the professional ethics they are supposed to have?" This question has been constantly appearing in my mind^[1]. Therefore, when I read the students' responses of the questionnaire, it was just like my head was hit by a stick. Originally, I carefully planned course, the students not only could not accept, but also reduced their willingness to learn. Therefore, I wrote my reflection:

Perhaps, I was too eager to send the article to the students, and I thought that the students will read those articles at home. I completely ignored whether the students can digest those Chinese and English articles. Moreover, I also neglected that students receive too much reading information hence they resisted learning.

There are also students' responses said that ethics course should be easy, and just talk about cases and discuss some examples. In response to this, I adjusted the course content and teaching strategies to supplement the more current cases and real-world issues in newspaper. For example, in terms of business ethics, take the case of a new black heart oil incident as an example. In terms of ethics of tourism, a customer's credit card incident stolen by a travel agency in Hualien City was taken as a real case and discussion. All these cases were my teaching material. Students were required to analyze and judge the ethics and behaviors that the cases violates in the professional workplace based on the perspective of ethical theory they learned in the classroom.

Regarding six individual interviews, I organized the interview data, coded process to the transcripts, and then finally I divides the data into five topics, as detailed below:

(1) Students' views on the importance of learning "professional ethics"

Students' views on the importance of studying "professional ethics" were varied. Some students thought that it was not imperative to learn. They would naturally learn in the future when they enter their workplaces. Some students thought that professional ethics was not necessary to be a required course. The course could offer as elective one for those who want to study and just take it.

(2) Students' views on having the basic knowledge of "professional ethics"

The students interviewed all agreed that learning professional ethics should have basic knowledge, step by step first as an ethical reasoning tool, and then give real ethic issues, so that the students have the ability to analyze and judge the real case.

(3) Students' views on the knowledge, judge ability and behavioral attitude of "professional ethics"

After eight weeks of studying, the students believed that they had learned the knowledge of professional ethics and could judge things according to the knowledge they had learned. For example, Yu Fan said:

Before I went to this class, I would just simply think the incident of selling the used oil in the

market is not right Din-Shin Company did. I could not think further why the company shouldn't do it. But, after I attended this class, now I can clearly tell that the company's behavior had violated social corporate responsibility and professional morality.

Yi Zhen mentioned that she has learned the "benefit theory" and "objectives theory" in professional ethics. She said after eight weeks of studying, she has effectively improved her judgment ability and reasoning. She said:

At the beginning, the Prof. Lou distributed a newspaper and I didn't know how to start at all. After these eight weeks of class and study, now I know where to start cutting and commenting when I get an ethical case.

Jiahui also mentioned that taking this class has given her the ability to analyze the ethical case in the daily newspaper. For example, A fake cooking oil incident showed in the newspaper she could immediately judge that the oil trader violated the "good faith principle" in the business market.

(4) Students' views on curriculum planning and its content

Among the six students' interviews, some students thought that the curriculum planning was slightly dull and serious, and there was a drop between their expectation for the course content and learning direction. For example, Jiahui said:

I thought this class was an easy one and we just discussed cases in the classroom. Who knows we have to read articles related to ethics, listen to Dr. Lou taught ethical knowledge, and study ethical theory. It was really boring, my god.

Some students expressed their opinions of reading either Chinese or English articles was too difficult reflected by Junjie, Jiahui and Kiahui. They said that because the content of Chinese articles contains philosophical theories, it was difficult to understand. So they need to be explained by the instructor.

So, according to these response to my interviews above, I wrote my reflection in the teaching journal:

Regardless of whether the students were positive or negative about the content of my curriculum plan, I do need to make some adjustments in response to the students' voices.

Based on my reflection, after the mid-term exam (the ninth week), I re-modified the curriculum and developed a student-centered teaching method.

Table 2 Students' Perceptions of Ethics Reading Requirements

Yizheng	Very much required. This is because professional courses require additional information and supplementary.
Jiahu	Required. This because the reading articles helps me to judge ethics issues in my future workplace.
Yuying	Required. The articles helps to understand the differences between ethics and professional ethics.
Yufan	Required. The samples in the articles can deepen my impression in professional ethics learning.
Junjie	Required very much because reading can promote my thinking skills.
Kiahui	It's really required because I have to obtain the ethics knowledge from readings firstly, then I have the capacity of thinking.

(5) Students' views on the multiple teaching methods

The teaching methods in this course used declarative teaching (reading and explaining articles, slides usage, group discussions, case analysis and reasoning), computer-assisted teaching, such as power points, judgment on the case of newspaper, and role-playing game. The students' responses were varied and diverse. Generally speaking, they preferred teaching methods such as lectures, slide film teaching, case analysis, cooperative learning, group discussion and role- play.

At the end of the semester, I interviewed the original six interviewees again. In addition, I distributed questionnaires to the whole class. All the interview questions and questionnaire content surrounded the topics on my curriculum planning and the students' learning needed, the students' daily behavior changes and their improvement of English ability. I encoded the data into six themes and explains them as follows (Table 2-3).

Table 3 Students' Conception of Importance Level for Reading Articles on Ethics and Professional Ethics in This Course

Yizheng	Extremely important. Reading these articles can help me improve my analytical skills.
Jiahu	Important. It improves my critique skills.
Yuying	Very important. I can absorb the essence of the articles and related knowledge.
Yufan	Extremely important. Because reading articles enhances my understanding and professional connotation.
Junjie	Important. It increases my thinking skills.
Kiahui	Very important. It is the only way to gain knowledge and I can think through reading relevant articles.

In terms of daily life behaviors and attitudes, Yizheng, Yuying, Yufan, Junjie and Kiahui said that they have changed their attitudes and daily behavior after taking this course. Nevertheless, Jiahu said that she has not changed.

Here were the responses from six interviewed students (Table 4-5):

Table 4 Students' Views on Course Help in Adhering to Ethical Norms and Being a Quality Citizen

Yizheng	Yes. To me, It is more cautious with my Behaving in the daily life.
Jiahu	No. all are the same as before as I have been a good person already.
Yuying	Yes. It helps me pay more attention to my spoken words when I was talking to people. I also restrained my bad behavior a little.
Yufan	Yes. I thought of ethical morality to myself at the any time. Very often, I kept myself was self-disciplined and be self-aware.
Junjie	It's just okay. I keep matching myself words with deeds from time to time.
Kiahui	Yes. I am careful on my words and deeds to be good manner.

Table 5 Changes in Learning Attitude

Yizheng	Yes. After the mid-term examination, my study become more positive, and my motivation was stronger.
Jiahu	Nothing change. I have always maintained a consistently positive learning attitude.
Yuying	Yes. Before the start of the course, I don't think I need to take this course. At the end of the course, I found that there are still some concepts and knowledge that I want to learn. .
Yufan	Nothing need to change. My learning attitude has always been positive.
Junjie	It's just okay. But, I have paid more attention to the news on the newspaper, and generated more curiosity to make judgment.
Kiahui	Yes. At the beginning of the semester, I felt that I don't need to take this course. Later, I found that many ethical terminologies Introduced by the instructor, I changed my learning attitude.

Regarding the curriculum content and used teaching methods for the students' learning outcome and impact, the interviewees' responses were (Table 6):

Table 6 Students' Satisfaction with Course Content and Teaching Methods

	Course Planning on Content	The Favorite Teaching Methods
Yizheng	Acceptable, I felt that it was a good curriculum planning and instructional design.	a) Group activities. Discussion articles, reading division of labor, students often interact. b) Role-playing, situational experience deepens cognition that the curriculum becomes interesting.
Jiahu	Sure. A clearer understanding of the events that may be encountered in my future workplace.	Short play, role playing.
Yuying	Satisfied. It is a very clear curriculum planning and teaching procedure, step by step.	a) Group discussion. b) The film analyses the plot and critique the characters' behavior, gaining thoughts and mastering more relevant knowledge.
Yufan	A positive curriculum planning. In the ways of making comments the instructor used deepened me understood the importance of this course we should take it.	Watching movie and analyzing its story.
Junjie	Satisfied, I have learned many basic knowledge and judgment ability for the ethics issues	Analyzing current news event, deepened my impression through specific life situations. Performing short plays and role-playing bring a sense of accomplishment.
Kiahui	The curriculum is well-down planned. It was from shallow to deep, from basic knowledge to professional knowledge which made me learn step by step.	The short play and role play enhance me the effective learning.

In terms of improving English skills, the six students agreed that there was a great improvement (Table 7).

Table 7 Improving English Language Abilities

Yizheng	Yes, I have improved.
Jiahu	There are a lot of improvements. Knowing a lot of ethics terminologies.
Yuying	Yes. Reading speed is faster through reading, and comprehension skills have improved.
Yufan	Yes, my new vocabulary are increased a lot. My reading speed has been faster.
Junjie	My English ability has improved, and the reading speed has increased too.
Kiahui	There is a good progression on my reading comprehension.

As for the final survey to the whole class, it was a five-stage scale (very satisfied, satisfied, ordinary, dissatisfied, and very dissatisfied) were regarding the curriculum planning, curriculum content richness, and multiple methods of teaching and assessments. The results were as follows (Table 8).

Table 8 Table: Student Satisfaction Survey Results

Evaluation Dimension	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Ordinary	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Curriculum Planning	1	8	3	4	0
Curriculum Content Richness	0	9	5	2	0
Diverse Teaching Methods	1	9	3	2	1
Multiple Assessments	2	8	3	2	1

The final self-evaluation was five-stage scale (very agree, agree, ordinary, disagree, and very disagree) to all students on their learning outcome.

The results were below (Table 9).

Table 9 Student Feedback on Learning Outcomes

Evaluation Dimension	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Ordinary	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Course Content Absorption	0	7	5	4	0
Ability to Judge Right/Wrong & Express Opinions	0	10	5	1	0
Problem Solving Skills Improvement	0	10	5	1	0
Teamwork Capacity Improvement	0	12	3	1	0
Understanding Ethical Issues & Applying Professional Ethics	0	10	5	1	0
Possessing Mature Moral Cognition & Embracing Justice as Modern Citizen	1	9	3	2	1

4. Conclusion and Suggestions

This study described an integration of ethics education into professional curriculum design, transforming curriculum knowledge into an observable, measurable ability to assess student learning outcomes in the Department of Applied Foreign Languages. Applying the learning theory of constructivism as the theoretical framework, I planned the curriculum and designed the instruction with multiple methods and assessments to explore the students' learning process and learning effectiveness. From the results, this study verifies that the constructivist curriculum and instruction is a learning action of stimulating thinking and leading, emphasizing that the gain of human knowledge is actively constructed by individual, rather than through passively delivery or absorb (Osborne, 1983)^[2].

Most students in their self-evaluation at the end of semester said that the course design is substantial and practical. And, the instructional design and approaches use are effective. Although the student's learning performance cannot be 100% as expected in this study, my curriculum planning and instructional design have been approved by the students. Of course, once a course is designed, it needs to be constantly reviewed and re-modified to satisfied students' needs and expectation. These judgments are reflective inquiry, which usually create some unexpected results, the so-called reflection for action (Hyun,1992)^[3].

The teacher assesses the student's learning outcome through reflection, modifies the course content, and teaching methods based on the student's learning condition. As for the teaching methods, when teaching ethics it is advisable to use varied and dynamic teaching methods, and it is considerate the length of teaching time, the resources acquisition, the individual learning motivation, level, and the main learning style. Furthermore, enabling students to formulate the ethical rules for their future potential careers through group work is valuable so that students can achieve their learning objectives^[4].

In this study, I provided a practical model by which I integrated professional ethics into three different professional areas in English Teaching, and in the designed course. Despite this study has done as much as possible about holistic design and consideration in terms of curriculum and instruction, it might probably not entirely include the aspects of issues on course content, instructional design, teaching methods, teaching resources and teaching materials. This will be future research and further exploration^[5].

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