Research on the Collaborative Educational Path between Specialized Courses and Career Planning Education in Higher Vocational Colleges

Qian Liu*

Harbin Preschool Teachers College, Harbin, 150010, China
**Corresponding author: liuqian_913@163.com*

Abstract: *Specialized courses and career planning education in higher vocational colleges share a profound intrinsic connection in their educational functions. However, in practice, these two types of education often operate independently, which restricts the overall improvement of students' professional competence. This study focuses on the collaborative educational paths between the two, conducting discussions from three perspectives: theoretical logic, curriculum model, and support system. The research holds that the two types of education demonstrate value compatibility in terms of objectives, exhibit a foundation of element coupling in terms of content, and present characteristics of symbiosis and mutual embedding in terms of process, which together constitute the internal mechanism for collaborative education. On this basis, a deeply integrated model is constructed from three dimensions: integration of curriculum objectives, infusion of teaching content, and coordination of teaching methods. Furthermore, long-term support mechanisms are explored from three aspects: integration of teacher cognition, development of multidimensional resources, and diversification of evaluation, in order to provide a theoretical reference for higher vocational colleges in promoting the organic integration of specialized courses and career planning education.*

Keywords: *Higher Vocational Colleges, Specialized Courses, Career Planning Education, Collaborative Education, Curriculum Integration*

Introduction

Higher vocational college students are in a critical period of career orientation and professional development, and their development inherently requires the mutual support of professional competence cultivation and career development guidance. Specialized course education aims to impart professional knowledge and skills, while career planning education guides students to form clear career cognition and self-awareness, with both jointly facilitating students' smooth transition from campus to the professional world. In reality, however, specialized courses often emphasize repeated skill training, paying limited attention to deepening students' career cognition and cultivating their career awareness, while career planning courses frequently fail to address students' intrinsic needs due to their detachment from specific professional contexts. This separation not only constrains the full realization of the educational functions of both types of education, but also makes it difficult for students to establish a coherent connection between their specialized studies and career development. Exploring the collaborative educational paths between the two is both a practical response to meeting students' needs for holistic development and an inherent requirement for deepening curriculum reform. Starting from the intrinsic connection between the two types of education, this study systematically analyzes the theoretical logic for collaboration, constructs an integration model at the curriculum level, and explores long-term support mechanisms, in order to provide a conceptual reference for educational and teaching reforms in higher vocational colleges.

1. Theoretical Logic and Internal Mechanism of Collaboration between Specialized Courses and Career Planning Education in Vocational Education

1.1 Value Alignment: The Intrinsic Unity of the Educational Objectives of the Two Types of Education

Specialized course education takes the imparting of systematic knowledge in a specific professional

field and the cultivation of corresponding technical skills as its core objectives. Its purpose is to equip students with the professional competence necessary to enter a given occupation, focusing on the forging of individual vocational competency. Career planning education, on the other hand, aims to guide students in forming a clear understanding of themselves and the professional world, establishing their career development direction, and cultivating career decision-making and management abilities, focusing on the establishment of individual career orientation. Although the two appear to follow different paths, they both jointly address the core issue of students' vocational development. The acquisition of professional competence provides students with instrumental support for their livelihood, while the maturation of career cognition endows professional learning with value orientation and the pursuit of meaning. The two achieve deep convergence at the level of holistic human development[1].

From the perspective of individual growth, the process of professional learning itself serves as an important vehicle for career exploration. The sense of achievement and self-efficacy that students gain from overcoming technical challenges and completing project tasks constitute a direct source of professional identity formation, enabling skill training to transcend mere operational practice and evolve into a process of shaping individual professional character. Meanwhile, clear career goals can, in turn, stimulate students' intrinsic motivation to engage in professional learning, transforming what were originally external academic requirements into an active pursuit of self-fulfillment. Both types of education jointly serve students' smooth transition from “campus individuals” to “professional practitioners,” and the unity of their objectives is profoundly reflected in the holistic cultivation of students' professional competence.

1.2 Element Coupling: The Interactive Relationship between Curriculum Content and Occupational Demands

Curriculum content serves as the concrete manifestation of educational objectives, and specialized courses and career planning education possess a natural foundation for coupling in terms of content elements. The knowledge system and skill standards embedded in specialized courses directly reflect the core technical standards and operational procedures of specific industry fields, and this content itself constitutes direct material for students to understand the professional world and comprehend job requirements. The typical cases, project tasks, and introductions to industry standards found in specialized courses often contain rich elements of career education. For instance, explanations of technological development trends can stimulate students' career aspirations, while emphasis on job operation standards can cultivate students' sense of professional responsibility. This inherent correspondence between professional knowledge and vocational competence provides an objective basis for the integration of the two types of education at the content level.

The content structure of career planning education also cannot exist independently of specific professional contexts. The deepening of career cognition relies on a genuine understanding of specialized content within a given field, and the effective conduct of career exploration requires the experiential platform provided by professional practice. When career planning education guides students in self-awareness, their performance and feedback during the professional learning process serve as important reference points; when it guides students in understanding the professional world, the industry fields involved in specialized courses become the most direct objects of cognition. This interactive relationship between the content of the two types of courses enables the methodology of career planning to be concretized through professional learning, while also allowing the imparting of professional knowledge to gain deeper meaning and support within the context of career development[2].

1.3 Process Symbiosis: The Simultaneous Construction of Knowledge Acquisition and Professional Identity

The formation of students' professional competence is a gradual and cumulative process, and specialized course instruction and career planning education exhibit characteristics of symbiosis and mutual embedding in the dimension of the educational process. The specialized course teaching process is not merely an information flow of knowledge transmission and skill training, but also a process of immersion in which students gradually engage with, understand, and internalize the specific professional culture. While imparting professional knowledge, teachers' own professional attitudes, their adherence to technical standards, and their understanding of industry values subtly influence students' professional values. Through repeated skill training, project practice, and technical application, students gradually come to appreciate the unique charm and value implications of the profession itself.

This profound experience, originating from the learning process itself, constitutes a solid foundation for the construction of professional identity.

The integration of career planning education injects both reflective and prospective dimensions into the professional learning process. By guiding students to examine their current professional studies within the broader context of long-term career development, it enables them to simultaneously construct their understanding and expectations of their professional roles while acquiring skills. This simultaneous advancement of knowledge acquisition and professional identity transforms the professional learning process from isolated technical practice into an active journey in which students explore professional meaning and shape their professional character. The interweaving and symbiosis of the two types of education at the process level not only enhances the motivational level of professional learning, but also endows career planning with a genuine practical foundation. Their collaboration together constitutes the deep mechanism underlying the educational logic of higher vocational colleges[3].

2. Construction of a Deeply Integrated Model at the Curriculum System Level

2.1 Integrated Design of Curriculum Objectives

The integration of curriculum objectives serves as the logical starting point for the collaboration between the two types of education, with its core aim being to break the pattern in traditional curriculum objective setting where professional competence cultivation and career development guidance remain separated. The curriculum objectives of specialized courses have long focused primarily on knowledge mastery and skill proficiency, with relatively limited attention paid to students' career cognition and career planning abilities. In contrast, the objectives of career planning education are often established independently, failing to form an effective connection with the professional learning process. The primary task of integrated design is to establish, at the curriculum standard level, a correspondence between professional competence requirements and career development indicators, enabling each specialized course not only to fulfill the function of imparting knowledge and skills, but also to assume the educational responsibility of cultivating students' professional identity and career decision-making abilities.

Specifically, the integration of curriculum objectives needs to be carried out across three dimensions. The first is the integration of professional competence objectives with elements of professional qualities, enabling students to understand the professional norms and industry ethics underlying a specific technology while mastering that technology. The second is the embedding of a career cognition dimension into knowledge learning objectives, guiding students to simultaneously construct their understanding of relevant professional fields during the process of acquiring professional knowledge. The third is the reflection of a self-development orientation in skill training objectives, transforming the process of skill refinement into a vehicle through which students can examine their own career inclinations and accumulate career confidence. Through this multi-dimensional, multi-level integrated design, the teaching objectives of specialized courses can be expanded from a singular focus on competence cultivation into a composite objective system that encompasses both professional development and career growth.

2.2 Infusion-Based Arrangement of Teaching Content

The infusion-based arrangement of teaching content serves as a concrete pathway for achieving the integration of curriculum objectives, and its essence lies in systematically embedding elements of career planning education into the knowledge system of specialized courses. Traditional teaching content of specialized courses is primarily organized around the logic of disciplinary knowledge and the sequence of technical skills, paying insufficient attention to students' needs for understanding the professional world. Infusion-based arrangement requires the organic integration of career cognition, career exploration, and career decision-making into various aspects of specialized course instruction without compromising the integrity of the knowledge structure of specialized courses. This integration is not an external addition, but a natural extension based on the intrinsic connection between professional knowledge and occupational demands.

The specific strategies for infusion-based arrangement can be considered from three levels. In specialized theoretical courses, instructors can introduce content such as industry frontier trends and typical job-related cases, so that the learning of theoretical knowledge progresses simultaneously with

the understanding of the professional world. In specialized skill courses, instructors can integrate professional quality requirements such as job specifications, operating standards, and quality awareness into the entire process of skill training, enabling students to develop a deep understanding of their professional roles while mastering technical actions. In specialized expansion courses, instructors can set up thematic modules related to career development, guiding students to reflect on their professional learning outcomes in relation to their personal development directions. This progressively structured, infusion-based arrangement transforms career planning education from an isolated course into a continuous experience that runs through the entire process of professional learning[4].

2.3 Coordinated Innovation and Application of Teaching Methods

The coordinated innovation and application of teaching methods serve as a crucial link in transforming integrated objectives and infused content into tangible educational outcomes. Traditional teaching methods in specialized courses tend to focus on the one-way transmission of knowledge and repetitive skill training, with relatively insufficient engagement of student agency. Career planning education, in contrast, emphasizes experiential, reflective, and inquiry-based approaches, and its methodological framework offers significant referential value for activating specialized classrooms. The core of coordinated innovation lies in integrating the methodological strengths of the two types of curricula to form a new teaching model that can both effectively transmit professional knowledge and stimulate students' active thinking and self-exploration.

Specifically, the application of project-based learning enables students to experience a complete cycle of goal setting, resource integration, problem solving, and outcome evaluation while completing comprehensive professional tasks, and this process itself serves as a micro-level career rehearsal. The introduction of situational simulation methods can bring authentic professional contexts into the classroom, allowing students to experience the application scenarios of professional knowledge in simulated professional roles and examine the alignment between their abilities and interests. The organization of collaborative group learning not only cultivates students' professional communication skills but also provides them with a reference system for observing others and understanding themselves. The coordinated application of these teaching methods transforms specialized classrooms from mere sites of knowledge transmission into important spaces where students explore the professional world and construct their professional selves, thereby providing solid operational support for the integration of the two types of education at the teaching process level[5].

3. Exploration of Long-Term Collaborative Education Mechanisms under the Support System

3.1 Cognitive Integration and Competence Interconnection of the Teaching Staff

Teachers are the direct implementers of collaborative education, and their own educational concepts and competence structures determine the depth that integration practices can achieve. Specialized course teachers have long been deeply engaged in specific technical fields and possess relatively profound mastery of professional knowledge systems, but they often lack systematic understanding of the concepts and methods of career planning education. Career planning teachers, although equipped with professional expertise in career guidance, may have limited understanding of specific professional fields and thus find it difficult to closely connect their guidance content with students' professional learning contexts. This cognitive disconnect and competence gap constitute the primary obstacle that needs to be overcome in the process of advancing collaborative education.

Cognitive integration centers on guiding both types of teachers to transcend their respective disciplinary boundaries and form a holistic understanding of student development patterns. Specialized course teachers need to recognize that guiding career cognition and supporting career decisions are not an additional teaching burden, but rather the educational functions that professional education should inherently assume. Career planning teachers, in turn, need to enter specialized classrooms and training venues to understand students' learning characteristics and development needs within authentic professional teaching contexts. Competence interconnection is manifested as the cross-transfer of teaching competencies: specialized course teachers gradually master the basic methods of career guidance and can keenly identify entry points for career education within specialized instruction; career planning teachers gradually become familiar with the basic content of relevant professional fields and can base their career guidance on an accurate understanding of professional characteristics. This two-way convergence at the cognitive and competence levels provides the most fundamental human

resource support for the daily integration of the two types of education[6].

3.2 Multidimensional Integration and Development of Teaching Resources

Teaching resources serve as important carriers through which the concept of collaborative education is materialized, and their allocation directly affects the feasibility and sustainability of integration practices. Under the traditional model, teaching resources for specialized courses and those for career planning education belong to separate development pathways: specialized training facilities, course textbooks, and case libraries are primarily used to support professional skills instruction, while career assessment tools, career information databases, and career activity materials serve the needs of career guidance. This segmented state between the two types of resources makes it difficult for students to form a smooth connection between their professional studies and career exploration, thereby constraining the effectiveness of integrated education.

The primary task of multidimensional integration is to break down the barriers separating the ownership of resources and establish a shared resource platform that serves the dual educational objectives. Specialized training rooms are not only venues for skill training but can also become spaces for career experience; by introducing authentic workflow processes and standard requirements from real positions, they enable students to simultaneously develop their perception of professional roles during professional training. The development of school-based teaching resource repositories needs to encompass both specialized cases and career materials, presenting typical work tasks in connection with corresponding career development paths, so that students naturally engage in thinking about career prospects when accessing specialized materials. The introduction of industry and enterprise resources requires the establishment of more flexible cooperation mechanisms, organically linking activities such as enterprise visits and job internships with the teaching schedule of specialized courses, thereby ensuring that the utilization of external resources serves the intrinsic educational logic. This multidimensional resource integration provides collaborative education with material support beyond the classroom level.

3.3 Diversified Transformation and Guiding Function of the Evaluation System

The evaluation system exerts a significant guiding influence on teaching activities, and the sustained advancement of collaborative education cannot be achieved without corresponding adjustments to the evaluation mechanism. Traditional student evaluation takes the level of professional knowledge mastery and the proficiency of operational skills as its core indicators, paying limited attention to the development of students' career cognition and the enhancement of their career planning abilities. This single-dimensional evaluation orientation leads both teachers and students to focus their efforts on measurable skill training while relatively neglecting the cultivation of professional qualities and the nurturing of career awareness. If collaborative education is to be truly implemented, a transformation from a single dimension to a diversified approach needs to be realized at the evaluation level.

The core of the diversified transformation lies in incorporating career development indicators into the overall framework of student evaluation. The assessment of specialized courses can add, on the basis of the original skill examination, observations and evaluations of dimensions such as understanding of professional norms and perception of job roles. Formative assessment can more authentically capture the dynamic changes in students' career cognition during the professional learning process, bringing classroom performance, project participation, and self-reflection into the scope of evaluation. The application of evaluation results also needs to be endowed with a guiding function, not only for determining academic performance but also for serving the continuous optimization of teaching strategies. When teachers learn from evaluation information about students' weaknesses in career cognition, they can adjust teaching content and methods accordingly; when students recognize their growth and deficiencies in professional qualities through evaluation feedback, they can engage in self-adjustment and planning with clearer direction. This evaluation system, which possesses both diagnostic and developmental functions, provides an important institutional guarantee for the long-term operation of collaborative education.

Conclusion

This study systematically explores the collaborative educational paths between specialized courses

and career planning education in higher vocational colleges from three perspectives: theoretical logic, curriculum model, and support system. The research reveals that the two types of education demonstrate value alignment at the objective level, jointly pointing toward the holistic cultivation of students' professional competence; exhibit a foundation of element coupling at the content level, forming an interactive relationship between professional knowledge and occupational demands; and present characteristics of symbiosis and mutual embedding at the process level, where knowledge acquisition and professional identity are simultaneously constructed within the educational process. This internal mechanism provides a theoretical basis for the collaboration between the two types of education. On this basis, the deep integration at the curriculum level needs to focus on three directions: the integrated design of curriculum objectives, the infusion-based arrangement of teaching content, and the coordinated innovation and application of teaching methods, thereby transforming specialized classrooms into important spaces where students explore the professional world and construct their professional selves.

The sustained advancement of collaborative education cannot be achieved without systematic support and guarantees. The cognitive integration and competence interconnection of the teaching staff provide human resource support for daily integration, the multidimensional integration and development of teaching resources endow the collaborative concept with a material carrier, and the diversified transformation of the evaluation system provides an institutional orientation for integration practices. Future research can further focus on directions such as the specific adaptation of collaborative models in different professional categories, the follow-up evaluation of collaborative education effects, and the application of information technology in resource integration, so as to deepen the relevant explorations continuously.

Fund Projects

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