The innovative research of APL in course development

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Abstract: Assessment of prior learning (APL), which was developed on the basis of experiential learning theory, is more in accordance with the age requirements for building a learning society. Relying on the new concepts of lifelong learning and inclusive education, accreditation system of APL learning outcomes, credit transfer cohesion system and qualifications framework are intended to accelerate the course development. By docking with course objectives, organization, implementation and assessment, the old subject-centered course organization model would be changed. More and more people would pay attention to the cognitive development. As a result, the education could play an important role in personal career development, which will increase the coupling between course learning and social and economic development.

Keywords: APL, course development, innovative research.

1. Introduction

Traditional course development focuses on subject knowledge itself excessively, and it only makes mechanical arrangement of knowledge in a logical order of easy-to-difficult and simple-to-complex, which is blended for overlooking the importance of individual learning and causes the out of touch with the real needs. Over the years, our country always attaches importance to the unity of education, and implements uniform course standards and plans across the country, making it impossible for different schools to teach students according to local conditions and individual aptitude. Moreover, courses couldn't be implemented with unified standard. In order to effectively alleviate the passive situation of school in course development, China has changed the policy direction, paid more attention to education reform and implemented a series of educational autonomy policy since 1990s, which lay a foundation for improving the school-running initiatives and taking advantage of school-based courses. Due to lacking the research of relevant practice field, as well as the simply copying of foreign academic achievements and experience, school-based courses have not worked so well in practice.

1.1 Development and utilization of the course resources affected by institutional.

Social educational resources are not only the important support to promote the country's economic, cultural and social development, but also a huge treasure trove to excavating the educational potential and improving education initiative. Effective integration and usage of various educational resources determine whether the education can develop soundly and rapidly or not. At present in practice, social training and school education are isolated from each other, and an effective mechanism to exchange credits is missed, which somewhat affect the interconnection and utilization of their resources. As a result, the effectiveness of social educational resources has been reduced in general and the possibility of wasting school course resources development has also been increased. School course resource development mainly focus on textbooks and tutorials, while fail to combine with the local resource advantages and make effective use of natural and humanities resources, thus leading to insufficient space for the development of course resources. In addition, restriction of teaching in traditional classrooms, laboratories and other fixed places as well as the insufficient layout and development of the place to outside would have resulted in single teaching form and limited teaching content.

1.2 Lack of course evaluation system supporting

The evaluation subject is unitary. As current evaluation subject to bear the main responsibility of scholastic evaluation system, scholastic professionals have strong scholastic standard features due to the perspective and thinking habit. Besides, they are less involved in social economic activities and lacking of cognitions on environmental change. Consequently, the evaluation results and teaching goals always have divorced from reality. As a newly born baby, assessment mechanism does not draw enough application and attention in the department divorcing from production function, which becomes formulaic with less adopt technical updating and upgrading, leading to a contradiction between practicality and hysteresis on technical means. Another major factor influencing the all-round development of education is that schools and training units are not able to establish a uniform evaluation system because of the differences in teaching concept.

2. APL functional play in course development

2.1 Credit transfer and personalized course.

As an important part of course development, course organization directly affects the quality of the course content. During the process of course organization, the inherent logic of discipline itself should be considered, and the cognitive law, purview or interest of students should be followed. Credit exchange is helpful for promoting the unification of the education goals among different education subject, closely linking formal education to informal education, and degree education to vocational training, positively catering to the needs of the development of social economy. Combining course development with students' actual need through credit swaps could reduce the waste of education resources caused by cognitive demand repeated supply [1]. The establishment of credit transfer system offers feasibility for establishing personalized classes. Tailor-made classes with strong flexibility on the structure and level, could provide the course content which is the actual demand of individual development for the crowds of different cognitive ranges, and also effectively shorten teaching length and improve teaching efficiency. Compared with the previous redundancy course system, it is more according with the requirement of changeable market environment.

2.2 Learning outcomes certification and course ending.

By APL credit bank mechanism, the accumulated knowledge and skills are quantified as corresponding credits after the individuals having finished the course, and accredited by learning outcomes. According to this principle, courses would pay more attention to the modular division of knowledge structure in design and development, with characteristics of flexibility in comparison to traditional course structure. By enabling the students to receive corresponding credits after a short learning, the positive effects of timely feedback mechanism.
to improve the students' learning enthusiasm could be exerted, and credit transfer in different educational institutions would be promoted. Moreover, modular course structure can highlight integrity and independence of course, which is more conducive to achieving the teaching goal, and enhancing the pertinence of course content. Combining the study achievement certification and course development, offers convenience for the transfer of students in different educational institutions, which not only broadens the choices of individual career development, but also prompts course developers to arrange the courses based on the whole social education needs. High-level vision and philosophy is of great significance to social progresspromoting, as well as economy revitalization by education.

2.3 Evaluation mechanism and program debugging.

APL evaluation mechanism, which considers both processes and results, could timely feedbacks course stage results and long-term results, enhance the procedural reflection of design to results. In addition, it can help designers to optimize course structure and develop course content, which can be roughly divided into basic courses, rich courses and extended courses. To narrow the proportion of rich courses and expand courses, the traditional course designers often need to make course arrangements with taking care of the practical knowledge structure of most learners, in accordance with the universal principle of course design. This is undoubtedly a waste of talent for students with high degree of knowledge acceptance and strong skill levels. It also hinders the function exerting of expand courses for training the innovative consciousness. With the overall requirements of economic development on technical progress, cultivation of innovative talents is drawing more and more attention, which has became the trend of course reform. The role of APL evaluation mechanisms in improving course structure and helping designers to get course debugging is evident.

2.4 Qualifications framework and generic intellectual education

Full qualifications framework certification system could eventually show the learner's learning experience and qualification characteristics, which can be classified as "specialist course certificates", "college diploma", "certificate of undergraduate courses", and "undergraduate diploma" based on education background and qualifications, also as "accounting qualification certificate", "human resources management division", and so on according to the direction of professional qualification of practitioners. Qualifications framework certification system would be applied to course development, thus helping course developers fitting the programme into your life based on prior learning and practical needs of learners, rather than making learners literally adapt the established profession[2]. Perfect qualification framework system allows learners to select the relevant or alternative profession according to their own professional knowledge background and actual needs, which greatly expands their selection range. Course developers design course for different groups and different needs based on qualifications framework, which improve practicability and meet the multiple learning demands of society.

3. Practical dilemma and solutions of APL applied to course development

3.1 Practical dilemma

3.1.1 High previous identified cost and unclear standard

By Sorting out and analyzing the relevant information abroad, and listing the practice of the Institute of Education at London University in previous learning and evaluation, it was found in their published "Previous study identified policies and guidelines" that learners need to provide material matching the learning program when applying for admission, which include the authenticity, realistic, relativity and specific of materials, but without specific standard of the above contents. On one hand, the uncertain specific assessment indicators increase the difficulty for applicants to prepare the application materials, who have to waste a lot of time to prepare complex materials, which affects their enthusiasm. On the other hand, it increases the work intensity of assessors, expending a lot of time and resources.

3.1.2 Research on credit bank mechanism is still shallow and lacking of practice.

Credit bank mechanism, which is designed to solve learning exchange and mutual recognition of degree among different levels and kinds of education, is a huge system engineering. It plays an effective supporting role on the effective operation of APL. Currently, researches at home and abroad on credit bank mechanism focus more on the core level, while less on the peripheral effective operation. Because of the policy, system, cultural differences or different policy guidance, the exploration practice of credit transfer and accumulation mechanism abroad presents various forms and obvious regional difference, and has limited reference value. As a new concept initially introduced into China, credit bank research mainly focuses on the credits transfer between network education and relevant professional training, and its research scope is local. Meanwhile, the research level constraints in management and operation mechanism. As a result, the research on overall building the framework of the whole education system is relatively scarce.

3.1.3 Transformation mechanism of abilities and skills achievements remains to be improved.

Course goal setting is the primary stage of course development, determining the difficulty and selection of course content. Setting the course goal according to the evaluation results fulfill the actual needs of perfecting individual knowledge system. Course goals are set for groups with different knowledge and skill levels, which is advantageous for course designers to make more reasonable arrangements for spatial layout of course system and course content. Redundant information transmission caused by asymmetric information between designers and learners would also be reduced, and course goal tends to be more reasonable, which in turn promotes effective evaluation mechanism. Therefore, it is particularly important for innovation evaluation mechanism to choose evaluation means and methods. Applying APL to course development innovatively can accelerate the positive influence of evaluation feedback on course elements. Generally, there are two assessment methods for learning outcomes of applicants. One is quantitative method, which is quantifying specific indicators of application materials and translating into quantifiable data. The other is qualitative method, thus is considering application content using statistical method in social sciences. In the execution of the two methods, examiners are required to not only possess professional knowledge theory and method, but also have in-depth research on the assessment method. As examiners lack of professionalism and the corresponding evaluation index is not clear, they often provide the evaluation results with certain subjectivity, affecting identified capabilities and skills achievements of applicants. At present, missing the third party evaluation institutions and the imperfect school evaluation method are the important factors that affect ability and skills achievements transformation.

3.2 Solutions.

3.2.1 Improve online assessment service system

Relevant information service system must be established, big data repository should be made full use of, learning outcomes certification system and professional qualification authentication mechanism need to be constructed, and co-construction and sharing mechanism of multi-educational outcomes should be built. In this way, assessors could search the related applicant information conveniently, shortening the time from the evaluation authentication data to structure determination, and reducing expenses caused by complexity of evaluation. We should establish evaluation index sharing system, formulate detailed assessment rules with the reality of course development, and speed up the information sharing, making applicants with computer terminal easily understand evaluate specific process, method and standard [3].

3.2.2 Establish perfect credit bank system

The establishment and perfection of system mechanism require not only the support of related theory research, but also a guaranteed comfortable environment, promotion of different interest demands and action force support. Both top design and effective implementation are keys to the successful implementation of credit bank system. During the theory and empirical research, we should comb system and design thought according to the characteristics of China's education system and education rights allocation. A smooth system environment should be created based on system reform to break the existing rigid system. Through the observation of a series of measures implemented on the establishment of credit bank system by domestic government in recent years, we found that the government attaches great importance to improve the field system. For example, between 2001 and 2010, important documents about the establishment of credit bank system have been successively promulgated and pilot works have been developed. The vigorous promotion by the government provides a solid foundation for the development and improvement of credit bank system in future [4]. For the purpose of adapting to the difference of local economy and features around China, future work should focus on strengthening top-level system design of the national level, delegating autonomy in school running, as well as giving full play to the initiative of local government. In addition, system need be refined and perfected longitudinally. The convergence between the overall system and local policies should be properly handled. It is worth giving attention to the problems arising from the system in the continuation and development, and satisfying various interests from the macro and micro level. In conclusion, we must make every effort to ensure the implementation of a complete set of original ideas, including balanced education, education fairness, and life-long education, etc. It is also required to strengthen the guide of beneficial exploration and practice among school subjects on credit accumulation, credit conversion and academic recognition, and to carry out multiple forms of exchanges and cooperation, liking offering minor courses, selecting course across the regions, disciplines and schools, and exchanging students. Besides, we should attempt to join secondary vocational with higher vocational, to carry out pilot work of credit change system between higher vocational and ordinary undergraduate course, self-study examination and ordinary undergraduate course, and to build an "flyover" that connect degree recognition, credit swaps, and resource sharing among the same or different levels of colleges.

4. Conclusion

Because of traditional inertia, most domestic teaching is mainly performed in the classroom, which is very single. On one hand, it is not conducive to show practical-orientated classroom teaching content. On the other hand, the cultivation of learners' autonomy and independent thinking ability is neglected. Single examination-based assessment mode can be changed into multiple evaluation forms of process and comprehensive evaluation using APL evaluation mechanism. Furthermore, for the sake of making the learners really have learned something, it is need to promote and carry out the teaching improvement which combines evaluation with course development organically, to promote the third party evaluation mechanism used in course and teaching, to adjust the course structure, and to develop diversified teaching.

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References