Research on the Teaching Reform of “Curriculum Ideology and Politics” for English Majors under the Background of the “New Liberal Arts Construction”

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Abstract: In recent years, curriculum ideological and political education has become a hot topic in educational reform. The concept of curriculum ideological and political education provides a new convergence point for the integration of subject teaching and ideological and political education. Its purpose is to infiltrate the core content of ideological and political education in subject teaching, organically integrate ideological and political curriculum teaching with the subjects, and implement the fundamental task of cultivating students’ morality. In the process of English teaching, cultivating students’ firm political stance is particularly important, especially in cultural comparison and dissemination, nurturing students to “tell a good Chinese story”, spreading excellent traditional Chinese culture, and demonstrating cultural confidence. Further exploration is needed. In the context of the integrated reform of ideological and political education in universities, middle and primary schools, the research on curriculum ideological and political education in subject teaching is not yet in-depth and extensive. Based on the curriculum standards for morality and the rule of law, as well as the correlation between students’ core literacy and socialist core values, this article proposes the necessity of integrating ideological and political education into English majors, and actively explores effective strategies and approaches in order to provide useful ideas and references for the ideological and political education reform of English majors.

Keywords: Curriculum Ideology and politics; English major; Teaching Reform.

1. Introduction

The deep meaning of the construction of the new liberal arts is to adhere to moral education as the guide, improve the quality of talent cultivation as the important goal, and continuously improve talent cultivation plans on this basis, constructing a scientific and reasonable curriculum cultivation system. To adapt to the innovative development of new humanities in the new era, English majors should aim to enhance students’ knowledge, abilities, and value guidance in their ideological and political courses, making them “builders and successors of socialism”. The reform of English major should aim at the construction of ideological and political education in the curriculum, sort out and explore the ideological and political elements contained in the curriculum, play the role of ideological and political education in the curriculum, and achieve the organic unity of knowledge system education and ideological and political education. As a subject that students must master, English needs to comply with the requirements of the times, actively shoulder the mission of ideological and political education, so that students’ professional knowledge, values, and spiritual pursuits can be unified, and promote their comprehensive development. However, in reality, the ideological and political education of English major courses and the teaching of professional knowledge cannot be fully integrated. Therefore, how to effectively promote ideological and political education in courses based on the characteristics of the subject itself has become an urgent problem that English teachers need to solve. The author has provided an overview of the characteristics of ideological and political courses and English majors, followed by an analysis of the necessity of carrying out ideological and political courses in English teaching, and actively explored effective strategies and approaches for implementing ideological and political courses, in order to provide useful ideas and references for the reform of ideological and political courses in English majors.

2. Overview of “Curriculum Ideology and Politics”

“Curriculum ideology and politics” is an educational concept and measures with Chinese characteristics proposed by China after the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, in response to the fundamental issues of what kind of students universities cultivate in the new era, how to cultivate students, and for whom to cultivate students. Its original intention was to endow all courses with ideological and political education functions beyond the original ideological and political theory education system, with various courses as the starting point. Through the effective integration of ideological and political elements and knowledge system, it continuously expands the breadth and depth of ideological and political education, and realizes that ideological and political education runs through the entire process of talent cultivation in higher education. From this point of view, it cannot be understood as courses in a certain discipline, but rather as innovative educational concepts or methods with Chinese characteristics.

Therefore, during the teaching process of the course, teachers should abandon the original teaching thinking that solely focuses on imparting knowledge, actively construct a collaborative education concept that combines knowledge education and ideological and political education, guide students to establish the correct three perspectives, enhance their cultural identity, and improve their cultural confidence.
The ideological and political education in China is mainly distributed in the national political work, and has undergone various historical stages of change, constantly evolving into what we now call ideological and political education.

The research on ideological and political education in the academic community has been constantly deepening, and scholars have also put forward their own different views on the connotation of ideological and political education. After a long period of practice, people have gradually discovered that ideological and political education has exposed some problems that cannot be ignored in the process of implementation. The most obvious one is that ideological and political education and professional courses are in an independent state, resulting in a phenomenon of separation between ideological and political education and professional teaching. As a result, ideological and political education has not achieved its actual goals and effects, and in this case, the concept of “curriculum ideology and politics” has emerged. This to some extent alleviates the problem of poor effectiveness and low efficiency caused by the current ideological and political education solely playing its educational role. Professor Sun Youzhong, Vice President and Doctoral Supervisor of Beijing International Studies University, proposed in his book “Design of College Foreign Language Textbooks from the Perspective of Curriculum Ideological and Political Education” that curriculum ideological and political education should be carried out in non-ideological and political courses. It is necessary to establish a mechanism for various courses to work in the same direction, and jointly promote the achievement of the goal of cultivating moral character. Curriculum ideological and political education is not simply inserted into curriculum teaching, Transforming moral education into rigid preaching unrelated to the teaching content, but integrating ideological and political education elements into the process of imparting knowledge and cultivating abilities, achieving the effect of having oneself within oneself and having oneself within oneself. Lv Ning (2018) proposed that ideological and political education, as a “explicit education” of ideological and political theory courses in universities, complements the “implicit education” of other professional courses and jointly constructs a comprehensive curriculum education model. In the process of education and teaching, ideological and political education elements, including theoretical knowledge, value concepts, and spiritual pursuits of ideological and political education, are integrated into various courses, seeking the connection between professional knowledge and ideological and political education in various disciplines, and subtly influencing students’ ideological consciousness and behavior. Fully explore and utilize the ideological and political education resources, and integrate socialist core values into English major teaching, in order to guide English major students to firm their ideals and beliefs when facing the invasion of foreign erroneous ideological trends, and establish the right political ideology.

3. The Current Situation of “Curriculum Ideology and Politics” in English Major

Curriculum ideology and politics is a comprehensive educational concept, which is based on the fundamental task of establishing moral character, enhancing students’ humanistic and moral qualities and laying a good foundation for their future studies, work and life. As a public basic course and a core general education course, English is widely accepted by the public, and the teaching time is long, so it is a good foundation for students’ future study, work and life and it has the dual nature of instrumentality and humanity. The core of humanism is to put people first, promote human values, cultivate comprehensive quality, and realize all-round development. Therefore, it is necessary and feasible for English courses to be devoted to ideology and politics.

In recent years, China’s foreign language education circles in China have carried out some theoretical research and practical discussions on the ideology and politics of foreign language courses. Liu Jiania proposed the BIPA model in the context of ideology and politics in the curriculum content, teaching process, teaching evaluation and other aspects of foreign language courses. Wen Qiufang discusses the connotation and framework of ideology and politics in Foreign Language Courses and puts forward operational suggestions on the practice of ideology and politics in Foreign Language Courses. Xiang Mingyou explains the key issues and directions of the teaching design of ideology and politics in university English programs in terms of teaching objectives, teaching contents, teaching methods, and so on. Therefore, tapping into the elements of ideology and politics for the construction of English courses and the design of teaching content is the future development trend of English courses’ ideology and politics.

However, for a long time, ideological education has been mainly carried out through the ideology and politics courses and other majors have not paid much attention to it. At present, the following weak problems exist in the courses: teachers’ awareness of ideology and politics is not strong enough.

Teachers emphasize on language knowledge teaching, but do not emphasize on culture teaching and value education. Students study English too utilitarian and practical, learning for the certificate or level exams, but not for cultural confidence, self-confidence and self-esteem. Teachers and students only emphasize the input of western culture knowledge and neglect the penetration of traditional Chinese culture, resulting in a certain degree of "Chinese culture loss". Thus, English teaching is facing a new battle, and the integration of ideological and political education should not be delayed.

4. The Characteristics of English Major

4.1. Closely Connected to Western Culture

Any language is rooted in a certain culture, and language is constantly evolving while also making progress. The differences in geography, history, and other factors have created different cultures, resulting in linguistic differences. For language learners, understanding the cultural history and customs of the target language country is crucial. Therefore, English majors need to be exposed to a large amount of hidden cultural background in the process of learning English, in order to achieve better results. On the one hand, they need to learn from specific cultural phenomena of Britain and America, and on the other hand, they need to analyze its history and social and cultural forms, further discussion was conducted on its cultural and ethnic characteristics, and a comparison was made with the relevant conditions of Chinese culture. Therefore, the curriculum of English majors is closely
integrated with Western culture. In addition, due to the unique nature of the subject, English majors often learn cultural knowledge of Western countries in the classroom, and some students may even be more interested in it and delve deeper into it. After class, they can find relevant materials, read foreign original books, newspapers, and browse foreign websites by themselves. Students have been influenced by Western culture for a long time, and their behavior and thoughts gradually become similar to Western culture. Most of them show an open mind, quick response to new ideas emerging in society, willingness to try and accept new things, and a high level of acceptance of foreign culture.

4.2. Easily Influenced by Western Values

In the context of globalization, various Western social ideologies have entered China on a large scale in different ways. For students, their values are in a period of formation and establishment, and their ability to judge and distinguish between advantages and disadvantages is still weak. They lack a certain ability to distinguish and judge foreign cultures. This makes it easy for college students to be influenced by all foreign ideas, and the values of English major students are highly susceptible to Western values. So the courses of English majors are greatly influenced by Western ideologies to some extent, which requires us to guide college students to fully understand Western social trends and correctly grasp Western values, exercise their ability to distinguish right from wrong, and allow them to objectively see the values of different cultures.

4.3. Greatly Influenced by Western Lifestyles

Lifestyle reflects the way of thinking, which in turn affects the choice of lifestyle. The social development and ideological differences between countries have led to significant differences in their lifestyles. With the progress of the Western Industrial Revolution, the deepening of domestic reform and opening up, and the development of globalization, the Western way of life has been introduced into China with the widespread dissemination of Western culture. Compared to other majors, English majors have the most frequent exposure to Western culture. They have a better understanding of Western culture and lifestyles, so they are most significantly influenced by Western lifestyles. The Western way of life is influenced by factors such as its own values, cultural beliefs, and ideology, with a distinct color of self-interest and pragmatism. Westerners adopt a relatively free and open attitude towards emotions and interpersonal relationships. Compared to traditional Chinese culture, they pay more attention to their emotions and prioritize their interests in the process of communication, placing their emotions above emotional connections. In terms of consumption concepts, there is also a significant difference between the Western consumption concept and the traditional Chinese consumption concept. The West pursues the idea of money first and material enjoyment, while China advocates the consumption concept of diligence, frugality, and moderate consumption. Therefore, after extensive learning of Western culture and understanding of Western lifestyles, English majors in universities are highly susceptible to the impact of external thinking, and exhibit a lifestyle that tends to be free, open, and materialistic, as claimed by the West.

The curriculum characteristics of English major courses determine that the educational reforms should be strengthened in the practice of ideological and political education in English major courses. The development of the socialist market economy in the new era has new requirements for the cultivation of English talents, and there is a greater need for talents with complex and comprehensive development. The skills and characteristics of the talents covered are more comprehensive, and the characteristics of education are more prominent. So the courses of English majors have more value in ideological and political education. We should pay more attention to patriotism and collectivism education, cultivate students’ political consciousness, guide them to critically absorb the essence of foreign culture, remove the rough and extract the essence, eliminate the false and preserve the true, critically inherit foreign culture, and promote China’s excellent traditional culture.

5. The Necessity of Ideological and Political Education in English Major Courses

5.1. Leading the Right Value Orientation

It is not enough for talents in today’s world to only possess certain professional knowledge and skills. They also need to possess good quality qualities, correct self-awareness, good interpersonal relationships, behavioral habits, and so on. In daily course teaching, teachers should not only impart theoretical knowledge, but also help students form correct values. In recent years, achieving the value cultivation of education has gradually become an important topic of concern for society and academia. In the context of the information explosion in the new era, students of various academic stages have been infused with a large amount of knowledge and information for a long time, but they often feel confused. The reason for this is the rigid teaching philosophy, where teachers blindly focus on grades and lack attention to the deep value system of students. For a long time, English has occupied an important position in various stages of learning, but the low efficiency and utilitarianism in the teaching process have long existed. Therefore, how to make good use of this important educational position to play its role in cultivating morality and people, and reflect its value shaping role is of great significance. English learning is inevitably accompanied by the transmission of Western cultural customs and values. To some extent, it is learning Western customs and mainstream values. Faced with the differences in values and political systems between China and the West, their values will inevitably undergo invisible changes. In order to cope with the complex and ever-changing international ideology, the construction of “curriculum ideology and politics” in English courses is not only important but also necessary. Emphasizing and strengthening the ideological and political aspects of English is of great significance for guiding college students to establish political awareness, firm beliefs, adhere to right value orientation, and apply Marxist methodology to address cultural differences between China and the West.

5.2. Enhancing National Identity and Cultural Belongings

The construction of “new literal arts” in the context of the new era has the characteristics of the times. At present, the world is in the context of economic globalization, information mobility, and cultural diversity. China is at a new node in the historical intersection. As an important component of new cultural construction, foreign language discipline, in line with
the trend of the times, will help promote Chinese culture, develop cultural construction in the new era, and enhance China’s discourse expression ability on the world stage. To serve the development needs of socialism with Chinese characteristics and establish a disciplinary value system with Chinese influence. In the actual teaching of English courses, it involves western economy, politics, culture, social formation, values, moral thinking and other contents. It is necessary to guide students to rationally look at the similarities and differences between various intertwined trends of thought, absorb the essence of western culture, remove the dross, establish the correct value orientation, and cultivate higher ideological and political literacy. This requires teachers to do a good job in ideological guidance. Faced with complex and ever-changing international issues, foreign language teaching should not only focus on the instrumental role of language, but also promote the cultural consciousness of young students in a multicultural background, cherish the excellent traditional Chinese culture, and use English to tell Chinese stories well. Language learning is not a repetition or simple imitation of Western culture, but a learning process of reconstructing cultural identity through communication between different languages and cultures. Teachers must adhere to correct ideological and political methods, incorporate knowledge, professionalism, and ideology into the teaching process, to help students develop language and cultural awareness, and enhance national identity and cultural belonging. While improving professional application skills, emphasis should be placed on educating students’ thinking skills, enhancing their sense of social responsibility and mission, in order to achieve the educational goal of “curriculum ideology and politics” in English major.

5.3. Improving the Value of Textbook

The English textbooks cover a wide range of content with great situational and practical applicability. The learning of various language scenarios and topics in textbooks can not only cultivate students’ comprehensive English abilities in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation, but also help cultivate their qualities such as love for the party, patriotism, civilization, politeness, firmness, and composure. This is fully consistent with the foothold of ideological and political education, providing it with diverse content. Conducting ideological and political construction in English classrooms will also help achieve subtle value shaping for students, guide them to understand and inherit the excellent traditional Chinese culture.

6. Strategies for Ideological and Political Education in English Majors

6.1. The Inner Quality of Teachers

Taking the concept of curriculum ideology and politics as the core, implementing the reform of curriculum ideology and politics in English majors, one of the key factors is the level of English teachers’ ideological and political education, which largely determines the actual effect of teaching reform. Teachers are the first person in charge and powerful promoter of curriculum ideological and political education, and the ideological and political quality of teachers directly affects the quality of curriculum ideological and political education. English teachers must re-examine their own responsibilities, change their teaching concepts, and focus not only on strengthening their professional knowledge and English teaching ability, but also have a good moral quality and excellent ideological and political quality. Teachers need to continuously strengthen their learning of ideological and political theories through self-study, training and other ways and channels, and make efforts to learn, understand and apply them. Teachers, as preachers, must understand the way and believe in the way, and English teachers need to constantly improve their own ideological and political education ability, so as to promote the integration of ideological and political education and English teaching. In addition, teachers need to strengthen their own teacher ethics, improve their own character cultivation, and set a good example for students through their own words and behaviour. By actively practicing socialist core values, they provide the right leadership for the healthy development of students’ ideological quality. Furthermore, teachers should also endeavour to improve their own national cultural literacy, study traditional culture seriously, understand the essence of traditional Chinese culture, be familiar with China’s historical development, and know the customs, traditions and habits of different places. In the process of teaching, they can effectively compare Chinese and Western cultures by combining textbooks and learning materials, effectively guide students to express Chinese culture in English, and cultivate students’ ability to use English to achieve the dissemination and communication of national culture.

6.2. Teaching Content and Materials

Classes are generally centred around the content of the relevant teaching materials, which should not only be in line with the learning age of students, but also with the current situation and psychology of students. The teaching materials should not only meet the students’ learning age, but also the students’ current situation and psychology. When choosing teaching materials for English subjects, the ideology, science, accuracy, practicality and innovation of the teaching materials should be taken into consideration, and the preparation and selection of the teaching materials should also take into full consideration of the ideological and political education in the English classroom, so that the contents and objectives of it can be integrated into the English classroom as well. This will reduce the pressure on English teachers to prepare for classes and allow them to devote more time and energy to the planning and design of English classroom teaching activities, so as to avoid differences in the positioning of the objectives of ideology and politics due to the differences between different schools and different teachers. The teaching content of English majors involves western knowledge and related culture, which belongs to another language form and cultural form, and naturally contradicts with the ideology and politics education, and there is a lack of elements of ideology and politics in the English teaching content, therefore, it is necessary to appropriately increase it in order to effectively implement the ideological and political education, and to incorporate China’s cultural ideology and socialist core values into the content of the teaching materials. At the same time, in the part that involves a lot of western culture, Chinese culture should be added appropriately, so that the two can form a contrast, on the one hand, to cultivate the students’ critical thinking, and on the other hand, to reduce the impact and influence of western culture on the students. In addition, the teaching of ideology and politics in English courses must
be supported by rich content, so expanding and enriching the teaching content becomes the basis for promoting the reform of ideological and political teaching in English courses.

6.3. Teaching Methods

The construction of “new liberal arts” in the context is characterised by innovation. Innovation is the vitality of the discipline. The construction of “new liberal arts” should be based on inheritance, in line with the actual situation of China, facing the world, and strengthening the transformation of the discipline. Under the background of “new liberal arts”, insisting on the innovation of education and teaching concepts, forming the innovative development of humanities, which puts forward new requirements for the reform of the teaching of English course ideology and politics, and the traditional classroom teaching methods have become too backward, so it is necessary to optimise the teaching methods of course ideology and politics. First of all, in the course of teaching, teachers should strengthen the interaction with students, avoid simple theoretical knowledge instillation. Students can be grouped together to discuss the content of a teaching according to the group report on the results of the discussion, after that teachers correct the results of the discussion, in order to fully stimulate the students’ enthusiasm for learning. At the same time, the teacher can use the scenario teaching method, according to the English teaching content simulation scenarios, guiding students practice exercise, which not only can enhance the ability to master the English language, but also cultivate their correct values.

Besides, foreign languages should actively broaden disciplinary fields and take advantage of the invention of new technologies to provide appropriate tools for disciplinary research. The “new liberal arts” require breaking down disciplinary barriers, making use of new technologies, integrating humanities and science and technology disciplines, achieving mutual promotion and synergistic development, and promoting cultural integration. In China, the form of teaching English courses in some schools has already changed, such as, MOOC, SPOC courses, online courses and online classrooms which are quietly prevalent. In the context of the deep integration of information technology and education, the effective teaching of course ideology should be closely related to the content of the textbook. It is important to integrate with the teaching method and classroom organization, so as to ensure the smooth implementation of course ideology education. Teachers should make full use of modern teaching methods, carry out the course through multimedia teaching methods, present the teaching content in the form of video, audio, pictures, etc, to better attract the attention of students and improve the effect of ideological and political teaching in the English course. In the teaching process, it is necessary to make full and effective use of information technology means, enrich the learning resources, expand the space-time dimension of ideological and political learning, and enhance the effect of ideological and political education.

7. Conclusion

In the context of the “new liberal arts”, the curriculum reform of English majors should implement the educational mission of establishing morality, cultivating and practicing socialist core values, and carrying out the ideological and political education throughout the whole process of teaching and educating people. Under the background of ideological and political education reform, most of the schools have carried out the practical work of curriculum ideology and politics, and the combination of ideology and politics construction and each major has become the promotion of its development. As a special discipline, the English major is closely connected with western culture, which makes it more necessary to combine the English discipline with the ideological and political education. This paper elaborates the necessity of curriculum ideological and political education in the English major from the aspects of students’ value cultivation, national identity, and the value of teaching materials, so as to further cultivate the students’ correct values and to promote the dissemination of the excellent Chinese culture. In addition, the author also puts forward suggestions on teaching content and methods. It is significant to explore the elements of ideology and politics, enrich the teaching content, and integrate the ideology and politics contents such as Chinese excellent traditional culture, laws and regulations into the translation course. Giving full play to the advantages of resources, enrich teaching means, make full use of modern information technology, strengthen computer-assisted teaching, and improve teaching quality, all of which is necessary to the curriculum ideological and political education. In additions, schools should integrate implicit education, increase extracurricular practice, enrich and innovate the forms of ideology and political education, and stimulate students’ enthusiasm and initiative in learning. Emphasis is placed on teacher training to enhance the ability, organize academic lectures, and carry out the ideological and political teaching design competition.

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