

Research on the Implementation Difficulties and Optimization Measures of Project-based Teaching in Maritime English

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Abstract: In recent years, project-based teaching has become the focus of national vocational education curriculum reform, and has also become an important teaching form in the curriculum reform of major maritime vocational colleges. The project-based teaching reform of maritime English has achieved significant breakthroughs and results after implementation, but there are still many problems in teaching practice. This article analyzes the implementation difficulties of project-based teaching in maritime English and proposes corresponding optimization measures to address these difficulties, providing reference for effectively deepening the reform of maritime English teaching in vocational colleges.

Keywords: Maritime English, Project based teaching method, Implementation difficulties, Measures.

1. Introduction

The Outline of the National Medium and Long Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020) clearly states that "vocational education needs to enhance its attractiveness, reform its teaching mode, promote the integration of professional curriculum content and vocational standards in vocational colleges, reform the traditional talent cultivation mode centered on schools and classrooms, and explore the establishment of new models for cultivating skilled talents. The reform of project-based teaching method has emerged as the times require.

The research and practice of project-based teaching in China originated in the late 1990s. In recent years, with the construction of dual high education in major vocational colleges and the vigorous development of demonstration vocational colleges, the reform practice of project-based teaching has also been widely carried out. The main reason is that the adjustment of the development positioning of vocational education has triggered the reform of teaching models, strategies, and methods. Teachers must find breakthrough points in vocational education that can implement the concept of "combining engineering and learning", and ultimately find suitable teaching reform projects for themselves. The implementation of project-based teaching in professional courses in vocational colleges is an inevitable result of complying with the trend of vocational curriculum reform.

2. Project Teaching Method

Regarding project-based teaching methods, different scholars have different definitions. Starting from the purpose of cultivating students' lifelong learning abilities and attitudes,

the Curriculum Development Department of the Hong Kong Education Department of China believes that project-based teaching is a process of in-depth exploration based on a certain theme, combined with corresponding tasks or situations, for exploratory learning, allowing students to connect knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes for knowledge construction (see Figure 1). Rudolf Pfeifel of Germany believes that project-based teaching focuses more on students' learning interests, life experiences, and initiative. In project group activities, students, under the guidance of teachers, propose project ideas, conduct feasibility analysis, make decisions, and implement the project. During the project implementation process, learning content and methods are determined around the goals. In fact, this is a teaching process where students plan, implement, and evaluate learning activities on their own with guidance and assistance. Scholars in China have a relatively consistent view that project-based teaching method is an advanced form of practical teaching, leading team activities with projects. The purpose is to enable students to comprehensively apply their existing knowledge, experience, and skills in practice. By completing a complete work project, students can not only gain practical work experience, but also cultivate knowledge and skills related to practice, collaboration, and expression. Enable students to acquire and develop professional abilities. Overall, project-based teaching method mainly refers to the joint participation of teachers and students in a project's teaching and training activities, with the main goal of improving students' employment competitiveness, sustainable development, and entrepreneurial ability. The teacher is mainly responsible for developing the project name, main content, and achievement display; Students are mainly responsible for formulating specific steps for project implementation, such as collecting information, implementing plans, and evaluating assessments.

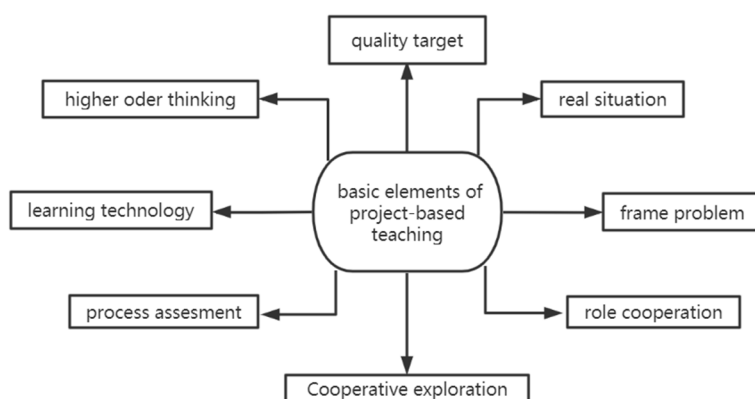


Figure 1. Basic elements of project teaching

The project-based teaching method has many advantages. It not only enhances the learning interest of vocational college students and allows them to participate in various learning activities independently, but also greatly improves their comprehensive abilities such as analytical ability, communication ability, innovation ability, and job ability. Therefore, exploring the topic of project-based teaching in depth has a positive promoting effect on higher vocational education teaching.

3. The Necessity of Project-based Teaching in Maritime English

With the proposal of the maritime power strategy, the position and role of maritime English in the field of shipping are increasing day by day. As a specialized English language, it is a necessary tool for maritime communication and exchange. Therefore, it is receiving increasing attention in maritime colleges and universities. At present, there are many shortcomings in the teaching of maritime English in vocational colleges, especially the lack of a sound foundation for students to have a weak English learning foundation, and there is a significant gap in the quality of teaching in their source regions; The teaching staff is imbalanced, especially the lack of dual qualified English teachers proficient in both professional and navigation; The teaching facilities are relatively backward and cannot meet the basic needs of modern teaching; The classroom teaching mode is single and cannot break away from the traditional teaching mode; Insufficient teaching hardware and lack of authoritative and unified supporting textbooks; Teaching emphasizes theory and lacks practicality. The existence of the above related issues is to a large extent detrimental to the improvement of China's maritime English teaching level, and cannot meet the basic needs of modern development. Therefore, the reform of maritime English is imperative.

4. Difficulties in Implementing Project-based Teaching Reform in Maritime English

In order to better understand the current implementation status of project-based teaching in maritime English, the author conducted a questionnaire survey around the theme of this article based on the problems found in literature research, collected first-hand information, and then analyzed the obtained data. The results of the questionnaire survey show that major vocational colleges have actively launched attempts at project-based teaching. Many vocational colleges have formulated relevant plans and institutional requirements for project-based teaching, actively calling for and carrying out vocational teaching reform, advocating targeted management of professional courses. The concept of project-based teaching has been formed in vocational colleges and gradually spreading among the teacher team. However, through investigation, the author also found some common implementation difficulties in the current project-based teaching reform in vocational colleges.

(1) The "work and market" orientation in project teaching is not clear

The essence of project-based teaching is an innovative teaching model that combines theory with practice. In the process of project-based teaching, students participate in a creative process. In practice, students not only undertake learning tasks, but also learn basic theoretical knowledge, feeling the learning achievements and fun brought by showcasing achievements. Teachers should guide students to solve problems encountered in the process of acquiring knowledge and gradually cultivate students' operational abilities. According to the basic ideas of teaching ideas and project design, the following teaching implementation processes are commonly adopted in project-based teaching plans for maritime English.

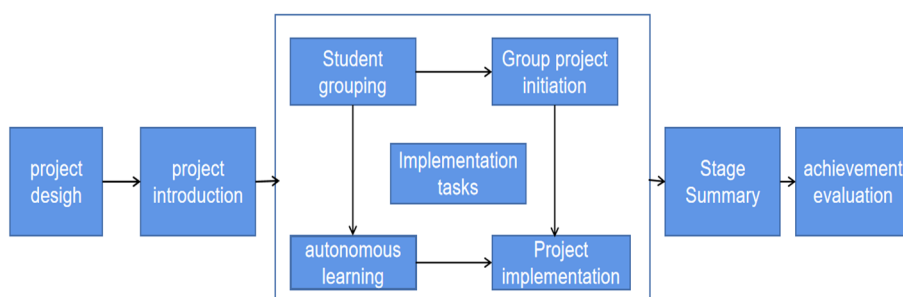


Figure 2. Implementation flowchart of project-based teaching for maritime English

In interviews with teachers, we learned that due to the fact that many teachers do not have experience working in enterprises, in the process of project selection, teachers rely more on textbook implementation project design, and filter based on textbook related knowledge and assume an offshore language training environment. Therefore, to some extent, this form of project theme design has a certain degree of subjectivity, Unable to match the real maritime conditions and the development needs of shipping companies. In addition, the project-based teaching method encourages teachers and business personnel to jointly participate in the plan, develop project names and teaching plans based on the actual education of the enterprise and school, and allocate students reasonably according to tasks. However, in the actual teaching process, it is difficult to invite enterprise employees from numerous positions to share their experiences with everyone, and project design is even more impossible to achieve a comprehensive approach.

At present, most maritime English courses actively adopt a lively and rich teaching mode. Teachers determine teaching themes based on the content and relevant knowledge of the textbooks, and then provide targeted reinforcement training to students. They also provide targeted explanations and analysis based on professional knowledge and marine working environment. Therefore, the focus of cultivating students' maritime English language ability is still focused on, And it did not improve students' actual professional abilities in maritime English.

(2) Project teaching is just a formality, and student participation is not high

Project teaching emphasizes teacher-student cooperation, and its biggest advantage is that it can enhance students' enthusiasm for participating in classroom activities. However, in the actual process of classroom teaching, the situation is not optimistic.

Through research and discussions, we can see that many students are not interested in project-based teaching, and even do not participate in related activities. Many colleges and universities regard project-based teaching as a magic weapon to improve the current situation, hoping to improve students' comprehensive English abilities through project-based education. However, due to the generally weak foundation of English speaking among students in vocational colleges, even if it is a carefully prepared project theme by teachers, students who make great efforts to focus on the theme cannot achieve clear communication, especially in task learning and scenario simulation, Most students still use Chinese and cannot improve their listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities in practice, which naturally leads to a loss of interest in related projects.

Teachers provide guidance to students through the transformation of teaching tasks and situations during the teaching process, and students carry out specific work steps based on their own division of labor and the combination of relevant group members. In the project-based teaching process, teachers strive to build a platform for student learning and teacher practice, achieving the interconnection of teaching, learning, and usage. However, due to various factors such as student numbers, teaching venues, and equipment limitations, it is difficult to meet the relevant requirements in practical operations.

(3) Lack of scientific and effective supporting nautical

English textbooks

To successfully carry out project-based teaching in vocational colleges, it is necessary to have supporting maritime English textbooks based on project-based teaching. However, the textbooks currently used in vocational colleges are far from meeting this requirement. At present, several sets of maritime English textbooks commonly used in China are uniformly developed for senior crew members, with complex content, large vocabulary, and weak job specificity. There is no professional textbook for maritime English learning that can be written based on the specific job level of students at sea. If professional textbooks are introduced from countries such as the United States and the United States, not only will the cost be too high, but the difficulty will also be too high and not conducive to students' understanding. Therefore, the construction of textbooks for maritime English majors has become a key influencing factor in the development of higher vocational colleges.

(4) The construction structure of the teaching staff participating in project teaching is unreasonable

Teachers are the guides of project teaching implementation and the soul of a maritime English teaching course. The internal teaching team of vocational colleges is mainly composed of two parts: the first part is students who have graduated from English majors in comprehensive universities, and the second type is experienced senior sailors selected from the industry.

In contrast, the personnel in the first part have a high level of English proficiency, but are not familiar with the teaching mode of maritime English; The latter has a certain theoretical foundation in maritime English, but lacks relevant teaching experience and practice. Therefore, whether it is the former or the latter, it is difficult to provide a detailed explanation of the background of maritime English in the teaching process, and it is also difficult to explain to students how to carry out maritime activities based on their own experience, which is not conducive to improving the classroom effect and making it difficult for students to understand the content being taught. From the current situation of maritime English education in vocational colleges, most teachers neglect the cultivation of students' professional abilities in the teaching process. Students are destined to enter society in the future, and professional abilities are the fundamental foundation for their foothold in society. Theoretical and practical activities must be carried out based on the basic needs of professional activities on the basis of practice, in order to cultivate students' comprehensive abilities.

(5) Insufficient conditions for project-based practical teaching

The theory of project-based teaching is based on constructivism, and instructional design is also built on this theoretical foundation. The core of constructivism is student-centered classrooms, which not only require external stimuli to achieve students' knowledge acceptance and ability development, but also to transform the subject of information processing, requiring teachers to transform from knowledge instillers to helpers for students' autonomous learning. However, for students with weak professional foundations, they are suddenly required to output a large amount in English practice, and their abilities are in an overloaded state, which can easily lead to difficulty in sustaining project-based teaching. At present, most maritime colleges and universities

do not establish professional training venues for maritime English, but software and hardware facilities are equally important in the teaching process, both of which are important guarantees for smooth teaching. In terms of teaching hardware for maritime English, although each school has a voice room, there is a lack of relevant professional learning software equipment and training venues, making it difficult to provide real work scene training for students. Therefore, the project-based implementation of maritime English courses has not been satisfactory.

5. Optimization Measures for Project-based Teaching Reform of Maritime English

(1) Guided by professional work, improving the training objectives of maritime English

The focus of vocational education is to cultivate students' adaptability and personal abilities, and to cultivate technical applied talents with strong hands-on and innovative abilities, rich knowledge systems, and healthy mental development. In the development of vocational colleges, the study of maritime English majors must be based on social needs and employment oriented. Positions and teaching content must be set according to the needs of production management and frontline service content to achieve the rectification and development of teaching content. The correct goal of cultivating maritime English professionals should be to optimize the talent cultivation mode, promote the teaching reform of maritime English majors in maritime colleges, and cultivate composite talents with high comprehensive quality in maritime majors.

(2) Adapt or self compile nautical English textbooks based on market and job requirements

Compared to the past, there has been significant progress in the compilation of nautical English textbooks published in recent years, but it cannot be denied that there are still certain problems. Firstly, the content of the textbook is highly repetitive. At present, most of the content in the reprinted textbooks is copied from the original textbooks, especially the high repetition rate of listening, speaking, and explanatory text content, which leads to the reuse of educational resources and also involves copyright issues; Secondly, from a holistic perspective, the systematic and authoritative nature of the textbooks is insufficient. At present, there is no widely recognized set of textbooks in the industry. Although unified textbooks have emerged, the quality and content grading of textbooks are unclear and cannot be used as a universal textbook. Furthermore, there is insufficient supporting practice materials. At present, most of the maritime English teaching materials are not equipped with exercise books, and there are even no specialized teacher's books. From this, it can be seen that in order to achieve project-based teaching of English navigation majors in vocational colleges and implement the goal of cultivating maritime English talents, it is necessary to take our school as the foundation, fully consider market effects and social status, reorganize and revise maritime English textbooks, and write textbooks suitable for students' learning.

(3) Strengthen the construction of teaching staff and introduce specialized maritime talents to participate in project-based teaching

Maritime English is a highly practical profession and a

special form of specialized English for specific purposes. Its real context is closely related to the ESP curriculum, and it also has obvious professionalism. Therefore, clear teaching tasks should be used as guidance in the teaching process. Teachers not only need to have rich theoretical knowledge, but also have typical professional work experience, otherwise it is difficult to be competent in teaching. Therefore, we must formulate teaching objectives and curriculum arrangements for the maritime English major courses in higher vocational colleges based on the specific goals of talent cultivation. We must regularly arrange maritime English teachers to participate in training on the front line of enterprises, participate in practical experience on the production front line, enrich relevant knowledge of modern management concepts and business services, obtain practical sources of life for vocational English teaching, and improve the authenticity of teaching. At the same time, universities should strengthen cooperation with enterprises, fully carry out service and development work, implement the integration of industry and education, integrate and transform teachers' actual teaching achievements and practical experience, promote the interconnection of theory and practice, and transform a single teaching method. Therefore, with the integration of teaching, research, and production as an important teaching mode, a specialized teacher talent can be cultivated into a dual teacher talent, Let teachers not only assume the role of theorists, but also as practitioners.

(4) Improve assessment methods and increase students' enthusiasm for participating in project-based teaching

The key idea of combining engineering and learning is to learn by doing, and this teaching philosophy can also be followed in the process of practicing maritime English. Especially in the current project-based reform of maritime English in universities, traditional closed book assessments cannot truly reflect students' abilities, nor can they adapt to modern market demands, and even mislead students' correct understanding of learning,

Therefore, it is necessary to develop effective teaching assessment methods related to project-based teaching. In the assessment, the importance of the process should be reflected, and students should also be fully involved in the assessment. Group evaluation should be implemented, and students should evaluate each other and use it as an important reference for the final assessment.

(5) Strengthen the construction of practical training venues for maritime English majors and improve the effectiveness of project-based implementation

Project based teaching emphasizes learning through practice, which requires sufficient practical teaching hours and the ability to create teaching venues that align with relevant professional backgrounds. Major maritime colleges and universities should improve their investment plans for teaching and training venues, fully utilize existing training conditions for reasonable upgrading and development, and provide conditions for the implementation of project-based teaching that can adapt to the development of modern shipping. This not only allows students to have a greater sense of professional identity with the professional knowledge they have learned, but also fundamentally improves their relatively low interest in learning

6. Conclusion

At present, major maritime vocational colleges are vigorously promoting project-based teaching of maritime English, but the specific implementation and effectiveness are different. After hands-on practice, the author believes that after implementing the project-based teaching method, classroom teaching tasks become more targeted and purposeful, and students receive more opportunities for oral practice and practice related to real work scenarios. Teachers and students make the most of classroom practice, but whether every teacher can truly implement the project-based teaching method, The final effectiveness of project based teaching methods in enterprise practice and other issues still require a long period of reform practice to confirm.

Acknowledgment

Fund Project:1.The 2021 academy level project of Jiangsu Maritime Institute "Research on the Implementation Difficulties and Optimization Measures of Project-based Teaching of Maritime English" (Project No.:ZYJY 07)

2.2021 Adult Higher Education Research Project "Exploration and Practice of Online and Offline Mixed Teaching of Continuing Education in Maritime Colleges and Universities Under the Background of Post Epidemic" (Project No. CJY30)

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