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Constructing National Identity Education through Online Platform: A Case Study of Discovery Education for Primary Schools in UK

(Work in Progress)

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ABSTRACT

Through content analysis of Discovery Education, we found that the content of national identity is abundantly embodied in the curriculum of primary schools in UK. As a widely used online platform in primary schools of UK, Discovery Education integrates the content of national identity education into the curriculum. The presentation meets the needs of primary school students for its psychological and behavioral characteristics and provides personalized learning opportunities through a variety of links. Such practice displays advantages of online education. Recommendations are offered to developing virtual learning community, data analysis of online teaching process and the construction of expression system of online national identity education.

Keywords: Primary schools in UK, online education, national identity education.

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INTRODUCTION

National identity originates from the identity and acceptance of the individual to the country. From the perspective of nation, national identity is concerned with the internal cohesion which influences and determines whether a country can maintain relative stability in the multicultural collision. From the perspective of the individual, it affects individual's self-unity and sense of belonging, and it is the psychological support for individual to adapt to the social development.

In the past decades, national identity has been a focus for researchers. According the literature review, some researchers focused on the key elements of national identity such as language identity, cultural identity, historical identity, institutional identity, and so on. Some researchers paid attention to how the sense of national identity develops during the course of adolescence and found that the importance which children attribute to their national identity increases significantly between 5 and 11 years of age. Some other researches also provided insights about when it is appropriate to teach children to think about issues of diversity and nationality, and has implications for curriculum and policy related to national identity education in multicultural nations. These studies provide the basis for this paper.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Case Study is chosen as the main method of this paper and Discovery Education as the research object. In 2020, the online curriculum of primary schools in UK played an important role due to the COVID-19, especially the online Education platform provided by the OAK National Academy, BBC, Discovery Education, etc.

The features of Discovery Education

The recourses can be viewed repeatedly and it covers all subjects (including English, Maths, History, Geography, Art, PE, PSHE and so on) and all ages form foundation to Key stage 1 and Key stage 2 of primary school, it is highly relevant to the content of the face-to-face courses offered by primary schools in UK so it can complement the curriculum in school through providing many kinds of resources such as videos, picture books, images, quick links (news, games and so on)

Content Analysis

Content analysis are employed to deal with the resources. Through classification of curriculum content and identification of themes and key words, features and trends are pinpointed.

FINDINGS

The curriculum system of primary schools in UK is rich in the content of national identity education, which is mainly reflected in English, history, geography, PSHE and so on. There are higher requirements for the selection and design of curriculum resources, curriculum content, information dissemination and so on for online education achieving good results in a time-and-space-separated situation. National identity education through online platform has higher requirements for technical support and discourse expression. The curriculum resources provided by Discovery Education are varied and integrates the content of national identity education into various courses, uses narrative methods that match the attention and memory characteristics of primary school students, and provides a large number of in-depth links to students to expand the content of national identity education through online platform.

Decentralization and Integration: national identity education is embodied in the curriculum system

There is no special national identity curriculum in the UK, but many courses in its curriculum system contain a variety of national identity education. According to the curriculum resources provided by Discovery Education, national identity education is embodied in English (especially reading material in English courses), PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education), History and Geography. According to the content classification of national identity education, these courses contain a great deal of content related to the cultural customs, social institution, significant historical events, geographical boundaries of the country etc. It helps primary school students to construct the thinking mode, value orientation and behavior habit that accord with the mainstream society through the study of these contents, and then forms the individual cognition of the country and the nation.

The emphasis and presentation form of national identity education are different in different courses. In English class, the main form is the way of thinking identity. primary schools of UK pay great attention to the cultivation of students' reading ability all along. Reading is an extremely significant part in both online and face-to-face class. In addition to intensive reading of relevant literature in English classes under the guidance of teachers, the school will also provide a large number of extra-curricular books for students to expand their reading. These reading materials mainly include classic works of local writers and stories with traditional cultural characteristics. Most of the reading materials on Discovery Education are written by native British writers who were born and have lived in UK for a long time.

Take J.K. Rowling for example, she was born in Gwent County, England. Her *Harry Potter* series are full of British elements; There are also tales of traditional cultures such as *Merlin and The Dragons* and *The Loch Ness Monster*, and so on. From the perspective of values education, through the analysis and intensive reading of these reading materials, primary school students learn to identify different types of characters and make value judgments, and gradually form the value orientation accepted by the whole society. From the perspective of group psychology, through reading training, pupils learn to infer the feelings, the thoughts and the psychology of characters from their behavior, also learn to recognize and discuss various themes and customs in writing. The cultural customs contained in the traditional stories are infused into the students' cognitive system in the process, building a bridge between the nation's collective subconscious and its actual behavior, so that students can generate and even build up the mainstream of social thinking.

In the course of history, the primary school students initially formed their emotional identification with the history of the country by studying the significant events and the lives of the important persons who promoted the development of history in UK. In the course of geography, students gradually build and strengthen the individual identity of the territory with the study of the geographic information of the community and the city. And cultural and institutional identity education are the main contents in PSHE course, primary school students form a basic understanding of cultural customs and their historical inheritance from the perceptual level through the popularization of knowledge about festivals and celebrations, understand their own national system through the rules and institutions of social operation, lay the psychological foundation of national identity.

Table 1: Curriculum Distribution of National Identity Education

Curriculum	English	History	Geography	PSHE
Main content	Education in way of thinking identity: mainly through the reading and analysis of literary works and news materials in UK	Education in history identity: Mainly through significant historical events and important historical figures in UK	Education in territory identity: mainly on the map, mountains and rivers, well-known adventure course in UK	Education in cultural and institutional identity: festival celebrations, rules and institutions in UK
Example	J.K. Rowling (KEYSTAGE 2, English)	Second World War (KEYSTAGE 2, History)	Maps and Mapping (KEYSTAGE 2, Geography)	Democracy & Elections (KEYSTAGE 2, PSHE)

3.2. Convergence and Confirmation: multiple teaching materials are used in the same subject to reinforce identity.

Convergence generally refers to the process in which related things come together around a core. Convergence of information is more common on web, where the relevant information easily comes together and, in some cases, mutually reinforcing with each other. An individual's memory is related not only to the intensity of the information received, but also to the number of repetitions of the information received. Moreover, the same content presented in different forms can stimulate different parts of the brain to react and form a comprehensive understanding of the information which help the information to enter individual's

long-term memory system. The curriculum of Discovery Education reflects this feature of convergence and confirmation with videos, books and links related to each other, presented in different ways around the same theme. The most striking feature of Discovery Education's course resources is their brevity. Each course presented in different forms around the same core topic typically consists of one or more five-minute videos, one or more 10-page picture books, and a handful of small exercises. These contents arouse primary school students' interest and trigger their perceptual knowledge through video and pictures. Some contents can be transformed into rational knowledge through picture book reading, and then the learning content and activities are mutually converged through the after-class practice, thus a complete cognitive process including perceptual knowledge and rational knowledge and experience which makes relevant knowledge enters the student's cognitive system.

Take <Black History Month> of PSHE in KEY STAGE 2 for example. Firstly, the theme contains four categories (14 in all) of videos, the videos are on equal rights protests and social progress on black rights and individuals contributing to social progress and related news report. Secondly, knowledge development including prominent black representatives in various fields and images about significant people or classical scenes is related to equal rights. Thirdly, some printable resources are accessible for students.

Table 2: The Sample of Cultural Identity Education

Topic : Cultural Identity Education	videos	Protest (The story of Rosa Parks\The Little Rock Nine\The Berlin Olympic Games, 1936\Taking a knee protest) Progress (Britain elects the most diverse Parliament ever\The story of the Empire Windrush\President Barack Obama leaves office) People (The story of Mary Seacole\The life of Nelson Mandela\The life of Muhammad Ali) News reel (Martin Luther King marches for civil rights\Mandela walks to freedom\ Arrival on the Empire Windrush\Barack Obama is elected President\Black History Month)
	Facilitates	Early black British history, Trailblazers, World leaders, Cultural icons, Sporting heroes, Civil Rights in the USA, Historic speeches
	Printable Resources	To view these resources, you will need Adobe Acrobat.
	Images	Katherine Johnson at her desk – 1966, Katherine Johnson receives the Presidential Medal of Freedom – 2015, Martin Luther King, Jr., The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela in prison, Nelson and Winnie Mandela – 1990, Rosa Parks being fingerprinted by a police officer – 1958, Rosa Parks – 1999 (Totally 57 pieces)

Key-Point Narration: Telling History through Significant Events and important characters

Individuals of different ages have different psychological states and learning abilities, therefore, it is necessary to carry out education according to the individual's psychological development in order to achieve good results. From the perspective of attention depth, primary school students tend to be attracted by something new and changing, and they are not good at learning systematic and abstract knowledge; In terms of the stability of attention, it is difficult for primary school students to maintain a high concentration of attention for a long time. Judging by the propensity of attention, primary school students have strong emotion in the process of perceiving something, and they generally complete the reception of information based on their own interests. Therefore, the teaching content for primary school students should be able to grasp their attention, and achieve educational goals in line with their psychological and behavioral characteristics.

Key-Point narration used by Discovery Education can catch students' attention quickly through vivid and interesting points, and it can also stimulate students' interest in autonomous learning through a series of points. Systematic learning of history is necessary for primary school students but it is a little boring for them, and significant events are relatively easy to grab their attention and then enter their memory system. Discovery Education has chosen different types of points for its historical narrative such as through the major events that have taken place and important figures to promote the historical process, which can help primary school students form a preliminary understanding of history, evoking a collective sense of history through the national remembrance holidays, learning about national culture and historical heritage through holiday celebrations.

Table 3: Significant Events and Persons, Festivals, Days of Commemoration

Significant events	Second World War, 21st Century Timeline (Find out about significant people and events from the recent past by exploring an interactive timeline, which is organised around themes.)
Day of Commemoration	VE Day (Victory in Europe Day)
Festival	Red Nose Day
Significant persons	Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole Round the World with Captain Cook

Link Extension: Providing the Possibility of Personalized Learning and Deep Learning

The development of online education has provided greater possibilities for personalized learning for primary school students, whose students learning needs are varied and are in flux. In the traditional teaching process, teachers can only take the needs of the majority into consideration, so the depth and breadth of teaching content can only be kept at an average level, which makes them difficult to carry out personalized learning. On the contrary, online platform can expand the depth and breadth of learning through various links which can be chosen by students according to their own interests and abilities. At the same time, teachers can seize the static model (such as learning style, cognitive characteristics) and the dynamic model (the change of the interaction between the learning process and the environment) by mining the relevant educational data in the teaching process to optimize the curriculum resources on the basis of grasping the students' learning model.

In addition to the core content of the course, Discovery Education offers a number of links to articles, videos and a series of photos, as well as a number of links of websites. If students have a strong interest in the specific topic, they can click on these links step by step to expand and deepen their knowledge. Taking J.K. Rowling as an example, the online platform provides the core content of the Harry Potter series such as the main characters and classic scenes, it also provides main readers and news reports and the author's life and pictures and reading comments of Harry Potter series and so on. These diversified types of links meet the personalized needs of different students with differentiated interests and abilities.

Table 4: Links of *Harry Potter*

Videos	<p>Harry Potter books The readers\Entering the wizard world</p> <p>The characters Favourite characters\ Harry's school Hogwarts\Quidditch</p>
News archive	News archive: A collection of news videos (12) and articles (10) about J.K. Rowling and the <i>Harry Potter</i> books.
Factfiles	<p>J.K. Rowling: Find out about the author.</p> <p>The books: Learn what happens in each of the seven books.</p> <p>The characters: Find out about the most popular characters in the series.</p> <p>Hogwarts: Learn about the famous wizarding school.</p> <p>Quidditch: Could you be a future Quidditch star?</p>
Things to do	<p>Each resource can be used on-screen with type-in text boxes. Alternatively, they can be printed out and used away from a computer.</p> <p>Story openings: Using different openings for stories, in order to gain the reader's interest.</p> <p>Character description: Looking at and creating detailed descriptions of characters within stories.</p> <p>Ideas for longer pieces of writing: Suggestions for longer pieces of writing, some of which involve children working in pairs.</p>
Photos	<p>Photo gallery A collection of photographs of J.K. Rowling and the <i>Harry Potter</i> books.</p>
Book reviews	<p>An opportunity for pupils to read comments from other children about J.K. Rowling's books and to submit their own.</p> <p>J.K. Rowling Book reviews</p>

DISCUSSION AND SUGGETION

Make the most of online education in national identity education

In terms of the perspective of technological change, online education provides a more convenient channel for connecting educators and learners which can help communicating and disseminating information across the space-time barrier. In terms of knowledge dissemination, it is more convenient to share high-quality educational resources and enrich teaching process with various types of curriculum resources by the support of technology. In terms of the perspective of national identity education, in addition to the changes in educational and teaching methods brought about by technological changes, online education which has profound advantages should play a more active role in national identity education.

Firstly, the way of thinking emerges a fundamental shift in in online education. How to express, stimulate interest and motivation are the key issues that must be considered in online national identity education. The traditional national identity education can be carried out in the way of activities and projects, and the effect of identity education can be strengthened by immersion experience. In contrast, online national identity education has its own unique advantages. However, if we want to achieve good results, we need to study not only the technology, but also the interactive process under the support of technology, stimulating students' sustained interest in learning by exploring the discourse system suitable for online national education, and setting key nodes in the learning process.

Secondly, online education provides an effective opportunity for personalized learning. Online platform can not only provide abundant curriculum resources, but also expand the depth and breadth of some knowledge points through various links which

provides more possibilities for students' personalized learning. Students can achieve deep learning according to their own interests and abilities, of course, this also puts forward higher requirements and expectations for online education, it is urgent to solve the problems of arousing students' attention and interest and stimulating students' persistent motivation.

Focusing on the role of virtual communities in online national identity education

Differing from traditional face-to-face teaching, an even greater challenge for online education is how to stimulate students' interest and sustain motivation in the context of time-and-space separation. In other words, students can only rely on complete self-discipline because of the teachers' "absence" in online education, which brings great uncertainty to the process and effect of learning. At the same time, due to the barrier of space-time, learners of online education can only participate in the learning process in an individualized way, this kind of lonely learning mode will not only have a negative impact on the learning process such as learning interruption, etc., and also fails to exert the positive interactive influence among the educational objects. The separation of time and space between teachers, students and students, coupled with the difficulty of effective communication and interaction, students often find it hard to maintain the long-term and continuous learning because of emotional loss, loss of motivation and other difficulties, even show a low-input shallow learning state. Therefore, some online platforms will need to build a communication platform by establishing a virtual community to meet the intrinsic needs of mutual stimulation and communication in the learning process.

Paying more attention to the data analysis of online national identity education

Compared with traditional face-to-face courses teaching, one of the outstanding advantages of online national identity education is that it can be easy to grasp the static model and dynamic model of student learning process. Different with other courses in learning and evaluation, it is difficult to measure the effect of national identity education which cannot rely entirely on examinations or other similar means. Therefore, it is a difficult problem to take hold of the learning effect of students objectively and comprehensively. But online national identity education can be an effective measure of learning outcomes, to a certain extent. Students will have different learning preferences, click frequency, interactive style or attitude towards some issues in the process of online teaching, these characteristics can be more objectively reflected through the data. we can understand the deficiencies of the learning content and make timely adjustments through the analysis of some key data, on the other hand, we can also understand students more accurately and target to enhance the effectiveness of online education in a comprehensive grasp of the psychological and behavioral characteristics of students.

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