

## A Study of English Major Education Mode in Normal Universities from the Perspective of “Whole Person Education”

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**Abstract:** “Whole Person Education” is an ideal educational concept, aiming at correcting the instrumentality of modern and contemporary educational purposes, and devoting itself to cultivating all-around talents with sound personality and comprehensive development, which is called a great revolution in education. The idea of “Whole Person Education” also provides a brand-new perspective for the study of English education in normal universities, which is of great practical significance. At present, English education in normal universities in China attaches too much importance to the transmission of English knowledge and the cultivation of language skills, ignoring the cultivation and edification of students’ feelings and moralities. This paper first analyzes the ideological characteristics of “Whole Person Education” and then explores the application of “Whole Person Education” in the teaching of English majors in normal universities: the construction of a general education curriculum system, the integration of whole-person education and professional courses, the development of comprehensive practical activities, the improvement of teacher training programs, and the rational positioning of teaching, positioning of the teacher’s role, the cultivation of students’ critical thinking ability and the improvement of English curriculum evaluation mechanism. This paper aims to promote the all-round development of students’ abilities and improve the teaching quality of English majors in normal universities by exploring the construction of English education model in the perspective of “Whole Person Education.”

**Keywords:** holistic education, English majors, general education, humanity, teachers’ concept.

### 1. Introduction

“Whole Person Education” is a kind of educational ideology with a strong criticism, which was emerging in the 1960s and 1970s and gradually exerted a far-reaching influence on the educational philosophy of the world (X. Wen, 2014). The concept of “Whole Person Education” is an educational revolution aimed at correcting the mechanics and utilitarianism of modern educational purposes (M. Tan, 2006). American scholar Miller (1988) formally put forward the concept of “Whole Person Education,” pointing out that “the whole person” is “complete” person, and “Whole Person Education” refers to the educational concept of giving full play to individual’s potentials and promoting individual development. German philosopher Jaspers (1991) thinks that the goal of education is to train “the whole person.” “Whole Person Education” emphasizes the diversity and individuality of individuals, and emphasizes the cooperative relationship between individual experience and individuals. “Whole Person Education” advocates that education should fully tap the potentials of human beings, cultivate their complete development so that people have been fully developed in the physical, knowledge, skills, moral, intellectual, spiritual, spiritual, creative and other aspects. “Whole Person Education” attaches close attention to the enhancement of each student’s intelligence, morality, physical ability, social intercourse, emotion, aesthetics, and spiritual potentials. It aims to help students shape their character, learn social knowledge and skills extensively, develop independent thinking ability and solve personal problems, form lofty moral consciousness and social consciousness, and advocate the cultivation of them. Cultivating all-round development of talents can make people achieve the perfect integration of human moral ideals and spiritual strength, focusing on shaping a perfect, complete, free personality, rather than building a tool-like person (J. J. Xiang, 2014).

At present, some experts and scholars in China have done some research on English major education under the theory of “Whole Person Education” and have made some achievements. S. J. Wang (2015) proposed that teachers should pay attention to static and dynamic, explicit and tacit knowledge and experience in the process of interaction between “teaching” and “learning,” effectively teach and study comprehensively, so as to achieve the goal of training “whole person.” X. Wen (2016) thought that English majors’ training should be “based on comprehensive, professional, personality” to train students to master professional knowledge, but also proficient in basic skills with a sound and complete personality. Y. Chen (2016) pointed out that in foreign language teaching, we should uphold the concept of “educating people first,” cultivate students’ innovative thinking ability on the basis of professional knowledge teaching and cultivate students into all-around citizens with moral, intellectual, physical and aesthetic development. J. Lang (2017) believes that whole-person education should tap individual potential, encourage self-realization and focus on life experience, change the traditional teacher-student relationship, and adapt teachers to the new needs of student groups. Q. P. Zheng (2017) discusses the ways and means of integrating the concept of whole-person education

into professional foreign language education: establishing the concept of “Whole Person Education”, implementing general education and returning to the humanities of foreign language disciplines, paying attention to the cultivation of students’ morality and shaping sound personality, cultivating students’ critical thinking ability, and diversified evaluation system to promote the all-round development of students. Y. Y. Zeng (2017) analyzed the cultivation mode of business English talents in Higher Vocational Colleges under the concept of whole-person education, and re-examined the current situation of business English education from the perspective of “Whole Person Education”, which is helpful to overcome the shortcomings of unilateral emphasis on employment skills and neglect personality shaping in Higher Vocational Education and to construct a more competitive talent cultivation. In order to cultivate more qualified business English talents, Y. Lv (2018) put forward an effective way to guide the cultivation of English humanistic quality in higher vocational colleges with the whole-person education, so as to make the cultivation direction of English talents in higher vocational colleges coincide with the national goal of talent cultivation and optimize English teaching in Higher Vocational Colleges. In a word, the current research on “Whole Person Education” is still not specific and comprehensive. Based on these studies and according to the characteristics of English majors in normal universities, this paper will explore the construction of “Whole Person Education” from the perspective of English majors in normal universities.

## **2. Characteristics of the Idea of “Whole Person Education”**

### **2.1 Respecting people and putting people first**

“Whole Person Education” believes that education should train students to be flexible, initiative, adaptable, creative, and attaining personal development. Students have initiative and sense of responsibility, flexible ability to adapt to change, and they are a person of independent development, can achieve self-worth. Teachers should not look at students with static or colorful eyes, but with patience, love, and always believe that students have great potential for development, believe that students are people in development, education must teach students in accordance with their aptitude, give full play to each student’s potential and positive factors, and teach students with a clear aim. Each student gets the most out of it.

### **2.2 Teacher guiding and student centered**

“Whole Person Education” advocates that teachers should be the promoters or facilitator of students’ learning. Teachers should not be the absolute authority of traditional controllers or dictators, but should play the role of “promoters” in the teaching process and perform related tasks. Teachers should help students lead out and clarify problems, help students organize materials and help to provide more extensive learning resources and activities; teachers should serve students as a flexible and credible resource; teachers should participate in activities as learning participants (group members) in group cooperative activities; and teachers should take the initiative to work with groups, and share their feelings.

### **2.3 Focusing on digging the full potential of students**

“Whole Person Education” pays attention to the comprehensive excavation of each person’s intelligence, emotion, sociality, materiality, artistry, creativity and potential. First of all, it promotes people’s understanding to an unprecedented height, and its core content is the cultivation of “Whole Person”. “Whole Person” can be regarded as a person with complete personality and all-round development, and there can be no deviation in the process of human development. Education should pay more attention to the inner nature of people, such as emotion, creativity, imagination, compassion, curiosity, and etc., especially to the realization of self. This whole person paradigm theory does not belittle the importance of material, does not deny the value of social existence, but it believes that the process of education is not only the transfer of knowledge and skills training, but also should pay attention to the internal emotional experience and personality training, to achieve the unity of human spirit and material.

### **2.4 Stressing general education of humanistic nature**

General education is the core of “all-round education.” General education is also a kind of humanistic education, which goes beyond utilitarianism and practicality. General education aims to provide students with knowledge and values that are common among different groups of people, to cultivate students’ ability to think independently and to understand different disciplines so as to integrate different knowledge, and ultimately to cultivate comprehensive, complete and all-around people. Since the 20th century, general education has become a compulsory subject in European and American universities. In some universities in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and mainland China, general education has also become a compulsory or optional subject in universities.

### **2.5 Highlighting developing students’ innovative thinking ability**

Unlike traditional education, the fundamental purpose of “Whole Person Education” is to promote the sustainable development of students. It holds that the important task of teaching lies in teaching students to think positively and solve problems, and

cultivating their creative thinking ability. Creative thinking ability refers to the creative awareness and innovative spirit of thinking activities, not sticking to conventions, flexible change, for creative problems and creative problem solving. “Whole Person Education” holds that teachers should strengthen students’ independence in learning, maintain their due curiosity, cultivate students’ awareness of problems, guide students to find problems, and raise questions. Furthermore, teachers should also pay attention to cultivating students’ divergent thinking ability in order to enhance their innovative thinking ability.

### **3. Construction of English Education Mode in Normal Universities from the Perspective of “Whole Person Education”**

#### **3.1 Building general education curriculum system**

Holistic education is the ultimate goal of general education. General education is an important way to achieve whole person education. At present, English teaching pays too much attention to the increase of English professional knowledge and the promotion of English skills, ignoring the cultivation of students’ feelings and meanings. Therefore, in order to change the present situation, the teaching of college English majors should carry out the curriculum design of general education under the guidance of the idea of whole-person education, so as to realize the complementary balance between general education and professional education, and thus achieve the goal. The perfection of human development will ultimately achieve the goal of “whole person” education. In some famous universities in the United States general education courses account for about 35% in undergraduate courses, the University of Chicago is 50%, Harvard and Stanford University account for a third to a quarter, Yale University accounts for 44%, Columbia University is low, also accounts for 20% - 22%. The proportion of general courses in Taiwan’s universities accounts for 22% of the total credits. General education courses in mainland China generally account for only about 10%. In addition to the specialized courses, the courses of humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences should also be offered, including liberal arts education, modern civic education, life education, and professional quality education.

#### **3.2 Integration of whole person education and professional courses**

“Whole Person Education” is ubiquitous and should be infiltrated intangibly into the teaching of English majors. Teachers of English majors can adopt student-centered teaching methods, such as experiential teaching, subject-based teaching, and teacher-student role-switching teaching, to introduce students into thinking and discussing the contents of the course, so as to cultivate students’ independent thinking ability, aesthetic taste, and exploratory spirit. Teachers can flexibly choose teaching methods according to the teaching content, such as heuristic, discussion, inquiry, situational, case-based, task-based, cooperative teaching and so on. Teachers can adopt different teaching methods in the same classroom to develop students’ whole-brain thinking, combine induction with deduction, combine rationality with intuition, develop students’ potentials in the cohesion period from various angles, so that students can develop their language knowledge and skills while enhancing their morality, intelligence, physique, beauty, labor, and mind. Teachers should do more infiltration of multi-disciplinary knowledge based on teaching content, and cultivate students’ comprehensive quality. Courses for English majors cover ethics, physiology, cultural values, aesthetics, social responsibility, environmental protection, interpersonal communication, emotional control, willpower and so on. Under the guidance of diversified teaching methods in ESP classrooms, students have a new understanding of the subject of English major.

#### **3.3 Developing comprehensive practice activity design**

English teachers should design multi-faceted, and humanized general practice activities, such as English culture festival, English corner, English salon, academic salon, special lectures, thematic debate (English or Chinese), sports meetings, talents evening and other artistic activities, off-campus voluntary services, volunteer activities, and etc. Teachers can also combine extra-curricular practice with the second classroom so that students can practice after learning, test learning in practice, promote learning in practice, so as to comprehensively improve students’ learning ability, practical ability, innovation ability, and comprehensive quality. In the process of cultivating English majors in colleges and universities, teachers should pay more attention to the promotion of students’ scientific research training and English competitions so as to stimulate students’ spirit of research and exploration in an all-around way. At the same time, through the standardization of off-campus practice training, interpersonal communication strategies, conflict coping, the “problem students” training and other psychological knowledge are added to the practice, and emotional education is integrated into the teaching process, so as to serve the teaching better and enhance the effect of education.

#### **3.4 Improving the way and effect of teacher’s training**

It is a new direction of the current teacher development shifting from “professional development” to “all-round education,” and the implementation of the concept of education lies in the awakening and renewal of the concept of teachers. Schools should

regularly carry out the study of the whole-person education theory in order to change their concepts, carry out planned training, update teachers' knowledge structure, encourage teachers to participate in the "whole person education teacher training course" held inside and outside the school, guide teachers to infiltrate the "Whole Person Education" concept into all aspects of teaching, and form a comprehensive infiltration after class. At present, primary and secondary school teachers' professional development training mode mainly focuses on skills, and the overall quality of teachers is not satisfactory. The cultivation of humanistic quality comes from education. Teachers' value orientation, spiritual outlook, temperament, and other words and deeds exert a far-reaching influence on students. The simple process of education cannot be regarded as the one-way dissemination of knowledge, ignoring the enthusiasm and creativity of students. Whole-person education requires the full participation of all faculty members in order to achieve its objectives. Teachers can be encouraged to infiltrate humanistic literacy into teaching activities and student work through various forms, such as new faculty training, student workshops and so on.

### **3.5 Rationally positioning the role of teachers**

"Whole Person Education" is a kind of educational thought totally different from traditional educational thoughts. It advocates the full development of individual value and social value, which requires teachers to re-understand their roles. English teachers are first and foremost organizers, who can organize the teaching links so that the classroom teaching of the course can proceed smoothly. Secondly, teachers should be facilitators who can design and utilize foreign language learning environments to meet the special needs of students. Thirdly, teachers should be creators, and they can establish a teaching process of mutual learning and co-creation with students. Fourth, teachers should be students' friends, should be student-centered, concerned, appreciate and respect students, understand the needs of students, and coexist with students on an equal footing. Finally, a foreign language teacher should be a consultant who can realize that his duty is to cultivate students in an all-around way and that his attitude towards the students should not be different because of his or her academic achievements.

### **3.6 Developing students' critical thinking ability**

The cultivation of critical thinking ability is one of the goals of higher education. China's education over-emphasizes the imparting and accumulation of knowledge, resulting in the loss and lack of students' critical thinking, and analysis of problems, the problem-solving ability is significantly lower than that of developed countries in Europe and the United States. Q. F. Wen (2012) found that the "absence of speculation" is a common problem of college students in China. As far as foreign language is concerned, besides offering special critical thinking courses, the cultivation of critical thinking ability should be organically combined with the teaching of various courses. For example, in the reading teaching, students' critical thinking can be cultivated through critical reading. After each lesson, the teacher allows the student to write a reading impression, comment, resume, or rewrite. The content is open-ended, and students can express their own opinions. They can support or disagree with the author, propose better solutions, evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the argument, and redesign the relevant topics. His combination of reading and writing helps to improve students' critical thinking ability.

### **3.7 Improving the evaluation mechanism of students**

The significance of educational evaluation lies in promoting the all-round development of students. In the process of evaluating students' learning situation, we should not only pay attention to their academic achievements but also pay more attention to the formation of students' abilities and accomplishments. However, at present, the main basis for evaluating students in China is examination results. It is unscientific and static to attach importance to "summative evaluation" and ignore "formative evaluation," which is not conducive to students' all-round development. Under the concept of whole person education, English major curriculum should pay attention to the integrity and relevance of learning. Therefore, when establishing the evaluation mechanism, we should combine the process evaluation with the summative evaluation. Teachers can set up many multi-faceted assessment ways in a semester so that students have more opportunities to show themselves, test themselves, find shortcomings, and improve in time. Examination forms can be diversified, and the proportion of open-ended subjective questions can be increased in the examination paper, or the examination forms can be enriched in the form of reading reports and term papers. Teachers encourage students to participate in the evaluation, such as self-evaluation, group leader evaluation of members, and mutual evaluation among groups, which can give students autonomy and reflect their individual values.

## **4. Conclusion**

The idea of "Whole Person Education" is people-oriented, focusing on promoting the value of people, aiming at promoting students' balanced and overall development in physiology, intelligence, emotion, morality, social skills, creativity, art, spirit, potentials, and other aspects. The education of English majors in normal universities should establish the idea of whole-person

education, which not only ensures the growth of students' knowledge and skills but also focuses on their all-round development. Based on the analysis of the ideological characteristics of "Whole Person Education", this paper puts forward the application model of "Whole Person Education" in the teaching of English majors in normal universities, such as: constructing the curriculum system of general education, integrating whole-person education with professional courses, developing the design of comprehensive practical activities, improving the teacher training plan, and rationally positioning the role of teachers. To cultivate students' critical thinking ability and improve the evaluation mechanism of English curriculum, this paper aims to provide some references for the study of English education model in Teachers Colleges and universities from the perspective of "Whole Person Education."

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