

The Status Quo and Prospect of the Study on Ideological-Political Construction in Middle School English Curriculum*

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Ideological-political construction in English curriculum is to integrate outlook on the world, outlook on life, outlook on values, etc. into English language teaching and learning. In recent years, studies on ideological-political construction in middle school English curriculum have made some progress, with an emphasis on its significance and the strategies for its realization. However, there is still room for expansion in the research methods, research contents, and research perspectives.

Keywords: ideological-political construction in curriculum, middle school English, status quo, prospects

Introduction

Ideological-political construction in the curriculum is an inevitable requirement for realizing the fundamental task of fostering character and civic virtue. In the 18th National Congress report, the Communist Party of China pointed out that cultivating socialist builders and successors featuring an all-around moral, intellectual, physical, and aesthetic grounding with a hard-working spirit is an inevitable requirement. President Xi Jinping has also repeatedly urged promoting education reform and consolidating the educational function in the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation at various significant meetings in recent years. He stressed that fostering character and civic virtue should be the central part of education and that all kinds of courses and ideological-political theory courses should go towards the same direction and form a synergistic effect and emphasized that the adolescent stage is the plucking and gestation period of life, and youths need the most elaborate guidance and cultivation.

As a basic course of humanities, the middle school English curriculum has unique merits and plays vital roles in ideological-political construction. With the theme of ideological-political construction in curriculum and middle school English, the author searched China Knowledge Network (CNKI) and found 24 relevant papers. Based on the above papers, this paper reviews the previous research results and explores the prospect of

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further research, aiming to promote the further improvement and development of ideological-political construction in middle school English curriculum.

Review of the Previous Study

The available literature showed that the studies on ideological-political construction in middle school English curriculum mainly include two aspects, the significance and the strategies for its realization.

Significances of Ideological-political Construction in Middle School English Curriculum

There are three points of the significance of ideological-political construction in middle school English curriculum. First, the middle school English curriculum has a synergistic effect on ideological-political construction. According to Wang Haihua and Guo Lingxia (2018), ideological-political construction is the core of quality-oriented education, and the middle English curriculum is conducive to providing a good atmosphere for ideological-political construction as it follows the requirement of educating people in all aspects. Second, ideological-political construction in middle school English curriculum is consistent with the goal of cultivating middle school students' core competencies and coordinates with the goal of basic education curriculum reform. Ideological-political elements, such as moral development, scientific spirit, and cultural heritage, are the components of students' core competencies, which are also the necessary qualities formed in middle schools to adapt to lifelong development and social development (Wang, 2020, pp. 77-83). Third, ideological-political construction in curriculum is a vivid reflection of the national English curriculum standard. It not only highlights the transmission of subject knowledge and helps gradually build up a complete knowledge system, but also focuses on cultivating students' correct outlook on the world, outlook on life, outlook on values, etc. Therefore, it is in line with the requirements of the national English curriculum standard (Zhang & Xu, 2021, pp. 210-211).

Strategies for Realizing Ideological-political Construction in Middle School English Curriculum

Four strategies are summarized to realize ideological-political construction in middle school English curriculum. The first one is to explore ideological-political elements. Different from ready-made teaching materials, the ideological-political elements hidden in the English curriculum need to be dug by teachers and infused into the whole teaching process so that students are implicitly influenced (Han, 2021, pp. 47-48).

Where do the ideological-political elements of the English curriculum come from? Wen Xu answers this question from the perspective of textbooks, arguing that textbooks are crucial carriers of teaching as well as ideological-political construction in the curriculum. They are the medium for students to acquire various types of knowledge and to understand the connotation characteristics and essence of values, culture, beliefs, morals, etc., thus gradually developing their attitudes and establishing their values. Therefore, exploring the ideological-political elements hidden in textbooks can be the top priority (Wen, 2021, pp. 71-77). Yao Chuyu and Tao Zhu (2020) shared a similar opinion and further classified the categories of ideological-political elements in the Oxford edition of the high school English textbook, namely man and self, man and society, as well as man and the state. The classification provides English teachers with a reference for integrating ideological-political elements in their instructional design. In comparison, Xu Jing (2021) took the content from a junior high school English textbook of the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press version as the

research object and explained that ideological-political elements in the junior high school English curriculum abound. For example, the curriculum is designed in modules, and each module has hidden cultural elements, the content of outlook on the world, outlook on life, and outlook on values.

The second strategy is to enhance teachers' awareness and ability to educate people, which plays a decisive role in the effectiveness of ideological-political construction in the curriculum. Without this awareness, teachers will ignore the essence of education. Without this ability, they will not be able to perform their roles. Hence, teachers should change the previous tendency of emphasizing knowledge transfer over value transmission and insist on the unity of teaching and educating (Qiu, 2017, pp. 10-14).

How can teachers' awareness and ability to educate people be improved? According to Zhu Guangqin (2019), middle school English teachers can improve their ideological-political ability by promoting quality education and spreading the excellent Chinese traditional culture, and they can strengthen their awareness by following the principle of being a good teacher with ideals, morality, a wide range of knowledge, and kindness. In addition, enhancing their political literacy, boosting their morals and ethics, and designing suitable teaching plans and methods are also effective ways (Liu et al., 2019, pp. 59-62). Similarly, Han Jie (2021) suggested that English teachers should continuously improve their humanistic literacy by deeply understanding Chinese history, excellent Chinese traditional culture, and socialism with Chinese characteristics.

The third strategy is to take advantage of new media and educational resources to innovate teaching content and methods (Li, 2020, pp. 190-192). In terms of teaching content, teachers can employ various online resources, such as videos, pictures, official accounts, and learning applications, to activate students' interest in learning. In terms of teaching methods, teachers should change the traditional didactic mode, explore ways to involve students in teaching activities, increase teacher-student interaction, and implement a good instructional design that plays a prominent role in implementing ideological-political construction in middle school English curriculum (Wang & Guo, 2018, pp. 132-131). Some scholars have tried to integrate ideological-political elements into instructional design. Yu Peng and Yan Li (2021) explored the integration of ideological-political construction into reading teaching activities. They showed students a video with cultural elements before reading, set up a series of cultural knowledge activities during reading, and enable students to discuss the cultural elements in groups after reading. Likewise, Zhang Juanjuan and Xu Chenchen (2021, pp. 210-211) designed an example of internalizing ideological-political elements in English reading teaching, which provided some ideas for carrying out ideological-political construction in middle school English curriculum.

The fourth strategy is to establish a sound mechanism for evaluating ideological-political construction in the curriculum. Liu Hongyue & Jia Hong (2020) stressed its necessity and held that a reasonable evaluation mechanism is a favorable initiative for its implementation. Additionally, the evaluation mechanism can prompt teachers to carry out more scientific instructional design and instruct students to reflect on and improve their ideological quality.

Microscopically, evaluation is an indispensable top-down link in foreign language teaching. The three aspects of foreign language learning evaluation, including evaluation contents, evaluation methods, and evaluation subjects, provide some space for teachers' evaluation of ideological-political construction. Self-assessment and peer assessment should be used to achieve diversification of assessment subjects and assessment methods so that they can understand themselves objectively and improve themselves actively (Wen,

2021, pp. 47-52). Macroscopically, some basic principles should be followed to evaluate ideological-political construction in the curriculum. Firstly, as ideological-political construction in the curriculum is still in the preliminary stage, and the evaluation system is still immature, it is recommended to pay attention to the overall framework. Secondly, we should try to reach a consensus that some teachers can keep trying and accumulate experience, while others are allowed to be a little slow and gradually keep up. Third, teachers should comply with the norm (Han, 2019, pp. 1-6+15).

Prospect of the Future Study

From what has been mentioned above, studies on ideological-political construction in middle school English curriculum has attracted the attention of front-line teachers. However, there are still some gaps in its practice and research. First, previous research is at the stage of fragmentary summary, and macro and global research is rarely involved. For example, the system and the basic framework of ideological-political construction in middle school English curriculum need to be further explored. Second, prior studies are basically at the empirical level, and in-depth theoretical research is scarce. Third, there are few truly informative and generalizable empirical studies on the implementation and effects of ideological-political construction in the English curriculum. Fourth, the scope of research is limited to classroom teaching and teachers. Because of the above limitations, the following directions will be proposed for further research.

Firstly, the research method should combine theoretical and practical research. Theoretical research needs to clarify specific problems and make systematic arguments, while practice urgently needs to break through the limitations and take corresponding measures for the problem. Middle school English teachers can make full use of the authentic teaching context, combine the design and findings of the research with the teaching practice, and choose appropriate research methods, such as action research and survey research, to improve the ideological-political construction in middle school English curriculum in practice.

Secondly, the research content should start from the macro and theoretical exploration and directly deal with the difficulties or problems of ideological-political construction in the English curriculum, such as (1) the theoretical basis; (2) the systematic framework of implementation; (3) the way of ideological-political construction to realize the unity of value shaping, knowledge transfer and, ability cultivation; (4) optimization of the environment.

Thirdly, the perspective of future research needs to take the textbooks, teachers, students, teaching methods, teaching evaluation as well as educational administration into account. It not only requires the participation of foreign language researchers, foreign language teachers and students, but also take such factors as the compilation of teaching materials, the configuration of the teaching environment, and even the school's educational management policies into consideration as integral parts of future study, as they contribute to the successful implementation of ideological-political construction.

Conclusion

The ideological-political construction is a very complicated project that is closely related to such big issues as the cultivation of socialist builders and successors and the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. It requires the participation of all parties, including foreign language researchers, foreign language teachers, and

students. Additionally, factors, such as the compilation of teaching materials, the configuration of the teaching environment, the psychological condition of students, and even the school's educational management policies, should become an integral part of future study, as they contribute to the successful implementation of ideological-political construction.

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