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Current Status and Countermeasures of Project-based Interdisciplinary Collaborative English Teaching in Higher Vocational Colleges

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Abstract: ***With the ongoing advancement of the new liberal arts, there is a growing demand for innovative teaching models in higher education. Among these, project-based interdisciplinary collaborative English teaching in higher vocational colleges emerged as an innovative teaching model, offering new insights for teaching reform. However, numerous challenges persist in its practical application, including insufficient teacher competence, unreasonable curriculum design, and an incomplete interdisciplinary collaborative mechanism. This paper delves into these issues and proposes targeted countermeasures, such as enhancing teachers' interdisciplinary knowledge and teaching abilities, optimizing curriculum design to strengthen interdisciplinary integration, and refining interdisciplinary team building and resource-sharing mechanisms. The study aims to provide valuable references for the reform of vocational college English teaching and to promote the development of the project-based interdisciplinary collaborative education.***

Keywords: Project-Based Interdisciplinary Collaborative English Teaching, Higher Vocational Colleges, Teacher Competence, Curriculum Design, Interdisciplinary Mechanism**.**

1. Introduction

With the continuous advancement of the new liberal arts, the demand for interdisciplinary collaborative education in higher vocational colleges is growing. College English, as an important component of higher vocational education, urgently needs to innovate its teaching model to meet the demands of educational reform under the new liberal arts. Project-based interdisciplinary collaborative education, as an innovative teaching model, offers new ideas and directions for college English teaching. However, in practical applications, this model still faces many pressing issues that need to be addressed. This paper aims to explore the current status of project-based interdisciplinary collaborative English teaching in higher vocational college, analyze existing problems, and propose targeted countermeasures to provide useful references for the reform of college English teaching.

2. Current Status of Project-based Interdisciplinary Collaborative English Teaching in Higher Vocational Colleges

Before diving into the specific issues within the current status of project-based interdisciplinary collaborative English teaching, it is crucial to highlight that the effectiveness of this teaching model heavily relies on the competence of teachers. Teachers serve as the backbone of any educational initiative, and their capabilities directly influence the quality and success of the teaching outcomes. Therefore, understanding the challenges faced by teachers in this context is essential for addressing the broader issues within the system.

2.1 Insufficient Teaching Competence of Teachers

Among the various challenges faced by teachers in project-based interdisciplinary collaborative English teaching, one of the most significant is their insufficient interdisciplinary knowledge reserve. This gap directly impacts their ability to design and deliver effective project-based lessons that integrate multiple subject areas. Without a robust foundation in interdisciplinary knowledge, teachers struggle to connect different fields of study and apply them in practical teaching scenarios.

2.1.1 Insufficient Interdisciplinary Knowledge Reserve

Most English teachers in higher vocational colleges graduated from English Language and Literature programs, with a relatively narrow professional background and limited interdisciplinary knowledge. In the project-based interdisciplinary collaborative English teaching, teachers are required to integrate English teaching with knowledge from multiple disciplines such as culture, economics, management, tourism, and international trade. However, many teachers lack sufficient knowledge in other disciplines, making it difficult to effectively integrate interdisciplinary content into their teaching. For example, in projects related to cross-border e-commerce or culture and tourism, teachers may be unfamiliar with e-commerce operations or tourism product design, leading to superficial teaching content that fails to explore the intrinsic connections between interdisciplinary knowledge points.

2.1.2 Insufficient Mastery of Project-based Teaching Methods

Project-based learning is a student-centered, project-driven teaching model that requires teachers to organize, guide, and evaluate project implementation. However, many college English teachers lack training and practical experience in project-based teaching methods. Some teachers fail to scientifically and reasonably set project objectives, tasks, and evaluation standards, leading to chaotic project implementation and poor student learning outcomes. For example, some teachers fail to effectively guide students in teamwork and independent exploration during project implementation, leaving students without clear direction or tasks, ultimately causing projects to become superficial and fail to meet expected teaching goals.

2.1.3 Insufficient Practical Teaching Ability

The project-based interdisciplinary collaborative English teaching emphasizes the cultivation of students' practical abilities, requiring teachers to have rich practical teaching experience and operational skills. However, many college English teachers lack industry practice experience, making it difficult for them to combine theoretical knowledge with practical applications. For example, in cross-border e-commerce projects, teachers may be unfamiliar with platform operation processes or international logistics rules, preventing them from providing effective practical guidance to students. Additionally, some teachers lack the ability to monitor and guide practical activities, leading to unresolved issues during practice, which affects students' learning enthusiasm and practical outcomes.

2.1.4 Insufficient Ability to Integrate Teaching Resources

Project-based interdisciplinary collaborative education requires the integration of various teaching resources, including textbooks, online resources, business cases, and practice bases, to support project implementation. However, many college English teachers lack the ability to effectively utilize existing resources to provide students with diverse learning materials and practical opportunities. For example, some teachers fail to fully utilize online platforms and digital resources, limiting students' learning channels. Additionally, some teachers lack the ability to integrate resources from businesses, preventing them from incorporating actual projects, cases, and practice bases into teaching, thereby limiting students' practical experiences and learning outcomes.

2.2 Unreasonable Course Design

Course design is a core component of the project-based interdisciplinary collaborative English teaching, directly affecting the scientific, systematic, and effective nature of teaching content. However, many issues exist in the course design of project-based interdisciplinary collaborative education in higher vocational colleges, severely impacting teaching effectiveness and students' learning experiences.

2.2.1 Unscientific Project Theme Selection

Some project themes are outdated and fail to align with current social trends and industry needs. For example, some colleges still use conventional hotel English service themes despite the Belt and Road initiative and the rapid development of the digital economy. Some project themes fail to fully integrate interdisciplinary knowledge, resulting in monotonous course content that does not reflect the characteristics of interdisciplinary collaborative education. For example, some tourism English projects only cover basic English language knowledge and related vocabulary without integrating knowledge from tourism management or culture and history.

2.2.2 Insufficient Integration of Interdisciplinary Knowledge Points

In some course designs, knowledge points from different disciplines are simply pieced together without logical connections. For example, in cross-border e-commerce projects, teachers may list English grammar, e-commerce processes, and international trade rules separately, making it difficult for students to understand the connections between these knowledge points. The integration of interdisciplinary knowledge points often remains superficial, failing to deeply explore the intrinsic connections between disciplines. For example, in culture and tourism projects, teachers may only introduce basic English expressions and cultural backgrounds of tourist sites without delving into the relationship between culture and tourism or effective cross-cultural communication through English.

Some course designs fail to update interdisciplinary knowledge points in a timely manner, leading to outdated course content. For example, in the context of the rapidly developing digital economy, some courses, such as Business English, have not yet incorporated content on the application of emerging technologies like big data analysis and artificial intelligence in business, causing a disconnect between what students learn and what the society needs.

2.2.3 Unreasonable Course Structure Design

In some course designs, the steps and processes of project implementation are unclear, leading to disjointed and unsystematic teaching activities. For example, in an International Business Negotiation Project, teachers may fail to clearly outline steps such as project initiation, research, plan formulation, negotiation simulation, and result presentation, causing students to lose direction during the project and fail to effectively complete learning tasks.

Some course designs lack scientific division of course modules, leading to poorly organized and arranged teaching content. For example, some colleges divide the teaching content into project theory learning modules and project practice operation modules without adequately considering the connection and transition between them, making it difficult for students to effectively transition from theoretical learning to practical operation.

Some course designs allocate teaching time unreasonably, leading to overly long or short duration for certain teaching segments. For example, in some projects, teachers may allocate too much time to project planning while neglecting implementation and result presentation, depriving students of sufficient practice and presentation opportunities.

2.2.4 Mismatch Between Teaching Methods and Course Design

Some teachers still rely on traditional lecture-based methods in course design, ignoring the interactivity and practicality of project-based learning. For example, teachers may spend excessive time lecturing on theoretical knowledge while allocating insufficient time for group discussions, project practice, and result presentation, leading to low student participation and poor learning outcomes.

Some course designs fail to adequately guide students in autonomous learning and exploration, resulting in low student

initiative and enthusiasm during project learning. For example, in the segment of project research, teachers may fail to provide effective learning resources and guidance, leaving students at a loss during the research process and causing the research segment to become superficial.

Project-based learning emphasizes teamwork, but some course designs lack team-based learning activities, preventing students from developing teamwork skills. For example, some teachers may fail to reasonably assign group tasks and collaboration, leading to disjointed student efforts and an inability to form effective team synergy.

2.3 Incomplete Interdisciplinary Collaborative Mechanism

Interdisciplinary collaborative education requires close cooperation among teachers from different disciplines (Yang, 2024). The effective implementation of this model requires a robust collaborative mechanism, including interdisciplinary team building, resource sharing, and coordinated teaching processes. However, many higher vocational colleges still lack sufficient mechanisms for interdisciplinary collaboration, severely impacting the implementation of project-based interdisciplinary collaborative education.

2.3.1 Insufficient Interdisciplinary Team Building

The interdisciplinary teams in some colleges are predominantly composed of English teachers, lacking participation from other discipline specialists and industry mentors. This structure results in course content lacking depth and breadth, making true interdisciplinary integration difficult. For example, without the involvement of e-commerce specialists, courses may fail to cover actual operational processes and business knowledge in cross-border e-commerce.

Some colleges lack clear interdisciplinary team collaboration mechanisms, with unclear role divisions and ineffective communication channels and processes among team members. For example, during project implementation, team members may experience overlapping or omitted tasks due to a lack of coordination, affecting teaching progress and outcomes.

2.3.2 Insufficient Teaching Resource Sharing

Teaching resources from different disciplines are often scattered across various departments and teachers, lacking unified management and integration. For example, English teaching resources may be managed by the Department of Basic Education, while e-commerce teaching resources are managed by the Department of Economics and Management, with no effective sharing mechanism between them, making it difficult for teachers to access resources from other disciplines during course design and project implementation.

Some colleges possess rich teaching resources, but due to a lack of effective sharing platforms and mechanisms, resource utilization is very low. For example, some higher vocational colleges have established on-campus practice bases that primarily serve several majors due to a lack of interdisciplinary sharing mechanisms, failing to meet the needs of project-based teaching.

Some colleges lack effective mechanisms to integrate actual projects, cases, and practice bases from businesses into teaching. For example, while businesses may be willing to provide practice opportunities, a lack of coordination with colleges prevents these opportunities from being effectively transformed into teaching resources, leaving students without real-world application scenarios during project practice.

2.3.3 Insufficient Coordination in the Teaching Process

Teachers from different disciplines may have differing teaching objectives, making consensus difficult. For example, English teachers may focus on language ability cultivation, while teachers of specialized courses prioritize skill development, leading to a lack of unified goals in the teaching process.

The teaching pace of different disciplines may be inconsistent, making interdisciplinary teaching activities difficult to effectively coordinate. For example, in the projects related to culture and tourism, the teaching pace of English may not align with that of tourism management, causing knowledge gaps for students during learning.

3. Countermeasures for Project-based Interdisciplinary Collaborative English Teaching in Higher Vocational Colleges

To effectively address the challenges identified in the current status of project-based interdisciplinary collaborative English teaching, it is essential to focus on enhancing the teaching competence of educators. Teachers play a pivotal role in this innovative teaching model, as they are responsible for integrating interdisciplinary knowledge, designing meaningful projects, and guiding students through collaborative learning experiences. However, as previously discussed, many teachers currently lack the interdisciplinary knowledge, project-based teaching skills, practical teaching abilities, and resource integration capabilities required for successful implementation. Therefore, prioritizing the enhancement of teachers' professional competencies is not only a critical first step but also a foundational strategy for improving the overall quality and effectiveness of project-based interdisciplinary collaborative English teaching in higher vocational colleges.

3.1 Enhancing Teachers' Teaching Competence

Enhancing teachers' teaching competence requires a multifaceted approach, with a primary focus on addressing the gaps in their interdisciplinary knowledge and practical teaching skills. Among the various competencies that need improvement, interdisciplinary knowledge stands out as a critical area, as it directly impacts teachers' ability to design and implement effective project-based interdisciplinary collaborative teaching programs. Without a solid foundation in interdisciplinary knowledge, teachers may struggle to integrate diverse subject areas into their English teaching or guide students in real-world applications. Therefore, strengthening interdisciplinary knowledge training is a fundamental step toward building teachers' overall

professional capabilities and ensuring the success of project-based interdisciplinary collaborative education.

3.1.1 Strengthening Interdisciplinary Knowledge Training

To address the issue of insufficient interdisciplinary knowledge reserves among teachers, higher vocational colleges should implement systematic and comprehensive training programs aimed at broadening teachers' knowledge bases and enhancing their ability to integrate interdisciplinary content into English teaching.

Firstly, colleges can regularly invite experts and scholars from related disciplines, such as business, tourism, international trade, and cultural studies, to conduct lectures and workshops. These sessions can provide teachers with insights into the latest developments and practical applications in these fields. For example, e-commerce specialists can explain the operational processes of cross-border e-commerce platforms, while tourism management experts can introduce the design and promotion of tourism products. This exposure helps teachers better understand how to integrate these disciplines into their English teaching.

Secondly, colleges should organize regular interdisciplinary teaching seminars where teachers from different departments can share their teaching experiences and best practices. These seminars can include case studies, panel discussions, and collaborative project planning. For instance, English teachers can collaborate with business teachers to design projects that combine language skills with business scenarios, such as negotiating international trade contracts or creating marketing strategies for cross-border e-commerce.

Thirdly, teachers should be encouraged to utilize online platforms and digital resources to expand their interdisciplinary knowledge. Colleges can subscribe to some platforms or specialized academic databases that offer courses and materials in various disciplines. For example, teachers can enroll in online courses on digital marketing, international logistics, or cultural studies to deepen their understanding of these fields.

Additionally, colleges can collaborate with businesses to provide teachers with opportunities to participate in real-world industry projects. For instance, English teachers can work with e-commerce companies to assist in translating product descriptions, drafting business proposals, or facilitating cross-cultural communication. This hands-on experience not only enhances teachers' practical skills but also helps them identify how interdisciplinary knowledge can be applied in real-world contexts.

Moreover, colleges can offer financial and logistical support for teachers to pursue advanced degrees or professional certifications in related fields. For example, teachers can enroll in master's or doctoral programs in business administration, tourism management, or international trade. Alternatively, they can obtain certifications in specific areas such as cross-border e-commerce or digital marketing. These advanced qualifications not only enhance their academic credentials but also equip them with deeper interdisciplinary knowledge.

3.1.2 Improving Project-based Teaching Skills

Higher vocational colleges should conduct specialized training in project-based teaching methods. Training content should include the entire process of project design, implementation, and evaluation. Through case analysis and simulated teaching, teachers can master core project-based teaching skills. For example, teachers can participate in project design competitions, creating and presenting complete project-based teaching plans, with guidance and feedback from experienced teachers or experts to enhance their project-based teaching abilities.

3.1.3 Enhancing Practical Teaching Ability

Higher vocational colleges should strengthen industry collaboration and provide teachers with practical training opportunities. For example, teachers can be arranged to work in businesses to participate in actual projects and understand business operations and needs. Additionally, colleges can invite industry experts to provide practical teaching guidance, helping teachers master operational skills. For example, in cross-border e-commerce projects, industry experts can explain platform operation processes and international logistics rules to enhance teachers' practical teaching abilities.

3.1.4 Improving Ability to Integrate Teaching Resources

Higher vocational colleges should establish a teaching resource sharing platform to consolidate both internal and external resources. For example, an internal teaching resource database can be created to classify and organize resources from different disciplines for easy access and use by teachers. Additionally, colleges can collaborate with businesses to incorporate actual projects, cases, and practice bases into the teaching resource system, providing students with rich practical opportunities. Colleges can also encourage teachers to utilize online platforms and digital resources to enrich teaching content and improve teaching effectiveness.

3.2 Optimizing Course Design

When optimizing course design for project-based interdisciplinary collaborative English teaching, one of the first critical steps is ensuring the scientific and relevant selection of project themes. The choice of project themes sets the foundation for the entire learning experience, influencing students' engagement, motivation, and the depth of interdisciplinary knowledge they acquire. Therefore, it is essential to carefully consider how project themes are selected and how they align with both educational goals and industry demands.

3.2.1 Scientific Selection of Project Themes

Higher vocational colleges should choose project themes based on current social trends and industry needs. For example, in the context of the "Belt and Road" initiative and the rapid development of the digital economy, emerging fields such as cross-border e-commerce and digital marketing can be introduced. Project themes should also fully consider interdisciplinary knowledge integration to ensure diverse and comprehensive course content. For example, in tourism

English projects, English language knowledge can be combined with tourism management and cultural history.

3.2.2 Tight Integration of Interdisciplinary Knowledge Points

To address insufficient integration of interdisciplinary knowledge points, higher vocational colleges should strengthen the consolidation of these points in course design. For example, in cross-border e-commerce projects, teachers should explore the intrinsic connections between English grammar, e-commerce processes, and international trade rules to help students understand the relationships between these knowledge points. Course design should also focus on updating interdisciplinary knowledge points, incorporating emerging technologies in business applications to ensure course content remains cutting-edge.

3.2.3 Rational Course Structure Design

To address unreasonable course structure design, vocational colleges should clearly outline the steps and processes of project implementation to ensure the coherence and systematic nature of teaching activities. For example, in a project of international business negotiation, teachers should clearly design segments such as project initiation, research, plan formulation, negotiation simulation, and result presentation. Course design should also scientifically divide course modules and allocate teaching time to ensure effective integration of theoretical learning and practical operation.

3.2.4 Matching Teaching Methods with Course Design

Higher vocational colleges should encourage teachers to adopt diverse teaching methods, such as group cooperative learning, project-driven learning, case analysis, and role-playing. For example, teachers should reduce lecture time and increase time for group discussions, project practice, and result presentation. They should also guide students in autonomous learning and exploration to cultivate teamwork skills.

3.3 Improving Interdisciplinary Collaborative Mechanisms

Among the various components of interdisciplinary collaborative mechanisms, strengthening interdisciplinary team building stands out as a critical foundation. Effective teamwork is essential for ensuring that diverse disciplines can work together cohesively toward common educational goals. Without a well-structured and collaborative team, even the most carefully designed curricula and resources may fail to achieve their intended outcomes. Thus, focusing on how to build and support interdisciplinary teams is a vital step in enhancing the overall effectiveness of project-based interdisciplinary collaborative education.

3.3.1 Strengthening Interdisciplinary Team Building

Higher vocational colleges should form interdisciplinary teaching teams comprising English teachers, specialists from other disciplines, and industry mentors (Cheng & Dong, 2019). For example, in cross-border e-commerce projects, e-commerce specialists and industry mentors should be invited to participate in course design and implementation. Colleges should also clarify team members' roles, establish effective communication channels and collaboration processes, and regularly organize team exchange activities to promote mutual understanding and cooperation. For example, interdisciplinary teaching research projects can be established to encourage team members to jointly apply for and conduct teaching research, enhancing the team's overall teaching and research capabilities. These measures can strengthen the cohesion and collaboration of interdisciplinary teams, providing a solid foundation for project-based interdisciplinary collaborative education.

3.3.2 Promoting Teaching Resource Sharing

Higher vocational colleges should establish resource sharing mechanisms to consolidate resources from different disciplines. For example, cross-disciplinary sharing mechanisms for on-campus practice bases can be created to ensure students from different disciplines can use these bases for project practice. Additionally, colleges should strengthen industry collaboration to incorporate actual projects, cases, and practice bases into teaching. A digital teaching resource platform can also be established to classify and share resources from different disciplines (Liu, 2018). For example, resources in English teaching, business cases, and culture can be integrated into one platform for easy access by teachers and students. These measures can improve resource utilization and provide rich support for project-based interdisciplinary collaborative education.

3.3.3 Strengthening Coordination in the Teaching Process

To address insufficient coordination in the teaching process, higher vocational colleges should establish mechanisms for consensus on interdisciplinary teaching goals to ensure teachers from different disciplines share unified objectives. For example, in culture and tourism projects, English and tourism management teachers should jointly develop teaching goals to ensure content alignment. Colleges should also coordinate the teaching pace of different disciplines to ensure effective integration of interdisciplinary teaching activities. Additionally, colleges can establish mechanisms for monitoring the teaching process, such as teaching supervision groups to regularly check and evaluate interdisciplinary teaching activities, promptly identifying and resolving issues. These measures can enhance the coordination of interdisciplinary teaching processes and ensure the smooth implementation of project-based interdisciplinary collaborative education.

4. Conclusion

Project-based interdisciplinary collaborative education in higher vocational college English, as an innovative teaching model, has broad development prospects under the new liberal arts. However, the current implementation of this model faces many challenges, such as insufficient teaching competence, unreasonable course design, and incomplete interdisciplinary collaborative mechanisms. In response to these issues, this paper proposes corresponding countermeasures, including enhancing teaching competence, optimizing course design, and improving interdisciplinary

collaborative mechanisms. It is hoped that these suggestions will provide useful references for the reform of college English teaching and promote the development of project-based interdisciplinary collaborative education in higher vocational college.

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