

Dilemmas and Coping Strategies for the Professional Development of Public English Teachers in Higher Vocational Colleges

Mei Bai*

Guangzhou Modern Information Engineering College, Guangzhou 510663, Guangdong, China

**Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.*

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Abstract: To build a powerful nation, we must first strengthen education, and to strengthen education, we must first strengthen the teaching force. The construction of the teaching force is a foundational task in advancing the strategy of “strengthening the country through education,” and it holds significant practical importance for the development of China’s vocational education and the high-quality advancement of socialist construction. Currently, the professional development of public English teachers in higher vocational colleges faces numerous puzzles and issues, which also directly affect the quality of talent cultivation in these colleges. In response, based on the PEST analysis method, this paper analyzes these dilemmas and proposes a series of coping strategies, aiming to provide some references for higher vocational colleges and teachers, and comprehensively promote the professional development and comprehensive skill enhancement of public English teachers in higher vocational colleges.

Keywords: Higher vocational education; Public English teachers; Professional development; Dilemmas; Coping strategies

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1. Introduction

The plan for education rests on teachers. The construction of the teaching force is an issue that requires key attention on China’s path towards advancing the strategy of “strengthening the country through education.” Public English teachers, unlike specialized English teachers who focus on English teaching in specific professional fields, are more inclined to cultivate students’ basic English literacy. They are mainly responsible for teaching students general English knowledge, aiming to enhance their English foundational abilities in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation, to meet the general English communication needs that students may encounter in daily life, social interactions, and future careers ^[1]. However, the professional development of public English teachers in higher vocational colleges currently faces several dilemmas. In this regard, it is necessary for us to grasp these issues while actively exploring effective countermeasures, thereby promoting the overall

improvement of the quality of public English teaching and teachers' professional competence, and leading the modernization reform and development of higher vocational education.

2. Analysis of dilemmas in the professional development of public English teachers in higher vocational colleges based on PEST

2.1. Political environment (Political): Imperfect teacher evaluation system

The current evaluation system for public English teachers in higher vocational colleges is mainly linked to students' academic performance, and this model also has significant limitations. On the one hand, students' academic performance is influenced by factors such as learning attitude and foundation, which cannot reflect teachers' true educational standards and actual teaching input. On the other hand, this model overlooks teachers' efforts in stimulating student interest and promoting teaching reforms. For example, some teachers have introduced new technologies and methodologies, significantly enhancing students' interest in learning, but due to the poor foundation of some students, their academic performance does not improve significantly in the short term ^[2]. Therefore, in the new era, attention should also be given to the optimization and improvement of the teacher evaluation system to better promote the professional growth and development of public English teachers.

2.2. Economic environment (Economic): Dilemmas in enhancing professional competence

Currently, public English teachers in higher vocational colleges face some dilemmas in enhancing their professional competence. Firstly, some higher vocational colleges lack investment in training for public teachers, providing them with fewer training opportunities and content that does not meet their actual needs, which also affects their professional development ^[3]. Secondly, the construction of relevant academic platforms is insufficient, and teachers lack opportunities for in-depth exchanges and academic discussions with peers, which also prevents them from updating their educational concepts and improving their teaching methods in a timely manner ^[4].

2.3. Social environment (Social): Need for enhanced professional identity

Professional identity also has a direct impact on the professional development of public English teachers. However, currently, some public English teachers lack sufficient professional identity. From the perspective of subject teaching, public English teaching, unlike other specialized courses, cannot directly demonstrate educational outcomes, which also affects teachers' professional identity ^[5]. At the same time, society's recognition of higher vocational education is relatively low, and there is insufficient attention paid to the work value of public English teachers in higher vocational colleges ^[6]. In addition, within some schools, resource allocation for public English teachers is different from that of specialized teachers, coupled with imperfect title and merit evaluation systems. These issues make it difficult to quantify the teaching achievements of public English teachers, further affecting their professional identity and hindering their professional development and the enhancement of their professional quality ^[7].

2.4. Technological environment (Technological): Limitations of traditional teaching methods

The application of good educational teaching methods is crucial for ensuring the quality of public English teaching and is also a direct reflection of public English teachers' professional quality. Currently, there is a certain

degree of simplification in higher vocational public English teaching, with insufficient interactivity and fun in teaching activities, which also makes some students passive in learning and lack diverse practical opportunities. Taking public English vocabulary and grammar teaching as examples, some teachers often guide students to memorize and recite mechanically based on verbal explanations. However, the English foundation of higher vocational students varies, and this traditional and simplistic model can easily lead to poor learning outcomes, resulting in situations where some students are “unable to consume” and some students are “not satisfied.” Moreover, the lack of application of flexible teaching modes also makes students lack interest in learning, thereby affecting teaching quality ^[8]. Therefore, to promote the professional development of public English teachers, it is necessary to break through the limitations of traditional teaching modes and continuously improve the fun and effectiveness of English teaching.

3. Coping strategies for the professional development of public English teachers in higher vocational colleges

3.1. Improving the evaluation system and clarifying development paths

Establishing a diversified evaluation mechanism is the core of improving the evaluation system for public English teachers in higher vocational colleges, and it is also an important measure to promote the professional development of these teachers. In this regard, higher vocational colleges should first improve the evaluation standards for the teaching abilities of public English teachers. For example, based on the assessment of students’ test scores and learning effects, our college introduces process-oriented evaluation indicators, including the effectiveness of teaching methods, teacher-student interaction in the classroom, the completion of teaching objectives, and the comprehensive quality development of students, among others. This optimization and improvement of standards are aimed at facilitating the overall quality growth of teachers. Secondly, comprehensive evaluations should be actively conducted through methods such as peer classroom observations, student evaluations of classes, and evaluations by teaching supervisors ^[9].

Furthermore, the results of scientific research assessments should be included in the evaluation of public English teachers. For instance, colleges should actively encourage teachers to initiate and participate in academic research and teaching innovation projects. On this basis, importance should be attached to teachers’ contributions in the construction of teaching resources, curriculum system development, teaching method innovation, and vocational textbook compilation, and link these accomplishments to their professional title evaluations or merit assessments, to better improve teacher evaluations and promote their professional development and growth. In addition, it is necessary to understand the teaching effectiveness of public English teachers through student surveys and clarify their development paths ^[10].

3.2. Broadening learning channels and promoting professional growth

To break through the dilemma of improving professional competence and comprehensively promoting the professional growth of public English teachers, higher vocational colleges should also broaden learning channels for teachers and open up diversified paths for teaching and research exchanges, thereby enabling them to learn more advanced ideas and knowledge and facilitating their growth and development. First, higher vocational colleges should increase their support for teacher training and related investments, not only increasing the frequency of training but also ensuring that the teaching content of the training aligns with the needs of teachers’ professional development ^[11]. For example, based on the current background of the continuous development of

the cross-border e-commerce industry, corresponding e-commerce English training can be conducted, inviting professionals, corporate personnel, and industry experts to provide guidance lectures, bringing advanced ideas and methods to teachers, and promoting the enhancement of their professional qualities.

Secondly, online and offline teacher teaching and research activities should be actively organized to guide teachers to communicate, interact, and improve on the Internet platform. For example, schools can organize a “Great English Teaching and Research Team” consisting of public English teachers, specialized English teachers, ideological and political teachers, etc., to conduct discussions based on the new changes and directions in current public English teaching, continuously improving the professional qualities of public English teachers and enhancing the quality of education and talent cultivation^[12]. Another example is that schools can organize “Internet seminars” to allow public English teachers to participate in academic exchange activities online, understand the most cutting-edge teaching ideas and methods. Furthermore, for public English teachers, it is necessary to actively explore paths for professional development and make good use of their free time to recharge themselves. For instance, teachers can rely on the Internet, libraries, and other channels to learn new ideas and knowledge, continuously reforming and improving their teaching methods, applying and innovating new methods based on teaching practice, and improving the education and teaching system to provide better and more personalized teaching services for college students.

3.3. Strengthening professional cognition and enhancing work motivation

Objectively speaking, enhancing the professional identity of public English teachers in higher vocational colleges is the key to stimulating their working motivation. Therefore, higher vocational colleges should actively explore diversified approaches to strengthen the professional cognition of public English teachers, enhance their professional identity, stimulate their enthusiasm for work, increase their working motivation, and promote the improvement of their professional qualities.

First of all, the school can actively publicize the cases and deeds of outstanding teachers. For example, it can regularly carry out the activity of “Display of Outstanding Teachers’ Styles” in the school to share those public English teachers who have performed well in education and teaching, scientific research, and student guidance, so that more people can understand the deeds of public English teachers and increase the recognition of the work of public English teachers from all walks of life. Meanwhile, the advanced deeds of public English teachers can also be reported through the school website, official accounts, and campus radio, etc., to continuously enhance their professional responsibility, sense of identity, and sense of honor^[13].

Secondly, it is necessary to actively guide public English teachers to carry out career planning and clarify their professional development paths. For example, the school can invite educational experts and career planners to hold career planning lectures for teachers to help them understand their career development paths and potential. On this basis, based on the actual situations such as the teaching level and scientific research ability of public English teachers, assist them in formulating scientific career plans. For example, for young public English teachers, it is possible to define the training of their basic skills and teaching skills, and encourage them to actively participate in some teaching competition projects to promote the improvement of their comprehensive professional abilities; for those veteran teachers, they can be guided to actively carry out attempts of new technologies and new models, lead them to transform traditional educational concepts, improve educational skills and techniques, so that they can better adapt to the changes and demands of the public English teaching reform in higher vocational colleges in the new era, and continuously enhance their professional sense of mission and working motivation^[14].

3.4. Innovating teaching methods and enhancing classroom vitality

Facing the dilemma of the limitations of traditional teaching modes on the path of professional development, public English teachers in higher vocational colleges must break through the constraints of traditional concepts and modes, learn and apply more in educational practice, continuously innovate teaching methods, and comprehensively enhance classroom vitality and attractiveness.

First, based on the background of information-based vocational education reform, information technology can be introduced into teaching, using methods that students like to see and hear, to innovate teaching methods and stimulate their interest and enthusiasm. For example, in the teaching process, teachers can introduce digital micro-lessons to assist in textbook teaching and provide students with a better learning experience. Another example is that teachers can rely on artificial intelligence to organize English dialogues for students, letting AI serve students' English learning and practice, thereby leveraging its advantages of intelligent prompts and personalized push notifications to guide students' English ability growth and development. Secondly, teachers can introduce project-based learning into teaching, designing some vocational scenarios related to students' daily lives and professional studies, guiding them to learn and use English in specific scenarios. For example, for students majoring in tourism, an "international tourism promotion" project can be designed, guiding students to independently design English situational dialogue scripts and record short videos, thereby enabling them to use English in a more interesting way and truly achieve "learning by doing and doing by learning" ^[15].

Furthermore, combining the characteristic of "differentiated" learning foundations of higher vocational college students, a "hierarchical" teaching mode can be introduced. For example, students can be divided into three levels based on their learning situations: excellent, intermediate, and potential, and then targeted teaching objectives, practice contents, etc., can be designed for each level, ensuring that every student can gain something from their learning and challenge themselves, thereby fully implementing the concept of "individualized teaching," stimulating students' learning interest, and guiding them to shift from "I am made to learn" to "I want to learn."

4. Conclusion

In summary, against the backdrop and trend of current vocational education reform, the professional development of public English teachers in higher vocational colleges also faces numerous difficulties and challenges. In response, it is important to deeply grasp these predicaments while continually exploring effective methods and countermeasures. It is important to proceed from multiple angles to construct a support system for professional development, promote the cultivation of professional competencies among public English teachers, comprehensively enhance their educational level and overall quality, and lay a solid foundation for their professional development. At the same time, teachers should contribute to the modernization reform and high-quality development of higher vocational education.

Disclosure statement

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