

Original Research Article

A Practical Study on Career Education in County High Schools under the Background of the New College Entrance Examination

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Abstract: With the introduction of the new college entrance examination curriculum reform, career education in county high schools is gradually gaining recognition as an essential subject. Given that county high schools are responsible for nearly half of senior high students' education in China, it is crucial to conduct specific studies on the development of career education, its implementation strategies, and effectiveness. This article explores the research direction concerning talent cultivation goals, current development states, and breakthroughs in implementing career education within the context of national policies, college entrance examination reform, core accomplishments of high school students, and rejuvenation efforts in county high schools. Furthermore, by analyzing implementation results and policies along with highlighting the significance of career education, this article proposes various paths for implementing career education in high schools such as incorporating dedicated courses and clubs focused on careers or organizing class meetings centered around career themes. Additionally suggested are comprehensive practice activities related to career education. Finally, this article presents thoughts on school curriculum planning improvement teacher abilities enhancement, and expanding the influence of career education.

Keywords: County high schools; Career education; Implementation paths

1. Background of the research

1.1. The policy has pointed out the development direction for high school career education

The Opinion on Strengthening and Improving the Comprehensive Quality Evaluation of High School Students, released in 2014, emphasized that comprehensive quality evaluation should prioritize students' self-awareness, life planning, and self-development abilities. Guiding Opinions on Promoting the Reform of Education Methods in Ordinary High Schools in the New Era, issued in 2019, highlighted that the need for ordinary high schools to establish a comprehensive student development guidance system to enhance support for students' ideals, psychology, learning process, life skills, and career planning through specialized courses. In January 2022, the Ministry of Education issued Guidelines for Quality Evaluation of Ordinary High School Education, which placed significant emphasis on career education. Consequently, strengthening career education in high schools and providing effective career guidance to high school students have gradually gained attention from the government over recent years.

1.2. New college entrance examination reform has compelled high schools to implement career education

With the gradual implementation of college entrance examination reform since 2014 and the active exploration by ordinary high schools across various regions within our country, career education has been widely acknowledged by educational institutions, research communities focusing on career development as well as

educational administrative departments. In 2022, the fifth batch of provinces participating in this new college entrance examination reform included Henan Province. This signifies that a new college entrance examination system with classified examinations, integrated evaluations, and multiple admission criteria has essentially taken shape. The new college entrance examination policy compels high school students to consider their future prospects through a series of steps: career orientation →major selection→university selection→subject learning→subject selection strategies. Under the "3+3" and "3+1+2" mode, the new college entrance examination policy demands higher requests to education of ordinary high schools. The subjects of the college entrance examination have changed from the same "set menu" to optional test "buffet". Students' future career planning, college major selection and high school curriculum are closely related to the selection of subjects, which urgently requires us to introduce career education into high school education.

1.3. Current imbalanced state of career education in county high schools has drawn attention

High school education plays a crucial role in bridging the gap between higher education and selecting exceptional junior high school students for further education. Career planning education in high schools serves as an effective means to connect universities and middle schools for innovative talent cultivation. Firstly, general career planning education in high schools should prioritize cultivating students' ability to make informed choices based on the current situation. Secondly, it should also focus on nurturing students' core abilities and important qualities to meet the future needs of society. In recent years, while urban high schools, especially those located in provincial capital cities, have made steady progress in developing career education due to their superior teaching staff, better school resources, and increased social attention; county high schools have faced challenges resulting from limited actions taken towards career development. Given that nearly 50% of Chinese high school students come from county areas, it is necessary to conduct researches on career education specifically targeting these institutions.

2. Research Objectives on Career Education in County High Schools

2.1. Talent Cultivation Goals of Career Education

The Guidelines for Career Education Curriculum in Ordinary High Schools in Henan Province(Trial)stipulates that schools must provide career planning guidance courses to assist high school students in establishing a proactive development concept and enhancing their social adaptability. This has become a crucial component of high school education and an urgent requirement for the advancement of high school students. The guidelines specify detailed training objectives for career education, including the mastery of abilities such as understanding and adapting to societal needs, objective and comprehensive self-awareness, awareness of changes in social development, utilization of effective resources within the environment, integration of personal growth with societal demands, acquisition of skills in self-management, self-monitoring, self-reflection, and self-adjustment; ultimately improving career management and decision-making capabilities. Building upon this foundation, this study analyzes the requirements set forth by other national policies such as the Henan Province General High School Career Education Curriculum Guidelines (Trial), while also outlining our desired goals.

2.2. Current State of Career Education Development

Up to date, China's high school career education has been primarily in the process of exploration, revealing a significant disparity between rural and urban areas. Provincial and municipal high schools have evident

advantages in terms of location, social resources, city development, educational concepts, teacher construction, facility funding, curriculum resources, student sources, and school construction. Consequently, they have successfully implemented rich and efficient career education practices. In contrast, most county high schools either lack involvement in career education or only scratch the surface. Very few schools are able to deeply integrate career education into their curriculum. The main reasons for this gap include: the underdeveloped economy and education system in counties leading to low attractiveness and high turnover rate of talents; insufficient social resources resulting in a lack of practical teaching methods within career education; difficulties allocating limited educational resources towards career education due to pressure on college enrollment rates; inadequate special support funds hindering improvement of the function of career education. Therefore, this article aims to explore: what is the current state of high school career education in Xi country? What are the challenges faced during its implementation? What are the underlying causes behind these challenges?

2.3. Breakthroughs in the Implementation of Career Education

Considering the limited resources in terms of career education funding, teaching staff, and equipment, as well as the insufficient understanding of career education concepts among schools, teachers, students, and parents, this study aims to implement career education based on local resources to achieve national talent training goals in county high schools. By engaging students in a variety of practical career activities, they can gain awareness of the importance and direction for further development within their hometown. To promote the advancement of career education, local education departments should prioritize career education courses and integrate them with teachers' competency evaluations through research on career courses and high-quality curriculum. Schools are encouraged to incorporate career education into various subjects gradually by leveraging enthusiastic teachers who take the lead in promoting it. Additionally, establishing specialized career education clubs and organizing themed class meetings will help create an atmosphere conducive to fostering a strong emphasis on careers. Building upon these efforts, this study continues to analyze how county high schools can overcome practical challenges they face while developing distinctive career plans, and what kind of support and guarantees are necessary.

3. Implementation paths of career education in county high schools

3.1 Career Education Courses and Club Activities Should Be Conducted Regularly.

It is crucial for country high schools to actively implement career education courses, ensuring that students gain a comprehensive understanding of career planning from the beginning of their first year in high school. Regular career planning courses can provide students with theoretical foundations, while also requiring subtle integration with other subjects by involving subject leaders from each grade to promote their initiative in organizing career education activities. High school clubs, typically formed based on interests, offer opportunities for students to engage with society, gain practical experience, and explore diverse professions. Through participating in club activities, students can develop a deep understanding of community processes and obtain initial exposure to specific industries. Teachers can establish career clubs where they guide students in practical activities such as exploring careers and designing related projects. Additionally, inviting experts or parents working in various industries like education, medicine, and banking to deliver lectures will help students acquire profound insights into different fields. These professionals can share the characteristics of their respective professions as well as the knowledge, skills, and requirements necessary for success within those fields. Inviting

university professors to discuss majors offered at universities along with their development trends would also be beneficial.

3.2. Regular Career Education Themed Class Meetings

Class meetings are a regular activity for students' moral education. They can be assigned to each class with a career education theme, organized by the head teacher and the class committee of each class, and held in a designated classroom every month. There are various formats for class meetings, including diverse forms for the same subject, student speeches, inviting parents to provide career guidance, conducting career interviews, etc. Rich and varied activities are planned and implemented with active student participation. By integrating career education into class meetings, not only can students' engagement be ensured but also their experiential learning can incorporate elements of career education. Throughout this process, career education is conducted through class meeting activities that focus on life goals and qualities required for both personal development and future careers as well as providing counseling on psychological issues before college entrance examinations. The completion of career education is achieved through these organized and implemented class meeting activities where students develop an increasing awareness of career planning. In some cases where specific career-related problems arise during these sessions, teachers or professional part-time educators from the Career Planning Consulting Center may offer solutions as they possess expertise in this field.

3.3. Career Education Embedded in Subjects of College Entrance Examination

In the context of college entrance examination subjects, career planning courses can be implemented based on the correlation between majors and professions, as well as subject teachers' involvement in learning and conducting career education. Consequently, students' interests in diverse professions are nurtured through the integration of career education into the school curriculum. For instance, apart from covering chemical elements, experiments, and reactions, chemistry classes should incorporate stories, research content, and achievements of renowned chemical scientists to stimulate students' curiosity. Similarly, history classes can instill deep-rooted feelings of family and national pride by exploring China's history and narratives about Chinese heroes. Throughout the teaching process, students can evolve into nation-builders with a strong sense of responsibility, lofty ideals, and global perspectives. Subject teachers play a pivotal role in introducing specific subject matter along with its connection to university professionals and future trends within relevant fields during their lessons. By acquainting students with discipline-specific learning methods, skills, and abilities, the academic plan for the subject (including one-year or even three-year study plans) should be communicated beforehand. In terms of school-based career education, collaboration across various subjects can foster diverse forms of synergy between subjects and career education. This collaborative approach gradually unveils students' enthusiasm for learning as well as their capacity for exploration and planning. Simultaneously, in moral education aspects, schools can integrate it with career education by organizing class meetings centered around themes related to careers while implementing practical approaches towards constructing effective career guidance.

3.4. Conduct Career Activities with Career Education Studio as Their Carrier

Career activities are facilitated through the Career Education Studio, which offers comprehensive knowledge support and a well-established infrastructure. The classroom teaching of career education is supported by a dedicated curriculum team that plans, designs, and develops tailored instruction. Teachers have access to professional development platforms and opportunities for growth through industry engagement and school

exchanges. The robust infrastructure ensures sustainable implementation of work and foundational development. Career planning education emphasizes personalized instruction tailored to the individual needs of students, with a focus on recognizing and addressing their unique differences. Students have the opportunity to receive one-on-one counseling and guidance from career planners throughout their academic journey, enabling them to address any concerns or uncertainties they may have. Building upon this foundation, a group of career mentors has been cultivated, consisting of expert mentors who provide scientific perspectives and values guidance in collaboration with school leadership teams, as well as external experts hired by the school. Additionally, growth mentors comprise dedicated career planning teachers who strategically plan, design, and develop curriculum teams for career education within classrooms while offering comprehensive educational tools such as career consultation services and vocational experiences supported by facilities for psychological assessments research. Academic advisors, homeroom teachers, subject teachers, and psychological counselors offer tailored guidance and support to students based on their diverse family backgrounds, physical and mental states, social environments, and home environments. They prioritize the needs of all students while also paying attention to individual differences by providing career counseling and psychological guidance that addresses variations among students' circumstances while clarifying any uncertainties or questions they may have.

3.5. Career Education Implementation Based on Comprehensive Practice Activities

Career education implementation based on comprehensive practice activities is carried out by leveraging both internal and external resources, including the active involvement of students' parents, social organizations, and other stakeholders. Our school has established a dedicated "Parent Lecture" section where distinguished industry professionals are invited to share their personal career experiences and deliver lectures on various professions and industries. We also organize immersive "Career Study Tours," such as winter/summer camps, Xichang Satellite Study Camp, weekend corporate study tours, intangible cultural heritage study tours, etc. Furthermore, specific comprehensive practice activities are conducted during certain festivals through our well-structured "Festival Practice Activities" program. Under the "Alumni Expert Interviews" initiative, we arrange career interviews with industry experts followed by engaging interviews and lecture events featuring outstanding alumni. To provide holistic guidance for students' career development plans, we hold a biannual "Career Planning Day," which encompasses interactive role-playing exercises for different careers along with visits to universities and colleges. Additionally, class-level thematic meetings known as "Career Theme Class Meetings" are organized to facilitate diverse yet interconnected theme-based discussions among different classes.

4. Reflections on County High School Career Education

4.1. Formulate school plans for the implementation of school career education curriculum

The school's implementation plan for the career education curriculum promotes students' comprehensive and personalized development, effectively aligns with the national high-quality curriculum, and constructs a school-based curriculum. By integrating practical activities, labor education courses, life education courses with social practice activities, voluntary services, red education, and inquiry-based learning in its implementation process, it can reflect the comprehensiveness of the curriculum and enhance overall effectiveness.

4.2. Improve the career education quality of subject teachers

To enhance the career education literacy of subject teachers in high school education, it is essential to familiarize teachers with the psychological development characteristics and individual growth stages of high

school students. Additionally, integrating cognitive and guiding functions into career education teaching by exploring the intersections between career education and college entrance examination subjects can effectively guide students. This guidance will help stimulate their interest in learning, establish connections between current knowledge and future careers, clarify relevant disciplinary knowledge and professional skills, as well as encourage proactive preparation for achieving their future occupational aspirations.

4.3. Promotion and guidance of high school career education

County high schools have made certain achievements and gained valuable experience in career education. However, there may be a lack of sufficient emphasis on the importance of high school career education and its thorough implementation. It is imperative to explore whether county high schools can truly establish the necessary conditions for effective career education, including leadership attention, recognition from school staff and students, improvement of school infrastructure, policy support without bias, and endorsement from higher authorities. We must continue to explore and promote these efforts through various means such as internet platforms, information technology advancements, and integrated media communication in order to develop a more comprehensive approach towards high school students' career planning.

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