

Problems of Academic Atmosphere in Higher Vocational Colleges in the Post-epidemic Era and Countermeasures

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Abstract: Surveys found that in the post-epidemic era, the academic atmosphere in higher vocational colleges has not only continued the previous problems, but also the addition, evolution and superposition of problems caused by the COVID-19 epidemic, mainly manifested in weak motivation, poor discipline, and weak professionalism. In this regard, higher vocational colleges should take comprehensive measures to strengthen students' identity as "the first persons responsible for learning", give full play to the convenience brought by informationization for personalized promotion, enhance the professional infiltration effect, and guide students to set reasonable goals and grow into talents in diversified ways, so as to fulfill the mission of fostering virtue through education.

1. Research background

Academic atmosphere is essentially a cultural representation of institutions and groups. As far as colleges and universities are concerned, it is the ultimate manifestation of mainstream cultural values, which is of great significance to the quality of talent cultivation and the sustainable development of colleges and universities. General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out, "The school spirit and academic atmosphere of a school, just like sunlight and air, determine the growth of all things, directly affect students' learning and growth."^[1] Article 38 of the Vocational Education Law clearly stipulates: Vocational schools should strengthen the construction of school spirit and academic atmosphere, teachers' morality and ethics, create a good learning environment, and ensure the quality of education and teaching. At present, the construction of academic atmosphere in higher vocational colleges is not only affected by the decline in the quality of students after continuous enrollment expansion, but also by the changes in teaching and learning methods caused by the three-year epidemic prevention and control, presenting problems such as impatience, utilitarianism, short-sightedness, and even some students are tired of learning. Therefore, it is imperative to take appropriate measures.

2. Post-epidemic Era

The impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on the whole world is undeniable. New York Times columnist Friedman even directly declared that COVID-19 is the starting point

of a new historical period. Not long after the outbreak of COVID-19, it was claimed that human beings have entered the post-epidemic era. According to the research conclusions given by scholars, the post-epidemic era is characterized by the belief that human society has entered a period of "normalization and continuity of the epidemic", and then it is given the expectation of "after the epidemic is over", emphasizing a state of transition from "during the epidemic" to "after the epidemic".^[2]

At the beginning of 2023, with the promulgation of the *Framework Plan for the Management of COVID-19 as a Class B Infectious Disease*, the prevention and control of COVID-19 epidemic in China has entered a new stage, and it has become the goal of current work to maximize the protection of people's life safety and health and to minimize the impact of COVID-19 epidemic on economic and social development. With the resumption of work, production and school, the whole society gradually resumed normal operation. At this time, it is essential to carefully observe and evaluate the academic atmosphere of higher vocational colleges, and objectively judge the impact of COVID-19 epidemic on colleges and universities, so as to ensure the implementation of prevention and control policies in the new stage and fulfill the mission of fostering virtue through education in colleges and universities.

3. Problems of Academic Atmosphere in Higher Vocational Colleges and the Causes

Higher vocational colleges, as an important channel for students to become talents and standouts, are the

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foundation education for the whole society. With the major topics of the times such as improving quality, cultivating high-quality technical and skilled personnel, and showing their own characteristics of different categories, compared with school spirit and teachers' morality, the construction of academic atmosphere is more specific and direct, which has a greater impact on students' growth and success, and directly reflects schools' styles and features.

The research group designed a questionnaire on academic atmosphere, including 20 single-choice questions, multiple-choice questions, and open-ended questions. The survey was conducted among freshmen and sophomores, and a total of 4,401 valid questionnaires were collected. Through questionnaires, interviews and discussions, reality observation, and activity detection, the current issues of academic atmosphere are sorted out as follows:

In terms of learning motivation, more than half of the students lacked a clear and positive learning motivation, felt confused, acted freely without academic planning. Only 46.47% of the students express that they "make plans and adjust according to the situation" for their studies, while the majority are ignorant and following the crowd. 57.47% of the students are "average" or "not interested" in their majors, 29.04% are indifferent to the online "binge-study" behavior, 75.89% of the students spend less than 8 hours of self-study per week on average, and they do not seek academic excellence, but rather passing exams. Some students are weary of study. 18.61% of them choose to "skip class" or "don't listen to lectures" for courses they don't like. In terms of study discipline, the phenomenon of being late for class, leaving early, and absenteeism is not uncommon. 13% of students do not have a correct concept of cheating in exams, and 31.77% of students believe that the main problem with the current academic atmosphere is "poor discipline awareness". In terms of learning methods, some students can learn with the help of information technology and network resources. They have good methods and learning qualities such as information mining, independent learning, and independent thinking. However, 48.74% of students believe that "interference from mobile phones and computer games" is the main factor affecting their learning effect, and 24.97% of students believe that their main problem in learning is "poor self-control and addiction to games", and inappropriate attention to meaningless information on the Internet, which consumes time. In terms of learning objectives, they have short-term goals such as obtaining qualification certificates, and the impulse to follow the crowd to upgrade to a 4-year college. They have weak awareness of profession development, and lack of consciousness to focus on and enhance professionalism.

Some of the above-mentioned problems are long-standing issues, such as weak learning motivation and poor self-discipline awareness; but some of them are also exacerbated or newly added after the COVID-19 epidemic, such as confusion, weak sense of discipline, and weakened professionalism. Tracing back to the root cause, the online teaching that was unavoidable during the epidemic period and the disorderly shift between online and offline teaching caused by the epidemic have caused changes to

campus state and the behavior of teachers and students. There is little face-to-face communication between teachers and students, activities organized by class groups and professional departments are out of question, and it is not an exception that students cannot come to school for six months or even longer. Normal activities such as professional cognition, enrollment education had to be carried out online, and the sequence of theoretical and practical courses could not be followed. Instead, they had to be implemented according to the risk level of the epidemic, making it difficult to form complete and clear professional cognition for students and leading to a lack of professional atmosphere. Teachers and students each sit in front of the computer to complete the course teaching and learning, with lagging feedback and little real-time effective interaction, so how about the results? The sentence made by Internet celebrity at the end of 2022 is evident, to the effect that: Every man for himself, students majored in medicine after three-year online learning are going to offer medical treatment for us. Of course, the object of ridicule can also be engineering students, normal university students and so on.

Xu Jianghong discovered in the exploration of the construction of academic atmosphere: too fast knowledge updating, too complicated information, over-interpreted public opinion events and multiple temptations that exist objectively have eroded the learning confidence of some college students, disrupted their learning interests, weakened their learning thinking, and blurred their learning stance. ^[3]Zou Hongjun's research found that online learning also carries the risk of depriving people of attention through the "audio-visual economy". This is because people are accustomed to the intuitive, superficial, and entertaining taste of online learning, and their learning behavior gradually transforms into audio-visual behavior, with eyes losing focus on the screen, and ears losing sensitivity in the noise of entertainment, resulting in people's physical and mental alienation. Expertise does not reject fun, but it is by no means fun knowledge, nor can it be as easily accessible as games or entertainment information. Being accustomed to the superficiality of online learning, it is easy for students to avoid the difficult and choose the easy in professional learning. In the questionnaire, 5.77% of students choose "easy to get credits" as the criterion when choosing courses, while 51.6% of students believe that the difficulty of professional courses is the main problem in their learning.

4. Countermeasures and Suggestions

"Compared with pre-university education, which focus on cultivating learners' recognition of rules and self-abiding, higher education places greater emphasis on cultivating learners' independent spirit, innovative ability, transcendent quality, and self-development ability." Facing up to the problems, holding on the times and taking up the mission, higher vocational colleges should rectify problems and negative tendencies in academic atmosphere in time, and take comprehensive strategies from multiple perspectives, so as to cultivate new talents of the times who are responsible, professional and capable of action.

4.1. Guide students to be "the first persons responsible for learning".

It is vital to strengthen value education and enhance awareness of responsibility. As stated in the *Analects of Confucius*: I will not enlighten my students until they have really tried hard but even so fail to understand. I will not instruct them until they have something to say and make themselves understood. Practice has proved that if the educated subject does not have the desire to actively seek solutions, it is difficult for educational activities to take effect. Students must be placed in the position of the first persons responsible for learning, so that learning should be managed, planned and responsible for, and their sense of ownership should be stimulated. Schools should carry out educational seminars on "lives, life and career", inspiring students to redefine the role of "students" from the perspectives of lives, life, and career, to plan their careers on the basis of respecting life and cherishing life, so as to become true social beings; Carry out discussions on school motto and sing school songs, so as to instill school spirit and ideas into the mind, and establish a campus community; Organize activities such as great craftsmen into campus, integrate core socialist values in education, and cultivate students' sense of dedication and integrity; Give full play to the peer-driven effect, and encourage students to seek virtue and upward spirit with the role models around them. Comprehensively use the model of the times and models around to drive students, propagandize school spirit and school motto, class culture to enhance the sense of belonging and collective consciousness of students, stimulate the sense of honor of students, and help them establish lofty value pursuit.

It is necessary to promote the internalization of external discipline. External discipline, represented by rules, disciplines and disciplinary mechanisms, currently widely implemented as a bottom-line constraint in team building and individual growth, plays an end-control role that is reactive and prone to externalization, false coping and even blatant confrontation. Combined with the mental characteristics of college students, these hard constraints are transformed into contracts and internalized into codes of personal conduct covering various learning and life scenarios between schools and students, teachers and students, and students themselves, and then they can abide by and achieve mutual success, achieving twice the result with half the effort. For example, conducting a collection of elements of academic atmosphere of "We are the master of academic atmosphere", jointly developing the "eight rules" for the construction of class atmosphere and academic atmosphere, drafting dormitory civilization convention by dormitory members. The stakeholders should jointly agree and abide by it, start from the details, abandon complicated written terms and hard constraints, promoting individuality and respecting commonality, and choose lively, easy-to-remember ways such as painting, creative design and posters for flexible intervention and post them in corresponding places to make them visible, easy to implement, and become a part of campus culture. Regularly carry out activities such as model classes for the construction of study style and selection of civilized dormitories to promote the transformation of discipline

from external requirements to endogenous motivation.

It is essential to implement the growth record system. With the help of information management methods, transparent growth files, clear personal portraits, dynamic changes in learning points and credits can be traced, serious and timely academic warnings, academic bottom lines are set, and academic elimination is effectively implemented. At the same time, establish a support mechanism, set up a support team with outstanding students as the main body, cooperate with teachers to provide after-school tutoring and answer questions, and help students with academic difficulties solve their problems. Make students aware of their academic level, improvement space or warning range at any time, refuse frog-boiling effect, settling accounts with students afterwards, or repeatedly take make-up exams, academic "throwing a game" and other substandard behaviors, let students become the person in charge of personal academic growth affairs.

4.2. Support large-scale personalized education with information literacy./

The rapid promotion and implementation of online teaching due to the COVID-19 epidemic has led to a revolution in education. In addition, with the advancement of technology, as Minister of Education Huai Jinpeng pointed out in his keynote speech at the World Digital Education Conference, "digital technology has increasingly become a leading force driving fundamental changes and all-round reshaping of the way of thinking, organizational structure and operation mode of human society, providing us with major new opportunities and challenges to innovate, reshape and promote development, and "what is the purpose of education and where should education go" has become a common topic for countries around the world to consider." He said that in the future, we will "deepen the implementation of the digitalization of education strategy, and promote resource digitalization, intelligent management, personalized growth, and socialized learning, so that high-quality resources can be replicated, disseminated, and shared, and large-scale personalized education becomes possible, and take a new step forward in building a learning society and a learning nation with the digitization of education." [4] Online teaching, multi-platform switching, and in-depth exploration of network resources have tested and expanded the information technology application capabilities of teachers and students, and should be continuously promoted, consolidated, and improved. Schools should follow the development trend of the digital economy, continue to deepen the reform of intelligent teaching, integrate the whole process of information technology into campus management and services, and effectively play the driving role of digital technology to realize the transformation and upgrading of traditional education.

In the process of promoting smart education, consideration should be given to all parties and the pursuit of benefits and avoidance of disadvantages. The neutrality of technology can only be realized through positive

utilization by teachers and students. The biggest advantage of online teaching is its ability to fully explore and utilize rich educational and teaching resources, and expand the boundaries of resources. Contemporary college students, as aborigines in the Internet age, have the advantage of being self-taught in the use of information tools, data mining, and information tracking, and are highly sensitive to information. However, this does not necessarily mean that they are sufficiently information literate to cope with new forms of learning. The Internet also comes with more temptations when providing rich learning resources. "In order to improve their popularity in the highly competitive market, individual portals are not hesitated to publish information by means of enlargement, exaggeration and distortion." [5] Compared with the warning discussion on the problem of phubber in colleges and universities before the COVID-19 epidemic, the questionnaire and recent classroom monitoring results show that about 40% of students heavily rely on electronic devices such as mobile phones in the classroom, resulting in poor learning outcomes. Playing mobile phones and playing games have become one of the salient factors affecting classroom effectiveness. Thus, information literacy enhancement needs to be further put on the agenda to correct the undesirable phenomena of disorderly and confusing use of online resource that consumes time, confuses values, and even leads to addiction to games and the Internet.

4.3. Give full play to the professional infiltration effect.

Whether viewed from the perspective of academic categories or the mastery of knowledge and skills, majors and their corresponding industries and occupations can have a subtle impact and shaping on individuals. Most students in higher vocational colleges are not familiar with their majors upon enrollment, with unclear purpose of study, and uncertain employment prospects. Entrance education should be taken as an opportunity, and professional teachers and professionals should join hands to explain clearly what the major requires and what kind of work they will be engaged in in the future. At the beginning of the semester, they should draw a rough outline of the major and establish a framework for understanding. With organic integration of professional learning and value leadership, the entire process of academic education should focus on enhancing professional awareness and ability, focusing on two classrooms, timely solving students' doubts, leading them to establish professional concepts, establish professional consciousness, expand their understanding of the profession, form professional identity, and deepen and consolidate their professional consciousness. Give full play to the role of the first classroom as the main front, and systematically cultivate professional awareness through the design and implementation of the curriculum system; implement the auxiliary responsibilities of the second classroom, closely coordinate various activities with the professional training of the first classroom, enhance experience and interaction, and realize daily professional application, regular professional expansion, and realize

the integration of professional basic literacy, core competence, value orientation and extension requirements. Integrating professional thinking into the two classrooms and campus life, allowing students to immerse themselves in the professional atmosphere all the time and realize the transformation of "daily application without realization".

It is essential to strengthen professional practice and improve hands-on ability. Adhering to practicality and strengthening abilities is the characteristic of vocational education and the key to cultivating professional thinking. At the same time, unlike general higher education and research-oriented higher education, which attach importance to theoretical exploration, higher vocational colleges directly face the frontline of production and service, cultivating high-quality technical and skilled talents, and practice is a particularly important cultivation means, and the education targets are more inclined to hands-on practice than theoretical study. Therefore, higher vocational colleges should take their own posts, make the best use of the circumstances, highlight the importance of practical teaching in the cultivation of professional talents, lead students to start from serving around according to the rules of skill formation, encourage students to participate in studios, enterprise project practice, and entrepreneurial projects, and gradually integrate theoretical knowledge into projects through follow-up practice and on-the-job practice, so that students can systematically master professional skills in project-based practice, continuously test and improve their professional abilities, and experience the a sense of accomplishment brought by learning in practice, thereby consolidating professional beliefs and establishing professional self-confidence. It is necessary to keep close social contact and closely dock with industry enterprises, and enable students to broaden their horizons, enhance their professional knowledge, and gradually acquire innovative abilities while being exposed to the latest trends in the industry.

4.4. Rational deployment of multi-objective relationships to achieve diversified growth and success.

It is the legal duty of vocational education to be open to everyone and to teach students in accordance with their aptitude. It is the ardent expectation of the whole society for vocational education that everyone is brilliant and diversified. Therefore, respecting students' basic and reasonable goal setting and guiding them to reasonably allocate multi-objective relationships should become another solution to the problem of academic atmosphere.

Students should actively respond to the impact of "upgrading from junior college student to university student". The survey found that a total of 96.3% of the surveyed freshmen and sophomores plan to upgrade to university students. Taking Shandong Institute of Commerce and Technology as an example, in 2021, it coincided with the reform of the admissions policy for upgrading from junior college student to university student in Shandong Province. A total of 1,835 students from the school took the undergraduate examination, accounting for about 42% of the graduates, and the

admission rate was 78.5%. In 2022, 2,935 candidates participated in the entrance examination, accounting for about 60% of graduates. Pursuing further studies is understandable in itself. However, surveys have found that many students only pursue a higher education and spend a lot of time participating in tutoring and training, doing exercises, neglecting professional learning, club activities, job practice, and other requirements, thereby lowering academic requirements. In this regard, college workers should face up to the impact of upgrading from junior college student to university student, encourage enthusiasm for learning, clarify the relationship between professional learning and upgrading to a 4-year college, guide students to set reasonable expectations for upgrading, and urge students to pursue further studies based on good professional learning.

Students are required to reasonably deal with multiple tasks such as community activities, certificate acquisition, and preparation for competitions. The innovative practice of the integrated training model of post-course competition and certificate in higher vocational colleges has effectively improved students' adaptability in the workplace. In the past three years, due to the COVID-19 epidemic, community activities and various competitions have been restricted. Now, after deregulation, there is a trend of "revenge": community activities are carried out one after another, tight schedule for the competition, and the qualification certificate and skill level certificate examination are heating up day by day. All of the above, when applied to individual students, make them feel overwhelmed. Therefore, schools should do a good job of sorting and allocating, fully considering students' acceptance ability; At the same time, it is necessary to guide students to make reasonable choices under the main line of professional ability cultivation and training. Don't seek demanding perfection, or being determined to win everything; let alone put the cart before the horse and follow suit, such as reducing the overall quality improvement activities to speculative behaviors such as accumulating learning points.

5. Conclusion

The issue of academic atmosphere is not something that can be accomplished in an action, but requires long-term efforts. Especially in the post-epidemic era, in the face of major changes in teaching forms, the issue of academic atmosphere has continued previous problems, and there are also new situations and new changes superimposed. Higher vocational colleges should learn from the latest guiding ideology of COVID-19 epidemic prevention and control, regard students as "the first persons responsible for learning", give full play to the convenience brought by informationization for personalized promotion, strengthen professional infiltration, and guide students to set reasonable goals and grow into talents in diversified ways, so as to fulfill the mission of cultivating high-quality technical and technical talents entrusted by society.

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