

Research on Innovative Talent Cultivation Mode of Public English Course in Higher Vocational Colleges from the Perspective of Intercultural Education

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Abstract: Intercultural education is one of the hot topics in the world of education today and its integration into the process of talent cultivation is an inevitable trend and of great significance. This paper conducts research on the innovative talent cultivation mode from the perspective of intercultural education, in response to the problems of traditional and undiversified mode of public English teaching and talent cultivation in domestic higher vocational colleges, and the relative lack of intercultural education. Through the analysis of the concept and meaning of intercultural education, and the current situation and problems of public English teaching, it explores the application and development of the curriculum system, practice system, and teacher development of the talent cultivation mode in the context of intercultural education. This paper finds that the integration of intercultural-related teaching contents, the application of multimedia, international exchange cooperation, as well as teachers' training and self-development, play a vital role in the process of talent cultivation and is of significantly importance to the innovation of talent cultivation mode. It helps to enrich the talent cultivation mode and improve students' interest and initiative in learning, thus enhance students' English language proficiency, broaden students and teachers' international horizons, improve their comprehensive cultural quality, and lay a solid theoretical and practical foundation for the cultivation of international and interdisciplinary talents. This paper expects a practical and forward-looking exploration on the innovation and practice of the current public English talent cultivation mode in higher vocational colleges.

Keywords: intercultural education, public English course, higher vocational education, talent cultivation mode

1. The Concept and Significance of Intercultural Education

Intercultural education, an active form of interactive education, is a new trend in international education and one of the hot topics in the world of education today. UNESCO stated that intercultural education is a response to the challenge to provide quality education for all.^[1] It

is intended for all pupils and citizens, this education is designed to promote respect for cultural diversity and mutual understanding and enrichment. The aim should be to move from an understanding of the culture of one's own people to an appreciation of the cultures of neighboring peoples and, ultimately, of world culture.^[2] According to Curriculum Criteria of English Course for Higher Vocational Education (2021), English course for higher vocational education is a basic course which is compulsory or limited optional for students of all majors, and it possesses both instrumental and humanistic characteristic. Multicultural exchange among it reflects the value of core quality. It refers to students' ability to identify, understand, and respect the world's diverse cultures, broaden their international horizon, enhance their national identity, strengthen their cultural self-confidence, and establish a sense of community for the Chinese nation and the community with a shared future for mankind in the process of English learning and application; it enables students to communicate effectively across cultures in their daily lives and in the workplace, and to spread Chinese culture in English.^[3] For higher vocational colleges, the implementation of core quality requirements contributes to the realization of intercultural education.

Therefore, integrating the concept of intercultural education into public English courses in higher vocational colleges is an inevitable trend in the development of English teaching and has great significance. Firstly, it helps to improve students' interest and initiative in learning. While learning the language, teachers appropriately integrate culture, history, art, religion, and other aspects of Western countries through various forms to enhance the interest of English to a certain extent and stimulate students' interest in learning, so as to lay a good foundation for further language learning. Secondly, it helps to improve students' English language skills. Creating a great language atmosphere for students through the infiltration of intercultural contents and setting of intercultural contexts, enables them to experience in the real linguistic environment, thus improving their intercultural communication skills, as well as essential English skills including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Moreover, it helps to

improve comprehensive cultural quality of teachers and students. The input and application of intercultural education concept are conducive to expanding students' knowledge and international horizon. Meanwhile, teachers continuously learn to strengthen their understanding of different cultures and interactions so as to help students to develop intercultural awareness, and improve the quality of teaching as well as their own cultural quality.

2. The Current Situation and Problems of Public English Teaching in Higher Vocational Colleges

In recent years, the teaching form of domestic higher education has gradually diversified and developed towards informatization; the content of teaching has also been enriched and integrated with interdisciplinary and intercultural elements. However, public English courses in higher vocational colleges still focuses on the teaching of language knowledge and skills, and the teaching method and talent training mode are traditional and undiversified, while intercultural education is relatively absent. In the process of transformation and adjustment of the teaching and talent cultivation mode, there are problems in the following aspects:

2.1. Aspect of Students

Some students from higher vocational colleges, due to their relatively weak English language foundation and varying levels of English skills, coupled with the stereotypical impression that traditional English language learning is tedious, are easily intimidated and lack interest in learning, which make it difficult to carry out English teaching effectively. At the same time, there are certain differences between Chinese and foreign cultures. Besides, students are easily influenced by their mother tongues, so their ability of intercultural understanding and expression, as well as their awareness and ability of cultural differences dealing are relatively weak, making it difficult to integrate the concept of intercultural education into the teaching process, also, there are various problems that need to be addressed reasonably.

2.2. Aspect of Teachers

On the other hand, there is a lack of diversity in the teaching mode, and teachers are likely to ignore the cultivation of student' ability of independent learning. Teachers mostly adopt an indoctrination-based teaching method, and students passively accept knowledge. In this situation, students are unable to fully experience language learning in an intercultural context, which is not only has an adverse impact on cultivating their interest in learning, but also makes them form certain stereotypes, thus affecting their intellectual development. In addition, the teaching force lacks specialized talents with practical experience and relevant work experience.

2.3. Aspect of Teaching

There are some problems in the teaching arrangement, syllabus, and curriculum resources of public English courses in higher vocational colleges. At present, English

teaching tasks in higher vocational colleges are relatively arduous, and English teaching under exam-oriented education mode focuses on tutoring for various national English level tests, lacking reasonable teaching arrangements related to intercultural education. The syllabus is relatively undiversified with conventional content, and it is not closely linked to students' career development and professional courses, lacking the cultivation of intercultural awareness. In addition, the selection of curriculum resources is limited, with the content mostly based on domestic textbooks, which are tedious and antiquated, lacking authentic materials and the application of multimedia curriculum resources. It fails to consider in depth the positive significance of promoting students' thinking, reflecting cultural differences, and other aspects.

3. Innovative Talent Cultivation Mode from the Perspective of Intercultural Education

As UNESCO emphasized in Guidelines on Intercultural Education (2006), Intercultural education cannot be just a simple 'add on' to the regular curriculum. It needs to concern the learning environment as a whole, as well as other dimensions of educational processes.^[4] A true approach to such education should not limit itself to providing supplementary content, or be confined to peripheral school activities or to certain disciplines, but should permeate all teaching and the whole educational structure.^[2] Based on this, this exploration of innovative talent cultivation mode combines theory with practical application, coupled with my own teaching and research experience. It unfolds specifically from the application and development of curriculum system, practice system, and teacher development of public English courses in higher vocational colleges.

3.1. Curriculum System

The application of innovative talent cultivation mode in terms of curriculum system is reflected in the selection of educational contents. I mainly teach College English for students majoring in Electrical Engineering and Automation, Fashion and Apparel Design. In the teaching process, I permeate the concept of intercultural education by selecting intercultural materials that highlight the practical and cultural aspects of English language and focusing on the cultural connotation of textbooks. For example, in the Culture and Tradition unit of the textbook, it discusses the reasons why the quality of diligence has always been highly valued by Chinese people and it is related to their attitudes towards life, moral ethic, and entrepreneurial ethic. At the same time, audio-visual materials on the national character of Westerners are added to enable students to understand the difference between the general national character of Chinese and Western societies, which states that Western people prefer a sense of carefree lifestyle and focus on the pursuit of life quality and spirituality. In addition, this unit also discusses the different meaning of the dragon in Chinese and Western cultures. Dragons in Western cultures have often been depicted as winged, horned,

four-legged, and capable of breathing fire, while dragons in eastern cultures are usually depicted as wingless, four-legged, serpentine creatures with above-average intelligence. By supplementing intercultural materials related to the theme of the unit, students are likely to gain a deeper understanding of the differences between Chinese and Western cultures, and inadvertently improve their intercultural observation skills.

Another application of innovative talent cultivation mode in terms of curriculum system is reflected in the strengthening of curriculum design. Appropriate cultural introduction contributes to the improvement of efficiency of intercultural teaching in the teaching process. For example, in the reading part of the "People and Place" unit, it mainly discusses about the current state of Chinatown in London. In the lead-in part, the background and content information about Chinatown are supplemented as below: (1) watch a documentary *Forever, Chinatown* (2016), about an artist Frank Wong recalling he memories of Chinatown in San Francisco by creating miniature models; (2) watch a video about how Chinese New Year is celebrated in Chinatown of Bangkok; (3) illustrate other famous Chinatowns around the world, such as Quartier chinois de Paris - the biggest Chinatown in Europe, and Yokohama Chinatown - the biggest Chinatown in Asia; (4) guide students to discuss about the reasons for the formation of Chinatown, it is related to early migration, human desire for group living, and the pursuit of belonging; (5) recommend books related to Chinatown in English and Chinese, such as *China to Chinatown - Chinese Food in the West* by J.A.G. Roberts, *Chinatowns around the World: Gilded Ghetto, Ethnopolis, and Cultural Diaspora* by Baohua Wang and Zhiming Chen (chief editor). Through these diverse introductions, students are able to gain a deeper understanding of the concept of Chinatown, which not only expands their cultural horizons, but also enhances their perception of cultural differences and syncreticity.

3.2. Practice System

The innovation of talent cultivation mode is reflected in the diversified new media teaching based on multiple platforms. At present, multimedia teaching has been popularized among higher institutions. It aims to visualize abstract professional knowledge and presents in a more vivid way, which helps to stimulate students' interest and improve their concentration in class, thus enables them to enhance communication skills and practical communication abilities.^[5] E-learning platforms have gradually become popular in recent years due to the globalization of information and restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, the College English course relies on "Unipus" - a smart teaching cloud platform, to develop digital courses that match the textbook and support both PC and mobile use. It combines online independent learning, face-to-face teaching, and mobile learning to improve learning experience and teaching effect in all aspects. In addition, well-known foreign higher institutions provide free and open access to a selection of online courses, such as Open

Yale Courses and free online classes of Coursera in cooperation with a number of foreign universities. In the process of talent cultivation, it is suggested that teachers make reasonable use of abundant online resources to assist in the realization of authentic scenarios and make up for disadvantages of traditional teaching. Therefore, students are likely to experience the atmosphere of international higher education, broaden their international horizons, and gain an immersive English learning experience.

Conducting international exchange and cooperation is also a vital way in the practice system. Various forms of international exchange and cooperation such as Sino-foreign cooperative education, study tours, student exchange programs, international forums, etc. It provides students with the opportunity to experience the intercultural atmosphere in person and blend into the environment of intercultural communication, which helps to promote students' understanding of cultural differences, respect for cultural diversity, and eventually be able to identify, understand, and respect the world's diverse cultures. For example, the Fashion and Apparel Design program of higher vocational education is held by the college where I teach in cooperation with Academy of Fine Arts and Media ACME in Milan. I am the translation assistant for the English for Fashion Design (ESP) course, which is taught in collaboration with an Italian teacher from design major and held in the smart classroom through Zoom Meetings. Except the teaching of basic English, the Italian teacher adds the content of Italian fashion brands, the world fashion industry, and others related to design fields, so that students can experience the different design, culture, and way of thinking between China and Italy in all aspects. Furthermore, an online study tour is held in this Sino-Italian program and it is in the form of webcast for Chinese students to immerse themselves into the campus life and the educational philosophy of the Italian school.

Apart from these, carrying out international student exchange and study tour programs are of great significance. Some colleges select outstanding students to study in partner institutions for a limited period of time and provide them with great opportunities to immerse in the real foreign language environment. Therefore, students are able to fully understand the local humanities, arts, customs, language cultures, moral values, etc., and experience the differences between different cultures while also improve their intercultural communication skills.^[6] The college have cooperated with higher institutions in Canada, South Africa, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and other areas to hold student exchange programs, study tours programs, as well as workshops during summer and winter vacations. Moreover, international forums and exchange activities conducted jointly by higher institutions, industry associations, and cultural institutions have a great impact on broadening students' international horizons, creating an environment for intercultural exchange, and fostering intercultural awareness.

3.3. Teacher Development

Building a highly qualified and high-level public English teaching force plays a vital role in the process of talent cultivation. Firstly, teachers are encouraged to actively participate in various types of training at home and abroad to promote professionalism, such as specialized training provided by training bases of domestic higher institutions or training related to vocational skills organized by other institutions. In particular, English training of certain professional disciplines could be added appropriately in order to stimulate teachers' initiative in acquiring new knowledge and promote their exploration of industry knowledge, thus effectively achieve professional expansion. Therefore, various training is conducive to expanding teachers' horizons, improving their teaching quality, and promoting their professional development. Secondly, collaboration and communication of teachers from different disciplines is a proven method for talent cultivation. Public English teachers are good at language teaching, and professional teachers are proficient in industry English. Both sides combine their strengths to promote the sharing of high-quality teaching force and maximize the benefits to students through communication, discussion, co-teaching, and other ways.^[7] For example, the teaching force formed by Sino-foreign cooperation is conducive to promoting interdisciplinary and interprofessional cooperation and exchange between teachers at home and abroad.

Moreover, teachers are encouraged to constantly absorb new knowledge, adhere to lifelong learning, and strive to improve their comprehensive quality. In order to achieve the current goal of cultivating international and interdisciplinary talents, except from the participation in training, teachers tend to keep continuous learning to acquire professional knowledge of various disciplines, update their teaching philosophy timely, and strive to master the English-related knowledge required by students' majors. Furthermore, teachers may improve themselves by working in enterprises. By going deeper into the enterprises of the relevant professions, teachers have a chance to deeply understand and adapt to work contents, operational connotations, and competency requirements of the corresponding positions in enterprises, which helps to improve their professional and teaching abilities, as well as is of great significance in improving comprehensive quality, strengthening school-enterprise cooperation, and optimizing in the talent cultivation mode.

4. Conclusion

This paper takes intercultural education as the background, starts from a theoretical perspective, and analyses the existing problems of students, teachers, and teaching based on the current situation of public English education in higher vocational colleges. It conducts a

theoretical study and practical exploration of the current talent cultivation mode, mainly from three aspects, curriculum system, practice system, and teacher development.

In the new era, integrating the concept of intercultural education into the process of talent cultivation is an inevitable trend and of great significance. It embodies in the appropriate increase of intercultural-related contents in the teaching content and curriculum design, and the integration into the intercultural communication environment through multimedia and international exchange cooperation, which helps teachers and students to identify, understand, and respect the world's diverse cultures. At the same time, teachers continue to improve themselves through participating in training and co-teaching, forming a highly qualified and high-level public English teaching force, which plays a vital role in the process of talent cultivation. This exploration is of significantly importance to the innovation of public English talent cultivation mode in higher vocational colleges. It helps to enrich the talent cultivation mode and improve students' interest and initiative in learning, thus enhance their English language skills, broaden international horizons, improve comprehensive cultural quality, and lay a solid theoretical and practical foundation for the cultivation of international and interdisciplinary talents.

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