

Research on the Integration of Job, Course, Competition, and Certification in Early Childhood Education Programs in Vocational Colleges under the 1+X Policy

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Abstract: *With the continuous advancement of vocational education reform in China, Early Childhood Education programs in vocational colleges are facing significant demands and challenges. This study aims to explore the construction of an integrated teaching model under the "1+X" policy focusing on four aspects: job-oriented course design, competition-driven learning, certification-based curriculum reform, and online-assisted teaching. This model is intended to motivate students, enhance educational effectiveness, and provide reference and guidance for the reform of Early Childhood Education programs in vocational colleges.*

Keywords: *1+X policy, Early Childhood Education, integrated teaching model*

1. Introduction

With the continuous deepening of vocational education reform in China, the education sector is facing new opportunities and challenges. Under the 1+X policy framework, vocational education now requires students to obtain both an academic diploma and a vocational skills certificate. This dual certification approach has significant implications for the innovative development of early childhood education programs.

2. The Importance of Integrating Work, Courses, Competitions, and Certification in Teaching

The teaching model that integrates work, courses, competitions, and certification aligns with the current educational needs and provides strong support for the newly established early childhood education programs in recent years.

2.1. Stimulating Students' Learning Motivation and Clarifying Long-term Learning Goals

The integration of work, courses, competitions, and certification in early childhood education provides a practice-oriented learning experience, allowing students to actively engage in the education and care of children. By combining theoretical knowledge with practical application[2], this approach helps to stimulate students' learning motivation, encouraging them to take a more proactive approach to their studies. Through real-world experience in childcare and early education positions, students gain a deeper appreciation for the importance of dedication to their profession[1]. By integrating elements of work experience, coursework, competitions, and certification, students can better define their learning goals, enhance their professional competitiveness, and establish longer-term educational objectives.

For example, (as shown in Table 1) Step 1 is to analyze the position of early childhood education teachers, which includes early education institution teachers and childcare institution teachers. Step 2 is to understand the skills required for the actual work, which are divided into: communication skills, artistic skills, caregiving skills, the design of group educational activities for infants and toddlers, and the observation of infant and toddler behavior. The Step 3 involves redesigning the curriculum, breaking it down into modules. Communication skills are divided into storytelling for infants and toddlers using picture books and oral communication for teachers; artistic skills are divided into singing songs for infants and toddlers, rhythm activities, and simple drawing; caregiving skills are divided into nutrition and meal care, sleep care, and the development of hygiene habits. The design of group educational

activities for infants and toddlers is further divided into parent-child activity design and childcare activity design. Infant and toddler behavior observation is further broken down into behavior analysis and intervention guidance. Step 4 involves gathering feedback from early education and childcare institution teachers, making repeated revisions. Step 5 is collecting feedback from graduates to continuously adjust the curriculum to match practical skills, thereby enhancing students' employability.

Table 1: Breakdown of Steps Diagram

Steps	Description
Step 1	Analyze employment positions and identify typical job tasks
Step 2	Identify the core competencies required to complete the job tasks
Step 3	Reimagine course content to ensure alignment with job tasks and relevant competencies
Step 4	Collaborate with educators and childcare professionals to gather feedback and continuously improve the curriculum
Step 5	Maintain contact with interns and graduates, adjust based on their feedback, and strengthen students' practical skills and employability

2.2. Improving Educational Effectiveness and Enhancing Students' Comprehensive

Competence The integration of work, courses, competitions, and certification incorporates practical educational assessments into the teaching process, evaluating not only knowledge acquisition but also students' performance in real-life scenarios. This type of assessment more accurately reflects students' educational levels and practical abilities, thereby improving the overall effectiveness of education[3]. This teaching model connects job requirements, competitions, and certification, breaking down the traditional academic knowledge framework[4]. It encourages interdisciplinary learning, equipping students with more comprehensive skills and better preparing them to meet the diverse challenges of early childhood education.

3. Curriculum Reform in Early Childhood Education Under the 1+X Framework Through the Integration of Work, Courses, Competitions, and Certification

3.1. Job-Driven Curriculum Design: Restructuring Course Content

The curriculum for early childhood education is redesigned based on an analysis of employment positions in the field, focusing on core competencies identified through typical job tasks[5]. By completing multiple work projects, the learning content is restructured. The professional competencies required for early childhood education are aligned with the roles of educators in educational institutions and childcare centers to understand the skills needed for actual work. Course content is redesigned and broken down into modules to ensure that each module matches specific job tasks and relevant competencies. Within each module, tasks, projects, and case studies are introduced, allowing students to apply what they have learned in simulated or real-world scenarios[6]. We adopt a project-based teaching approach, interweaving core job competencies throughout the actual teaching process, closely linking teaching content and driving it with task-oriented activities.

3.2. Promoting Learning through Competitions: Bringing the Competitive Spirit into the Classroom

Promoting learning through competitions integrates classroom teaching with the spirit of competition. Experiencing competitions allows students to better understand the knowledge they are learning, while also fostering their abilities to think critically and work collaboratively in teams. Competitions such as the Hunan Provincial Vocational Skills Competition's Infant Care Event and the "Youlemei Cup" National Vocational College Early Childhood Education Student Teaching Skills Competition are typical events for the early childhood education field. By analyzing these competitions, the key points and challenges can be identified, core skills can be extracted, and course content can be aligned with competition projects[7]. The assessment standards for these competitions can also be used as benchmarks for evaluating students, with similar questions and tasks incorporated into the classroom to give students a sense of the intensity of competition.

Through this competition-driven learning approach, teachers can promptly identify students' weaknesses in skill operations and adjust teaching methods accordingly. The competitive nature of these

events also inspires students to be more flexible and driven. This method further develops students into application-oriented talents and strengthens their ability to remain calm and confident when facing intense market competition, ultimately helping them to better meet future job requirements.

3.3. Course Reform Based on Certification: Strengthening Core Skills

Reforming courses based on certification helps better prepare students by equipping them with the core skills necessary for their field. For early childhood education, relevant certifications include the Infant Caregiver Certificate, Childcare Worker Certificate, 1+X Early Childhood Care Vocational Skills Certificate, and Kindergarten Teacher Qualification Certificate. By analyzing the requirements of each certification exam, these requirements are purposefully integrated into the relevant courses, ensuring that students are exposed to exam-related content throughout different stages of their studies[8]. Students are encouraged to focus on key knowledge points related to certification exams in class, analyze past exam questions, and receive detailed explanations and practical demonstrations.

Students will have the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of exam requirements and engage in practical exercises and mock exams. Additionally, we emphasize the deepening of knowledge points. Students must not only master the knowledge but also understand the principles and applications behind it. This approach helps them better apply what they have learned to solve real-world problems in the exams.

3.4. Enhancing Courses with Online Resources: Optimizing Teaching Materials

Due to the relatively short history of the early childhood education program, there is a limited amount of course and library resources. While drawing on resource libraries from other institutions, we actively develop our own early childhood education course resources. Starting with foundational courses, we work to expand related course materials, eventually building a core curriculum resource library and additional resources for related early childhood education courses.

In our teaching, we actively utilize information technology to create a resource-sharing and problem-solving platform that integrates work, courses, competitions, and certification. In addition to developing online course resources, we also make full use of social media platforms like QQ, WeChat, and DingTalk groups. We actively invite teaching team members and technical experts from partner companies to join these groups, providing timely assistance to students with questions during their studies and offering online guidance to students participating in skills competitions.

We encourage students to use applications like Xuexitong and Cloud Classroom to more efficiently manage their learning process. This helps establish formative assessments, enabling teachers to gain deeper insights into students' learning progress and to adjust teaching priorities accordingly.

4. Conclusion

The 1+X policy, aimed at integrating theoretical education with practical skills, demands significant efforts from vocational colleges, particularly in early childhood education programs. By focusing on the areas of industry collaboration, teacher development, course resource expansion, and evaluation mechanisms, schools can effectively align their programs with industry needs and enhance student employability.

4.1. Strengthening Industry Collaboration

To meet the demands of the 1+X policy, vocational colleges must actively engage with early childhood education companies and institutions. Strengthening partnerships by offering internships, inviting industry experts for lectures, and establishing mentorship systems will provide students with real-world insights and practical experience. Collaboration on real-world projects further enhances students' understanding of actual work environments, thereby aligning educational content with industry job requirements. This will improve students' employability and ensure that the talent cultivated in schools meets industry standards.

4.2. Enhancing Professional Development for Teachers

Teacher development is key to the success of the integrated teaching model that combines work,

courses, competitions, and certification. Continuous improvement of teaching skills, particularly in online and blended learning environments, is essential. Schools should offer specialized training programs to ensure teachers are up-to-date with the latest developments in early childhood education, and are proficient in modern digital tools. Regular workshops and experience-sharing sessions will help teachers adapt to evolving educational environments, allowing them to refine their teaching methods and contribute to students' success.

5. Improvements and Recommendations

5.1. Developing Diverse Course Resources

Vocational colleges need to continuously expand and diversify their course resources. This should include actively promoting the development of online courses and establishing virtual education platforms to offer students more learning options. Additionally, it is recommended to create virtual labs and simulated environments to increase hands-on opportunities and develop students' practical skills. Along with these resources, adopting diverse teaching methods—such as project-based learning and case analysis—can encourage students to think critically, enhance their problem-solving abilities, and apply theoretical knowledge to real-world practice.

5.2. Establishing an Evaluation and Feedback Mechanism

To continuously improve the integrated teaching model of work, courses, competitions, and certification, vocational colleges should establish evaluation and feedback mechanisms. This includes academic and comprehensive quality assessments of students, student satisfaction surveys, and maintaining connections with alumni. These evaluation methods will help schools understand students' academic performance, satisfaction levels, and career development, enabling more targeted adjustments to teaching and curriculum to ensure students' competitiveness. This ongoing evaluation and feedback mechanism will help enhance teaching quality and cultivate students with stronger overall competencies.

These improvements and recommendations will help vocational colleges better adapt to the educational needs of early childhood education programs under the 1+X framework, enhancing both teaching quality and student competitiveness. Additionally, they will contribute to the continuous refinement of the integrated teaching model of work, courses, competitions, and certification, making it more suitable for future educational requirements.

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