

Original Paper

Research on the Path of Adaptation Education for Freshmen in Higher Vocational Colleges

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Abstract

Adaptive education is not only beneficial for facilitating the successful role transition of new vocational college students and their rapid integration into university life, leading to healthy personal and professional development, but it also enhances the quality of talent cultivation in vocational institutions. Considering the unique origins and developmental needs of these students, the implementation of adaptive education for new vocational college students should include timely psychological adaptation and mental health guidance. This encompasses ideological and political education as a primary approach to ideological guidance. Additionally, leveraging the dormitory environment as an educational platform ensures the effectiveness of residential education. The use of online media platforms is also crucial for providing effective educational guidance in the digital realm.

Keywords

Vocational College Newcomers, Ideological and Political Education, Adaptive Education

1. Introduction

Higher vocational education constitutes a significant segment of China's higher education system, bearing the responsibility of cultivating high-skilled talents needed at the forefront of production, construction, service, and management sectors. New students in vocational colleges, originating from diverse educational backgrounds, are confronted with the immediate challenges of transitioning to and swiftly adapting to the academic and social environment of university life. The effectiveness of adaptive education for these newcomers is crucial. It directly influences their ability to smoothly transition at this new juncture in their lives, ensuring healthy personal development and the realization of their life values. The success or failure of this adaptive educational process is pivotal in determining their initial experience in higher education and their subsequent personal and professional growth.

2. Analysis of the Current Student Source Structure and Characteristics in Vocational Colleges

2.1 Diversification in the Composition of Student Sources in Current Vocational Colleges

The student base in China's vocational colleges today is characterized by diversity and complexity, primarily comprising four categories. The first category consists of regular high school graduates who enter through the national college entrance examination. These students generally possess solid foundational knowledge in subjects like mathematics, English, and Chinese, making them among the better-prepared in the new vocational college cohort. The second category is students admitted through independent recruitment, who have undergone specialized technical training during their high school years. They exhibit strong practical technical skills, but their foundational academic knowledge and self-management abilities are relatively weaker compared to regular high school graduates. The third category includes students from the '2+3' system, which encompasses two years of high school and three years of specialized vocational education. These students typically have poorer academic performance, lack good study habits, and have weaker self-discipline, though their education focuses on cultivating comprehensive qualities and vocational skills. The fourth category comprises individuals from the workforce who meet the admission criteria, including young employees from enterprises, veterans, laid-off workers, and modern professional farmers. This group is often not subjected to stringent academic performance requirements for admission.

2.2 Characteristics of the Student Base in Current Vocational Colleges

Firstly, in terms of learning autonomy, the majority of vocational college students exhibit poor self-directed learning abilities. The learning environment in university differs markedly from that in high school, where students are accustomed to studying under the guidance and supervision of teachers. In contrast, university education demands a higher degree of self-motivation and initiative, often leading to a sense of confusion and disorientation during the transition phase.

Secondly, regarding the understanding of vocational education, most students possess limited knowledge about it. Many enroll in vocational colleges due to various reasons such as not performing well in the college entrance examination, errors in choosing preferences, or family circumstances. A significant portion of these students lacks a clear understanding of vocational education, their future career paths, or even the purpose of their studies.

Thirdly, from the perspective of overall student quality, it tends to be on the lower side. The student body in vocational colleges is diverse and multifaceted, with most students having a weak academic foundation. Their learning capabilities are limited, and they often exhibit poor life habits and low self-discipline, contributing to an overall lower quality in terms of student attributes.

3. Adaptation Challenges Faced by New Students in Vocational Colleges

3.1 Issues of Maladaptation Due to Changes in the Learning Environment

Young university students are at a crucial stage of physical and psychological development. Confronting the new environment of university life, they are prone to various forms of psychological maladjustment. If these issues are not addressed promptly, they may lead to psychological disorders or even mental illnesses. For instance, many new university students lack clear life goals and plans. The absence of definite learning objectives and motivation can lead to feelings of confusion and disorientation. Over time, this can cause a range of psychological issues among students, such as low spirits, a lack of motivation, anxiety, and depression. University students are in a phase of unstable emotional self-management. Upon entering university and facing unfamiliar environments and relationships, many new students experience negative emotions like tension, anxiety, and indifference. If these emotions are not properly managed and allowed to proliferate unchecked, they can lead to severe psychological issues and potentially extreme behaviors. Therefore, effective measures are urgently needed to address and guide students through these emotional challenges, helping them overcome these difficulties.

3.2 Issues of Maladaptation Due to Changes in the Learning Model

Students in vocational colleges generally face the issue of a weak academic foundation. During their time in vocational high schools or technical schools, their learning was often passive, dictated by teachers' arrangements. To achieve good grades, besides inherent aptitude, they relied on diligently following teachers' instructions, coupled with positive attitudes and scientific study methods. However, university learning, unlike high school, requires a shift from passive to active learning. It demands students to proactively explore and seek knowledge, a quality that many new university students lack. This deficiency in self-directed learning awareness and ability leads to their maladaptation to university life, often manifesting as confusion about 'what to learn' and 'how to learn'.

3.3 Issues of Maladaptation Due to Unclear Life Planning

During their high school years, most students have a clear objective: to achieve good grades and gain admission to a desirable university, ultimately securing a promising future. However, upon entering university, some new students struggle due to the lack of new goals and clear life planning. This leads to a state of aimlessness, with no motivation or ability to strive, resulting in a life of blind following and listlessness. Many students spend their first year in university in a state of confusion. Furthermore, influenced by traditional misconceptions, some university freshmen believe that university life does not require the same level of hard work and relentless effort as high school. Only when they actually step into university do they realize the significant gap between their ideals and reality. While a portion of these new students can adapt to this change by setting new goals, many fail to establish new objectives, falling into a period of brief wandering and confusion (Yang, 2019). This lack of direction during the first year of university is common. If vocational college freshmen are unable to smoothly transition, they risk losing their desire to learn and their motivation to strive. This can lead to truancy, a dislike of

studying, and in some cases, students may even apply to drop out, abandoning their education altogether.

4. The Significance of Adaptive Education for New Students in Vocational Colleges

4.1 Facilitating a Smooth Role Transition and Adaptation to University Life for Vocational College Newcomers

University freshmen, moving from a familiar environment to an entirely new one, are confronted with unfamiliar teachers, classmates, and novel academic and social demands. This significant change requires an adjustment in their learning approach and an update in their interpersonal relationships. Such transitions often lead to psychological discomfort, panic, anxiety, and irritability among new students. Many may begin the new academic term feeling a stark disconnect between their expectations and reality, leading to a lack of motivation, poor study efficiency, and a potential decline in academic performance. Generally, these students lack the skills and abilities to cope with these contradictions and difficulties. This scenario underscores the need for educational institutions to actively provide guidance, assisting students in smoothly transitioning into their new roles, enhancing their adaptability, and integrating into university life as quickly as possible.

4.2 Assisting Vocational College Newcomers in Establishing New Goals and Realizing Life Values

For university freshmen embarking on a new phase of life, the inability to effectively transition and establish new goals can lead to a temporary state of confusion and even adverse emotions like anxiety and aversion to study. Effective adaptive education can promptly help them set new objectives in this new life stage, facilitating a smooth transition in their goals. Adaptive education enables these new students to quickly adapt to their roles, understand the significance of university education, and contemplate their future paths post-graduation. It provides clear direction for the students in their journey of growth and personal development, helping them embark on a new quest for achievement. Through adaptive education at the onset of university life, students are guided to establish new ambitious goals, fostering the realization that they should strive not only for personal success but also contribute societal value. This education aims to mold them into well-rounded socialist builders and successors, endowed with both talent and virtue (Xiao, 2020).

4.3 Enhancing Self-Management Skills and Overall Abilities of Vocational College Newcomers

University students have more freedom in managing their time, offering a broader platform for development. However, university learning differs from high school in that it relies more on self-motivated and conscientious learning. Therefore, a student's awareness and ability for self-directed learning largely determine how much knowledge they can acquire. A person's self-discipline and self-management abilities directly impact their future development. The relatively relaxed academic environment in university does not reduce the demands on students; on the contrary, it sets higher expectations for their self-learning and self-discipline. Many vocational college students struggle precisely due to a lack of initiative and learning skills, leading to aimless and unproductive university

experiences. This results in graduates lacking essential knowledge and skills, ultimately facing unemployment. Hence, providing adaptive education to vocational college newcomers is crucial in developing their self-learning and self-discipline abilities, thereby enhancing their overall capacities.

5. Pathways for Adaptive Education of New Students in Vocational Colleges

5.1 Implementing Psychological Adaptation Education and Fostering Mental Health Awareness

Firstly, targeted psychological counseling should be provided to help new students adapt to the new environment and lifestyle. After first-year students enroll, a comprehensive psychological survey should be conducted promptly. This could be through individual counseling sessions or psychological interviews, aiming to establish precise and standardized mental health profiles. Regular follow-ups and check-ins are essential to monitor the psychological well-being of new university students and to effectively assist them in mental health education. This helps students develop a positive mindset to adapt to university life.

Secondly, it's beneficial to invite well-known mental health experts from within and outside the institution to conduct lectures on psychological health. These lectures, combining online and offline formats, aim to spread awareness about mental health and elevate the students' understanding of psychological well-being. They equip new students with knowledge about potential or existing psychological challenges and teach them methods to manage these issues.

Thirdly, organizing regular or irregular thematic activities centered on mental health is crucial. Activities like psychological quality development training, viewing psychological dramas, participating in group counseling games, mental health knowledge contests, and discussion sessions actively engage students. These activities aim to enhance students' psychological adaptability and coping skills, helping them adjust more quickly to university life.

Fourthly, using themed class meetings or group day activities to focus on university students' psychological adaptation is effective. These meetings can address topics such as managing interpersonal relationships, overcoming unhealthy romantic inclinations, combating internet addiction, and boosting self-confidence to overcome feelings of inferiority. Inviting class advisors to teach university study methods or having upperclassmen share their study plans and techniques can significantly help new students integrate into university life. This peer-led approach is instrumental in helping newcomers adapt swiftly to their new environment.

5.2 Emphasizing Ideological and Political Education for Guiding Thought Processes

Firstly, counselors should effectively utilize class and grade meetings to encourage new students to think proactively and adapt actively. For new vocational college students, it's crucial first to understand three key questions: Why attend university? What are the ultimate goals of university education? What are the prospects after graduation? During class meetings, through the guidance and questioning of counselors, students are encouraged to think proactively, plan early, face reality objectively, establish new goals, and make long-term career and future development plans.

Secondly, it's important to guide new students in solidifying their beliefs and strengthening their education in ideals and convictions. Ideological and political counselors and dedicated teachers should play a leading role in educating students. Utilizing class meetings and political theory classes, they should teach Marxist theory to reinforce the students' belief in Marxism. Students should be adept at applying the principles of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, the "Three Represents," the Scientific Outlook on Development, and the ideology of Socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era. This education aims to equip students with the ideological tools to guide their ideals and convictions, fostering a steadfast pursuit of the grand ideal of Communism and the common ideal of Socialism with Chinese characteristics. In doing so, students can realize their life values in contributing to the modernization and great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation (Liu, 2020).

Thirdly, conducting research on the ideological trends of new university students and timely guiding their thought processes is essential. In an era of rapid internet information development, where online content varies greatly in quality and is influenced by misleading Western social trends, new university students with limited ability to discern right from wrong may encounter problems in political stance, weak identification with mainstream ideology, diminished moral consciousness, vulgar internet language, and lack of integrity. Therefore, after new students enroll, it's vital to conduct timely research on their ideological trends. Accurately grasping these trends is key to helping them resolve any ideological and behavioral issues that arise after enrollment.

5.3 Leveraging the Dormitory as a Platform for Education

Firstly, universities should endeavor to develop counselors, class teachers, logistics personnel, security staff, and professional instructors into new entities responsible for student education. The aim is to promote comprehensive involvement in the dormitory life, facilitating face-to-face communication, exchange, and guidance with new students, thus assisting them in swiftly adapting to university life. Vocational colleges, based on their management realities, can categorize this involvement as academic tutors, life tutors, and dormitory guides. Academic tutors, consisting of full-time teachers, primarily provide professional assistance and regularly enter dormitories to guide students academically. Life tutors, comprising counselors, class teachers, student affairs staff, and logistics personnel, mainly offer guidance on aspects of personal growth, such as emotional intelligence training, public morality education, and habit formation. Dormitory guides, including counselors, dormitory managers, and senior students, focus on peer education and mentoring to help new students overcome challenges in both their personal and academic lives, thereby maximizing the role of dormitory tutors.

Secondly, the involvement of university leaders, such as secretaries and principals, in dormitory life is crucial for creating a family-like atmosphere. These leaders should engage in face-to-face and close-range interactions with students, primarily addressing their ideological confusions. They should discuss topics of growth, success, and talent development that concern young students and actively participate in student community activities. By befriending students during these activities, leaders can assist students in securing a solid foundation in life, planting the seeds for their future, and building a

platform for their development. This approach aims to resolve the ideological dilemmas of young university students, guiding them out of confusion and towards realizing their life values (Xu, 2016).

5.4 Utilizing Online Media Platforms for Educational Guidance in Cyberspace

Firstly, online media platforms can be leveraged to guide new university students in timely adjusting their mindset. Before new students arrive on campus, official social media channels like WeChat public accounts, Weibo, or Douyin can be used to deliver engaging and inspiring content. This content should aim to educate new students about facing the upcoming university life, emphasizing that their past achievements are now behind them and that entering university means facing entirely new challenges (Zhou, 2013).

Secondly, new media platforms can be utilized for promoting campus life. Employing mobile social media marketing strategies and appealing formats, new students can be introduced to various aspects of campus life through engaging graphics, texts, and videos about student events and club activities. Promoting campus life helps new students understand and familiarize themselves with their new environment, aiding them in acclimatizing to the university, finding a sense of belonging, and alleviating any anxiety or unease about the unfamiliar setting.

Thirdly, establishing class-specific communication groups on platforms like WeChat or QQ can facilitate direct communication with students. Through these platforms, class tutors and counselors can conduct informative sessions, offering in-depth insights into various academic disciplines. This not only helps students understand their chosen fields of study but also fosters strong student-teacher relationships and reinforces their commitment to their chosen disciplines.

Fourthly, online open courses can be used to provide education on career planning for new university students. Hosting online lectures with career planning experts can introduce students to relevant knowledge in this area. This approach enables new students to plan their professional development early, find their life direction, objectively assess themselves, make rational career choices, and formulate career plans that align with their personal development goals, thereby motivating them to strive towards these objectives.

6. Conclusion

With the continuous development of higher vocational education in China and the rapid expansion in the enrollment scale of vocational colleges, the number of enrollees has been increasing, resulting in a more complex and diversified student source structure. Considering the characteristics of this student structure and the psychological traits of new university students, it is essential for vocational colleges to keep pace with the times and aim precisely in their efforts. This involves continuously exploring new approaches and methods in adaptive education for new students, guiding them to swiftly integrate into university life and laying a solid foundation for their entire university journey.

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