

A Study on the Current Situation and Countermeasures of English Teaching in Secondary Vocational Schools

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Abstract: With the progress and development of modern society, the use of English is becoming increasingly integrated into daily life, and consequently, the demand for vocational English is also growing. In reality, secondary vocational English teaching faces numerous bottlenecks, making it difficult to implement high-quality English teaching and carry out effective teaching for students in vocational schools. Therefore, this paper conducts an in-depth analysis of the current situation of secondary vocational English teaching and carries out a certain study on countermeasures.

Keywords: Current Situation; Secondary Vocational English Teaching; Countermeasure Research.

1. The Current State of Secondary Vocational English Teaching Is Worrying

1.1. Students Lack Initiative in English Learning

Most students in secondary vocational schools have insufficient learning ability and low learning enthusiasm, especially when it comes to English. The majority of them have a weak English foundation and consider English as dispensable. Based on the current situation of students in most secondary vocational schools known to the author, English classes are extremely lacking in vitality. Many teachers merely complete their teaching tasks passively, while students also lack the necessary cooperation. In the eyes of most students, English is seen as unnecessary—they lack the essential interest in English learning, believe that English has no practical use for their future, and thus have no initiative to absorb English knowledge[1].

1.2. Teachers' Teaching Models Are Monotonous

Faced with the current situation where students in secondary vocational schools have low learning ability and insufficient enthusiasm, most teachers adopt a monotonous teaching model. They simply follow the textbook content and adopt a cramming-style teaching method. There is no two-way communication, no systematic teaching process, and it is even more out of the question to arouse students' interest or fulfill the tasks specified in the secondary vocational teaching syllabus. Due to their low learning ability, most students enroll in vocational schools for employment or other purposes, aiming to acquire a certain professional skill. Both teachers and students lack a sufficient understanding of English learning and regard English as dispensable. Teachers only focus on completing simple classroom tasks, without ensuring that students master and apply the knowledge. Many schools do not even have a teaching and research group. The teaching model is basically the traditional "Chinese-style" teaching (characterized by teacher-centered, lecture-based instruction with little student participation). As a result, many

students have poor oral English skills and a limited grasp of professional vocabulary, which makes them totally unable to meet the needs of society. The one-way input-oriented teaching process lacks emotional interaction, leading to relatively tense teacher-student relationships[2].

Meanwhile, due to various circumstances concerning existing teachers—such as their lack of necessary on-the-job training—many teachers struggle to adapt to the new teaching requirements in the context of the new era and under the new situation.

1.3. Secondary Vocational Schools Lack a Sound Assessment System

Among the many secondary vocational colleges known to the author, the courses offered by these schools lack a strict assessment system. As a result, students do not face the necessary exam pressure, and teachers thus lack the due motivation for teaching. Since these schools focus on applied professional knowledge as their core, they do not attach sufficient importance to cultural knowledge and English learning. Currently, secondary vocational colleges themselves are under great pressure to fulfill their enrollment quotas. In order to retain existing students and attract new ones, schools worry that excessive learning tasks and the resulting pressure on students will lead to student dropout. Therefore, many assessments have become a mere formality.

1.4. Single Teaching Materials and Severe Lack of Practice

Most schools rely on a single textbook for English teaching, resulting in an over-simplified and homogeneous selection of teaching materials. Regardless of whether students are majoring in auto repair, nursing, accounting, or early childhood education, they all use the same set of secondary vocational English textbooks. Such textbooks lack professional relevance—this makes many students perceive the materials as impractical, and as a consequence, phenomena like students being tired of learning English or even giving up on it are widespread. In the long-term teaching process, there is a lack of necessary practice, or many schools do not assign practice tasks to students at all—this makes it difficult to effectively implement and carry out teaching objectives. English learning requires a large amount of

reading practice; mastering English cannot be limited to textbooks alone, yet textbooks are capable of addressing many learning-related issues. When most students cannot even fully understand the content of textbooks, coupled with the absence of necessary supplementary practice and insufficient absorption of reading materials, it becomes extremely hard for them to grasp English knowledge[3].

1.5. Outdated Teaching Equipment and Severe Lack of School Investment

English teaching requires necessary teaching equipment and investment. To learn English well, students need to master essential listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills to enhance their practical English application abilities. With the increasing development of international exchanges, after secondary vocational students enter society, they will face both the static demand of understanding foreign products and the dynamic need of communicating with international counterparts. In such scenarios, students not only need to be able to understand English knowledge related to their professional fields but also apply English in practical situations—this requires them to acquire certain listening, speaking, reading, and writing competencies. Therefore, in the actual teaching process, we need to use necessary teaching aids, such as basic teaching equipment and specialized listening teaching devices. Among the vocational schools known to the author, the investment in teaching resources by these schools is severely insufficient.

1.6. Imperfect Fund Management System and Weak Supervision

In recent years, the state has invested heavily in vocational education and provided strong policy support. Many vocational colleges and schools receive certain policy support from the state, and there is a significant policy tilt in state funding for school construction—especially for talent introduction support programs and other initiatives. However, according to the author's understanding, the state's policies have not been effectively implemented to a large extent. Phenomena such as fraud and misappropriation of state support funds by many schools occur from time to time. The state-supported construction funds often fail to be used as intended, and the misappropriation of funds is extremely serious. In addition, due to the shrinking student enrollment, the problem of redundant teachers is also severe, and the situation of "too many monks and too little porridge" (i.e., an imbalance between the number of staff and available resources) is widespread.

According to a teacher who once applied for an English teaching position at a secondary vocational school, the school promised to offer the teacher a certain salary and also commit to applying for the state's special fund subsidy for talent introduction on their behalf. However, to my knowledge, the local government has been delaying the disbursement of the subsidy by making various excuses. What is worse, many teachers in vocational schools even have their basic salaries in arrears. Most of the state support funds are spent on unnecessary construction projects, while the investment in actual teaching is obviously insufficient.

On the one hand, the state provides strong support through preferential policies; on the other hand, due to the imperfect fund management system and the lack of a robust supervision mechanism, the resulting negative impacts are quite significant.

2. Research on Countermeasures to Address the Current Dilemma in Teaching

2.1. Strengthen Ideological Education for Students to Enhance Their English Learning Motivation and Awareness of Its Importance

(1) Strengthen ideological education. Against the backdrop of accelerating reform and opening-up in China and the advancing process of economic "globalization", China's politics, economy, and culture are increasingly connected with the rest of the world. Secondary vocational school students will have more opportunities to communicate with international counterparts in their future jobs. Therefore, it is necessary for secondary vocational students to learn English well, understand Western culture, and enhance their sense of national pride and self-confidence through education on the excellent culture of their own nation. In response to future social demands, they should be able to effectively apply foreign language knowledge to improve work efficiency.

(2) Make good use of and align with the current *Syllabus for Secondary Vocational English Teaching*, and based on this, assess students—taking such assessment as one of the necessary conditions for recommending them for employment in the future. English is a compulsory public basic course for students in secondary vocational schools, which helps students learn basic knowledge, develop language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and initially cultivate the ability to apply English in workplace scenarios. During the teaching process, teachers should stimulate and foster students' interest in English learning to the greatest extent, help them master learning strategies, develop good learning habits, and improve their autonomous learning ability.

So, on the basis of ensuring student assessments, standards for evaluating teachers' performance should be established—specifically, the passing rate of students' English assessments. Taking the passing rate of students' assessments as the standard for measuring the quality and effectiveness of teachers' work will not only significantly enhance students' attention to English learning but also greatly boost teachers' enthusiasm[4].

2.2. Increase Teacher Training, Improve Teachers' Teaching Skills, and Enhance Teachers' Status and Benefits

(1) To improve teaching capabilities and gain students' recognition, it is essential to increase training for teachers' teaching competencies. Most students have only completed nine-year compulsory education, with relatively weak academic foundations, insufficient learning abilities, and low learning enthusiasm. This requires teachers not only to arouse students' interest in the teaching process but also to effectively develop students' ability to learn and apply knowledge. Through activities such as teaching competitions and students' skill contests, we can enhance recognition of teachers' teaching achievements and cultivate students' enthusiasm for learning as well as their sense of honor.

(2) Vigorously enhance teachers' status and benefits. Schools should make rational adjustments to campus construction, appropriately allocate funds, and strive to

improve teachers' benefits. They should increase performance-based salaries, implement competition and retirement mechanisms, adopt an annual salary system, and provide regular salary increases to break the "iron rice bowl" (a lifelong guaranteed job) in the teaching profession. In particular, for teachers with outstanding performance or significant contributions, incentive performance-based salaries should be granted based on specific circumstances. According to the results of performance evaluations, schools should reasonably determine salary grades and appropriately widen the gap in salary distribution.

Naturally, schools should establish a comprehensive evaluation system, with a focus on teachers' morality, competence, and achievements. Although the evaluation of vocational schools differs from that of traditional compulsory education schools, each vocational school should formulate reasonable evaluation rules based on its own actual conditions, and ensure that each rule is effectively implemented.

2.3. Establish a Scientific Teaching Quality Evaluation System, Focusing on Quality and Connotation

Secondary vocational education places excessive emphasis on professional programs while neglecting the quality of cultural education. This leads to a situation where the quality of cultivated talents fails to meet market demands, which is, to a certain extent, caused by the imperfect supervision and management systems for vocational education teaching quality, unclear standards, and inadequate assignment of responsibilities. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a teaching quality evaluation and supervision system under the English education and research departments of secondary vocational schools, with clear definition of responsibilities. Secondary vocational schools shall conduct examination and evaluation on the courses offered in English-related programs and bear the primary responsibility for the supervision of teaching quality; English education and research departments shall formulate professional standards, conduct random inspection evaluations on courses, and play a role in supervision and promotion[5].

(1) Secondary vocational schools should formulate English teaching evaluation plans. Teaching evaluation is not about applying a single standard rigidly to teachers; instead, it should enable teachers to identify with the evaluation content, which in turn is internalized into their conscious teaching pursuit. This helps teachers continuously enrich their teaching art, thereby enhancing their professional quality and improving teaching quality. Secondary vocational schools need to explore teaching evaluation strategies that align with their actual conditions, maximize the guiding function of evaluation, and promote the improvement of educational and teaching quality. The evaluation system should reflect not only foundational nature but also professionalism and applicability. Examinations are designed to assess students' academic proficiency, testing their basic professional knowledge and fundamental competencies. On one hand, examination results can serve as the basis for determining whether a student has completed the course; on the other hand, they can act as the main criterion for teachers' promotion, selection as outstanding staff, and recognition. Clear regulations should be established regarding the nature, requirements, format, and organization of examinations and assessments. This integrates teachers' teaching with students' learning, and links students' academic performance with their

eligibility for graduation. Such measures are conducive to enhancing students' initiative in learning and improving the quality of education and teaching.

(2) The teaching and research departments of schools should conduct random inspection evaluations on English courses. They should create real-world scenarios to carry out applied assessments—for example, how an auto repair student communicates with customers when interacting with foreigners, or how students learn about the knowledge of imported spare parts when faced with such components. Unlike specific and practical vocational skills, English courses require students to be able to understand introductions to imported foreign-language products, communicate with foreign friends, and engage in oral or written communication. This creates certain differences from traditional examinations.

2.4. Standardize and Improve the Curriculum System, and Increase Investment in Teaching Facilities

Most secondary vocational students are from junior high schools. Having mainly been exposed to basic English in the nine-year compulsory education, they must achieve a transition and connection from basic English to applied professional English. Therefore, first of all, the curriculum system should reflect both knowledge-oriented and professional characteristics. Textbooks should be connected to real-life situations and useful for students in their future employment. They should align with the professional orientation of secondary vocational students, be scientifically designed, and at the same time reflect the knowledge nature of English. In this way, the textbooks used can not only expand students' professional English vocabulary but also improve their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Only in this way can the cultivated students be versatile and well-rounded.

Meanwhile, while conducting systematic teaching based on textbooks, it is necessary to increase investment in teaching equipment and equip schools with a certain scale of teaching facilities, such as projectors, video playback devices in classrooms, and listening training rooms. We must not just pay lip service[6].

2.5. Strictly Supervise the Flow of Funds to Ensure Rational Allocation

In recent years, the state has provided increasing support for vocational education, which has greatly promoted the development of vocational education to a large extent. However, due to the shortage of local financial resources, many government leaders have sought to misappropriate these funds, resulting in a failure to ensure that a large amount of special funds is used for their intended purposes. Furthermore, some leaders have even resorted to fraud and deception, wantonly embezzling state funds to line their own pockets. In response to this, a strict fund supervision system must be established to ensure that special funds are truly used for developing vocational education and improving the quality of vocational education.

In conclusion, for secondary vocational schools, teachers are the foundation for improving the quality of education and teaching, policies are the guarantee, and teaching evaluation is the means. Only by giving full play to the respective roles of these factors can we achieve an all-round improvement in the teaching quality of secondary vocational education. This paper only presents a preliminary study on countermeasures;

there is still a long way to go to achieve the long-term development of secondary vocational education.

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