

Current Research Status of College English Teachers' Teaching Capabilities

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Abstract: College English teachers' teaching capabilities is not only crucial in the reform of college English teaching but an important factor affecting the teaching effectiveness of college English courses. Domestic scholars have conducted researches on the connotation and framework, development, as well as approaches or strategies for the improvement of their teaching abilities. Thus, a research system has initially formed. However, researches in this field lack of depth in theoretical systems and comprehensiveness in practical exploration. In the future, the connotation and composition of college English teachers' teaching abilities should be more accurate, while more attention should be paid to individual characteristics of the college English teacher group.

Keywords: College English teachers; Teaching Capabilities; Current Research Status

1. Introduction

With the introduction of new liberal arts concepts and the advent of digital intelligence era, foreign language education reform faces new challenges and opportunities. Besides, college English teachers are endowed with new missions in this new era. Their teaching abilities are increasingly interpreted and explored by researchers. Domestic scholars primarily discuss the rich connotations and current development, forming a preliminary research system. By reviewing and commenting the existing literature, this paper will follow the main thread of research on the teaching capabilities of college English teachers, attempt to clarify the development as well as provide a prospect on the directions of this research.

2. The rich connotation of college English teachers' teaching ability

Currently, domestic scholars have multiple focuses on the connotation of the teaching abilities of college English teachers, among which the most prominent are blended teaching capabilities, information technology-based teaching capabilities, and ideological and political education through curriculum teaching capabilities.

2.1 Blended teaching capabilities

College English teachers' blended teaching capabilities are inseparable from the characteristics of blended learning models. Researchers generally agree that the blended teaching capabilities of college English teachers are based on a "student-centered" concept, fully leveraging students' initiative, utilizing online teaching platforms or resources, and organically integrating the advantages of both online and offline teaching to achieve mutual educational effect. Moreover, researchers pay considerable attention to the components of blended teaching capabilities. For instance, Tan Jiangrong believes that the blended teaching capabilities are composed of internal and external abilities: internal abilities refer to the cognition of traditional and current education, the courage to be open and transparent about one's teaching, and the ability to collaborate with others in teaching and innovation; external abilities include effective communication skills with students and peers, data literacy, management of blended learning experiences, and the ability to apply teaching tools^[1]. Based on the contextual and dynamic nature of teacher' capability development, Xu Jinfen has built an AKSs framework for university foreign language teachers with a combination of online and offline context that includes three elements: awareness, knowledge, and skills and three stages of development: exploration, integration, and innovation. Her research provides an important reference for the professional development of college English teachers^[2].

2.2 Information technology-based teaching capabilities

Although domestic scholars do not have a very clear concept of information technology-based teaching capacity, it is generally accepted that this capacity is a kind of teaching ability that meet the requirement of the era of digital intelligence or big data as well as the characteristics and teaching objectives of college English courses. There are various views on the elements of information technology-based teaching capacity in the domestic research. For example, Wang Zhenhuan interpreted it from three perspectives: the informatization of teaching meth-

ods, teaching design, and teaching environment. He believes that with the help of informatization of teaching methods and teaching design, it is helpful to realize the transformation from a teacher-centered to a “teacher-lead and student-centered” teaching structure^[3]. Through surveys on information literacy of college English teachers from different regions and universities, Fang Xiucui pointed out the information literacy of college English teachers should include both teachers’ and students’ information technology ability, awareness and behavior^[4]. It can be seen that although the descriptions of the elements of information technology-based teaching capacity are not the same, they all aim to achieve the transformation from teacher-lead to student-centered in the teaching process.

2.3 Ideological and political education through curriculum teaching capabilities.

The concept of ideological and political education in courses led to significant educational reforms in higher education. The research on the ability of college English teachers to conduct ideological and political education in courses is quite an unique aspect. The most representative researcher is Gao Yulei, who analyze the connotation, characteristics, and components of the ability of college English teachers to conduct ideological and political education in their courses. He define this ability as: in various teaching situations, teachers consciously explore the ideological and political elements contained in the curriculum and organically integrate them into all aspects and stages of teaching, aiming to shape students’ values, enhance their abilities, and accumulate their knowledge. He also point out this ability possesses characteristics such as being political, generative, situational, and integrative^[5]. This definition considered both the general nature of foreign language teaching abilities and the specificity of ideological and political education in courses, making it more suitable for college English teachers.

3. The development of college English teachers’ teaching capabilities

Domestically, scholars have conducted a series of empirical studies on the development of their teaching abilities. The vast majority of scholars have employed questionnaire surveys, designing questions from three perspectives: cognition and attitude (awareness), modern educational technology competence, and knowledge. The current development of their teaching capabilities has the following features.

3.1 Educational background, teaching experience, and professional titles are the common factors that influence college English teachers’ teaching ability

From the research findings domestically, it is evident that three main factors—educational background, teaching experience, and professional title influence their teaching abilities. For instance, through surveys on the current state of college English teachers’ capabilities in integrating ideological and political education into the curriculum, Hu Pingping and Liu Wenjing found that years of teaching experience and professional title significantly impact these capabilities^[6]. In her study on the development of information technology-based teaching capabilities among university foreign language teachers, Shi Minmin, using the TPACK framework and considering multiple combinations of each element based on teachers’ gender, educational background, teaching experience, and professional title for mean value statistics, compared differences in TPACK dimensions across these influencing factors. She discovered a positive correlation between educational background, teaching experience, and professional title with various dimensions of TPACK, indicating that higher levels of education, more teaching experience, and higher professional titles correspond to higher TPACK scores^[7]. This confirms the significant impact of educational background, teaching experience, and professional title on college English teachers’ knowledge, sensitivity to updates in educational technology, and awareness of integrating technology into teaching.

3.2 The ability to effectively integrate technology into teaching is relatively weak

The research results of the vast majority of scholars show that the information technology ability of university English teachers is still in its initial stage. That is, they have a certain awareness of modern educational technology, but their ability to effectively integrate technology into teaching is relatively weak. For example, Liu Fang conducted a survey on 81 college English teachers nationwide aimed at understanding the attitudes and teaching abilities of them, and solving the problems they encounter in teaching practice. Based on the results of the questionnaire, she pointed out that the overall situation of the educational technology ability of college English teachers in China is: there is a strong awareness of using modern educational technology, but the application level and operational ability are not high. Most teachers’ application of modern educational technology still stays at the primary stage such as multimedia teaching^[8].

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, domestic research on the teaching capabilities of college English teachers has initially formed a system with theoretical and empirical studies in aspects such as connotation, framework and development. However, there are deficiencies in this field of research and future studies should focus on the following two aspects: First, the construction of the teaching capability framework should be more precise and profound, relying more on the characteristics of college English courses and the traits of college English teachers. Second, as for the research subject, existing studies have paid more attention to the commonalities among college English teachers while neglecting individual characteristics of this group, such as younger teachers, teachers whose students are majored in sports and arts, etc. Research on the teaching

capabilities of these types is extremely scarce. Strengthening the study of different categories of college English teachers is beneficial for enhancing the teaching capabilities of this group and the teaching effectiveness of college English courses on a broader level.

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