

Research On The Application Of Project Based Learning In The Teaching Of The Conspectus Of Modern Chinese History: Taking The Special Topic Of "Why The Bourgeois Republic Plan Doesn't Work In China" As An Example

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Abstract

The university course "Conspectus of Modern Chinese History" (hereinafter referred to as the "Conspectus"), as a compulsory ideological and political course for college students, the "Conspectus" has unique advantages and effects in helping college students establish a solid materialist historical perspective, cultivate historical thinking ability, enhance historical confidence and political identity, inspire college students' sense of historical responsibility and mission. Given the current situation of many ideological and political courses for college students in universities, and the large class sizes that lead to poor teaching effectiveness, "project-based learning" as a dynamic, student-centered learning method is gradually being applied in the teaching of ideological and political courses in universities. This article will select a topic from the "Conspectus" course, "Why did the capitalist republican solution not work in China" to illustrate the application of "project-based learning" in this course.

Keywords: *Project-based Learning, Conspectus of Modern Chinese History, Applied Research*

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I. Introduction

Ideological and political education courses play a pivotal role in the moral and intellectual development of students, serving as irreplaceable conduits for instilling foundational values and responsibilities of significant weight amongst their instructors (Xi J.P., 2020). The "Conspectus of Modern Chinese History" course, a key component within this educational framework, holds a prominent position in higher education teachings, underscored by its indispensable status. Primarily, it shoulders the responsibility of laying down the disciplinary foundations, introducing students to the core theories, knowledge, and methodologies of a given subject, thereby solidifying their academic groundwork (Smith, J., Johnson, A., 2019). Furthermore, the curriculum structure of the course provides students with a comprehensive understanding of their chosen disciplines before delving into advanced professional knowledge, offering them a platform to grasp the essence and developmental

trends within their fields fully. This not only aids in clarifying their future academic and research directions but also in fostering a deeper comprehension of their subjects (Wang, L., Li, H., 2020). Moreover, the course contributes to the cultivation of students' comprehensive abilities. Through engaging in systematic study of the fundamentals, case analysis, and classroom discussions, students not only enhance their disciplinary skills but also develop critical thinking, teamwork, and problem-solving capabilities, which are crucial for their future academic pursuits and professional endeavors (Chen, Y., Lyu, Q., 2018). Additionally, the course plays a foundational role in the construction of the university's academic system. As part of the disciplinary framework, it lays the groundwork for further in-depth development and expansion by imparting basic disciplinary knowledge and fostering students' comprehensive abilities (Zhang, W., Yang, S., 2017). The importance and status of the "Conspectus" course in higher education teaching cannot be underestimated; it is not only the starting point for students' learning journeys but also a cornerstone for their future growth, making a significant contribution to the academic structure of the university and the cultivation of students' holistic competencies (Li, M., Wu, X., 2016).

University teachers of ideological and political education courses bear an unwavering duty, considered a sacred obligation, to nurture students into becoming steadfast, dream-chasing, pragmatic, bold, and competent youths of the new era, fully embodying ideals, responsibility, resilience, and diligence (Wang, X. H., 2009).

II. The Dilemmas Of Traditional Teaching In The "Conspectus" Course

With the development of the times, the teaching methods of university courses are diversified, and the problems existing in the traditional teaching methods of the "Conspectus" course are becoming increasingly prominent.

Passive Reception by Students

Traditional teaching methods for the "Conspectus" course typically adopt a teacher-centered approach, wherein students assume a passive role, merely receiving information during lectures. This pedagogical style results in a lack of opportunity for active thinking and participation, diminishing students' motivation to learn and their capacity for innovation. It restricts the development of their understanding and application of knowledge, potentially leading to a superficial grasp of the subject matter, devoid of in-depth thought and applicative skills.

Lack of Practice and Application

Traditional teaching methods predominantly focus on the rote memorization and transmission of knowledge, emphasizing theoretical instruction while often neglecting the cultivation of practical and applicative skills. Students are typically required to master only the fundamental concepts of a discipline, or even merely the knowledge points listed in textbooks, lacking opportunities to apply this knowledge in real-world contexts. This limitation results in students' understanding of the subject remaining theoretical and impedes their ability to convert knowledge into practical skills.

Almost No Personalized Guidance Exists

Traditional teaching methods often employ a standardized instructional model, lacking personalized guidance and support that take into account the individual differences and learning characteristics of students. This results in some students not receiving sufficient assistance and direction in the classroom, making it challenging for them to realize their potential and strengths.

Rare Interactions and Collaborations

Traditional teaching methods often emphasize the lecturer's explanation and the students' passive listening, markedly lacking in collaborative interaction among students themselves as well as between students and teachers. Such a classroom environment constrains the development of cooperative skills and teamwork, crucial for problem-solving abilities, and fails to harness collective intelligence to enhance learning. Additionally, the monotonous and unengaging atmosphere discourages students' engagement, leading them to distract themselves with mobile phones or other unrelated activities.

Lack of Technical Support

In the era of advanced modern technology, traditional teaching methods often fall short in leveraging educational technology and multimedia resources. This limitation hinders the diversity and innovation in teaching approaches, failing to fully utilize modern technological means to enhance teaching effectiveness and enrich students' learning experiences.

Narrow Teaching Objectives

Under the examination-oriented educational system, the conventional pedagogical model often prioritizes students' mastery of knowledge while neglecting the cultivation of their emotional and volitional faculties. This leads to a superficial comprehension of the subject matter among students, who fail to integrate the acquired knowledge into their personal competencies, overlooking the holistic development of the student.

Traditional "Conspectus" teaching methods often face issues such as passive student reception, a lack of practical application, inadequate personalized guidance, and insufficient opportunities for interaction, collaboration, and technological support. Project-based learning holds significant relevance and practical value in higher education, promoting the enhancement of students' practical skills, teamwork, problem-solving abilities, learning motivation and interest, as well as the development of comprehensive capabilities and interdisciplinary thinking. This approach aids in steering higher education towards more innovative and practice-oriented directions, aligning with the demands of contemporary development. To augment teaching outcomes and enrich the students' learning experience, it is crucial to explore innovative teaching methodologies that address these limitations, emphasizing active student participation and personalizing the educational process to foster comprehensive development. The application of project-based learning in the "Conspectus" courses is one of the investigations this article conducts to address the existing issues in traditional teaching efficacy within the curriculum.

III. The Role Of Project-Based Learning In The Teaching Of The "Conspectus" Courses

Project-based learning plays a pivotal role in students' education, for instance, by fostering the development of core competencies, enhancing comprehensive skills, encouraging teamwork and communication abilities, and boosting learning enthusiasm and engagement. This enables students to more effectively meet the challenges of the world and prepare for the future. Specifically, the role of project-based learning in the context of the "Conspectus" courses in higher education is as follows.

Improve Student Engagement

Traditional teaching models have invariably involved a one-way flow of information, where teachers lecture and students passively listen, primarily memorizing and reciting information. With the advent of technology, smartphones have become ubiquitous among college students, who often find themselves distracted by their devices during class, leading to a stagnant and unengaging learning environment. Project-based

learning, however, revolves around educational content with open-ended questions that drive the curriculum. Under the guidance of educators, students collaborate in small groups to investigate and discover answers autonomously, ultimately forming their own unique learning outcomes. This pedagogical approach shifts the focus from teacher to student and allows learning results to be expressed in diverse, student-defined ways, significantly enhancing classroom engagement.

Fixed Student Subjectivity Status

Contemporary college students navigate through a complex and multifaceted new social environment, with widespread access to information through a diversity of channels, broad horizons, and active thinking. However, their appreciation for core curriculum courses often remains superficial, focused solely on passing grades, credits, and scholarships—elements directly linked to their immediate lives. Consequently, during their university education, students exhibit a minimal demand for deeper learning. This situation is exacerbated by traditional teaching methods, which result in rigid classroom dynamics and a lackluster atmosphere, leading to students attending classes without engagement or initiative. Project-based learning addresses these issues by restoring students to the forefront of the educational process, thereby fostering a proactive and engaged learning approach.

Enhance Students' Teamwork and Problem-solving Abilities

Project-based learning typically necessitates that students collaborate within teams to accomplish tasks, thereby fostering their teamwork, communication, and leadership skills. It also emphasizes learning through tackling real-world problems, which nurtures students' problem-solving capacities and innovative thinking. Incorporating project-based learning into core curriculum courses allows students to collectively explore subject matter through team collaboration, enhancing both the efficiency and quality of learning. Moreover, it enables students to comprehend subject knowledge through solving practical issues, cultivating their critical and creative thinking abilities.

Enhance Teacher's Teaching Ability

For contemporary university students, traditional teaching models fail to meet their expectations for classroom instruction, necessitating continual enhancement of pedagogical skills by educators. Project-based learning not only has a long-term, positive impact on various aspects of student development but also significantly enhances the teaching capabilities of educators. For teachers, each step of designing a project-based learning module tests their logical reasoning, creativity, design, organizational, and expressive skills (Dai, H., 2023). The progression of project-based learning is led under the guidance of teachers, placing high demands on their knowledge reserves, instructional design, lesson preparation, and problem-setting skills. Thus, implementing project-based learning in the classroom presents a considerable challenge for teachers and concurrently elevates their teaching proficiency in a substantive manner.

Implementing Diverse Teaching Modes

In the traditional pedagogical model of core curriculum courses, educators often lecture unilaterally from the podium, resulting in students passively listening below, which can lead to lecture fatigue over time. Under the contemporary epoch, the adoption of diverse educational models aligns with the developmental needs of the era, catering to students' listening needs with innovative methods that further enhance teaching capabilities. Project-based learning, integrating traditional teaching methods, online education, video instruction, and flipped classrooms, invigorates classroom atmospheres and better meets the knowledge acquisition

preferences of modern university students, aligning closely with the instructional goals of core curriculum courses, as well as the needs and expectations of college students. Practical application of project-based learning has revealed that students prefer this free, dynamic, and individuality-showcasing style of learning, they are more engaged in the classroom and report that the knowledge gained through this teaching approach is retained more firmly than that acquired through passive listening to lectures alone.

IV. The Application Of Project-Based Learning In The Teaching Of The “Conspectus” Course

The topic “Why the Bourgeois Republican Plan Was Unfeasible in China” pertains to the content of the Xinhai Revolution, a pivotal moment when, amidst national and ethnic peril, various societal forces repeatedly failed in their early attempts to chart a course for the country. Under the leadership of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the bourgeois revolutionary faction endeavored to overthrow the Qing Dynasty’s autocratic regime and establish a republican government, marking a nationwide revolution. The Xinhai Revolution constitutes a crucial knowledge point within the core curriculum, and its exploration through project-based learning offers students a platform for delving deeply into this historical event, comprehensively understanding its impact and significance, while also enhancing their historical awareness and critical thinking skills. What follows is a detailed analysis concerning this application.

Step One: Establish the Theme. The initiation of project-based learning necessitates the careful selection of a project theme, which not only guides the students’ direction and progress of learning but also allows them to dissect and engage with the theme in response to driving questions. In higher education, core courses are often structured around specific topics, making it relatively straightforward to determine the project theme, which in this case aligns with the topic “Why the Bourgeois Republican Plan Was Unfeasible in China”. Students are encouraged to explore the complexities underlying this theme, considering both the successes and failures of the Xinhai Revolution by analyzing its successful and unsuccessful aspects to reach conclusive insights. This process not only kindles students’ interest in learning but also actively involves them in the project.

Step Two: Setting Objectives. University students possess adequate learning capabilities and methodologies, hence the establishment of objectives centers around the core and challenging aspects of the theme. Once the project theme is defined, the facilitator elucidates these focal and complex points to the students for a comprehensive preliminary understanding of the subject matter. This clarity aids in distinguishing between minor and major points during project-based learning. The crucial and challenging elements serve as the learning objectives of this topic, ultimately aligning with the mainstream and essence of the core curriculum.

Step Three: Formulating Questions. The formulation of driving questions constitutes the core of project-based learning research, highlighting the dilemmas and queries to be discussed and resolved within the project. These questions, often rooted in real-world contexts and practical life, serve to direct students’ exploratory activities (Dai, H., 2023). For this particular topic, three driving questions are posited: “Why was the outbreak of the Xinhai Revolution an inevitable episode in history?”, “Why is the Xinhai Revolution considered both a success and a failure?”, and “Why was the bourgeois republican model unviable in China?”. Dividing the topic into three segments based on these questions allows students to choose their focus according to their interests.

Step Four: Collaborative Division of Labor. The facilitator finalizes student teams through proactive communication, recommending teams of three to five members. Each group undertakes an inquiry based on their chosen subject. Every team must clarify their tasks and goals, members leverage their unique skills to distribute responsibilities effectively, collaboratively addressing the group’s questions. The presentation of findings is jointly decided by team members on how best to demonstrate it to the class. The facilitator encourages the presentation forms to be as varied as possible, fostering imagination, innovation, and proactive

engagement. Information regarding these four steps is disseminated to students two to three weeks in advance. Given the comprehensive nature and stringent hourly requirements of the curriculum, it is imperative not to overly dedicate time to a single subject. Furthermore, as university students operate under a course selection system with daily free periods, they are well-positioned to successfully complete this activity within the two-to-three-week time frame through effective time management.

Step Five: Independent Inquiry. This stage represents the crux of the project, where the emphasis is on fostering students' initiative and active participation in learning. During this phase, each group formulates an internal project plan through discussion and collaboration. Responsibilities are assigned and activities are distributed among members who aim to complete their tasks within the planned timeframe. Subsequently, the groups consolidate their work to discuss, analyze, address any gaps, and refine their findings into final outcomes. Students are expected to engage with historical documents, research papers, and news articles to gain a comprehensive understanding of the Xinhai Revolution's historical context, process, and impact. They must also organize and analyze the gathered data to distill useful information. Throughout this process, the instructor provides guidance, resolves queries, and assists in troubleshooting any issues the students encounter. This supportive oversight ensures continuous improvement and adherence to educational objectives while also noting each group's strengths and areas for improvement.

Step Six: Discussion and Exchange. Based on the foundation of collected and organized materials, teams will regularly convene discussions to share their discoveries and insights. These discussions enable students to develop a deeper understanding of every facet of the Xinhai Revolution and encourage them to view historical events from multiple perspectives. Moreover, this mode of interaction significantly contributes to cultivating students' critical thinking and communicative skills.

Step Seven: Presentation of Outcomes. The presentation of results is scheduled to take place during a preset class session, where each group is expected to showcase its research findings in various forms such as reports, speeches, or demonstrations. As the groups had the autonomy to select their topics, the formats of these presentations are diverse, ranging from PowerPoint presentations delivered by a representative, to scenarios where all members contribute by speaking about the sections they were responsible for. Notably, one group excelled with an innovative format that combined a PowerPoint presentation with a dramatic skit, effectively illustrating the establishment of bourgeois revolutionary groups and the promotion of the "Three Principles of the People" through pamphlets. This stage is primarily an opportunity for students to exhibit their learning achievements and their ability to articulate and reflect on their perspectives, facilitating mutual learning among peers. This not only serves as an assessment of their learning outcomes but also enhances their enjoyment and sense of accomplishment derived from project-based learning. Following the presentations, the teacher will guide a reflective session, encouraging students to contemplate the entire project process, evaluate their strengths and areas for improvement, and thereby refine their approach to future learning endeavors.

Step Eight: Comprehensive Evaluation. This pedagogical exercise offers multifaceted benefits. For teachers, it enhances familiarity with the instructional content and improves teaching proficiency. Furthermore, it deepens the rapport between students and teachers through increased interaction and communication, fostering a more intimate and harmonious relationship. For students, the impacts are notably positive: there is an increase in classroom engagement and efficiency in listening, the classroom atmosphere becomes more vibrant, countering any tendency towards dullness, and students exhibit heightened self-directed learning, creativity, teamwork abilities, as well as improved retention and application of knowledge. However, deficiencies were identified based on discussions outside of class. Firstly, the effectiveness of student presentations was not on par with teacher-led explanations, with issues such as inadequate preparation, deviation from the educational content, or lack of clarity. Secondly, students who did not participate in the activities showed lesser retention

and application of knowledge compared to their active peers. To maximize educational outcomes, total participation from all students is essential.

Upon the conclusion of the project-based learning initiative, we facilitate a reflective session for the students, guiding them to retrospectively analyze the entire project trajectory, deliberate on their achievements and areas for improvement, all aimed at enhancing guidance for their future academic pursuits.

V. Shortcomings Of Project-Based Learning In The Teaching Of The “Conspectus” Course

Project-based learning, as implemented in the comprehensive curriculum courses, has shown promising results but currently faces several challenges: Firstly, there is the issue of curriculum coverage. Given that these courses are mandatory for the entire school and often entail a vast syllabus with numerous classes, the teaching load is substantial, especially in large-class settings. The time-intensive nature of project-based learning may prevent deep engagement and practice within a single activity. Consequently, achieving full participation from all students over a semester is unlikely, and not all topics can feasibly adopt this method, leading to compromised curriculum coverage. Secondly, the lack of student teamwork proficiency is notable. While project-based learning typically requires group collaboration, students tend to work in isolation post-division of tasks, showing a dearth of teamwork skills and effective communication. This deficiency hampers collaborative efforts, culminating in outputs that are merely compilation of individual work, devoid of genuine cooperation. Thirdly, there is an insufficiency in teacher training and guidance. In the realm of project-based learning, educators serve as guides and mentors, yet the lack of relevant training and experience, coupled with inadequate communication with students, results in insufficient instructional support for student projects. Fourthly, students’ autonomous learning capabilities are found wanting. Project-based learning emphasizes self-directed inquiry, but some students may lack the habit or ability for independent study, requiring time to adjust to this educational approach. The consequence is often projects that are limited to presentation formats, lacking in innovation and richness of content, and at times veering off-topic. Fifthly, student motivation poses a problem. A segment of the student body may exhibit little interest or incentive for project-based learning, which demands active participation and inquiry. To mitigate this, continuous assessment rewards have been employed, however, this approach has led to superficial engagement by some students solely for grade improvement. Others may remain disengaged during presentations, indicating a broader issue of unstimulated learning interest. Furthermore, student feedback suggests that peer-delivered content may not be as effective as teacher-led instruction, potentially clashing with their accustomed passive learning style.

VI. Summary

In the long-term perspective, project-based learning emerges as a novel and fitting instructional methodology for ideological and political courses in higher education institutions. Its application within the curriculum of the “Conspectus” has demonstrated considerable pedagogical value and effectiveness. Through project-based learning, students gain a deeper understanding and mastery of the subject matter by engaging in practical activities. This approach effectively bridges theory with practice, thereby enhancing learning outcomes (Zhang, H., Li, L., 2021). Project-based learning also fosters interdisciplinary integration and the development of comprehensive skills by offering students opportunities to amalgamate knowledge from history, politics, economics, and other disciplines, enhancing their ability to apply this knowledge in a cohesive manner. Such a holistic understanding and interpretation of historical events elevate students’ academic and intellectual caliber (Wang, Q., Zhao, L., 2022). Moreover, this pedagogy has made significant strides in promoting teamwork and communication skills (Chen, M., Zheng, J., 2023). Students are required to collaborate closely with team members to analyze issues, devise strategies, and execute tasks collectively, cultivating a strong sense of

teamwork and communication abilities. These skills are invaluable for their future professional endeavors and social interactions.

Overall, the application of project-based learning in the curriculum fosters critical thinking, innovation, problem-solving skills, and a spirit of teamwork among students. It also diversifies pedagogical methods and meets the contemporary demands of higher education and societal advancement. Furthermore, it provides valuable insights and a framework for pedagogical reforms in similar courses (Zhao, J., Liu, Q., 2024). The implementation of project-based learning is a gradual and rigorous process that demands continuous effort and reflection. Although it has not yet been widely adopted in ideological and political education courses at universities, the journey of research and practice in this pedagogical method is extensive. As a researcher, I am committed to furthering this study, aiming to achieve a deeper understanding and professional growth through these endeavors.

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