



Research on First-class Foreign Language Curriculum Construction in China's Universities: Connotation, Features, and Design

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Abstract

The Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China officially initiated the "Double Ten-Thousand" first-class curriculum initiative in China's Universities in 2018. Building a first-class curriculum of foreign languages is among them. With the framework of Curriculum Theory, the study attempts to put forward the connotations and features of the first-class curriculum of foreign language and connect the building of the first-class curriculum of foreign language and first-class discipline of foreign language and literature. Thus, utilizing AI (Artificial Intelligence) and the Internet and expounding on the models of online teaching and offline teaching, the paper, from three aspects, namely, distinctive classes at the micro level, characteristic classes designed by the school at the meso level and various supports by country at the macro level, raises the suggestive ways to bring reference to the building of China's first-class curriculum of foreign language. At the micro level, it emphasizes (1) building the educational objectives of first-class foreign language curriculum; (2) selecting and organizing foreign language teaching and learning experience; (3) compiling or introducing first-class foreign language teaching materials; (4) conducting a comprehensive evaluation of (2) (3). At the meso level, the main concern is to open up the second characteristic classroom. At the macro level, it emphasizes the importance of national policy guarantees, organization guarantees, mechanism guarantees, and evaluation guarantees. These provide references for promoting the construction of a first-class foreign language curriculum.

Keywords

First-class curriculum of foreign language, First-class discipline of foreign language and literature, Connotation, Feature, Approach

1. Introduction

On August 8, 2015, the Leading Group for Comprehensively Deepening Reform of the CPC Central Committee of China deliberated and adopted the Overall Plan for Promoting the Construction of world-class universities and Disciplines in a coordinated manner, and decided to promote the construction of world-class universities and disciplines in a coordinated manner. On June 21, 2018, the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China held the first conference on Undergraduate education in Chinese Institutions of Higher Learning in the New Era since the reform and opening up,

at which it was pointed out that curriculum is the "last kilometer" reflecting the concept of "student-centered development", but it is a common shortcoming, bottleneck, and weakness in Chinese universities. The conference proposed to eliminate "low-quality courses" and build a "First-class curriculum" around first-class undergraduate education. By 2022, 20,000 "First-class curriculum" will be built across China. On April 30, 2019, the Ministry of Education fully implemented the "Double 10,000 Plan" for the construction of first-class majors and a first-class curriculum for all universities and majors. The Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China first started to promote the construction of first-class disciplines and first-class majors and then continued to promote the construction of first-class curriculum, namely the construction of golden courses. The curriculum is the core element of talent training. Although it is a micro issue, it solves the big problem of macro educational strategy (Wu Yan, 2018).

Although the connotation and essence of a first-class curriculum are different from those of excellent courses, they are connected and interrelated, and their common characteristics are high goals, difficult content, new means, and flexible evaluation (Wen Qiufang, 2019). Excellent courses are "online courses" in a certain period, while the types of first-class curriculum have been expanded to include not only online courses, but also traditional offline courses, online and offline mixed courses, virtual simulation courses, and social practice courses. Excellent courses are representative of an online "First-class curriculum" in higher education (Qin Jun, 2019). The proposal of a First-class curriculum is the formal requirement for the development of colleges and universities, which is the trend of the era. First-class foreign language curriculum is an important part of national first-class curriculum construction. In order to match the country's major development strategy and the prospect of first-class foreign language and literature discipline construction, it is necessary to define the connotation and characteristics of "first-class foreign language curriculum" and shape the "first-class foreign language curriculum" system at the classroom level, the school level and the national level.

2. Related research on first-class foreign language curriculum

"First-class curriculum" is a general term for high-quality courses. In recent years, scholars at home and abroad have carried out relevant research on how to build high-quality courses or First-class curricula from different perspectives at different levels.

According to the statistics of SSCI journals, scholars in foreign journals generally talk about two major topics in terms of high-quality curriculum design. First, how to create or optimize curriculum design (Chun Zheng, 2018; Veronica Villarreal, 2018; Michael Ginda, 2019; Hsiu-Ting Hung, 2019; Stefan Hrastinski, 2019; Eulho Jung et al., 2019). Second, in what ways does the curriculum design strongly influence or promote the development of students? (Eulho Jung et al., 2018; Muge Adnan, 2019). Such foreign studies tend to micro research, focusing on the dynamic and situational mode, path, and strategy thinking. In China, since the concept of "golden curriculum" was put forward in 2018, scholars in the field of foreign languages have conducted a series of more diversified theoretical and practical studies. In terms of theoretical research, Qin Jun (2019) proposed how to create a foreign language "golden curriculum" that meets the learning mode of "human-computer interaction" and the wisdom age through technology-driven development; Feng Zhiwen (2020) discusses the connotation, classification, and characteristics of foreign language golden curriculum, and discusses the significance of The Times and the construction strategy; In addition, many scholars put forward theoretical construction based on the construction standard of foreign language "First-class curriculum" (Cai Jigang, 2018; Wang Lifei & Ren Jie, 2019; Chen Dongchun & Wu Min, 2019; Guo Yingjian, 2019). In terms of practical research, Wen Qiufang (2019) defined the difference and connection between "golden foreign language courses" and "excellent courses", put forward the standard of golden foreign language courses and suggestions on the construction of golden foreign language curriculum, and proposed to build a "golden foreign language teacher team". Zhang Jing (2022) constructed and described the teaching model of a First-class curriculum of interpretation through practice. In addition, domestic scholars also focus on college English and put forward practical research on First-class curriculum construction, practical direction, and quality assessment model construction (Li Fangyuan & Yang Rong, 2020; Zhang Dan, 2021; Ma Wulin et al., 2021; Cai, Manyuan, 2022).

To sum up, past studies on first-class foreign language curricula have rarely been comprehensively discussed in the context of first-class discipline construction. At the same time, the past domestic studies on first-class curriculum mainly discussed the theory and practice construction of first-class curriculum from the perspective of policy response. At this point, foreign research gives a lot of enlightenment to this field. Therefore, from the background of the construction of first-class disciplines, this study will discuss how to design the various factors of the First-class curriculum and what characteristics the First-class curriculum should have.

3. The connotation and characteristics of first-class foreign language curriculum

In previous academic research, scholars do not have a clear definition of a first-class foreign language curriculum. The study will expound on its connotation and characteristics.

3.1 Connotation of first-class foreign language curriculum

First of all, it is necessary to clearly define the connotation of the curriculum, thus demonstrate the connotation of first-class foreign language courses (first-class foreign language curriculum), and clarify the theoretical basis for the construction of a first-class foreign language curriculum.

3.1.1 The curriculum should grasp two perspectives

First, from the perspective of history, the curriculum has different meanings in different times, so it is necessary to put the understanding of curriculum in a dynamic situation to examine; Second, from the perspective of knowledge genealogy, people give different meanings to the curriculum from different knowledge genealogy.

3.1.2 Connotation of the course

Ancient scholar Zhuxi from South Song Dynasty described the word "Curriculum" as equivalent to the "academic progress is a long journey, in which teachers are required to design the process purposefully and students should complete the tasks strictly before the limited term". The curriculum here refers to those in teaching and research areas. The Western word "Curriculum" comes from the Latin word "race course", meaning the course of a learner's course of study. According to the "Curriculum" entry in the American Encyclopedia of New Education, "the curriculum refers to the totality of learners' learning activities under the guidance of school teachers." In addition to the formal curriculum expressed in the school schedule, there are "extracurricular activities" specially planned and implemented as extracurricular practices, as well as the non-institutional aspects of campus culture such as the values, attitudes, and behaviors of the collective teachers and students. Zhong Qiquan (2015) suggests the "curriculum" covers a wide range of concepts including educational objectives, teaching content, teaching activities, and even evaluation methods (cf.). In addition, there are three indispensable principles of curriculum preparation and curriculum development. The first one is Taylor's principle, including (1) determining educational objectives; (2) choosing learning experiences; (3) Organizing learning experiences; And (4) implementing educational evaluation. (Taylor, 1981). The second one is H. Taba's Schematic model for curriculum design. It proposes (1) setting goals; (2) Selecting and organizing content (textbook); (3) Selecting and organizing the learning experiences (teaching); and (4) educational evaluation; All form the circle of curriculum design, namely, educational objectives → educational content → teaching → educational evaluation. Zhong Qiquan (2015) believes that H. Taba's schematic model of curriculum design is the most appropriate expression of the process of the curriculum preparation stage. In his book Curriculum Process, Wheeler put forward a more general theory, namely five aspects constituting "curriculum structure" (cf. Zhong Qiquan, 2015, pp. 266-267): (1) the selection of purpose, academic year, subject goal and teaching objective; (2) the planned learning experience that contributes to achieving these goals and objectives; (3) Select content (materials) that provides a certain type of experience; (4) the organization and synthesis of learning experiences and content about the teaching and learning process in schools and classrooms; And (5) an evaluation of the overall effect of (2) (3) (4) on the achievement of the goals and objectives proposed in the stages. To sum up, according to China's teaching practice and convenient expression, the study summarizes the curriculum connotation factors (1) curriculum education objectives; (2) curriculum teaching or learning experience; (3) teaching materials; (4) organization and synthesis of teaching materials and curriculum or learning experience; And (5) evaluation of the overall effect of (2) (3) (4).

3.1.3 Connotation of first-class Foreign Language Curriculum

With reference to the above curriculum connotation elements, the connotation of First-class foreign language curriculum is defined as follows: (1) Set the educational objectives of First-class foreign language curriculum according to the discipline category of foreign language and literature. (2) Inherit and innovate foreign language teaching and learning experience to keep pace with The Times. (3) Adopt or design First-class foreign language teaching materials with an international perspective and/or local characteristics. (4) combine perfectly foreign language course teaching or learning experience and foreign language teaching materials. (5) Evaluate the overall effect of (2) (3) (4). On this basis, the first-class foreign language curriculum should also include a variety of distinctive second-class activities carried out by the school for students' foreign language development.

3.2 Features of first-class foreign language curriculum

The first-class foreign language curriculum is designed to meet the needs of China's development. In the great background of further opening up of China, the country needs a large number of foreign language talents to promote the "Belt and Road Initiative", "to tell Chinese Stories and Spread Chinese Voice" and to build a community with a shared future for mankind. The First-class foreign language curriculum is a bridge built by foreign language talents. At the same time, the first-class foreign language curriculum can meet the needs of students in the new era and can cultivate a large number of students with international vision and Chinese feelings. Therefore, a first-class foreign language curriculum must have the following characteristics.

3.2.1 Integration of moral education and foreign language courses

First-class foreign language curriculum must enjoy two characteristics of "change" and "unchanged". One of the invariable characteristics of the First-class foreign language curriculum is that foreign language learning and teaching must serve national construction and cultivate talents with virtues. In the process of teaching and educating people, the teachers should value the practice of moral cultivation, and student development as the center and embedded with the concept of whole-person education and in-depth understanding of students' physical and mental development and individual differences to establish a harmonious relationship between teachers and students. However, a First-class foreign language curriculum must also have the characteristics of "change". In other words, curriculum objectives, curriculum content, and curriculum form should be considered in the great changes in the world and the great development of China.

3.2.2 Having the features of Three-dimensional informatization, network, and artificial intelligence

With the support of modern educational technology, create offline, online, online, and offline mixing, virtual simulation, and social practice "first-class curriculum (Article 3 of No. 6, 2019). With the promotion of information-based network artificial intelligence, first-class foreign language curriculum has launched foreign language MOOCs, micro-courses, SPOC, and foreign language flipped classrooms. In addition, it has built a three-dimensional foreign language learning network platform. Students can learn deep learning independently with the help of online teachers and artificial intelligence, creating an online smart classroom.

3.2.3 Having the characteristics of being Advanced, innovative, and challenging

The "advanced" first-class foreign language curriculum refers to the combination of internationalization and localization, the combination of international vision and Chinese thinking through first-class foreign language courses, so as to train students to put forward "Chinese plan" and "Chinese thinking" in line with national values. The "innovation" of first-class foreign language curriculum refers to the introduction of cutting-edge core achievements into the textbook in terms of content, so as to continue the classic content and absorb the latest research, balance the comprehensive open and innovative curriculum content, and closely integrate the first classroom with the second classroom at the school level; In the aspect of form, "innovation" refers to absorbing the development achievements of modern information technology and artificial intelligence, and carrying out the teaching of online, offline, online-offline MOOCs, SPOC and other courses. In the aspect of result, "Innovative" encourages students to have critical thinking, investigative enthusiasm, and personalized views, and not pursue the only answer to any problem. The characteristic of being challenging first-class foreign language curriculum refers to the phenomenon that the difficulty of a foreign language course should exceed the students' current level, and students must study hard, read more, think deeply, ask questions, practice frequently, and explore more cooperation in order to learn the course well.

3.2.4 Calling for Comprehensive professional teachers

The establishment of a first-class foreign language curriculum has put forward higher requirements for foreign language teachers. Foreign language teachers should renew their teaching concepts and respond to the call of the Ministry of Education to build a first-class foreign language curriculum. Foreign language teachers should not only master the professional content of the course, and deeply understand the students' psychology, but also have enough information literacy. Information literacy is not limited to the ability to acquire, integrate, and use information, but also to have the ability to apply network tools to design teaching.

4. First-class foreign language curriculum design ideas

There are three faults in the current school curriculum (Zhong Qiquan, 2015): (1) the fault between the current curriculum and society, economy, and culture; (2) the fault between the current curriculum and students' physical and mental development; (3) the fault between the current curriculum and the development of modern disciplines. Therefore, the

design of a first-class foreign language curriculum should conform to the national strategy, social needs, the requirements of students' physical and mental development, and the development trend of foreign language discipline. The First-class curriculum of a foreign language can be constructed from the micro, meso, and macro perspectives.

4.1 On the micro level

the construction of a first-class foreign language curriculum specifically refers to the construction of First-class curriculum educational objectives, teachers' teaching experience & and students' learning experience, foreign language teaching materials, and comprehensive evaluation.

4.1.1 The educational goal of a First-class curriculum is to aim at the first-class foreign language discipline, and the construction of first-class curriculum and first-class curriculum should go hand in hand

In essence, the core goals of the construction of the first-class foreign language discipline and the construction of the First-class curriculum are the same, namely, training first-class "foreign language +" talents, and ultimately serving the economic and social development of the country. The First-class curriculum of foreign language focuses on students' study. In recent years, the Ministry of Education has made great efforts to build five types of "first-class curriculum", including offline "first-class curriculum", online "first-class curriculum", online and offline mixed "first-class curriculum", virtual simulation "first-class curriculum" and social practice "first-class curriculum". The first-class foreign language curriculum can be applied to offline "first-class curriculum", online "first-class curriculum", online and offline mixed "first-class curriculum" and virtual simulation "first-class curriculum". They can Make full use of the Internet and artificial intelligence to carry out foreign language MOOCs, SPOC micro-courses, and flipped classroom teaching, and build a rich and colorful teaching organization, teaching structure, and teaching styles. These online first-class foreign language curricula, mainly in the form of MOOC and SPOC, can be learned free of charge by teachers and students from other universities, and play a leading role in promoting overall foreign language education in China.

4.1.2 Teachers' teaching experience and students' learning experience: Build a team of high-level "Foreign language +" teachers and cultivate high-level "Foreign language +" students from multiple perspectives

The construction of a first-class foreign language curriculum requires foreign language teachers to innovate and understand "curriculum standards" and "curriculum paradigms". In the new era, teachers need to rely on artificial intelligence as cognitive outsourcing of the human brain for information processing and thinking. The cognitive outsourcing of "AI+ teacher" is the main form of human-machine collaboration in the era of artificial intelligence, and will become the norm (Yu Shengquan & Wang Qi, 2019). Focus on the changes in artificial intelligence in the field of education. We believe that AI will place new demands on the knowledge, learning ability, leadership, cooperation, and even emotions of English teachers. Wang Xuemei (2019) believes that artificial intelligence can help human teachers make more informed decisions by relying on its powerful data computing ability, but it will not replace the future of human beings, and "artificial intelligence + teachers" is the trend of The Times. Therefore, in this process, foreign language teachers should continuously improve their information literacy, enhance their ability to acquire, integrate, and utilize information, and be proficient in the application of network tools and web-based teaching design (Xu Jinfen, 2019). In addition, in the coming era of artificial intelligence and robots, human wisdom and creativity will be particularly important. The key is how teachers enable students to develop abilities that robots and artificial intelligence do not have, such as problem raising ability, problem analysis ability, problem-solving ability, creativity, and innovation ability (Jiang Li, 2019).

Foreign language teachers need to develop imagination, creativity, empathy, and open-ended problem-solving skills. In the future, students with "foreign language +" ability will need more personalized learning materials, make full use of online textbooks and resources, and carry out independent learning and deep learning under the guidance of teachers, based on problem awareness and project-based learning mode. The Internet and artificial intelligence can help cultivate compound, multilingual, and high-level international talents with homeland emotion, international vision, critical thinking ability, and cross-cultural ability. It is expected to cultivate foreign language talents with profound cultural heritage at home and abroad, outstanding cross-cultural communication and professional ability, and strong professional ability.

4.1.3 Compile or introduce "three-dimensional" teaching materials with the feature of internationalization and localization

First-class foreign language curriculum textbooks should have two factors, international perspective and Chinese elements. The teaching materials of the First-class curriculum should be a combination of international imported teaching materials and local self-compiled teaching materials (Stefan Hrastinski, 2019). In other words, the construction of teaching materials should implement the principle of combining selection and compilation, use the most advanced new teaching materials that can reflect the frontier of the subject, vigorously encourage teachers to choose "course materials for the

21st century", national key teaching materials and textbooks recommended by the teaching Steering Committee. The content of first-class foreign language curriculum textbooks can be combined with "systematic learning" and "problem-solving learning"; The content of first-class foreign language curriculum textbooks can also be the combination of interdisciplinary open paradigm based on the topic and the classic core paradigm of the course.

4.1.4 Comprehensive Assessment of first-class foreign language curriculum

Comprehensive assessment refers to the assessment of teachers' classroom teaching, students' online and offline learning, and teaching materials and the assessment of the relationship among the above three factors.

4.2 Meso Perspective

Meso Perspective refers to providing a colorful and distinctive second classroom for the construction of a first-class foreign language curriculum at the school level. The brand activities of the second classroom of the Excellence School of Shanghai International Studies University include "Excellence Forum", "Excellence Book Club", "Excellence Speaker", "Excellence Workshop", "Excellence Extension" and "Excellence Debate", etc. In order to build a First-class curriculum of foreign languages, the School of Foreign Languages of Peking University, with its own resources, invited well-known experts at home and abroad to give lectures on certain topics. All these are an indispensable part of the construction of a first-class foreign language curriculum.

4.3 Macro Perspective

Macro refers to the establishment of guarantees for a first-class foreign language curriculum on policy, organization, mechanism, and evaluation at all levels of government. In terms of policy guarantee, official documents are issued so that the construction of a first-class foreign language curriculum can be followed by laws. In terms of organizational guarantee, special teaching steering committees should be set up at all levels, such as on the national level to set up the Teaching Steering Committee of the Ministry of Education. These committees are the staff and guidance departments for the construction of a first-class foreign language curriculum. In terms of mechanism guarantee, all levels of government should take the national construction of new liberal arts as an opportunity to seek truth from facts, adapt to local conditions, and promote the construction of First-class curriculum at national, provincial, municipal, or university levels in stages. In terms of evaluation guarantee, the curriculum designers should follow the three-level professional certification, namely, "keeping qualified, improving the level and pursuing excellence" proposed by the Ministry of Education, setting up detectable, quantifiable, and evaluable "hard indicators", and strictly keeping quality control of first-class curriculum.

5. Conclusion

The construction of first-class universities and first-class disciplines and the layout of the first-class curriculum are all for China's higher education to stand at the forefront of The Times keep up with the world trend and train socialist successors. Under the background of the construction of first-class foreign language discipline, this paper uses the theoretical framework of curriculum theory to think about the connotation and characteristics of a first-class foreign language curriculum and tries to put forward the design idea of a first-class foreign language curriculum. The design ideas cover the micro level of the classroom, the middle level of school, and the macro level of government; The classroom level mainly focuses on first-class foreign language curriculum education objectives, classroom teachers' teaching experience, students' learning experience, teaching materials, and comprehensive evaluation of them. In the future, on the basis of extensive research, we can make full use of the achievements of the construction of first-class foreign language curricula in colleges and universities, explore the rules of the construction of first-class foreign language curricula, and serve to build a more meaningful first-class foreign language curriculum.

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