

PRACTICAL FEATURES AND DISSEMINATION DILEMMAS OF TEACHING REFORM PROJECTS IN VOCATIONAL COLLEGES

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Abstract: Higher vocational education reform projects are characterized by distinct practical features, embodied in the fact that "projects originate from practice, are researched within practice, and their outcomes are applied back to practice." This essential attribute profoundly influences the methods, pathways, and effectiveness of outcome dissemination. Currently, the promotion of these reform outcomes faces three main dilemmas: distinct school-based characteristics leading to insufficient confidence in promotion, questioned quality affecting the perceived value of dissemination, and a lack of motivation within project teams for promotion. In response to these issues, this paper proposes optimization strategies: selecting universal teaching issues for project initiation at the source, enhancing the quality and operability of outcomes, diversifying the forms of outcomes to increase targeted applicability, and establishing multi-level communication platforms to facilitate the effective dissemination and application of reform outcomes, thereby improving the utilization efficiency of educational resources.

Keywords: Educational reform project; Practical characteristics; Achievement promotion; Dilemma

1 INTRODUCTION

Higher vocational education reform projects serve as crucial means to promote innovation in teaching and enhance the quality of talent cultivation. All higher vocational colleges attach great importance to investing in these reform projects and have yielded numerous high-quality outcomes. However, for a long time, many higher vocational colleges in China have exhibited a tendency to "emphasize project approval while neglecting promotion, and prioritize achievements over application. Consequently, numerous educational reform projects are shelved upon completion, and the results are not promptly summarized, promoted, and applied, leading to a significant waste of educational resources" [1]. Currently, there is abundant research on the challenges faced in promoting the outcomes of educational reform projects, but it primarily focuses on empirical summaries and analyses. However, there has been no in-depth exploration into the logical relationship between the essential attributes of educational reform projects and the promotion of their outcomes. Educational reform projects are characterized by the principle that "projects originate from practice, are researched in practice, and have their research outcomes applied in practice." The "practical characteristics" are the essential features of educational reform projects, which constrain the methods and forms of "outcome promotion" and influence the paths and effects of "outcome promotion." Accurately grasping the inherent logical relationship between the "practical characteristics" of educational reform projects and "outcome promotion" can effectively and deeply analyze the root causes of the challenges faced in promoting the outcomes of educational reform projects. This, in turn, can help formulate more effective promotion strategies to alleviate the difficulties encountered in outcome promotion.

2 PRACTICAL CHARACTERISTICS: THE ESSENTIAL ATTRIBUTE OF HIGHER VOCATIONAL EDUCATION REFORM PROJECTS

Higher vocational education reform projects differ from general educational and scientific research projects. They exhibit distinct practical characteristics in terms of project setup, topic sources, research processes, and application of research outcomes. "Practicality" is the essential attribute of higher vocational education reform projects.

2.1 Source of the Topic: The Project Originates from Practice

The purpose of setting up educational reform projects is to improve teaching practice. The formation of these reform projects is not based on the personal interests of researchers, nor is it aimed at constructing corresponding educational theories. Instead, it is to effectively solve problems in teaching practice. "Exploring the laws of education and teaching and constructing theories of development teaching are only derivative functions derived from teaching research practice. Their purpose lies in promoting educational reform rather than enhancing the academic quality of teaching theories" [2].

The higher vocational education reform project originates from the problems encountered in school-based practice. "Universities face various problems and contradictions in the process of talent cultivation and education teaching. These problems restrict the smooth development of teaching work in schools and affect the improvement of talent cultivation quality. If they are not dealt with and resolved in a timely manner, it will be difficult to make teaching adapt to the needs of society and individual student development, and it will be difficult to achieve the expected educational

goals"[3]. Moreover, these problems are different from routine issues in general work, as they are complex and widespread. Existing educational teaching experience is difficult to directly apply, and it is necessary to organize capable personnel through project approval, conduct in-depth research, explore reforms, and focus on solving these difficult problems in educational teaching practice.

2.2 Research Process: Conducting Research in Practice

The research process of higher vocational education reform projects is conducted in practice, representing an action research. It exhibits distinct practical characteristics in terms of the research subject, research environment, and research process.

In terms of research subjects, the researchers are primarily frontline teachers or teaching administrators in schools. They are not observers but actual participants. This also places high demands on the participating members. Without strong educational research capabilities, they cannot directly benefit from the already overwhelming amount of scientific research achievements, nor can they scientifically analyze projects and propose reasonable action plans. Similarly, if the project team does not have strong control over the reform targets, it will be difficult to mobilize corresponding human and material resources, making it challenging to advance the reform actions.

In terms of research environment, it exhibits characteristics of authenticity and variability. On the one hand, it is conducted in a naturally authentic school teaching environment, which includes both macro-level school teaching work and micro-level daily teaching work between teachers and students. The authentic environment allows the project team to feel the complexity of practice. On the other hand, this environment will also present a state of change as research and reform progress. Researchers need to assess the impact of changes in internal and external environments in a timely manner and adjust research and action plans according to the actual situation.

In the process of research, research and reform practice mutually constrain and interact. The process of research is combined with the action process of practitioners. Research and action interact and mutually constrain each other. Scientific research results will provide strong guidance for reform, and the advancement of reform also verifies the results of research to a certain extent, while opening up new horizons for further research.

In terms of the technical route of research, the specific steps and methods for advancing educational reform projects depend on the actual context of each specific topic, and there is no unified and clear model or procedure. However, when summarized, a general thread can be found: "Planning: including the overall plan of the research and the preliminary plan for each specific action step; Action: implementing the plan according to the purpose, and the action should be flexible and dynamic, involving the understanding and decision-making of the actors; Inspection: inspecting the process, results, background, and characteristics of the actors, not rigidly adhering to specific procedures and techniques, and encouraging the use of various effective technical means and methods; Reflection: summarizing various phenomena related to the formulation and implementation of the plan that are perceived, describing the process and results of this cycle" [4].

2.3 Application of Results: Applying Results to Practice

The content, form, and application methods of the achievements of educational reform projects differ from those of typical educational research projects, exhibiting strong practical characteristics.

The application of achievements in practice marks the end of a teaching reform project, and also the starting point for deepening research and reform. The application of teaching reform project achievements in practice signifies that the project has entered the conclusion phase and reached its end point, as it has to some extent addressed the initially preset school-based practical issues and fulfilled its primary tasks and missions. However, from another perspective, the application of achievements in practice also serves as the starting point for deepening research and reform. Firstly, problems encountered in practice are often complex and variable, and a single project often cannot fully resolve them, necessitating further research and reform. Secondly, the promotion of reform achievements on a larger scale can effectively test the quality of the results, refine higher-quality achievements, and enhance the influence of project outcomes.

The final outcomes of educational reform projects encompass not only various theoretical achievements but also diverse practical results. Theoretical achievements include forms such as academic papers and scholarly works. To address issues in teaching practice, the research team employs scientific research methods to conduct in-depth studies on the reform targets. This research does not exclude drawing on the reform exploration achievements of other schools. It also includes a literature review of existing research on related issues. These studies provide support for formulating scientific and effective action plans for subsequent reforms. The scientificity and effectiveness of research findings are tested in subsequent actions and continuously improved during the reform process. The main forms of practical outcomes include survey reports, reform implementation plans, and other results. Practical outcomes are generated during the process of problem-solving and provide a clear description of the problem-solving process, influencing factors, technical routes, specific measures, and reform effectiveness. They are highly operational and differ from general educational research outcomes, which "are keen on thinking at a purely philosophical and abstract level, blindly adopting the discourse system of Western educational scholars, overly focusing on speculation, and there is a significant gap between their discourse expression and that of educational practitioners" [5]. Therefore, the significance of promoting and drawing on these outcomes is even stronger.

3 DILEMMA EXPLORATION: ANALYSIS OF THE DILEMMA IN PROMOTING ACHIEVEMENTS BASED ON PRACTICAL CHARACTERISTICS

The "practical characteristics" and "outcome promotion" of educational reform projects are dialectically related. The "practical characteristics" of educational reform projects constrain the methods and forms of "outcome promotion", and influence the paths and effects of "outcome promotion". We can delve into the root causes of the difficulties in promoting the outcomes of educational reform projects through the dialectical relationship between "practical characteristics" and "outcome promotion".

3.1 Dilemma 1: "The School-based Characteristics are Distinct, but the Promotion Significance is Limited"

Some schools, due to their educational reform projects stemming from "school-based practices," exhibit distinct "school-based characteristics" in their reform outcomes. Consequently, they exhibit "insufficient confidence" in promoting these outcomes, and harbor biases against drawing on the educational reform achievements of other schools, deeming it "of little significance." These attitudes reflect a lack of dialectical understanding of the "practicality" of educational reform projects.

On the one hand, educational reform projects indeed bear distinct "school-based" characteristics. Educational reform projects originate from the educational teaching and practice issues of the school itself, and their outcomes are produced under various comprehensive factors in the natural environment of the school. They inevitably bear distinct "school-based" characteristics. When the outcomes are promoted to other schools, different subjective and objective conditions such as school history and region will inevitably affect the promotion process. This is an objective reality.

On the other hand, common challenges and ongoing practical explorations necessitate the promotion and reference of achievements. Although educational reform outcomes stem from school-based practices, universities often face similar environments and issues. Many problems in university education and teaching are not solely caused by the universities themselves. Many issues arise from changes in the external environment, such as adjustments in educational policies, transformation and upgrading of industries, and changes in talent demands of industries and enterprises, which lead to new problems and contradictions. Universities need to adapt to these external environmental changes and make reform adjustments. These external environments do not affect only one university, nor do they require only one university to respond to these changes. Facing common challenges and external environments, universities can learn from each other's reform achievements during the exploration process and complement each other's strengths.

3.2 Dilemma 2: "Low Quality of Results and Low Promotional Value"

Some people believe that the primary subjects of educational reform project research are "frontline teachers and educational administrators". They lack rigorous academic training in educational research, resulting in "lower quality outcomes and limited promotional value". This perception fails to fully grasp the current model of team formation for educational reform projects, nor does it accurately understand the positive role of "frontline teachers and educational administrators" in enhancing the quality of outcomes and promoting them.

The composition of educational reform project teams encompasses both "independent mode" and "collaborative mode". Currently, the composition of educational reform project teams includes two modes. The first mode is the "independent mode": in this mode, practitioners conduct research independently. The research subjects are "frontline teachers and educational administrators", who do not require the assistance and guidance of experts (traditional "researchers"). While some "frontline teachers and educational administrators" possess high research skills, there are indeed some who lack rigorous academic training in educational research, resulting in "lower quality outcomes". The second mode is the "collaborative mode", in which experts (or traditional "researchers") and practitioners form a partnership. As "consultants", they help practitioners form hypotheses, plan actions, evaluate the process and outcomes of actions. The motivation for research comes from the practitioners themselves, who use their own wisdom to select topics and guide actions. In the "collaborative mode", issues such as the lack of scientific rigor in the research process and the use of inappropriate research methods by "frontline teachers and educational administrators" can be effectively addressed [6]. This can, to some extent, improve the quality of educational reform project outcomes. Moreover, in collaboration with "experts", the research capabilities of "frontline teachers and educational administrators" are significantly enhanced, providing support for their subsequent independent conduct of educational reform project research.

The participation of "frontline teachers and educational administrators" can effectively promote the depth of outcomes, verify the quality of outcomes, and enhance the operability of outcomes, which is more conducive to the promotion of outcomes. "Frontline teachers and educational administrators" can mobilize corresponding human and material resources to effectively promote the deepening of reforms, thus providing assistance for the in-depth research of projects. Some research has stalled, partly due to the consistent failure to deeply promote practical reforms. As users of research results, "frontline teachers and educational administrators" can effectively verify the quality of outcomes and provide timely feedback, thereby improving the quality of outcomes. As participants in research and actors in reform, "frontline teachers and educational administrators" can accurately describe the complexity of practice during the project's advancement, enhance the operability of outcomes, and make it easier for other schools to directly learn from and use project outcomes.

3.3 Dilemma 3: "Insufficient Motivation within the Project Team, and Low Enthusiasm for Promoting Project Outcomes"

In the promotion of educational reform project outcomes, a relatively common phenomenon often exists, which is the "lack of motivation within the project team and low enthusiasm for promoting the outcomes". In fact, we can analyze its deep-seated root causes from the practical perspective of educational reform projects.

The resolution of practical issues in educational reform, to some extent, signifies the end of the project. Once the practical issues related to school-based practices are resolved, the educational reform project enters a state of conclusion, which means the end of the project. This is also the main reason for the lack of motivation and enthusiasm among some educational reform project teams. Moreover, promoting the project requires a significant amount of time, energy, and resources. We can also confirm this phenomenon from another perspective: the most active advocates for promoting the results are the educational reform project management departments and educational administrative departments.

The conclusion of a teaching reform project does not signify the end of research. Practical issues are often complex and ever-changing, and the countermeasures proposed in a particular teaching reform project are often not the optimal solution. During the process of promoting the results outside the school, comparative analysis can provide more ideas and inspiration for solving teaching and practical issues in our school. On the other hand, through multi-school practice during the promotion process, the quality, application scope, and influence of the results can be improved, enhancing the academic status of the project team teachers. This is also one of the intrinsic motivations for some teachers to promote the results.

4 RETURNING TO PRACTICE: OPTIMIZATION STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING EDUCATIONAL REFORM ACHIEVEMENTS

4.1 Source of Achievements: Selecting Widely Applicable Teaching Practice Issues for Project Initiation to Enhance the Scalability of Achievements

The successful promotion of educational reform outcomes primarily lies in the fact that the practical issues addressed by educational reform projects are widespread problems. Before initiating an educational reform project, selecting teaching issues that are prevalent in school teaching practices can not only facilitate the wider promotion of project outcomes but also enhance the efficiency of project funding utilization. When determining the guidelines for educational reform projects, a combination of "top-down" and "bottom-up" approaches can be adopted to carefully select widespread practical issues. "Top-down" refers to in-depth research on relevant national educational and teaching policies, as well as hotspots and difficulties in education and teaching. "Bottom-up" refers to collecting information from frontline teachers and educational administrators about the key and difficult issues in their school's educational and teaching reforms. Then, the project department will sort out the widespread issues in school teaching practices based on the relevant information collected through both "top-down" and "bottom-up" approaches, and formulate a draft of the educational reform project guidelines. These guidelines will then be reviewed and discussed by the school's teaching work committee or academic committee before being finalized.

4.2 Achievement Formation: Improve the Quality of Educational Reform Achievements and Enhance Their Promotional Value

High-quality educational reform outcomes serve as a crucial foundation for promotion. Currently, some educational reform project teams primarily consist of frontline teachers and teaching administrators. In particular, science and engineering teachers generally embrace the paradigm of scientific research and are not well-versed in the humanistic paradigm of teaching research, which emphasizes action and experiential research. The overall quality of educational reform project research is not high and has been widely criticized. In addition to strengthening relevant educational research training for teachers, establishing reform project teams with diverse participation and cross-school collaboration is an important way to improve the quality of educational reform outcomes. "Experts or researchers" can form collaborative project teams with "frontline teachers and education administrators". "Experts or researchers" can appear as "supporters" or "collaborators", assisting "frontline teachers and education administrators" in scientifically analyzing problems, developing scientific and reasonable research and reform plans, and providing timely consultation and reference for issues arising during the research and reform process. This "collaborative model" is also an important way to enhance the research level of "frontline teachers and education administrators". Furthermore, "frontline teachers and education administrators" can form cross-school teams to ensure shared responsibility and results in the process of promoting research topics, which can, to a certain extent, guarantee the in-depth promotion and application of research outcomes.

4.3 Achievement Content: Enrich the Forms of Educational Reform Achievements and Enhance the Pertinence Of Promotion

The forms of educational reform achievements should be diversified, providing different types of outcomes tailored to different promotion targets. For example, for educational administrative leaders, outcomes such as decision-making consultation research reports can be provided to support their scientific decision-making. "The focus should be on

promoting the value of the achievement in theory and practice, and clearly indicating which 'difficult' and 'hot' issues in local education and teaching can be solved through the promotion of this achievement, in order to attract the attention of administrative leaders. In this way, not only will it be easily adopted in leaders' planning, decision-making, arrangement, and summary work, but it will also receive strong support during the promotion process of the achievement" [7]. For grassroots teachers and teaching administrators facing similar problems, outcomes such as brief introductions to the achievements and reform implementation action plans can be provided, making it easy for them to directly imitate and adopt the achievements. The forms of the achievements should be more specific, intuitive, and easy to imitate and operate, without being overly theoretical, reducing the difficulty of imitation and making it acceptable to both schools and teachers. For educational researchers, outcomes such as research reports, papers, and academic monographs can be provided. These achievements mainly reveal and summarize the laws and principles of educational science, inspire educators to continuously improve their way of thinking, and analyze and solve new situations and problems in education and teaching from a new perspective. The achievements focus on describing the research ideas, methods, innovativeness, and normativity.

4.4 Achievement Demonstration: Establish a Platform for Exchanging Educational Reform Achievements to Enhance the Convenience of Promoting These Achievements

From the previous analysis, we can see that for the project team, solving the practical problems of educational reform, to some extent, signifies the end of the project. Promoting the achievements is not the primary task of the teachers in the project team. Moreover, promoting the achievements actually requires a significant amount of time and effort, and mobilizing a substantial amount of resources to advance the work. The educational management departments that have the most positive view towards the value of promoting educational reform achievements have the responsibility and obligation to build a platform for exchanging educational reform achievements and promote the sharing and application of these achievements. The platform for exchanging educational reform achievements includes school-level, regional-level, and national-level platforms. This platform is conducive to accumulating practical experience in teaching development and is a valuable asset for schools and the country. At the same time, it facilitates the avoidance of duplicate projects when initiating projects, thereby improving the efficiency of the use of educational funds. For teachers from different schools, using relevant theoretical and practical achievements on this platform can effectively enhance the efficiency of resource utilization.

5 CONCLUSION

The promotion and application of achievements are two aspects. "Promotion refers to the process of systematically and step-by-step disseminating the content of achievements and applying them within a certain scope, so as to transform them into educational benefits. Application refers to the process of achievements being accepted, understood, internalized, transformed, and applied in educational practice by other educators" [8]. "Promotion" and "application" have their respective focuses, with "promotion" being the premise and "application" being the essence. This article mainly expounds on the logical relationship between the essential attributes of educational reform projects and the promotion of achievements from the perspective of the supply side. In fact, the process of promoting achievements to effective application and transforming them into teaching productivity in one's own school is complex and requires in-depth research and exploration.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

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