The Predicaments and Solutions for K-12 English Teaching Reform under the Core Literacy Concept

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Abstract: This paper aims to investigate the application of the core literacy concept in K-12 English teaching, analyze the predicaments of English teaching reform under the core literacy concept, and propose corresponding solutions. The concept, characteristics, origins, and development of the core literacy concept are introduced. The impact of the core literacy concept on English teaching is analyzed, and the specific practice of the core literacy concept in English teaching is discussed. The predicaments of English teaching reform under the core literacy concept, including student factors, teacher factors, and systemic factors, are analyzed, and corresponding solutions are proposed. The research content and main viewpoints are summarized, and suggestions and prospects for English education are proposed. Through this research, it is hoped to promote the reform and innovation of English education and improve the core literacy level of students.

Keywords: Core Literacy; English Teaching; New Curriculum Standard; Educational Reform; K-12 Education

1. Introduction

Globalization and information technology have highlighted the importance of core competencies[1]. Integrating these competencies into education is crucial for cultivating well-rounded individuals. English curriculum standards aim to promote virtue and develop students' language, cultural, thinking, and learning abilities[2]. These standards include eighteen aspects to help students adapt to the educational environment and meet the demands of the new era. The curriculum also focuses on instilling correct values such as moral character, responsibility, and teamwork. The English curriculum aims to cultivate talents with high moral character and innovation capabilities. It goes beyond language mastery to develop core competencies and value concepts[3]. The curriculum enhances national cognition, broadens horizons, and improves cross-cultural communication skills. Incorporating core competencies into English teaching is essential for reform and innovation in the field. This paper investigates the application of core competencies in English teaching, analyzes the current situation and issues, and explores ways to enhance students' core competencies.

2. The Concept and Characteristics of Core Competency

This section will elaborate on the concept of core competency, mainly including its origins and development, as well as its main content and characteristics.

2.1. The Origins and Development of the Core Competency Concept

The core competency concept is a novel educational philosophy and teaching model that first emerged in the United States, aiming to develop students' innovation capabilities and adaptability to future changes, thereby improving their comprehensive qualities[4]. Over time, the concept of core competency has been increasingly accepted and applied by more countries and regions, serving as an important theoretical basis for educational reform and teaching practice.

The introduction of the core competency concept poses a challenge and change to traditional education models. It emphasizes students' autonomy and creativity, focusing on students' active learning and self-development. Compared to traditional knowledge imparting, core competency pays more

attention to the cultivation of students' abilities and practical operation, emphasizing interdisciplinary and cross-cultural learning, nurturing students to become well-rounded talents with international perspectives and social responsibilities.

As the core competency concept continues to be promoted and applied, an increasing number of countries and regions have begun to recognize its importance. It has become a vital theoretical basis for educational reform and teaching practice and has been widely promoted and applied globally. In practice, the application effects of the core competency concept have gradually been affirmed. It has made significant contributions to the enhancement of students' comprehensive qualities and core abilities and laid a solid foundation for sustainable educational development.

2.2. The Main Content of the Core Competency Concept

The core competency concept is an educational philosophy that emphasizes students' comprehensive development and capability cultivation. Its main content includes: critical thinking, communication skills, collaborative spirit, innovation capabilities, information literacy, and multicultural literacy[5]. These competencies are essential for students in modern society and are indispensable skills and qualities for future workplaces and life.

Critical thinking, different from traditional rote memorization, emphasizes students' analytical and judgmental abilities, fostering students' logical thinking and judgment abilities, enabling students to obtain accurate information and knowledge in an era of information explosion. Communication skills require students to learn how to express their ideas in school, understand others' intentions, and communicate effectively with others. The spirit of cooperation requires students to learn how to cooperate with others in school, understand the importance of teamwork, and cooperate with others to complete tasks. Innovation capabilities require students to learn how to think innovatively, find solutions to problems, and develop their creativity and innovation abilities. Information literacy requires students to learn how to obtain accurate information in school, how to judge the credibility of information, and how to use information to solve problems. Multicultural literacy requires students to learn to respect and appreciate different cultures, learn to get along with people from different cultural backgrounds, and acquire a broader perspective and experience in cultural exchanges.

2.3. The Characteristics of the Core Competency Concept

The core competency concept is a new type of educational philosophy, whose main characteristics include:

2.3.1. Emphasizing Comprehensive Qualities

The core competency concept not only focuses on students' level of knowledge but also pays more attention to the cultivation of students' abilities and qualities. In education and teaching, it not only disseminates knowledge but also cultivates students' comprehensive qualities, including thinking ability, innovation ability, practical ability, communication ability, etc.

2.3.2. Focusing on Practical Abilities

The core competency concept emphasizes students' practical abilities, values students' hands-on abilities, and practical experiences. During the teaching process, teachers should focus on practice teaching, guiding students to engage in practical operations and real applications to improve students' practical operation abilities.

2.3.3. Encouraging Innovative Thinking

The core competency concept emphasizes students' innovative thinking and problem-solving abilities. Schools should create a good teaching environment and atmosphere, encouraging students to actively think and propose questions, solve problems through innovative thinking and methods, and cultivate students' innovation consciousness and abilities.

2.3.4. Highlighting Interpersonal Communication

The core competency concept emphasizes students' interpersonal communication abilities. Schools should focus on cultivating students' team spirit and communication skills, encouraging students to cooperate with others to complete tasks, and enhancing students' interpersonal communication abilities.

2.3.5. Advocating Cultural Diversity

The core competency concept emphasizes students' cultural diversity literacy. Schools should encourage students to respect and appreciate different cultures, improve students' international perspectives, and cross-cultural communication abilities. Through multicultural learning and exchanges, it cultivates students' international vision and cross-cultural communication abilities, enabling students to better adapt to the future international society.

In summary, the core competency concept is a modern educational philosophy that emphasizes the cultivation of students' comprehensive qualities, focusing on the development of practical abilities and innovative thinking. Educators should focus on students' comprehensive development in education and teaching, combining traditional knowledge imparting with practical operations, encouraging students to continuously explore, innovate, and solve problems in practice. This educational concept has strong practical significance and value, which can better cultivate students' comprehensive qualities, enhance students' competitiveness and adaptability. At the same time, this educational concept is more in line with the needs of modern society and can better meet the future societal demand for talents, further promoting the modernization of education and the development of quality education. Therefore, the core competency concept is not only a theory but also a practice, and it is an inevitable trend in education reform and development.

3. Application of Core Competency Perspective in English Teaching

In K-12 education, the core competency in English courses is reflected not only in the overall concept of the course, but also throughout the teaching process, aiming to help students achieve self-development and provide teachers with a set of values [6]. The cultivation and development of core competencies are crucial to achieving the fundamental goal of moral education, so they should occupy an important position in school education. To implement this goal, core competencies should be integrated into all aspects of curriculum education, including curriculum design, textbook writing, classroom teaching, and academic evaluation, becoming the core elements and basic guarantees for the progressive advancement of disciplinary education goals [7]. This section will detail the application of the core competency perspective in English teaching, including the influence of the core competency perspective on English teaching and the specific practices of the core competency perspective in English teaching.

3.1. Impact of Core Competency Perspective on English Teaching

The core competency perspective is a modern educational philosophy that has profound effects on English teaching.

3.1.1. Changes in Teaching Methods

In the past, English classrooms often placed the teacher at the highest position, emphasizing knowledge transmission, while students were mainly responsible for understanding and remembering the learned content. The core competency perspective emphasizes students' active learning and practical abilities, therefore teachers need to transform traditional teaching methods and adopt more flexible and diverse teaching methods. For example, in English teaching, teachers can increase student participation through games and role-playing, allowing students to learn English in a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere. Activities such as English corners and group discussions can enhance students' English speaking abilities and listening comprehension, enabling students to continuously accumulate and improve language skills through communication. In addition, teachers can design projects and practical activities to cultivate students' practical abilities and innovative thinking, encouraging students to explore and innovate in practice. These flexible and diverse teaching methods can stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning, promote the cultivation of active learning and practical abilities, and allow students to learn English in a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere, thus enhancing students' learning outcomes and interest.

3.1.2. Enhancing Teaching Quality

The core competency perspective focuses on the cultivation of students' comprehensive qualities and abilities, which means that English teaching needs to pay attention to the cultivation of students' language application skills, cultural literacy, and intercultural communication abilities. Teachers should focus on fostering students' English speaking and listening abilities in English teaching, enabling students to fluently communicate in English. This can be achieved through extensive oral practice and listening training. Teachers can set up scenarios for oral practice, allowing students to practice oral expression in

simulated real communication environments, and also use listening materials and listening tests to improve students' listening comprehension. Additionally, teachers should teach the cultural background and customs of English-speaking countries, enabling students to understand the culture of these countries more deeply and enhance their intercultural communication abilities. This can be achieved through explaining cultural knowledge, watching English movies, listening to English songs, and other means. Teachers can also organize cultural exchange activities, enabling students to better understand and experience the culture of English-speaking countries through communication. These teaching methods can improve students' language application skills, cultural literacy, and intercultural communication abilities, thus enhancing teaching quality. Through these methods, students can better master English knowledge and skills and better understand and comprehend the culture and customs of English-speaking countries.

3.1.3. Promoting Educational Reform

The core competency perspective is an advanced educational philosophy. Its proposition and application will promote the reform and development of English education, push education to keep pace with the times, and meet social demands and development. Guided by the core competency perspective, English education will pay more attention to the cultivation of students' practical abilities and innovative thinking, enabling students to better adapt to future social and career development. The proposition and application of the core competency perspective will lead English education towards a more practical and innovative direction. In teaching, teachers should focus on the cultivation of students' abilities rather than merely imparting knowledge. Through practical activities and innovative teaching methods, teachers can stimulate students' interest in learning, cultivate their practical abilities and innovative thinking. For example, teachers can let students participate in English speech competitions, write English essays, or organize English cultural activities, allowing students to better master English knowledge and skills in practice. In addition, the application of the core competency perspective will also drive the reform of English education. Educational reform needs to constantly adapt to the development of the times and social needs. Under the guidance of the core competency perspective, English education will be closer to social needs, focus on cultivating students' practical abilities and innovative thinking, and enable students to better adapt to future social and career development. Teachers will also pay more attention to the individual development of students, allowing each student to utilize their own strengths and specialties.

In summary, the impact of the core competency perspective on English teaching is comprehensive. It will promote the reform and development of English education, enable students to better master English knowledge and skills, foster practical abilities and innovative thinking, and provide better support and guarantees for students' future development.

3.2. Specific Practices of Core Competency Perspective in English Teaching:

The specific practices of the core competency perspective in English teaching can encompass the following aspects:

3.2.1. Critical Thinking

Teachers can guide students in reading and analyzing English articles, extracting the main ideas and perspectives from them, and analyzing the author's mode of expression and argumentation methods, thereby fostering students' critical thinking and reading skills. Simultaneously, teachers can organize debating activities for students, allowing them to employ critical thinking to explore issues from diverse angles, enhancing their ability to analyze and synthesize arguments.

3.2.2. Communication Skills

Teachers can design a variety of speaking and writing tasks to enhance students' communication and expression skills in language practice. For example, teachers can facilitate group discussions or involve students in English speech competitions, providing students with opportunities to practice oral expression and listening comprehension. In addition, teachers can assign English essay writing tasks, allowing students to exercise their skills in written expression and thought integration.

3.2.3. Collaborative Spirit

Teachers can divide students into groups and initiate cooperative learning activities to foster a spirit of collaboration and teamwork. For instance, teachers can assign English projects to be completed in teams, or ask students to collectively compile an English textbook. This kind of cooperative practice

encourages mutual learning and support among students, cultivating their teamwork skills.

3.2.4. Innovation Skills

Teachers can guide students to explore new thought patterns and methodologies through English classroom practice, thus developing their innovative capabilities and problem-solving skills. For instance, teachers can instruct students to design English teaching games or develop English learning software, enabling them to exercise their innovative thinking and problem-solving abilities in practice.

3.2.5. Information Literacy

Teachers can guide students to utilize online resources and English learning software, enhancing their abilities to acquire and use information. For example, teachers can instruct students to search for English materials online, or use English learning software for studying grammar and vocabulary, which can help improve their information literacy and independent learning skills in practice.

3.2.6. Cultural Diversity Literacy

Teachers can cultivate students' cultural diversity literacy and intercultural communication abilities through English cultural courses and cross-cultural exchange activities. For instance, teachers can enable students to understand the culture and customs of different countries or participate in international student exchange activities, enhancing their intercultural communication and cultural understanding abilities in practice.

In conclusion, the core competency perspective holds significant importance and practical value for English teaching. Teachers need to focus on the application of this perspective to enhance the quality and outcomes of English education.

4. Difficulties in English Teaching Reform Under the Concept of Core Literacy

The proposal and application of the core literacy concept have brought positive influences to English teaching. However, in practice, it also faces some difficulties and challenges. This section will primarily discuss the difficulties in English teaching reform under the core literacy concept from three perspectives: student factors, teacher factors, and institutional factors.

4.1. Student Factors: Insufficient Learning Attitude and Ability

The practice of the core literacy concept requires students to have a certain learning attitude and ability, including a proactive learning attitude and strong practical ability. However, in the current educational environment, some students show issues of negative learning attitudes, low learning interest, and insufficient learning capabilities. These issues restrict the practice and promotion of the core literacy concept in English teaching.

On the one hand, some students lack a proactive learning attitude, show less enthusiasm and motivation for English learning, and are often reluctant to participate actively in classroom discussions, have little interest in reading English articles, and lack habits for independent learning. These problems seriously affect students' English learning outcomes and the cultivation of practical abilities [8]. On the other hand, some students have insufficient language use and thinking abilities, making it difficult for them to understand and apply the complex language and thinking skills involved in core literacy. These students often show weaker English learning achievements and practical abilities, making it difficult for them to excel in English communication [9].

To address these issues, teachers need to take appropriate measures to help students overcome learning obstacles, stimulate students' learning interests and motivation, and enhance students' language application and thinking abilities. For example, teachers can guide students to actively participate in classroom discussions and activities, and strengthen students' practical and thinking abilities through heuristic teaching and fun-based teaching. Also, by personalized teaching and differentiated teaching methods, they can meet different students' learning needs, promoting the comprehensive development of students. In addition, schools and parents should also strengthen their guidance and education for students, cultivate students' correct learning attitudes and habits, and enhance students' independent learning abilities and motivation. Only through the joint efforts of students, families, and schools can the effective practice and promotion of the core literacy concept in English education truly be realized.

4.2. Teacher Factors: Misalignment between Teacher Competency and Teaching Philosophy

The core literacy concept requires teachers to have a cross-disciplinary knowledge background and diversified teaching methods, to adapt to different student needs, and to cultivate students' comprehensive qualities and practical abilities. However, in the current educational environment, some teachers' qualifications and teaching philosophies do not align with the core literacy concept, which affects its practice and promotion in English teaching.

On the one hand, some teachers lack cross-disciplinary knowledge backgrounds and rich teaching experience, unable to fully understand the connotations and requirements of the core literacy concept. These teachers may lack a deep understanding and comprehension of the English discipline, making it hard for them to flexibly use various teaching methods and means, thereby unable to cultivate students' comprehensive qualities and practical abilities [10]. On the other hand, the teaching philosophy of some teachers does not align with the core literacy concept. These teachers may overly focus on knowledge imparting and test scores, ignoring the cultivation of students' practical abilities and comprehensive qualities. Their teaching methods may be rigid and singular, unable to meet different students' learning needs and interests [11].

In response to these issues, the education department and schools should enhance training and guidance for teachers, improving teachers' cross-disciplinary knowledge and teaching experience levels, and enhancing teachers' teaching abilities and qualities. Also, teachers should focus on their own professional development and learning, continuously improving their competency and teaching philosophies to cater to students' diversified needs and development. Only through the joint efforts of teachers, students, and schools can the effective practice and promotion of the core literacy concept in English education truly be realized.

4.3. Institutional Factors: The Education System and Examination System are not Conducive to Cultivating Core Literacy

Currently, problems still exist within the education system and examination system, which have negatively impacted the practice and promotion of the core literacy concept in English teaching. Both systems prioritize memory-based and mechanical application assessments, lacking cultivation of students' comprehensive qualities and practical abilities, leading to a lack of innovative consciousness and practical abilities in students' English learning.

On the one hand, the current education system and examination system emphasize memory and mechanical application of knowledge, neglecting the cultivation of students' comprehensive qualities and practical abilities. This results in students lacking innovative consciousness and practical abilities in English learning, focusing only on acquiring and applying knowledge, and having difficulty genuinely mastering core literacy in English [12]. On the other hand, the current examination system is overly utilitarian, focusing only on students' scores and rankings, ignoring students' individualized needs and actual abilities. This results in students lacking habits and abilities for independent learning in English, focusing only on examination techniques and exam-oriented psychology, and having difficulty genuinely mastering comprehensive English literacy.

To address these issues, the education department and schools should strengthen reforms and innovation of the education system and examination system, emphasizing the cultivation of students' comprehensive qualities and practical abilities, and improving students' innovative consciousness and practical abilities. Simultaneously, schools and teachers should pay attention to students' individualized needs and actual abilities, adopting diversified teaching methods and means, promoting students' comprehensive development.

5. The Way Forward for English Teaching Reform Under the Core Literacy Concept

To realize the reform and improvement of K-12 English teaching under the core literacy concept, it is necessary to jointly promote student factors, teacher factors, and institutional factors. Only through concerted efforts in these three aspects can the transformation and enhancement of English teaching be truly realized. Specifically, it includes the following aspects:

5.1. Student Factors: Stimulating Student Interest, Enhancing Learning Ability, and Autonomy

Under the guidance of the core literacy concept, the role of students in learning has shifted from passive recipients of knowledge to active subjects of learning and practice. Therefore, to better realize autonomous learning, students need to participate actively in various classroom and extracurricular activities, ignite their interest in learning, and improve their learning ability and independent learning skills. In English teaching, teachers can organize various activities to stimulate students' initiative and creativity, such as group discussions, role-playing, and experimental research, allowing students to better grasp knowledge and skills through interactive communication and foster innovative thinking and practical abilities.

In addition, English teachers should also pay attention to using various teaching methods and strategies in teaching to meet the learning needs and interests of different students. For example, for students who enjoy reading, teachers can provide more reading materials and reading guidance to help them improve their reading comprehension and writing abilities; for students who enjoy listening to music, teachers can guide them to learn English through English songs, enhancing their listening and speaking abilities. Through these personalized teaching methods and strategies, teachers can better stimulate students' interest in learning and their independent learning abilities.

During the process of learning English, students also need to focus on improving their learning abilities and methods. Students can improve their learning abilities and methods through various avenues, such as participating in study groups, English corners, and English competitions, and actively participating in English learning and communication activities. Simultaneously, students also need to focus on cultivating their autonomous learning abilities, such as organizing and summarizing learning notes, independently completing English assignments and extracurricular reading, and enhancing their independent learning and thinking abilities.

5.2. Teacher Factors: Enhancing Teacher Literacy, Updating Teaching Concepts and Methods

The core literacy concept requires teachers to have a broad knowledge background and diversified teaching experience, to be able to flexibly use various teaching methods and means, and to guide students to actively explore and practice. Therefore, the enhancement of teacher literacy and the updating of teaching concepts and methods have become particularly important. English teachers should constantly self-reflect and learn, continuously improve their professional level and teaching skills, and continually explore and practice English teaching models under the core literacy concept to better meet students' learning and development needs.

To enhance teacher literacy, teachers can participate in various forms of teacher training and learning activities, such as academic seminars, teaching lectures, teaching practice observation, etc. Through these activities, teachers can understand the latest teaching concepts and methods, master advanced teaching skills and educational technology, and constantly expand their teaching ideas and educational horizons. At the same time, teachers should also focus on reflection and summary of teaching practice. By reflecting and summarizing their own teaching practice, teachers can identify their shortcomings and seek ways to improve and enhance their teaching. In this way, teachers can continuously update their teaching concepts and methods and improve their teaching level and literacy.

5.3. Institutional Factors: Reforming the Education System and Examination System to Promote the Cultivation of Core Literacy

The current education system and examination system have, to some extent, restricted the practice and promotion of the core literacy concept in English teaching. On the one hand, the education system overemphasizes exam-oriented education, neglecting the cultivation of students' comprehensive qualities and practical abilities. On the other hand, the traditional examination system overly emphasizes scores and grades, neglecting the development of students' innovative and practical abilities. Therefore, we need to reform the education system and examination system to promote the cultivation and development of core literacy, thereby further enhancing students' learning quality and abilities.

The key to reforming the education system and the examination system is to focus on quality education and the cultivation of practical abilities. On the one hand, we need to strengthen the cultivation of students' comprehensive qualities, pay attention to the cultivation of students' moral literacy, humanities literacy, scientific literacy, etc., and allow students to grow into all-round talents in learning. On the other hand, we need to encourage students to participate in various forms of practical activities, such as social practice, technological innovation, arts and sports, etc., allowing students to explore,

practice, and innovate continuously in practice. In this way, students can improve their comprehensive qualities and practical abilities in practice, and better understand and apply the ideas and methods of the core literacy concept.

In addition to students, teachers also need to improve teaching quality and levels through reforming the education system and the examination system. We need to establish a more scientific and flexible evaluation mechanism, focusing on the evaluation and recognition of teachers' teaching abilities and teaching effects, and also need to strengthen the training and learning of teachers, allowing teachers to constantly update teaching concepts and teaching methods, and improve their educational literacy and teaching levels.

In summary, the way forward for English teaching reform under the core literacy concept lies in the comprehensive and coordinated promotion of student, teacher, and institutional factors. Only through joint efforts from all aspects can we gradually overcome difficulties and challenges, and promote the effective practice and promotion of the core literacy concept in English teaching.

6. Conclusion and Prospects

This paper examines the transformation of K-12 English teaching under core literacy, analyzing challenges and proposing solutions. Applying core literacy in English teaching fosters holistic student development and practical abilities. However, implementation faces challenges from students, teachers, and the system. To address these, collaboration is needed to stimulate student interest, enhance teacher literacy, update teaching methods, reform the education system, and promote core literacy cultivation. Emphasizing comprehensive qualities and practical abilities, the English curriculum should encourage practical activities and interdisciplinary exploration. Improving teacher quality and teaching abilities, updating approaches, and emphasizing student autonomy are crucial. Educational system and examination reforms should prioritize quality education, practical skills, interdisciplinary integration, and innovation. Strengthening internationalization cultivates cross-cultural communication and global perspectives. The transformation of English teaching under core literacy requires continuous exploration, reflection, and improvement, fostering innovation and development in English education.

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