

Original Paper

“Community Literature” Practice: A Case Study of College Students Promoting Urban-Rural Cultural Integration Through Selected Readings in British and American Literature

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Abstract

This study focuses on the “community literature” practice where college students promote urban-rural cultural integration through selected readings in British and American literature. It analyzes the practice’s background, specific models, typical cases, and outcomes, explores challenges faced, and proposes countermeasures, aiming to provide new insights for urban-rural cultural integration.

Keywords

community literature, selected readings in British and American literature, urban-rural cultural integration, university student practices

Introduction

Urban-rural cultural integration stands as a critical issue in contemporary social development. As urbanization accelerates, cultural disparities between cities and rural areas have become increasingly pronounced. While urban and rural cultures offer potential for mutual enrichment through exchange and interaction, they also face challenges in achieving seamless integration. Against this backdrop, “community literature” initiatives have emerged. Using communities as platforms, these practices foster cultural exchange and mutual understanding between urban and rural residents through literary activities. As a vital component of literary education, selected readings from British and American literature offer rich cultural insights and diverse perspectives, providing unique resources for urban-rural cultural integration. As a new force in society, college students possess high cultural literacy and innovative capabilities. Their participation in “community literature” practices can introduce outstanding elements from English and American literature into urban-rural cultural exchanges, injecting new vitality into cultural integration. Therefore, researching how college students

promote urban-rural cultural integration through “community literature” practices using English and American literature selections holds significant practical significance.

1. Literature Review

1.1 Research on Community Literature

Community literature is a literary form rooted in specific neighborhoods, reflecting community life and expressing residents' emotions and values. Characterized by locality, mass participation, and realism, it enhances residents' sense of belonging and cohesion. Studies indicate that community literature plays a vital role in community cultural development by documenting historical transformations, preserving cultural traditions, and fostering interaction among residents. For instance, some communities organize literary creation activities to encourage residents to produce works reflecting community life, thereby enriching residents' spiritual and cultural lives while elevating the community's cultural sophistication.

1.2 The Influence of British and American Literature on College Students' Humanities Literacy

British and American literature constitute a vital component of world literature, embodying profound humanistic spirit and intellectual depth. Reading such works broadens college students' intellectual horizons, fosters well-rounded personalities, enriches emotional experiences, and enhances linguistic proficiency and cultural awareness. For instance, Elizabeth Bennet's independent perspective on marriage in *Pride and Prejudice* inspires college students to establish sound life views and values; the pursuit of beauty and understanding of life in *The Black Tower* can enrich their emotional world. Simultaneously, the linguistic styles and expressions in Anglo-American literature provide exemplary models for language learning, aiding in the improvement of their English reading and comprehension abilities.

1.3 Practical Cases of Urban-Rural Cultural Integration

Numerous practical cases of urban-rural cultural integration exist both domestically and internationally. In China, Mingyue Village attracted artists and cultural creatives through policy support and industrial development, establishing the “Mingyue International Pottery Village.” This initiative fostered cultural industries like pottery and tie-dye, promoting cultural exchange and integration between urban and rural areas. Concurrently, Mingyue Village prioritized talent cultivation by offering industrial and cultural skills training to enhance villagers' cultural literacy and business capabilities. Internationally, the United States possesses extensive experience in immigrant cultural integration. By vigorously developing immigrant training institutions and offering civic education and vocational skills training, it assists immigrants in assimilating into American society, fostering a culturally diverse yet unified framework. These cases provide valuable insights for college students seeking to advance urban-rural cultural integration through “community literature” practices facilitated by selected readings in British and American literature.

2. Research Methods

2.1 Case Study Method

Select representative cases of “community literature” practices for in-depth analysis, such as a rural cultural hall promoting urban-rural cultural exchange through British and American literature courses. This cultural hall regularly invites urban cultural volunteers to offer calligraphy, painting, music, and other courses to villagers, with the British and American literature course being particularly popular. By analyzing this case, we summarize its successful experiences and existing issues to provide reference for practices in other regions.

2.2 Questionnaire Survey Method

Questionnaires targeting university students and urban/rural residents were designed to gauge their awareness, attitudes, and participation levels regarding “community literature” initiatives and selected readings of British and American literature. Survey content included knowledge of British and American literature, willingness to participate in “community literature” activities, and perspectives on urban-rural cultural integration. This survey collected extensive data to provide empirical support for the research.

2.3 Interview Method

Conduct interviews with college students, community workers, and urban/rural residents involved in “community literature” practices to gain in-depth insights into specific implementation approaches, encountered challenges, and solutions. For instance, engage with college students participating in selected readings of British and American literature to understand teaching challenges and gains; communicate with community workers to gather their perspectives and suggestions on “community literature” initiatives.

3. Analysis of the Current Status of “Community Literature” Practices in Promoting Urban-Rural Cultural Integration

3.1 Practical Context and Motivation

The current development of urban and rural cultures exhibits significant imbalances. Urban cultures develop rapidly, with new cultural forms and concepts continuously emerging, while rural cultures lag behind, characterized by rudimentary cultural facilities and a lack of basic venues for cultural activities. Simultaneously, young people largely aspire to the vibrancy of cities, leading to a mass migration to urban areas. This trend has resulted in a talent shortage crisis for the preservation of rural cultural traditions. University students participating in “Community Literature” practices aim to build bridges for urban-rural cultural exchange through selected readings of British and American literature. This initiative promotes mutual understanding and integration between urban and rural cultures, injects new vitality into rural cultural development, and narrows the cultural gap between urban and rural areas.

3.2 Primary Forms and Content of Practice

University students engage in diverse forms of “Community Literature” practices, including offering selected readings of British and American literature courses in communities, hosting literary lectures and book-sharing sessions, and organizing literary creation competitions. In these courses and activities, students select classic works of British and American literature—such as Shakespearean plays and Dickensian novels—for interpretation and discussion, guiding urban and rural residents to appreciate the cultural significance and artistic value of these texts. Simultaneously, they encourage residents to engage in literary creation by integrating rural landscapes, folk customs, and urban cultural elements into their works, thereby fostering cultural exchange and convergence between urban and rural communities.

3.3 Scope of Practice and Participating Groups

The “Community Literature” initiative is implemented across diverse settings including neighborhoods, schools, and rural cultural halls, spanning both urban and rural areas. Participants encompass university students, urban and rural residents, and community workers. University students serve as the core practitioners, leveraging their academic expertise to organize and execute activities. Urban and rural residents participate to enhance their cultural literacy through engagement. Community workers provide logistical support and coordination, ensuring the smooth operation of all initiatives.

4. Specific Models for Promoting Urban-Rural Cultural Integration Through Selected Readings in British and American Literature

4.1 Introducing Literature Courses into Communities

College students bring selected readings in British and American literature into communities, designing tailored curricula based on residents’ cultural literacy and interests. Course content encompasses not only literary appreciation but also instruction in creative writing techniques. For instance, when teaching Shakespeare’s Hamlet, students first introduce the play’s historical context and themes. They then guide residents in analyzing Hamlet’s character and inner world, concluding by encouraging residents to write their own excerpts imitating Shakespeare’s linguistic style. This approach enhances both literary literacy and creative abilities among urban and rural residents while fostering cultural exchange and integration.

4.2 Building Communication Platforms Through Literary Activities

Organizing activities such as book-sharing sessions and literary competitions centered on British and American literature provides urban and rural residents with platforms for exchange and interaction. At these sessions, participants share their experiences and insights from reading these works, fostering mutual understanding of diverse cultures. For instance, during a Jane Eyre discussion, urban and rural attendees shared their interpretations of Jane’s pursuit of equality and freedom from distinct perspectives, deepening cultural comprehension between groups. In literary creation competitions, residents draw inspiration from British and American literature while incorporating elements of urban

and rural life into their works. Selected outstanding pieces are displayed within the community, further promoting the dissemination and exchange of urban and rural cultures.

4.3 Literary Creation Integrating Urban and Rural Elements

Encourage college students and urban/rural residents to blend urban and rural cultural elements in their literary creations, producing works with distinctive urban-rural characteristics. For example, using rural natural landscapes and folk culture as backdrops, combined with narrative techniques and expressive methods from British and American literature, to create novels, poetry, and other works reflecting the transformations in urban and rural life. These works showcase the unique charm of the countryside while incorporating modern urban cultural elements, promoting mutual learning and integration between urban and rural cultures. Simultaneously, through the dissemination and sharing of these works, more people gain insight into the differences and commonalities between urban and rural cultures, advancing their integrated development.

5. Case Study Analysis

5.1 Case Study 1: Anglo-American Literature Courses at a Rural Cultural Hall

A rural cultural hall partnered with a university to regularly invite student volunteers to teach Anglo-American literature courses for villagers. The curriculum included appreciation of classic works and spoken English practice. Volunteers employed engaging teaching methods like role-playing and group discussions to stimulate villagers' interest. For instance, when teaching Robinson Crusoe, volunteers organized role-playing activities where villagers experienced Robinson's survival on a deserted island firsthand, deepening their understanding of the work. After a period of study, villagers improved their English proficiency and gained a more profound understanding of Anglo-American culture. Simultaneously, the cultural hall became a vital venue for urban-rural cultural exchange, where city visitors interacted with villagers to share literary insights, fostering cultural integration between urban and rural areas. The success of this case lies in fully leveraging the cultural hall's role as a community hub. Through university-rural collaboration, it achieved resource sharing and complementary strengths. However, practical challenges remain, such as sustaining villagers' long-term learning motivation and enhancing the relevance of course content.

5.2 Case Study 2: Anglo-American Literature Exchange in Urban-Rural School Partnerships

A city school partnered with a rural school to launch Anglo-American literature exchange activities. Teachers and students from the urban school regularly visited the rural school to conduct lectures on British and American literature and book-sharing sessions. Rural students also gained opportunities to visit and learn at the urban school. During a lecture on Pride and Prejudice, the urban school teacher vividly introduced the work's background and plot through film clips and visual aids, guiding students to analyze character portrayals and thematic ideas. Rural students actively participated in discussions, offering many unique insights. Through these exchanges, friendships formed between urban and rural students, deepening mutual cultural understanding. Simultaneously, rural students enhanced their

English proficiency and literary literacy. The innovation lies in establishing a long-term, stable exchange mechanism through school partnerships, providing more interaction opportunities for students from both settings. However, implementation challenges include transportation difficulties and scheduling conflicts.

5.3 Case Study 3: The “Internet + Community Literature” Model for Disseminating British and American Literature

Leveraging internet platforms, this initiative promotes British and American literature through “Internet + Community Literature” activities. College students establish WeChat public accounts and short video channels to publish analyses and interpretations of literary works, attracting urban and rural audiences. For instance, a university student team created a WeChat public account titled “Journey Through British and American Literature,” regularly sharing classic works accompanied by detailed analyses and captivating illustrations. Simultaneously, they released themed short videos on platforms like “Shakespeare’s Dramatic World” and “Dickens’ London,” introducing British and American literature to urban and rural audiences in an engaging and accessible manner. Through internet dissemination, the influence of British and American literature has expanded, enabling residents to learn about it anytime, anywhere, thereby promoting the digital integration of urban and rural cultures. The strength of this case lies in leveraging the internet’s convenience and reach to overcome temporal and spatial constraints. However, challenges persist, including inconsistent content quality and insufficient user retention.

6. Practical Outcomes and Impact

6.1 Enhanced Cultural Awareness

Through participation in “Community Literature” initiatives, urban and rural residents gained deeper insights into both Anglo-American and local cultures. In literature selection courses and activities, residents encountered diverse cultural perspectives, value systems, and lifestyles, broadening their cultural horizons. For instance, reading Hamlet exposed residents to Western reflections on humanity, justice, and vengeance. Through creative writing workshops, participants integrated local cultural elements into their works, deepening their sense of identity and pride in their heritage. Simultaneously, cultural exchanges between urban and rural residents fostered mutual understanding and respect, reducing cultural barriers.

6.2 Enhanced Community Cohesion

“Community literature” initiatives fostered interaction among residents, strengthening community cohesion. Through literary activities and courses, residents collaborated in learning and creation, building positive interpersonal relationships. For instance, at book-sharing sessions, residents exchanged reading insights and life experiences, deepening mutual bonds; in literary competitions, participants encouraged and assisted one another to complete works collectively, enhancing teamwork

awareness. This strengthened cohesion helps foster a harmonious community atmosphere, promoting stability and development.

6.3 Talent Development and Growth

Participating college students develop and enhance their organizational skills, communication abilities, and cultural literacy. During the practice, students organize various literary activities and courses while coordinating resources, honing their organizational and coordination capabilities. Simultaneously, interactions with urban and rural residents improve their communication and interpersonal skills. Moreover, through in-depth study and research of British and American literary works, their cultural literacy has been elevated. For instance, one student reported developing a deeper interest in British and American literature after participating in the “Community Literature” initiative, alongside significant improvements in English proficiency and the ability to apply theoretical knowledge to practical activities.

7. Challenges and Countermeasures

7.1 Challenges

During implementation, the “Community Literature” initiative faces several challenges. First, limited resources—including insufficient funding, venues, and teaching materials—constrain the scope and scale of activities. Second, participation rates among urban and rural residents remain low, partly due to lack of interest in English and American literature or constraints such as work and daily commitments. Additionally, university students’ professional skills and practical experience require further development, potentially leading to difficulties in organizing and executing activities.

7.2 Countermeasures and Recommendations

To address resource constraints, social resources can be consolidated by seeking support from governments, enterprises, and social organizations to raise funds and materials, thereby improving practice conditions. Examples include applying for cultural project funding from government departments and collaborating with businesses on sponsorship initiatives. To boost participation among urban and rural residents, promotional efforts should be intensified. Utilize multiple channels to communicate the significance and content of “community literature” practices, thereby increasing awareness and participation willingness. Simultaneously, design more diverse and relatable activity formats and content based on residents’ interests and needs. Regarding the lack of professional skills and practical experience among university students, strengthen training and guidance. Invite professional instructors to provide training for students, sharing practical experience and teaching methodologies to enhance their practical capabilities and proficiency.

8. Conclusion and Outlook

This study demonstrates that the “community literature” practice, where college students promote urban-rural cultural integration through selected readings of British and American literature, holds

significant meaning and value. Through specific approaches—such as introducing communities into literature courses, establishing communication platforms via literary activities, and integrating urban and rural elements into literary creation—it effectively fosters cultural exchange and integration between urban and rural areas. This practice enhances cultural awareness among residents of both regions, strengthens community cohesion, and contributes to the growth and development of college students.

Moving forward, the “community literature” practice holds promise for broader regional expansion and deepening. Its forms and content can be further diversified by integrating modern technologies such as virtual reality and artificial intelligence to innovate literary teaching and dissemination methods, thereby enhancing the practice’s appeal and engagement. Concurrently, strengthening collaborations with governments, enterprises, and social organizations will foster a favorable environment for whole-society participation, contributing more substantially to urban-rural cultural integration.

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