

Research on the Characteristic Development of English Majors in Application-oriented Universities under the Background of “Neo-Liberal Arts”

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Abstract: The new approach to liberal arts education emphasizes the importance of interdisciplinary learning, with the goal of nurturing adaptable individuals who can contribute to societal progress. With the influence of this new concept, the teaching methods in application-oriented colleges and universities will be adjusted accordingly to better align with this approach. As a result, the quality and effectiveness of education in these institutions will be enhanced, fostering the development of versatile individuals who possess both specialized knowledge and a broader understanding of related fields. These individuals will possess the ability to contemplate professional growth within a larger context, thereby advancing their respective fields and generating greater value. This development will have far-reaching implications for social, economic, and cultural progress, ultimately realizing the individual's societal worth. The development of English majors in application-oriented universities should be undertaken within the framework of the neo-liberal arts reform. This should be complemented by leveraging the disciplinary advantages of the institution, implementing innovative teaching models, reforming curriculum systems, and cultivating a proficient teaching staff. The ultimate objective is to nurture well-rounded talents that align with the evolving demands of society.

Keywords: Neo-liberal Arts; Application-oriented colleges and universities; English major; Characteristic development; Approach

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“Neo-Liberal Arts” is a profound self-revolution of humanities and social sciences to actively adapt to the development of the new era. Wu Yan, Director of the Department of Higher Education, pointed out that how to revitalize the liberal arts and promote the development of the liberal arts into a new era is an important issue facing higher education at present.^[1] The neo-epoch, neo-situation, and neo-technique are calling for re-localization and transformation of education. The primary objective of English majors in applied colleges and universities is to cultivate highly skilled professionals who can adapt to social development, meet the demands of the socialist market economy and advancements in modern science and technology, and possess well-rounded development in terms of morality, intelligence, and physical fitness. These individuals should have strong proficiency in English language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation. They should also be familiar with relevant professional fields and possess practical operational and computer application abilities.

In the context of the new liberal arts, the cultivation of such talents requires a thorough examination of curriculum relevance and the application of teaching methods. The fundamental considerations should revolve around “adapting to society,” “individual development,” and “promoting social development.” These considerations should be combined with the characteristics of professional development to further adjust teaching methods to better align with the definition and requirements of talents in current social development. This will enable the achievement of professional characteristic development and, simultaneously, contribute to social

progress and the realization of greater social value.

1. Characterization of Characteristic Development of English Majors in Application-oriented Universities under the Background of New Liberal Arts

The characteristic development of undergraduate English majors in the context of the new liberal arts should have the following features. Firstly, it should strike a balance between practicality and humanistic elements, equipping students with practical English skills while fostering their humanistic literacy and cultural awareness. Secondly, it should focus on addressing real-world issues and developing students' problem-solving abilities, while also emphasizing understanding and appreciation of China's unique national conditions and culture, enabling them to offer a distinct Chinese perspective and value system.^[2] Additionally, it should encourage students to engage in innovative practices, cultivating their innovative thinking and practical skills. Moreover, it should prioritize the development of students' comprehensive abilities, including interdisciplinary learning, teamwork, and problem-solving skills. Lastly, it should cultivate students' sense of social responsibility and global perspective, enabling them to address social issues and global development trends actively. By incorporating these features into the characteristic development, applied undergraduate English majors can better adapt to the demands of the new liberal arts context and cultivate English professionals with comprehensive literacy and international competitiveness.

2. Approaches to the Characteristic Development of English Majors in Application-oriented Universities under the Background of New Liberal Arts

The professional goal of English majors in application-oriented universities under the backdrop of the "Neo-Liberal Arts" is to cultivate students who possess a solid foundation in English, interdisciplinary knowledge, an international perspective, cross-cultural communication skills, and a sense of social responsibility in the new era. As the demand for foreign language talents evolves, changes need to be made in the training models and curriculum systems reflected in talent development programs. Additionally, higher expectations are placed on the teaching staff.

2.1 Demand-oriented, optimizing talent cultivation mode

With the widespread penetration of technologies such as the Internet, artificial intelligence, and big data at the social level, there is a continuous trend of integrated innovation and integrated development among science, art, and humanities, and the boundaries between disciplines are becoming increasingly blurred.^[3] To cope with the new changes in social issues, the integration of interdisciplinary knowledge is an inevitable choice for the construction of new Liberal Arts.

The transformation of talent cultivation mode is an effective way to activate the vitality of professional teaching and make it more dynamic. English majors need to rationally adjust their training mode, training objectives, and teaching plans according to market demands. Taking Chengdu Neusoft University as an example, the university puts forward a talent cultivation mode with "foreign language as the foundation, IT as the feature, art as the highlight", and explores the applied talent training mode of "literature, engineering and art" interdisciplinary integration in the face of new social changes and new needs caused by new technologies and new media, so as to enhance students' international communication, thus realizing the transformation and reform of "foreign language plus" talent training mode under the background of new liberal arts.

2.2 Cross-disciplinary integration to create a distinctive professional curriculum system

The construction of "Neo-Liberal Arts" emphasizes the importance of interdisciplinary integration, and cross-border integration training has become a new trend in the development of disciplines and talent cultivation. However, it is necessary to adapt the curriculum design in talent cultivation plans to meet the changing demands of society. "Cross-subject" is an important feature of the new liberal arts background, that is, from the perspective of "comprehensive quality" and "comprehensive development", it emphasizes the combination of professional knowledge and other related fields, and comprehensively cultivates students, so as to promote them to learn professional English knowledge. At the same time, they can fully understand and learn other related cultural knowledge and business knowledge, in order to achieve the purpose of cultivating compound talents.

While many universities have offered interdisciplinary courses, the offering of such courses is only a rigid cross disciplinary superposition. Interdisciplinary courses do not form mutual support and are not designed systematically for specific job group needs. As a result, students' knowledge structure tends to be fragmented and lacks systematicity. Interdisciplinary learning often remains at the surface level, lacking practicality and alignment with output and societal needs. The professional characteristics of students are not prominent enough, and their core competitiveness is relatively weak.

Chengdu Neusoft University has adjusted its curriculum system in the 2023 undergraduate talent cultivation plan. Firstly, it has

added interdisciplinary courses in IT and art, enabling students to not only have a solid foundation in language and culture, but also master IT technologies such as image and video processing and data mining, and possess certain artistic literacy, aesthetic ability, and innovation ability; In addition, the school has also reformed existing courses, updated the role and objectives of the courses, adjusted the content and scope of the courses, and transformed the language skills of previous courses from a single oriented teaching to a multi-dimensional teaching with a focus on cultivating international communication ability, cultivating students to form unique knowledge and thinking styles that cross disciplinary boundaries;

2.3 Teachers reshape, temper the characteristic professional teaching staff

The establishment of a competent teaching staff is essential to achieve the goal of talent cultivation, especially in the construction of the “New Humanities” where a “foreign language+” teaching staff is urgently needed. The key to achieving talent cultivation goals is to build a double qualified teaching team with a strong foundation in English and a certain level of interdisciplinary professional knowledge. However, the construction of such a team has become a bottleneck that urgently needs to be overcome in improving the quality of talent cultivation in foreign language majors.

In the context of the “Neo-liberal Arts” construction, the English major needs to enhance the construction of a high-level teaching team through the following measures:

1. Internal training and external recruitment to enhance the professional competence of teachers: Efforts should be made to optimize the introduction mechanism for high-level talents and actively attract outstanding individuals. Targeted teacher training programs should be developed to enable teachers to adapt to their professional teaching work. Additionally, teachers should be encouraged to improve their academic qualifications and professional titles.

2. Establish a teacher learning community for mutual learning and improvement: Regular teaching research workshops should be conducted to stay updated on the latest developments and achievements in the field. External training, expert lectures, teaching competitions, scientific research projects, and other means should be utilized to continuously enhance the teaching level and quality of the teaching team.

Conclusion:

In summary, in order to achieve distinctive development of English majors in application-oriented universities under the background of the “Neo-Liberal Arts”, several key measures need to be taken. These include enhancing the depth and quality of education, innovating talent cultivation models, reforming interdisciplinary curriculum systems, and building a high-caliber teaching staff. The English major should be seamlessly integrated with other disciplines to foster versatile and practical foreign language talents. These talents should be equipped with the ability to effectively convey China’s story, amplify China’s voice, and contribute to the construction of a strong nation and a community with a shared future for mankind in the new era.

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Zheng Jia, born in August 1981, female, associate professor, graduate student, native of Jingzhou City, Hubei Province, now works in Chengdu Neusoft University, whose main research direction is English education, and has won the special prize of the Sichuan University Curriculum Ideological and Political Teaching Competition. She has presided over the project of talent training quality and teaching reform of higher education in Sichuan Province and the project of Sichuan Provincial Federation of Social Sciences.