

Original Paper

The Innovation and Practice of Synergistic Cultivation Model of Integrating the Spirit of Volunteer Teaching in Western China into the Moral Education of College English

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Abstract

Volunteer teaching in western China is an important initiative to serve the development of the western region of the country and contribute to the talent and science education of the west region. As a distinctive culture of Baoding University, volunteer teaching in western China is rich in educational values. Based on College English course, this paper mainly discusses the current dilemmas of the moral education of this course, puts forward synergistic cultivation strategies of integrating the spirit of volunteer teaching in western China into the moral education of College English, and presents some preliminary achievements of the synergistic cultivation model. It is expected that this research will promote the combination of college English teaching and patriotic education, realize the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education, and increase the output of volunteer teaching talents.

Keywords

volunteer teaching, moral education, college English, synergistic cultivation

1. Introduction

Education is of critical importance to the future of China. What kind of people we should cultivate, how, and for whom—these are the fundamental issues that education must address. The most fundamental object of education is to foster virtue. In December 2016, the National Conference on Ideological and Political Work in Colleges and Universities (Ministry of Education, 2016) instructed that “we should use classroom teaching as the main channel, so that all kinds of courses and ideological and political theory courses go in the same direction and form a synergistic effect”. The Symposium for Teachers of Ideological and Political Theory Courses in Schools (2019) emphasized again that “we

should improve the curriculum system and address the interplay between various types of courses and the ideological and political courses”. In May 2020, the Ministry of Education issued the Guideline for the Construction of Curriculum-based Ideological and Political Education in Higher Education Institutions (2020), which provides detailed instructions on how to promote and implement the construction of curriculum-based ideological and political education in all kinds of courses. The Guideline also stresses public fundamental courses should focus on strengthening students’ ideals and beliefs, fostering patriotism, enhancing moral cultivation, increasing knowledge and insight, fostering a striving spirit, and upgrading students’ comprehensive qualities in an imperceptible manner. All of these above have pointed out the direction for the moral education of the College English curriculum in the new era.

Since 2003, the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League and the Ministry of Education decided to jointly implement China’s “Go West” Program, which is an important strategic initiative in serving the strategy of large-scale development of the western region, the strategy for invigorating China through science and education and the strategy of workforce development. Volunteer Teaching in Western China is a manifestation of China’s “Go West” Program. Baoding University, a local application-oriented university in China’s Hebei province, has responded to the call of the country by sending a batch of graduates to teach in the West since 2000. In 2014, on the eve of China’s Youth Day, General Secretary Xi replied to representatives of Baoding University’s graduates teaching in rural areas of western China, highly praising their excellent deeds and noble spirit. Xi (2014) said, “Striving together with the people, advancing together with the motherland, serving the people and dedicating yourself to the motherland are the right direction for contemporary Chinese youth.” Today, volunteer teaching in western China has become a shining symbol of Baoding University, which is also in line with the Report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (2022), which addresses that “We will accelerate high-quality, balanced development and urban-rural integration in compulsory education.” In the future, Baoding University will cultivate more students to serve the West.

In the context of the teaching reform of college English, volunteer teaching in western China, as a distinctive culture of Baoding University, can provide a wide range of teaching materials for the moral education of College English course. To integrate the spirit of volunteer teaching in western China into the moral education of college English can realize a synergistic cultivation effect, thus cultivating more qualified talents who can contribute to the national rejuvenation.

2. The Dilemmas of the Moral Education of College English at Baoding University

In order to investigate the current state of the moral education in college English at Baoding University, a questionnaire was designed and conducted among the teachers undertaking the teaching task of College English course. A total of 28 respondents took part in the survey, including 4 male teachers and 24 female teachers. The respondents have a reasonable age distribution with young and

middle-aged teachers taking the majority (32.14% of teachers aged 30-40 and 39.29% of teachers aged 40-50). Teachers over 50 and under 30 account for 14.29% respectively. The overall age distribution shows three generations, old, middle-aged and young. At the same time, there are 2 professors, 6 associate professors, 14 lecturers, and 6 teaching assistants, thus forming a good pattern of guidance and assistance. All of the 28 copies of the questionnaire are valid.

However, the results of the questionnaire are not satisfactory in view of the teaching objectives of the College English course. Judging from the current state of moral education in college English at Baoding University, the researcher concludes that the dilemmas mainly come from the following three aspects:

(1) Little connection between campus culture and the content of the College English course.

Most of the respondents have involved moral education in the teaching of the College English course, but they haven't paid enough attention to campus culture, such as volunteer teaching in western China. As it is one of the campus-based moral education resources, it has the unique advantage of being understood and accepted by students. If the teaching materials for volunteer teaching in western China were fully explored, it would be a useful addition to the moral education content of College English. In addition, there is a lack of English-language materials related to volunteer teaching in western China.

(2) Single teaching mode and students' weak moral and political literacy.

Some teachers are too blunt in the integration of moral education into college English teaching, thus making the moral education too obvious and unnatural. In this way, students may feel that the teacher is lecturing and they have little interest in learning. Moreover, online and offline blended teaching has not been sufficiently developed. Teaching methods are not diverse. Students have not been given enough realistic communication scenarios of volunteer teaching. The curriculum evaluation is not comprehensive. All of the above problems are not helpful in shaping the values of students, or in cultivating their moral and political literacy.

(3) Limited teaching and research ability in moral education of college English.

Although all the teachers teaching College English at Baoding University have received relevant training in moral education, they still lack the practical skills and research foundation for moral education. Some teachers have not learned enough about the theoretical knowledge of moral education. They find it difficult to establish a moral education matrix of knowledge points and elicit empathy in students. At the same time, the enthusiasm of teachers to study the moral education of college English needs to be promoted.

3. Synergistic Cultivation Strategies of Integrating the Spirit of Volunteer Teaching in Western China into the Moral Education of College English

College English is a course full of cultural exchanges between the East and the West. To meet the standard of Golden Course, college English teachers should integrate effective moral education to shape students' right worldview, outlook on life, and values while teaching English knowledge and

developing English skills. The previous study has shown the deficiencies existed in the present moral education of college English and the value of teaching the spirit of volunteer teaching in western China. In view of the fact that Baoding University holds the excellent tradition of volunteer teaching in western China, it is convenient to select relevant materials for moral education in College English. Therefore, it is feasible to explore the synergistic cultivation strategies of integrating the spirit of volunteer teaching in western China into the moral education of College English. The specific strategies adopted are as follows:

3.1 Incorporate Volunteer Teaching Spirit into Course Syllabuses of College English

Course syllabuses are revised in accordance with the philosophy of OBE (Outcome-based Education). At the same time, Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives, university orientation and characteristics of different majors are considered in the revision process. According to Bloom, the learning process can be divided into six stages, namely, remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating. Therefore, the revised Course Syllabuses should follow the cognitive process of the learners. Besides, the orientation of Baoding University is to cultivate applied talents so as to meet the needs of society. Since Baoding University has a long tradition of teacher education and volunteer teaching in western China is part of the campus culture, it has already become one of the university's responsibilities to train a group of teachers to pursue volunteer teaching or talents with the spirit of volunteer teaching. In view of the above, it is quite necessary to incorporate the spirit of volunteer teaching into the course syllabuses of College English, which not only reflects the moral education of this course, but also contributes to the development of qualified teachers or other competent talents from cognitive, emotional and skill perspectives.

First, researchers have conducted an in-depth study of the spirit of volunteer teaching in western China, which includes dedication, kindness, friendship, perseverance and many other valuable qualities. Second, researchers have optimized the course syllabuses of College English after several rounds of discussions. Some improvements have been made to highlight knowledge imparting, competence cultivation and value leading. Third, the spirit of volunteer teaching in western China has been incorporated into the overall teaching objectives of College English, specific unit objectives and even the lesson objectives. At the same time, other improvements including the improvements in teaching contents, teaching methods, teaching evaluation, etc. will be discussed in the following sections. It is hoped that the revised course syllabuses of College English will fully display the instrumental and humanistic features of College English, and further strengthen the inheritance of the spirit of volunteer teaching in western China.

3.2 Dig Deeper into Teaching Materials on Volunteer Teaching in Western China

Teaching materials is an important part for moral education of College English course. In order to collect more teaching materials on volunteer teaching in western China, researchers have made full use of various information resources, such as news reports, documentaries, movies, and dramas. Relevant materials can be classified into the following categories: (1) national theoretical documents and

President Xi's important speeches and replies on volunteer teaching in western China; (2) current news on volunteer teaching in western China; (3) history of volunteer teaching in western China by Baoding University; (4) typical volunteer teaching stories of graduates of Baoding University; (5) volunteer teaching activities in western China for students at Baoding University. These materials are precious teaching materials. Here, taking typical volunteer teaching stories of graduates of Baoding University as an example, the stories are collected as shown in the following table (part of the content):

Table 1. Typical Volunteer Teaching Stories of Graduates of Baoding University

Character	Story
Hou Chaoru	Ms. Hou conducts psychological training before exams to guard students' mental health.
Li Guizhi	Ms. Li tells students about the world outside the desert and encourages them to explore the value and meaning of life.
Xin Zhongqi	Mr. Xin is willing to spend his whole life fulfilling his promise "I won't go away".
Yue Gang	Mr. Yue tells the story of commuting by the iron rope bridge.

The digging of those materials should reflect the emotional and moral values of the volunteer teaching group, as well as their professional orientations. The relevant teaching material database is under construction. Meanwhile, the materials can be presented in different forms. For example, the translation of the documentary Bloom, which was released by Baoding University in 2020, has been incorporated into some translation exercises. In this way, materials on volunteer teaching in western China can truly serve as a useful addition to the moral education materials in College English.

3.3 Innovate Teaching Methods and Promote Interactive Teaching

Flexible and different teaching methods should be adopted in the synergistic cultivation of integrating the spirit of volunteer teaching in western China into the moral education of College English course. Based on specific teaching content, teachers may adopt heuristic teaching method, task-based teaching method, project-based learning, flipped classroom, production-oriented approach, and so on. In the process of teaching, teachers should utilize the online and offline resources to conduct blended teaching. They also need to pay attention to the implicit integration of moral education to avoid direct lecturing. Interactive teaching is quite necessary. The spirit of volunteer teaching in western China may appear in the training of a variety of language skills, such as listening, speaking, talking, writing and translation. Teachers should play the leading role and activate students' critical thinking.

Let's take the warm-up part of iExplore 1 of Unit 4 On the Road in iEnglish 2 (An Integrated Course) as an example. After leading students to listen to a video clip about the changes travel has brought to different individuals, the teacher leads students to finish listening exercises. Then students have a

discussion about the opinion “Travel makes people more of what they are not”. The discussion is learning-centered. Students work in groups and share their different opinions. The teacher gives effective feedback to each group and creates a scaffold at the right time, which is a video clip created by one student who has just finished the volunteer teaching internship in Xinjiang province. Then students have a further discussion about the meaning of travel. Finally, the teacher leads the students to realize that compared to some Daka trips, which mean some trips just for the sake of taking a few attractive photos to prove they’ve been there, the real value of travel is to pursue and realize one’s personal dreams. In this part, volunteer teaching material is integrated quite naturally, which will definitely influence students’ value options.

In order to cultivate more volunteer teachers, college English teachers also need to focus on sharpening students’ basic teaching skills through some activities. Besides, English second classroom activities related to volunteer teaching in western China should be encouraged, for example, drama performance, micro-lecture competitions, speech contests, etc. These activities may help students to strengthen their autonomous learning ability, intercultural communication skills, deeper learning ability as well as volunteer teaching awareness.

3.4 Develop a Comprehensive Teaching Evaluation System

A comprehensive teaching evaluation system is critical to improve the teaching quality and enhance the educational effect of College English course. First, in the synergistic cultivation of integrating the spirit of volunteer teaching in western China into the moral education of College English, evaluation subjects should be diverse, including the steering groups of Baoding University and College of Foreign Language Education and International Business, College English teachers undertaking this teaching reform, other College English teachers, students, etc. Second, various forms of teaching evaluation need to be involved, such as teacher evaluation, student self-assessment, teacher-student cooperative evaluation, peer assessment, and machine evaluation. Besides, teachers should pay attention to the combinations of instant evaluation and delayed evaluation, as well as quantitative evaluation and qualitative evaluation. Third, it is necessary to reasonably set the ratio of process assessment and final assessment. So far, the process assessment has increased to 50%. Finally, in terms of the evaluation of teaching contents, in addition to assessing students’ basic English knowledge, teachers need to integrate volunteer teaching content into the assessment content of the College English course, so as to provide positive guidance to students’ teaching practice skills, values, ideals, beliefs, moral characters, etc. Therefore, through the adoption of the above measures, a comprehensive teaching evaluation system can be gradually established.

3.5 Enhance Teachers’ Abilities in Teaching and Research of Moral Education

College English teachers are the organizers and administrators of classroom activities of College English course, as well as monitors and guides for the healthy development of students. Hence, enhancing teachers’ abilities in teaching and research of moral education is quite necessary. First, college English teachers need to improve their moral and political awareness. They need to seriously

study President Xi's Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, fully implement the guiding principles of the 20th CPC National Congress, adhere to the Party's education policy and nurture more talents for the Party and the country. During the implementation of this project, college English teachers have carefully studied the relevant documents of volunteer teaching in western China, grasped the local education situations, and deeply comprehended the connotation and characteristics of the volunteer teaching spirit. Second, a specialized teaching and scientific research team on volunteer teaching in western China has been developed. The team organizes regular seminars, explores relevant teaching materials, invites outstanding teachers to present domos, and conducts research activities on practical teaching of the moral education of College English course. Third, Baoding University organizes various activities related to moral education of different courses each year, such as teaching competition, teaching case contest, teaching reform project, etc. College English teachers are encouraged to participate in these activities, and attempt to integrate volunteer teaching spirit in western China into these activities, which provide precious opportunity for college English teachers' personal development and will also improve their educational and research performances.

4. Preliminary Achievements of the Synergistic Cultivation Model

Through the adoption of the synergistic cultivation model of integrating the spirit of volunteer teaching in western China into the moral education of College English, preliminary achievements can be seen from the following aspects:

First, students can tell good stories about volunteer teaching in western China, and their awareness of volunteer teaching is rising. Up to now, students have participated in the translation task of volunteer teaching in western China. Through reading relevant materials, students can feel the hardship of volunteer teaching in western China, and the volunteer teachers' noble state of mind. They delve into those materials for deeper reflection. After that, they try to translate the materials, discuss the translation scripts cooperatively, and revise their translations. In this process, students also obtain a deeper understanding of the spirit of volunteer teaching in western China. Besides, based on the translation scripts, students exert their imagination to direct and perform plays in front of the class, which not only improves their oral expression and cross-cultural communication skills, but inspires their passions for volunteer teaching in western China. They are willing to overcome all kinds of difficulties and dedicate themselves to the cause of education in western China.

Second, concerning volunteer teaching in western China, College English teachers have made some related progress in teaching and scientific research fields. In the teaching field, the Synergistic Cultivation Program of Integrating the Spirit of Volunteer Teaching in Western China into the Moral Education of College English has been formulated and implemented. Based on Production-oriented Approach (POA), typical cases of integrating volunteer teaching in western China into the writing teaching of College English have been collected. Meanwhile, volunteer teaching elements have been reflected in competitions like English micro-lecture competition, English Golden Course competition,

etc. In scientific research field, relevant papers have been published, for example, Strategies of Native Culture Integration in College English Teaching Based on “Education of Chinese Ethics and Culture in All Courses”, Study on College English Teaching Based on the Concept of Ideological and Political Education in All Courses, The Integration of Socialist Core Values with College English Teaching under the Concept of “Ideological and Political Theory Teaching in All Courses”, etc. Besides, relevant scientific research projects are underway including Research on the Construction of Deep Learning-oriented College English Blended Golden Course in the Context of New Liberal Arts, Research on the Practical Path of Integrating University-based Distinctive Culture into Blended Teaching of College English under Teachers’ Profession Accreditation, etc. All these scientific researches contribute to the improvement of College English teaching.

5. Conclusion

As a compulsory course, College English lasts for two years and involves a wide range of students, which makes this course become a good carrier of moral education. The spirit of volunteer teaching is quite beneficial to the cultivation of students’ patriotic feelings, social responsibilities, ideal pursuit, and attitudes toward life. Integrating the spirit of volunteer teaching in western China into the moral education of College English to explore the synergistic cultivation model is an innovation of College English reform. The study of this project mainly focuses on the dilemmas of the moral education of College English at Baoding University, the corresponding strategies for synergistic cultivation, and preliminary achievements of the synergistic cultivation model. The practice proves that this study not only promotes teachers’ teaching skills, but also contributes to the output of talents for teaching in western China. The research results of this project can also serve as a reference for related projects on curricular moral education.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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