

Exploration of Ideological and Political Education in English Major Courses in the New Liberal Arts Context: A Case Study of the Course “An Introduction to English-Speaking Countries”

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Abstract: The New Liberal Arts Initiative advocates for the integration and innovation of liberal arts disciplines, as well as the transformation of talent cultivation, setting forth new requirements for fostering moral and value-driven English majors in the new era. “An Introduction to English-Speaking Countries” serves as a core course in English studies and is a key medium for implementing ideological and political education in English programs and advancing the New Liberal Arts reform. A three-dimensional pathway of knowledge transmission, skill cultivation, and values shaping can be adopted in the implementation of ideological and political education in this course, which helps students develop correct intercultural perspectives, strengthen their national identity, as well as enhance their intercultural competence. In addition, the teaching method of this course should be innovated to create an immersive ideological and political teaching environment. Finally, the course evaluation system should be improved to enhance the effect of talent cultivation.

Keywords: New Liberal Arts; English courses; Ideological and political education; Intercultural awareness; Intercultural competence; Cultural identity

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1. Introduction

The New Liberal Arts Initiative is an important direction for the development of higher education disciplines in China in the new era, aiming to promote the innovative development of liberal arts education and cultivate compound talents with interdisciplinary knowledge, innovation ability, and social responsibility^[1]. As an important component of the humanities field, the cultivation of English majors faces an urgent need to transform and upgrade its talent training mode in the context of the New Liberal Arts.

As a key measure to fulfill the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education, curriculum-

based ideological and political education integrates ideological and political elements into the entire teaching process of specialized courses, achieving an integration of imparting knowledge and shaping values ^[2]. “An Introduction to English-Speaking Countries,” as one of the core courses for English majors, encompasses rich cultural, historical, and humanistic knowledge, which provides platforms for the development of curriculum-based ideological and political education. In-depth research on talent cultivation and curriculum-based ideological and political education within this course under the New Liberal Arts context is of great significance for enhancing the comprehensive qualities of English majors and cultivating outstanding foreign language talents with a sense of national identity and international perspective.

2. New requirements for English Major talent cultivation in the New Liberal Arts context

“The Teaching Guide for English Majors in Regular Undergraduate Institutions” states that undergraduate English major education aims to cultivate English professionals and interdisciplinary talents with strong comprehensive qualities, solid language skills in English, and robust intercultural communication abilities, who can proficiently use English to serve the nation and society. In the New Liberal Arts context, both the educational philosophy and training mechanisms for English majors are undergoing a series of transformations, which impose higher demands on the objectives of English talent cultivation ^[3].

Firstly, the New Liberal Arts paradigm emphasizes breaking down disciplinary barriers and promoting interdisciplinary integration between liberal arts and other disciplines ^[4]. Comprehensively cultivating students’ academic and interdisciplinary abilities is an important goal of English talent cultivation, which requires English majors not only to have solid English language skills, but also to master broad interdisciplinary knowledge such as economics, management, law, etc., in order to meet the needs of diversified social development.

Secondly, in the context of New Liberal Arts, cultivating the comprehensive abilities of English talents is an important task, including critical thinking ability, intercultural communication ability, innovation ability, information technology application ability, etc., so as to increase the core competitiveness of English talents.

Thirdly, in the context of New Liberal Arts, cultivation of English talents should attach great importance to shaping their values ^[5]. English talents should not only have a broad international perspective, but also possess profound national sentiments, firm cultural confidence, and a deep understanding of the connotation of Chinese culture. They should tell the story of China well and promote the dissemination of Chinese civilization.

3. The necessity of ideological and political construction in the course “An Introduction to English-Speaking Countries” in the context of New Liberal Arts

3.1. Implement the fundamental task of cultivating virtue and talent

In the process of imparting knowledge of English-Speaking countries, the course “An Introduction to English-Speaking Countries” incorporates elements of ideological and political education, which can guide students to establish correct worldviews, outlooks on life, and values ^[6]. It can also cultivate students’ patriotism, sense of social responsibility, and professional ethics, and enable them to improve their ideological and moral literacy while mastering professional knowledge, effectively implementing the

fundamental task of cultivating morality and nurturing people.

3.2. Enrich teaching content

The construction of ideological and political education in the curriculum injects new vitality into the course “An Introduction to English-Speaking Countries” and enriches the teaching content of the course. Integrating ideological and political elements with course contents, such as guiding students to analyze the political, economic, and cultural factors behind historical events in English-Speaking countries from different perspectives, can cultivate students’ critical thinking abilities. At the same time, by introducing cases of cultural exchange and economic cooperation between China and English-Speaking countries, students’ horizons are expanded, and the practicality of the curriculum is enhanced.

3.3. Enhance students’ comprehensive quality

Through the construction of ideological and political education in the curriculum, the course “An Introduction to English-Speaking Countries” can cultivate students’ comprehensive literacy. In the process of learning professional knowledge, students not only improve their language expression ability and intercultural communication competence, but also enhance their ideological and political literacy and moral standards. The improvement of this comprehensive quality helps students better adapt to the needs of future social development and become high-quality talents with all-round development.

4. Implementation path of ideological and political construction in the course of “An Introduction to English-Speaking Countries”

4.1. Constructing three-dimensional educational goals

Based on the requirements of the New Liberal Arts education, educators should completely break from the single goal of teaching knowledge and construct a three-dimensional and hierarchical education goal system that integrates knowledge imparting, ability cultivation, and values shaping to implement ideological and political education effectively.

Knowledge imparting: Educators should enrich students’ understanding of the society and culture of English-Speaking countries, and promote the improvement of students’ humanistic literacy. This course introduces the social and cultural backgrounds of major English-Speaking countries, aiming to help students systematically understand the basic knowledge of their culture and society, such as geography, history, politics, economy, education, law, etc., in order to help students understand the cultural traditions and social customs of major English-Speaking countries, promote their understanding of language and culture, and enrich their humanistic knowledge^[7].

Ability cultivation: In this course, great importance should be attached to students’ understanding of the values behind culture, which can strengthen their comprehension of intercultural differences and enhance their ability to think critically across cultures. This course is not simply about imparting professional knowledge, but focuses more on comparing various aspects of society and culture between China and other English-Speaking countries. It aims to help students deepen their understanding and grasp of the cultural values behind social phenomena, enhance their intercultural awareness, strengthen their understanding of intercultural differences, enhance their intercultural competence, and cultivate their inclusive mindset while recognizing cultural differences^[8].

Values shaping: When introducing the basic social status quo of English-Speaking countries, educators should shape students' objective and correct evaluation of the social status quo of different countries. This course not only broadens students' international perspectives but also guides them to establish correct values. While enhancing students' intercultural communication, it deepens students' understanding of Chinese culture and civilization, enhances their cultural confidence, promotes their cultural identity, cultivates their national pride and patriotism, as well as encourages them to take on social responsibilities.

4.2. Innovative teaching method

Relying on the concept of interdisciplinary integration in the New Liberal Arts Initiative, educators should change traditional teaching modes, adopting diversified, interactive, and immersive teaching methods to achieve the silent and deep integration of ideological and political education through professional teaching ^[9].

Case studies: Select representative cases and integrate course knowledge with ideological and political elements. For example, when explaining the foreign policies of English-Speaking countries, taking the China-US trade friction as an example, students are guided to analyze the political, economic, and cultural factors behind it, which cultivates their international perspective and analytical skills. At the same time, by discussing China's response strategies in trade frictions, educators aim to enhance students' sense of national identity.

Group discussion: Organize students to participate in group discussions and encourage them to actively express their opinions and viewpoints. During the discussion process, educators should guide students to apply correct values and methodologies to analyze problems, cultivate students' critical thinking and teamwork spirit. For example, when studying social issues in English-Speaking countries, educators can organize student groups to discuss how to draw on the experience of English-Speaking countries to solve similar social problems faced by China, so as to cultivate the students' critical thinking and enhance their sense of social responsibility during the discussion.

Practical teaching method: Educators can carry out practical activities related to the course content, such as organizing students to conduct cultural research on English-Speaking countries, model United Nations conferences, etc. Through practical activities, students are encouraged to use their knowledge in real-life situations, enhancing their practical skills and intercultural communication competence. At the same time, educators should integrate ideological and political education into practical activities to cultivate students' patriotism and international cooperation spirit ^[10]. For example, in doing cultural research activities of English-Speaking countries, students are encouraged to actively participate in the external dissemination of Chinese culture in some cultural exhibitions.

4.3. Improve the course evaluation system

Based on the New Liberal Arts education Initiative, educators should break the single assessment mode that relies on scores and knowledge, and construct a comprehensive assessment system to achieve quantifiable, testable, and optimizable ideological and political education.

Knowledge and ability evaluation: Educators should not only test students' knowledge of the society and culture of English-Speaking countries, but also focus on testing students' ability to apply knowledge to solve practical problems ^[11]. Through diverse assessment methods such as classroom performance, assignments, exams, project reports, etc., educators should comprehensively evaluate students' learning outcomes.

Evaluation of ideological and political literacy: Educators should incorporate students' ideological and political literacy into the curriculum evaluation system, and evaluate the improvement of students' values, intercultural awareness, social responsibility, and other aspects of ideological and political literacy through observing their performance in classroom discussions and practical activities, as well as their course papers and reflections. Besides, educators should establish scientific and reasonable evaluation indicators of ideological and political literacy to ensure the objectivity and accuracy of the evaluation results.

5. Conclusion

In the context of the New Liberal Arts, the cultivation of English majors is closely linked to the construction of ideological and political education in the curriculum^[12]. As an important course for English majors, the course “An Introduction to English-Speaking Countries” has achieved an organic unity of knowledge transmission and value guidance through in-depth exploration of ideological and political elements in the curriculum, innovative teaching methods, and curriculum evaluation improvement. It has laid a solid foundation for cultivating high-quality English professionals with cultural confidence, international vision, and innovative abilities. In future teaching practice, it is necessary to continuously explore and improve the construction of ideological and political education in various courses, so as to better serve the cultivation of English professionals and make greater contributions to promoting the construction of New Liberal Arts and social development.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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