

Strategies on Promoting the Mixed Teaching Model of Higher Vocational Education

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Abstract. More and more vocational colleges are exploring to promote the reform of teaching model through a mixed way of teaching. Accordingly, this essay provides the key strategies: promoting the resources construction through setting up projects, constantly improving the mechanism and system of mixed teaching model, perfecting the publicizing and training system, building good platforms of software and hardware and so on.

Introduction

A mixed teaching model involving both online and face-to-face teaching has been spread in a large scale among universities and has reached certain achievements in application. Recently several vocational colleges have also realized that “teacher talks, students listen” is no longer the only model of a class. Instead, interactions between teacher and students and among students are becoming more positive and efficient ways in a class; while the teacher must consider how to reform the teaching model in the internet-based teaching environment. However, the mixed teaching model has been walking with difficulties in almost all vocational colleges due to the relatively weak basis of students, mechanism construction and other factors.

The author has made an investigation among Beijing University, Ji’nan University and other demonstrative higher vocational colleges and now concludes the key strategies for promoting the mixed teaching model of higher vocational education – platform construction serves as the base, resources construction the core, practical application in teaching the goal, teacher training the guide and management system the support.

Work hard on promoting the construction of online teaching resources

Application oriented construction of the online resources. Modern teaching resources construction remains the eternal theme of teaching informatization. According to the Educational Resources Construction Technical Specifications, digital teaching resources include eleven categories such as media materials, PPTs, exercises database, test papers, courseware, cases, literature, FAQ, resources directory indices, online course packs, etc. For example, an online course pack refers to the internet-based curriculum resources that have integrated system of course and knowledge and covers all knowledge points, also can be operated independently from the teaching platform.

Generally, in universities of undergraduate students, the online education and curriculum resources construction is developed by the Modern Educational Technology Center. In vocational colleges, the online education is usually undertaken by the Teaching Affairs Department or the specialized online education center. However, in any section including formulating documents, working out the courseware standards or checking the project before acceptance, it shall be emphasized that “application” is the key focus of network-aided instruction instead of an “image project” no matter who is in charge.

Rely on the projects to develop high-quality curriculum resources. The projects can be set up at the college level, provincial/ministerial or even national level. The projects of the college level shall be the main source of funds for the construction to guarantee and encourage teachers’ positive attitude relevant to the fund, achievements and other aspects (table 1).

Table 1: Examples chosen from the 753 projects set up by a college for promoting the network-aided instruction

No.	Project Type	Quantity
1	Education New Century Online Courses	3
2	Projects of the Ministry of Health	23
3	The Audio-Visual Education Program “Five Hundreds Project” of Guangdong Province	24
4	Higher Educational Technology “151 Project” of Guangdong Province	28
5	“The Eleventh Five-Year Plan” Online Model Courses Resources Construction Project of Guangdong Province	2
7	CAI Project of the college	157
8	Educational Technology “Innovation Project” of the college	516
	Total	753

Widely exploit channels for teaching resources construction. At present, higher vocational colleges have two basic channels for teaching resources integration – one is model curriculum and the other is professional teaching resources database. Besides, free online resources, the resources acquired from other colleges through exchanges and from providers by purchasing, online open courses and the resources developed through joint efforts with enterprises can also be processed for reference.

In recent years, even several national model curriculum projects may be set up for the same subject, with online curriculum resources and high-quality learning resources from home and abroad. In terms of curriculum design, course content, teaching method and means, teaching staff, practice conditions, teaching effects and features and other aspects, model curriculum has demonstrated the achievements of curriculum construction and has established a relatively sound construction mechanism. Model curriculum can serve as materials for online curriculum and its application shall be strengthened in online education. A teacher may guide students to take an active part in online learning through their preparation before class, assignments, group discussions and other ways. How a teacher collects and makes use of the aiding materials for teaching and how students choose and obtain useful online learning resources have become the typical questions that the teacher ought to consider in online education.

Develop online model curriculum in batches and promote its application. The first batch may choose those teachers who devote themselves to teaching and have basic knowledge and skills of information technology and whose courses are suitable for online teaching, since they are willing to reform the teaching methods and means and have strong academic ability. If sufficient fund is provided, certainly more teachers should be engaged in the process. The mode of “Sow extensively and focus on cultivating the earliest sprouted” can be taken, thus the demonstration and leading role of the first group may produce good radiate effects for the following work and comprehensively promote the general application in the college.

The construction details of all patterns of courses on the platform must be designed in advance. For example, brief introduction of the course, syllabus, PPT, exercises of each chapter and section, tests, learning activities, learning evaluation, course schedule (including teaching, experiments and tutoring), contact information of teachers, course notices and so on. This is the basic goal of the college’s all online curriculums, which is set up to meet the essential requirements of teaching and management.

Constantly improve the mechanism and system of mixed teaching model

Perfect the online education mechanism. College leaders must realize the importance of the mixed teaching model and this is the premise of promoting the reform of education and teaching. From the perspective of mechanism construction, the college shall have a leading group of online teaching and the group shall be led by the president who is in charge of teaching or informatization and constituted by department heads and director of the information center. In accordance with the college’s

development and teaching objectives, an online education platform dynamically integrated with the management systems of teachers, students and courses shall be built under the general framework of digital campus, following the principle of “unified planning, step-by-step implementation, stress the application and emphasize rules and regulations” and precisely making the three-year or even five-year plan of promoting online education.

The online education office of a vocational college usually consists of two or three members whose duties include guiding teachers with their teaching design, curriculums construction and experiments, encouraging teachers’ motivation by organizing training, designing publicizing, emotional exchanges and surveys, or concluded as “promoting the application”, and providing solutions and services to technical problems of network platform (fig.1). At present, the construction of online teaching platform has gone through the early period of resources accumulation and has now realized multi-directional reciprocal teaching. From the perspective of management, the online teaching services shall be strengthened in system operation service provided by IT technicians, tools using, skills training, accounts management service provided by online course administrator, timely answering questions from teachers and students and collecting and organizing their requirements, whole of which make a huge amount of work.

Online education is a long-term and onerous task, requiring officials with strong executive force, rigorous promotion strategies and ideas and excellent coordination skills to work with different departments.

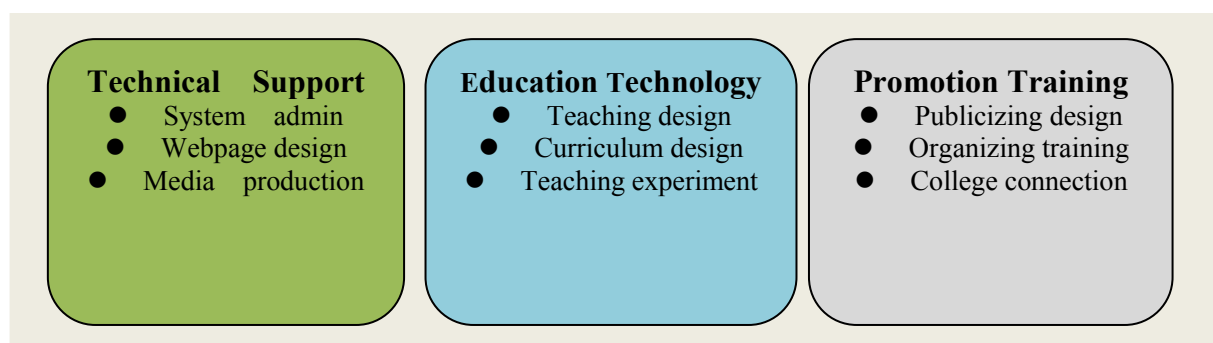


Fig.1: Three types of work in the online education office

Formulate and perfect series of effective rules and regulations. Formulating and perfecting construction process, projects management and technical regulations, such as expert review, project defense, project training, intermediate inspection, project concluding and acceptance online and achievements promotion. Measures such as IP restriction, printing watermarks on the materials to protect the intellectual property right in the process of resources sharing and to lift teachers’ worries so as to guarantee the steady and continuous development of the construction and application of teaching resources.

Establish and perfect the publicizing and training system

All-round publicizing and promotion are the basis of following work. The all-round publicizing and promotion are of vital importance in the process of promoting the construction and application of the online platform. Sending emails, posting on the forums, displaying on posters and billboards may be used to publicize the construction methods, achievements and application methods of the online teaching platform and relevant policies of the college so as to guide teachers and students subtly.

Various types of training serve as the guarantee of successful online education. For example, accordingly print and hand out some rough teaching materials and online course materials; make multimedia teaching materials of different levels and types and organize the project training to promote the multimedia teaching materials making and application; invite experts to hold seminars and organize the exchanges among teachers of different subjects; pick out a certain number of elite teachers from each department, hold the pilot experiments and teaching methods research for mixed teaching strategies each semester and summarize the experiences from the practice so as to promote the teaching methods reform and innovation ability fostering and spread them to other colleges.

Besides, improving the information technology literacy of teachers and students, strengthening the skill training of teaching platform and the training of online curriculum design and application include how to prepare for class online, release notices, preview and assign tasks online before class; how to encourage students to get involved in discussion, debate and comment on different opinions, share achievements, inspire the top students and spur those lagging behind in class; how to organize discussion, group work, review homework, communicate online after class, the whole of which enable the network truly serve the online teaching.

Build good platforms of software and hardware

Many foreign universities such as Stanford University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and domestic universities such as Sun Yat-sen University and Capital Normal University adopt two or more systems to reduce the loss in case of system breakdown. Some universities have strong research and development capability and may choose some open source software for free. The vocational colleges may have to purchase some developed system for instant use due to their information center or network center has relatively weak capability of software engineering. They need to consider many aspects before choosing a system, if not, once teachers and students are mobilized to use the online teaching system, they may face problems such as insufficient accounts, instable operation and resources transferring which will impede the following work.

At present, when choosing the online teaching platform software, Beijing Polytechnic College usually pay attention to these aspects – the software must guarantee the stability, safety and operation efficiency in case of large-scale concurrent users online; the soft must compatible with the course resources and the third party courseware can be operated within the system; the software must accord with the international common standard, which means the online teaching system can be used for importing and managing standard courseware resources; it is convenient to combine the software with the teaching affairs management system so that students' information can be referred and students' performance, which is based on the teaching system, can also be exported to the teaching affairs system; the software shall meet the requirements of web portals in digital campus construction and the system authentication shall be unified on the platform of campus identity authentication.

Conclusions

So, the key strategies for promoting the mixed teaching model of higher vocational education include platform construction serves as the base, resources construction the core, practical application in teaching the goal, teacher training the guide and management system the support. These strategies will be helpful to better push informative teaching process forward.

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