

The Curriculum Mode and Construction Principles of College English Education with Applied Theatre

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Abstract. In recent years, there has been a lot of overseas research on the applied theatre teaching method, especially the research on integrating applied theatre into English teaching in primary and secondary schools has attracted continuous attention. However, there are relatively few studies in Mainland China on applied theatre. Few professors studied the application of English teaching with applied theatre, but they always stop at the primary and secondary stage, lacking penetration into higher education. Moreover, there are problems such as arbitrariness and formalization of English education with applied theatre in practice. Therefore, the English curriculum construction of college English teaching in Mainland China is necessary and meaningful. This paper, which is based on the research and practice of applied theatre at home and abroad, discusses the curriculum mode from the four dimensions of objective, content, implementation and evaluation, and puts forward the three modes and construction principles of college English education with applied theatre.

1 Introduction

In recent years, applied theatre has gradually become one of the research hotspots in education circles at home and abroad, and has attracted more and more attention from primary and secondary school teachers. At present, in China, the studies related to applied theatre teaching method are mostly the teaching practice summary of drama in Chinese, English, History, and other subjects in basic education, about drama education and subject teaching fusion relatively complete curriculum mode research is rare, applied theatre curriculum exist problems of fragmentation and scattering, and lack of penetration of higher education. To solve this problem, this paper is based on the application of applied theatre teaching curriculum, under the horizon of the course, from the target, content, implementation and evaluation of four aspects of college English teaching with applied theatre curriculum mode and curriculum architecture, to explore the connotation of college English education with applied theatre curriculum, path and principle.

Applied theatre is a term that became popular in Europe and America in the latter half of the 20th century. It is often used to refer to "theatre activities that exist outside the mainstream drama or theater in the traditional sense, especially those that can benefit individuals,

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communities, and society" [1]. In this paper, applied theatre English education refers to the cultivation of English literacy through the form of drama in the environment of English, to realize the value of curriculum education.

Curriculum design is a process in which valuable abstract ideas are gradually planned into concrete and feasible courses to provide teachers with effective teaching and students with effective learning [2]. In this paper, applied theatre curriculum in college English education refers to the course objectives, course content, and teaching implementation of three aspects of the college English education drama curriculum system.

In general, the research on applied theatre education methods in Mainland China is not very prevalent compared with overseas studies, and it needs further development. Moreover, there are even fewer studies on truly forming a standardized curriculum, especially in the field of higher education. In the course of the curriculum, teachers lack a theoretical basis. In many cases, they are perfunctory only to complete the school drama performance task, the evaluation method is relatively simple, and there is no way to design the curriculum and lack of research and demonstration on the specific teaching strategies and teaching effects of applied theatre [3]. Therefore, it is of great significance to explore the curriculum of college English teaching with applied theatre.

2 Literature review

The key to the curriculum of college English education with applied theatre is to integrate educational drama into the course and community practice in the university. The following focuses on the combination path of applied theatre and school curriculum and the architecture of the curriculum model. Academic circles have different views on the way in which applied theatre should be integrated into the school curriculum. The two mainstream practical paradigms are the integrated teaching method of drama represented by Britain and the single drama teaching method represented by the United States [4]. In different teaching subjects, scholars have applied theatre teaching method for teaching practice, including mathematics education, science education, professional education, foreign language education, etc., while Drama for Schools (DFS) is a professional development programme that partners graduate students and academics with teachers in elementary and secondary education. DFS hopes to shift the learning culture of classrooms through the use of drama-based instructional methods (e.g. interactive games, improvisation, and role-playing [5]. These two modes are not binary opposition exclusion, but can complement and coexist [6]. In addition to being a teaching method, educational drama can also be applied to cross-subject subject integration teaching and single-subject teaching [7]. The point that applied theatre was always-already interdisciplinary research has become a consensus in the science world [8]. Schools in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China carry out educational drama in two ways: drama curriculum and drama teaching method. Drama courses are divided into two types: formal courses, which are independent courses, and informal courses, which are extra-curricular activities [9]. Huang Aihua proposed that drama education in schools can be started from three aspects: subject drama education, permeability drama education and activity drama education [10].

In the application of English teaching with applied theatre, Gong proposed three ways for applying educational drama in English teaching: penetrating drama strategy based on teaching materials, conducting drama teaching based on classic stories; establishing English drama clubs and editing English skits. Moreover, the main application of educational drama in primary school English teaching: integrating educational drama with English classroom teaching with the help of subject penetration, developing a school-based curriculum and adding a separate educational drama curriculum; combining educational drama with interest community activities based on theme activities [11]. Applied theatre teaching is a good

exercise for students' interpersonal skills and innovation ability. "In scripting and performing together, students developed new, affective bonds based on personal experiences of working as teammates. This change in their interpersonal relations with their classmates encouraged students to imagine new possibilities of coexisting with differences" [12].

3 The curriculum mode of college English teaching with applied theatre

Based on the existing research at home and abroad, this paper combines the national conditions of China and the relevant research on English teaching and proposes two ways of combining English education with applied theatre and school curriculum: semi-integrated and comprehensive embedded. The former is the path for college English teaching with applied theatre to integrate into the national unified college English education curriculum, while the latter is the path of school-based curriculum development. The latter is divided into integrating applied theatre into general education elective courses encouraging English drama education clubs and conducting performance activities.

In the process of design and implementation, the three curriculum modes of college English teaching with applied theatre show a high degree of logical self-consistency, which is particularly prominent in four aspects: carrying the course objectives, enriching the learning content, and giving play to students' subjectivity. Curriculum objectives play a core guiding role in the whole education process, and they lead the direction of the curriculum. Applied theatre, as a unique teaching method, not only plays a key role in enlightening students' minds, improving the students' personalities, and promoting students' creative development but also deepening moral education, which realizes college English teaching with applied theatre curriculum goal and the depth of the English course goal integration, so as to promote the comprehensive development of students.

In the three types of English education drama courses, the curriculum objectives have their own characteristics but complement each other, forming a systematic and complete education system. In terms of course content, the curriculum is carefully classified and arranged according to the standards of the national curriculum and school-based curriculum, which not only ensures the systematization of knowledge, but also shows the complementarity and expansion of the content. In the course implementation, students gradually participate in drama elements, from the initial use of drama to learn subject knowledge, to the final free display of themselves in subject drama, this process reflects the progressive and depth of educational drama.

To sum up, the design and implementation of the three English education with applied theatre curriculum modes show a high degree of logical self-consistency and systematization and provide strong support and guarantee for promoting the all-round development of college students.

4 Three curriculum framework of college English education with applied theatre

4.1 Mode 1: Employing the applied theatre teaching method to the college English course teaching

4.1.1 Course overview

This mode is to integrate applied theatre teaching method into the classroom, and teachers use some paradigms and strategies of applied theatre in the class. By creating situations for students, teachers guide students to mobilize multiple senses through imagination, role substitution, discussion, and so on, so as to improvise the discourse fragments in college English textbooks. In the performance, the students apply the target language (i. e. English) to achieve a deep interaction with the text and explore the characters. The teaching process includes four stages: educational drama paradigm selection based on teaching content, situation creation, students' performance, and the summary and reflection of teachers and students.

4.1.2 Principles of curriculum construction and implementation suggestions

The course goal is to promote the development of students' core literacy by applying the integration of drama teaching method elements. The course content is mainly based on the national curriculum content, with unit teaching or single-hour teaching as the carrier. Teachers need to sort out the content suitable for the educational drama activities in the textbook in advance and formulate curriculum plans. Teachers need to learn and understand some basic theories and paradigms of applied theatre. Moreover, teachers can evaluate students' understanding and use of language knowledge and impromptu language expression through classroom observation, and can also let students conduct self-reflection or peer evaluation.

The advantage of this course mode is that it integrates the applied theatre strategy on the basis of not breaking the integrity and independence of the original English course, so as to realize the combination of drama teaching and English teaching in an implicit way. The main challenge of this model is that drama activities take a long time, so teachers need to grasp the teaching rhythm flexibly. Additionally, teachers sometimes need to change between teacher identity and role identity. Meanwhile, students also need to gradually become familiar with the paradigm of educational drama activities and the integration of roles.

4.2 Mode 2: Employing applied theatre into the elective courses of general education

4.2.1 Course overview

The second mode is to integrate applied theatre teaching into the general education elective course within the university and to construct an independent school-based elective course module of English education with applied theatre. Universities usually have a variety of general education courses, including drama appreciation, English debate, western film and television works, and so on. The application of drama teaching into general education elective courses is a supplement and expansion of the national curriculum, which not only pays attention to students' participation, cooperation and experience, but also focuses on solving the problem of English learning for students in university. The course requires a combination of learning and performance. Through editing and performing, students link their learning content with real life and different themes, arouse emotional resonance and learning expectations, and express themselves in English. While developing their comprehensive language skills, they can improve their personal development, interpersonal communication, and problem-solving skills.

4.2.2 Principles of curriculum construction and implementation suggestions

The course content is guided by the theme of the teaching materials, and it integrates and expands the teaching resources. The implementation of the course can be a combination of offline classes or flipped classrooms, which can be taught by English teachers or by English teachers and professional drama teachers. The frequency can be one session weekly or biweekly. The teaching process generally includes four stages: teachers' selection of learning materials, students' learning texts, adaptation or creating scripts based on learning content, repertoire rehearsal, and performance display. A month or so can complete a small play, and can also carry out a relatively complete stage display. Course evaluation dimensions can include script quality, cooperative communication effect, creativity, pronunciation and intonation during performance and stage style, etc. The evaluation method combining teacher evaluation and peer mutual evaluation can be adopted.

The advantage of this course model is that it can provide efficient support for general education elective courses by combining the characteristics and personalized needs of college students. Students do not act for the purpose, but act to promote English learning. Students will use English in the process of creation, editing, and performance. The main challenge of this model is that the school should accurately judge the personalized learning needs of students, and can promote the curriculum construction through action research or small subject research; second, teachers need to reserve fixed time and class hours to avoid the course becoming a formality.

4.3 Mode 3: Expanding English education with applied theatre club and performing the activities

4.3.1 Course overview

The third kind is to set up English drama education clubs and conduct performances. Many universities combine drama with various performances through the form of clubs. This mode highlights the characteristics of comprehensiveness, creativity, and interdisciplinary education of drama. Drama performance can integrate the knowledge of different disciplines together. Students can think, communicate, and express meaningful ways in English through script creation and performance, and develop a deep cognition of self, relationships, and human nature.

4.3.2 Principles of curriculum construction and implementation suggestions

The goal of the course is to realize the integration of subject knowledge through interdisciplinary English script creation and performance, stimulate students' interest in English learning, promote students' creativity and teamwork ability, and the healthy development of body and mind. The course includes drama skills, script creation, acting ability, and other performance elements. Drama clubs usually perform original scripts according to the school's moral education work arrangement or important theme activities or choose classic works for arrangement and performance. Course implementation is usually carried out outside the classroom such as after-school delay service and club activities once a week. The theatrical arrangement should be taught by English teachers and professional drama teachers. The mode focuses on the polishing of the details of the performance, usually completing the performance of a big drama in a semester. The course evaluation dimension includes the mastery of drama knowledge, teamwork ability, expression ability, innovation ability, etc. The evaluation method can combine self-reflection with peer mutual evaluation and pay attention to the process.

The advantage of this course mode is that it can take the theme of life and practical problems as the main line and give play to the function of interdisciplinary learning and collaborative education. The main challenges of this model are the cooperation of teachers of different disciplines, such as English, art, history, music, and drama, and the second, the school should provide support for the club activities.

5 Conclusion

This study deeply explores the curriculum mode of college English education with applied theatre, and systematically analyzes it from four aspects: goal, content, implementation, and evaluation.

In terms of contribution, this study proposes three specific applied theatre education models in higher English education, including employing the applied theatre teaching method to the college English course teaching, employing applied theatre into the elective courses of general education, and expanding English education with applied theatre club and perform the activities, which provides specific operational guidelines for teaching practice. Moreover, this study clarifies the construction principles of applied theatre curriculum, which provide theoretical support for the sustainable development of the curriculum.

However, this study also recognizes the challenges and limitations that the three proposed models may face in practice. For example, how to adjust the difficulty and depth of drama activities according to students' actual level and interest, how to ensure the close integration of applied theatre activities and teaching objectives, and so on, are all problems that need to be considered in practice.

Future investigators are recommended empirical studies to expand the sample scope and number to verify the generalizability of the results of this study. At the same time, according to the characteristics and needs of different student groups, it is significant to further explore the specific application mode and effect of applied theatre in English education. In addition, combined with the development of modern educational technology, exploring the combination of applied theatre with online learning and mixed teaching is also an important direction of future research.

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