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Research on Innovating English Practical Teaching Approach to Enhance the Employability of College Students

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Abstract

The connotation of college students’ employability is very rich, including both hard power of professional knowledge and occupation ability, and soft power of management, innovation, cooperation, learning and expression analysis etc. How to cultivate and enhance students’ employability through daily teaching process is always one of the key reforms in colleges and universities. Based on the English practical teaching reform, this paper explores and researches suggestive approach to improve the employability of college students.

Key words: English practical teaching approach; Employability

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INTRODUCTION

The problem of employment of college students has been an important problem in society and universities which from the perspective of demand, supply and the matching of supply and demand, many experts and scholars analyze and research; they generally believe that the basic way to solve the problem is to improve the employability of the graduates. Through the discussion of how to innovate

English practical teaching approach, to improve students’ job-hunting capacity, and promote students employment smoothly and deepen university English curriculum innovation is the following study of this paper.

1. THE CONNOTATION AND RELATIONSHIP OF COLLEGE STUDENTS’ EMPLOYABILITY AND ENGLISH PRACTICAL TEACHING APPROACH.

The concept of employability originates from the “employment”. Initially the expression is “the ability of the individual to obtain and maintain work, to gain progress in work and to cope with change in work and life” by the International Labor Organization (ILO). For college students, it refers to the ability of the university graduates through knowledge learning and the development of comprehensive quality to gain access to achieving employment ideals, to meeting the needs of the society, to realizing their own value in society. It does not simply refer to the intellectual skills, but, including the intelligence factor, it contains internal comprehensive factors of emotional intelligence and occupation career planning, social adaptation ability. Hard ability, such as the quality of experience, skills and knowledge easier to assess, and soft ability such as the quality of the innovation ability, team spirit, self management ability not too easy to evaluate but important are both included in employability. How to take effective measures to improve the students’ market competitiveness of employment is one of the main directions of the reform and development of higher education.

University English education in our country has experienced 20 years of reform and development, and brilliant achievements have been made. Therefore college students’ comprehensive ability is put forward by higher requirements of new economic situation. The traditional English teaching mode with the teacher as the center,

bounds the learning potential and the ability of students, which has not been able to adapt to social development. English practical teaching approach, derived from “task-based” teaching theory, becomes a new viewpoint in recent years in the English teaching reform, which is a new idea to improve the students’ comprehensive ability and comprehensive quality. “Task-based” teaching theory pays attention to the training of students’ ability to analyze and solve problems, using “task-driving” as the main form, through demonstration and operation guide, leading students to complete the task, so as to achieve the teaching goal; the focus is to improve the ability of the students. English practical teaching approach, on the other hand, implements the concept of task-based teaching method, making up for the weakness of English class teaching “knowledge structure is unitary, and teaching contents is obsolescence”. According to the actual needs of English teaching and learning, teachers and students in the teaching field (classroom) organize and participate in a series of training activities which aims to improve students language application ability. This will not only improve the students’ cultural accomplishment, enhance their awareness of cross-cultural communication, motivate their autonomous learning, but also become one of the important means to cultivate learning ability, competence and ability of students, especially plays a rather important role in cultivating students’ activity ability.

The mode and effect of English practical teaching is multiple: through supervising the completion of tasks, cultivate students’ ability to discover problems, ask questions and solve problems; by teaching students to use learning materials, libraries, Internet information resource and various media to find the information they need, organize, arrange and use the data, cultivate students self-learning ability, research ability and problem solving ability; through a variety of expression and performance, cultivate students’ ability of expression and presentation skills; through the organization of various group or team activities, foster students’ cooperation ability and team awareness, organization and coordination ability and interpersonal skills. Therefore, to effectively organize the practical teaching forms can not only improve the students’ ability of using English, this teaching objective, but also to cultivate the students’ employability through the organization management, which are essential and necessary in college teaching.

2. STUDY ON THE INNOVATION ENGLISH PRACTICAL TEACHING APPROACH BASED ON IMPROVING THE EMPLOYABILITY OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

According to the survey, although in the English practical teaching activities in various forms are organized in universities, the activities are simply regarded as an

important means and ways to improve the students’ English listening and speaking ability, and it is not connected with the higher teaching goal to improve the employability of students, which can not reach the ideal effect. Therefore, to innovate English practical teaching approach, and to improve the employability of students has become one of the important targets and means of university English teaching reform.

2.1 Highlight Teacher Leading-Position, and Cultivate Students’ Innovative Consciousness and Ability

Jiang Zemin pointed out: “Innovation is the soul of a nation’s progress, and is an inexhaustible motive force for national prosperity”. The rapid process of science and technology, the increasingly fierce competition and the continuously high standard for talents require higher education to cultivate students not only with excellent professional knowledge, but also with higher innovation consciousness and innovation ability. To cultivate the innovative consciousness and innovative ability, practical teaching is an effective way. Cultivating students’ innovation consciousness and ability should be supported by knowledge and experience. Therefore successful instructors persist in imparting knowledge and questioning, in combination with exploring in the process of teaching. In English teaching practice, teachers change the traditional concept of “teaching”, and change “authority” into the equal role to communicate with the students. So, through the establishment of practical activity, the students’ innovation consciousness can be stimulated, students are promoted to ask questions, and the creative motivation is explored. By actively guiding students to make bold exploration, their psychological dependence can be eliminated. The students develop their ability to gain knowledge, seek knowledge, and explore unknown knowledge. Encouraging students to organize and implement a variety of practical activities can not only broaden their thinking, arouse their enthusiasm and creativity, and make the activities in diverse form, and rich content, but through their self-directing and self-performing improve their innovative consciousness and innovative ability. Stanford University’s motto is: “let the wind of freedom blow”; while Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s motto is: “not only learn how to use the brain, but also learn how to do it”. Their teaching philosophy is fully to give the students free space, develop their thinking, improve their practical ability, let them gradually learn how to plan and achieve their goal. A prominent characteristic of innovative talents is to think about what predecessors do not think of, to do what they do not do; innovative education is to strengthen and deepen personnel training, scientific research and social service functions in higher education. Encouraging students to innovate various lively and vivid English practice is very helpful to cultivate their innovative

consciousness and innovative ability. So, to carry out a variety of practical teaching activities, to deepen the reform of college English Teaching, and to lay stress on the students' creative consciousness, creative spirit and innovation ability in practice, is the core goal of English education and teaching reform.

2.2 Make Full Use of Ten Minutes Before Class and Train Students' Courage and Ability of Expression

An education expert once said: "classroom teaching contains enormous vitality; only the live performance of teachers and students in class can truly train the students, which leads to real vivid class". English classroom teaching is the embodiment of the combination of knowledge and practice, with teachers as the director and students as the main body. The participation, organization, creation and completion of teachers and students together constitute English practical teaching process. According to the teaching content, combining the actual conditions of students' psychological characteristics, physiological characteristics and professional characteristics, design rich and colorful classroom teaching activities, teachers let the students participate in the exchange, debate, induce, summarize, answer, supplement and evaluate, the topics related to school textbook knowledge, major events, fashion and western festivals, with 3 to 4 people in the form of a group discussion or debate or speech, while other students are called for a review or repeat thereafter. Through multidimensional interaction, the static classroom develops into a dynamic one, and pure theory teaching turns into a combination of theory and practice. Effective use of ten minutes before class, by contacting the textbook content, arranging the task ahead of time, and before the class allowing students to freely play and performance, not only can teachers train their courage, but can effectively improve students' performance skills, which especially can be of great help to improve the teaching effect to a large extent. Practice has proved: ten minutes before the English class performance through early active preparation, participation in turn, flexible form, will effectively arouse the enthusiasm of the students, and improve the students' expression ability and the psychological bearing capacity. The effect is obvious!

2.3 Encourage Students to Make Their English Powerpoints and Cultivate Their Learning, Research and Knowledge Application Ability

For non - English major students, how to combine their use of English as a tool with their professional knowledge and language application has been the focus of English teaching reform, because students not only can improve their interest in learning English, but also can strengthen their professional learning, effectively putting learning and use together. In the process of teaching, we try to encourage students to make powerpoints in English in 2 months, pick out excellent works, let students appreciate their works in

multimedia classroom, and ask them to interpret the content, and their experience of powerpoint making.

Results shows that, students can make full use of the network and library resources creating powerpoints with pictures about social phenomenon or knowledge of life in English words and pictures. Some engineering students make powerpoints with their own professional knowledge in English, and can explain them in English, which can obtain good effect and make other students admire them very much. Of course, making powerpoints in English requires a lot of time and energy for students. Students need to understand the powerpoint topics, collecting a large amount of information about the topics, apply to the courseware after analysis, which can virtually cultivate their learning ability and research ability; it is also an important way to improve students' scientific research ability. Certainly, asking students to make powerpoints in English is indeed a difficult reform of English practical teaching approach. On the other hand, if the plan is proper, the arrangements are careful, and the guidance is available, students not only benefit English professional knowledge, but more importantly, through independent study and research, the students' learning ability, research ability, knowledge ability will be improved, so as to promote the comprehensive promotion of students' overall ability, which lay a solid foundation on the improvement of their scientific research ability for the future!

2.4 Explore Rich and Colorful Extracurricular Activities to Improve the Expression, Application and Coordination Ability of Students

Teachers should combine classroom instruction and the extracurricular activities, actively develop English extracurricular activities and let the learners have enough training time for language practice. To improve the occupation skill and to promote the overall ability of the students is the main purpose of English teaching practice. English extracurricular activity should follow the principle of "students-centered", in which the English corner, tourism association, lectures in English, English broadcasting, English newspaper, English broadcasting video, English speech, English knowledge contest, English party, reading, playing English drama, calligraphy competitions, such extracurricular activity forms can be used in English teaching practice. Besides, filling in the resume, writing instructions, signing the contract and other simple virtual forms can also be used to improve students writing ability, so that learners experience the happiness of learning English in active participation, expanding knowledge, consolidating language knowledge and skills learned in the classroom. In addition, with the help of university English practical teaching platform, learners' can change their mode of thinking, transfer English knowledge, and improve their comprehensive ability, including the ability of

organization, communication and cooperation. It is worth emphasizing that in organizing and implementing any English extracurricular activities, teachers must put the goals on the improving employability of the students, not limited to improve English listening and speaking ability. Each specific practice form is various, but the actual operation of the activities is largely the same, including planning, preparation, rehearsal, officially launching, the follow-up work steps, characterized with “the sparrow may be small, the common characteristics are complete”. In the whole process, teachers should make budget plan, contact the sponsors and cooperative partners, buy or rent place, equipment, props and materials, etc. Besides, for the activities, the teachers should coordinate the personnel division, cooperation, and afterward, summarize what the students get in the activities, which can be described as “collaborate from inside with forces from outside”. Based on this, the successful task can be completed. These experiences can make students deeply realize that the achievement of any one thing needs more considerations and multifaceted cooperation. To be smooth in the employment, students must adapt to the demand for talents recruitment, which includes practical ability, environmental contingency-dealing ability, development ability and the public relation ability. And as mentioned above, these capabilities are available and can be cultivated through various English extracurricular activities.

2.5 Highlight The Dominant Position Of Students And Cultivate Students' Ability Of Organization, Coordination And Management

The main body of English practical activity organization should be students not teachers; the teacher should play the role of supervision and guidance. We should uphold the “student-centered” activity organizing principle, and try to encourage students to finish their plan as long as they can participate in the management of the activities. Students through participation in the organization and management, coordination of all kinds of relations, including borrowing classrooms, coordinating the relationship between teachers and students and arranging program activities, improve their coordination and organization skills. Meanwhile, large-scale activities require a lot of manpower and material support, and need to be carefully considered and arranged in detail. From the completion of preparatory work to the arrangements of each task implementing in the process and to the summary after the implementation, the organizers need to do a lot of careful work, with strong organization and management ability. So, through the activities, the organizers' coordination and management ability has been greatly improved. And the smooth implementation of the organization of the activities is the result of the joint efforts and cooperation of many people and how to smoothly carry out the activities requires the detailed

arrangement. If they can be under the guidance of the teacher, the students know how to operate and implement the activities, they are good learning and training opportunities for students. The ability of the students especially the organization ability and the coordination ability will be greatly improved which are necessary for college students' employability, especially for leadership positions. Therefore, to explore some activities aiming to cultivate students' leadership ability will play a positive role in enhancing the employment rate, and improving student's employability!

CONCLUSION

For colleges and universities, education quality and employment are two major issues related to their survival. Quality is the lifeline of high education, while employment is the purpose of high education and one of the testing criteria of its quality. In the development of market economy today, to get a job position for one person in the cruel competition, college graduates must spend more time and energy, continuously learn, develop, and improve their own professional skills, the ability to adapt to the society, their employability and the comprehensive quality. English practical teaching can not only effectively improve their cultural quality, enhance their awareness of cross-cultural communication, motivate their autonomic learning, and practice the student-centered education mode, but can cultivate the students' learning and research ability. Teachers should let the students learn to study, develop their scientific research ability of independent learning, in order to lay the foundation for lifelong learning and sustainable development. English practical teaching reflects the dominant position of the students, emphasizing the importance of unity and cooperation with others. Through cooperation, students learning together, cooperation, awareness and ability to live in harmony are cultivated. These abilities in the textbook can not be acquired, but they are essential to the student's employability.

Therefore, effective use of class time to carry out rich and colorful English practical activities, not only can improve students' interest in learning English and English level, but also can cultivate their expression performance ability, innovation ability, management ability, and strong communication and collaboration skills by encouraging them to organize and participate in activities. Through their careful activity preparation, and innovation, students can enhance their innovation, learning and research ability, which is the essential employability and quality of college graduates! Of course, the organizer before the implementation of each activity must do the relevant preparatory work, with sufficient preparation, clear labor division, to ensure the effectiveness in particular. Teachers must focus on the employability and effectively enhance students' English ability at the same time.

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