

Investigation and optimization strategies of primary school English enlightenment teaching model under the new curriculum standards —a case study of Rende Fourth Primary School in Xundian County

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Abstract. This study takes Rende Fourth Primary School in Xundian County as the sample and, under the background of the new curriculum standards, comprehensively employs multiple methods to explore the primary school English enlightenment teaching model. The research finds that although the phonics method has potential, it is constrained by various factors, resulting in students experiencing difficulties in phonological acquisition and oral expression. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the relevant constraining mechanisms and proposes optimization strategies such as enhancing teachers' abilities and improving home-school cooperation to promote the development of primary school English education.

Keywords: new curriculum standards, primary school English, Phonics Method

1. Introduction

In April 2022, the Ministry of Education issued the English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition) [1], which clearly stipulates that primary school English classroom teaching should take the comprehensive development of students' core competencies as both the starting point and the ultimate goal. The teaching model should demonstrate characteristics of multiple channels, perspectives, levels, and methods, embodying a unity of instrumental and humanistic qualities, and highlighting foundational, practical, and comprehensive features [2]. This has driven primary school English teaching to actively explore enlightenment models that suit local characteristics in order to adapt to the needs of educational reform.

The primary school stage is a critical period for language learning, and English enlightenment education plays a vital role in students' language ability development. Gui Shichun pointed out in *Psycholinguistics* (1985) that children aged 3 to 10 possess strong brain plasticity, and their physiological advantages give them greater potential in phonetic learning [3]. China's new curriculum standards designate the third grade of primary school as the starting point for English learning precisely based on this theory. During this crucial learning stage, children have a strong capacity for language absorption, and appropriate teaching strategies can effectively enhance their interest in and ability to learn English [4]. From a psychological perspective, learning English during this period enables children to establish a good linguistic intuition, laying a solid foundation for subsequent English learning. Meanwhile, English enlightenment education has a profound impact on students' academic development and future career choices. In some internationalized cities, many well-known enterprises have relatively high requirements for applicants' English proficiency during recruitment. Students who receive English enlightenment education from an early age are more likely to adapt to international environments in their future studies and work. Moreover, English enlightenment education broadens students' cultural horizons by helping them encounter the cultures, customs, and values of different countries, cultivating intercultural communication abilities, and enhancing understanding and tolerance of multiculturalism. This is especially important in today's increasingly globalized world.

The practices and challenges of English enlightenment teaching at Rende Fourth Primary School in Xundian County reflect the general situation and specific difficulties faced in primary school English education. Through an in-depth investigation of this school, first-hand data can be obtained on curriculum design, teaching methods, textbook usage, teacher behaviors, and student learning outcomes. This enables an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching model, a summary of experiences and lessons learned, and the proposal of targeted improvement recommendations to serve as a reference for other regions.

Based on the analysis of the current teaching situation, most primary school English classroom teaching models have certain gaps compared to the requirements proposed by the new curriculum standards, exhibiting issues such as insufficient coverage and low teaching efficiency [5]. Therefore, this study aims to explore the current status, problems, and optimization strategies of primary school English enlightenment teaching models under the new curriculum standards, providing teachers with recommendations for teaching model reform, promoting balanced development of English education, and enriching related educational theories.

2. Research methods

2.1. Literature review method

By reviewing relevant domestic and international literature, the current research status of English teaching models is understood to provide theoretical support and clarify the research direction. Existing research findings and practical experiences are sorted out to identify the entry points and focus of the study, avoid duplication, and ensure the scientific rigor and cutting-edge nature of the research.

2.2. Questionnaire survey method

2.2.1. Questionnaire design

The questionnaire covers teachers' basic information (such as teaching experience and education level), teaching models (teaching methods, resource usage), students' learning conditions (learning outcomes, participation), and teachers' views on the teaching model. The questions combine single-choice, multiple-choice, and open-ended formats, balancing quantitative and qualitative analysis. A pilot test was conducted before formal distribution to verify the questionnaire's reliability and validity and to adjust the questions accordingly.

2.2.2. Questionnaire implementation

Teachers and students from Rende Fourth Primary School in Xundian, under Kunming jurisdiction, were selected as the survey subjects. Data were collected through both the online platform "Wenjuanxing" and paper questionnaires, with data gathered both online and offline. Returned questionnaires were organized, invalid questionnaires were excluded, and data were prepared for analysis.

2.3. Structured interview method

In-depth interviews were conducted with some teachers from Rende Fourth Primary School in Xundian, focusing on English enlightenment teaching and the application of the new curriculum standard textbooks. Through face-to-face communication, detailed and in-depth data were obtained to supplement the shortcomings of the questionnaire survey and to uncover valuable information from teachers' instructional experiences.

2.4. Data analysis methods

Statistical software such as SPSS was used to perform multiple regression analysis and generate statistical charts on the collected data. Through data analysis, underlying patterns and trends were revealed, enabling an in-depth exploration of the relationships among the current teaching situation, existing problems, and various influencing factors. This provides data support for drawing research conclusions and proposing optimization strategies.

3. Research results and analysis

3.1. Student questionnaire data analysis

3.1.1. Analysis of participants' ethnic distribution and English-related information

A total of 200 student questionnaires were distributed in this survey, with 195 collected, yielding an effective response rate of 97.5%. The results show that approximately 78.46% of students began systematic English learning at the normal age for the compulsory education stage, while 7.18% had already been exposed to English during kindergarten. Further analysis revealed that students who were exposed to English in kindergarten showed relatively higher acceptance of English learning and stronger

interest after entering primary school. This may be because early English enlightenment gave them a certain degree of familiarity with the language, laying a foundation for subsequent learning.

3.1.2. Investigation of students' current English learning status

Regarding participation in classroom activities, 84.36% of students are willing or try to participate; however, 71.79% of students are not fluent in verbal expression. Only 23.59% of students find reading aloud the text easy, indicating relatively weak reading skills. Further analysis found that students exhibit issues such as flat intonation and improper handling of linking and weak forms when reading aloud. Additionally, most students consider memorizing vocabulary easy, while only 24.12% think that dialogue and listening comprehension are easy. This may be because vocabulary memorization can be completed through mechanical repetition, whereas dialogue and listening require students to possess a certain level of integrated language use ability and linguistic intuition. Strengthening listening, speaking, and reading practice is of great significance for improving students' overall English proficiency.

3.1.3. Use of the phonics method in English classrooms

Survey data show that 77.43% of students have been exposed to the phonics method, and 47.69% of students believe that phonics helps them read some simple words. This fully reflects the importance of phonics in students' English learning during the enlightenment stage. Further analysis reveals that students who have been exposed to the phonics method perform relatively better in word spelling and reading skills. For example, when spelling the word "cat," students can quickly and accurately write the word according to phonics rules.

At the same time, teachers mainly use the phonics method when instructing students to decode English words, which further confirms the applicability of this method in English enlightenment teaching. However, some students still lack proficiency in mastering the phonics method, which may be related to factors such as the implementation of teaching methods and individual differences among students.

3.2. Teacher questionnaire data analysis

The teacher survey was conducted among primary school teachers in Xundian County, with 52 valid responses collected. The participating teachers have a wide range of teaching experience, and 98.08% of them are well acquainted with the latest version of the primary school English curriculum standards. Among them, 42.31% believe that understanding the new curriculum standards helps improve teaching quality; meanwhile, 55.77% feel that it increases teaching difficulty due to the higher demands placed on teachers' qualifications and abilities.

Teachers pointed out issues such as the lack of learning resources for students studying English and that summative assessments are not conducive to the development of core subject competencies. Some schools lack English picture books and multimedia equipment, limiting learning channels; summative assessments focus heavily on grades while neglecting students' learning processes and the cultivation of comprehensive qualities. Teachers' professional abilities, students' learning attitudes, school support and cooperation, as well as family backgrounds all influence English enlightenment teaching. Among parents, 69.23% actively participate in their children's English learning, while 30.77% show relatively little concern. Therefore, teachers believe that formative assessment should be emphasized, focusing on students' interests, holistic development, and improvement in abilities and attitudes. They unanimously agree that the current teaching model needs improvement, with game-based teaching, multimedia teaching, and task-based teaching being more favored. In teaching practice, classroom interaction is considered the most important; most teachers use phonetic symbols or the phonics method, with the latter being more in line with students' actual needs.

In addition, teachers suggest reducing the difficulty level of teaching materials, offering interest-based English classes in lower grades, increasing class hours in higher grades, and reducing the number of classes each teacher handles; de-emphasizing exam-oriented education while enhancing oral skills and classroom efficiency; strengthening teacher training and reinforcing phonics instruction; and urging education authorities to improve resource allocation and guide parents to place greater importance on English learning.

3.3. Teacher interview analysis

After conducting in-depth interviews with seven teachers from Rende Fourth Primary School in Xundian, it was found that the teachers unanimously agree that English enlightenment teaching should start from children's interests. Using videos to lead children in perception, imitation, and practice helps them master correct pronunciation. Currently, the greatest difficulty for students learning English lies in their inability to read and their lack of understanding of phonetic symbols; therefore, efficient phonetic symbol instruction is particularly important.

Regarding the application of phonetic symbol teaching methods, teachers hold different views. Teacher Wang advocates that the 48 phonetic symbols are the foundation; once mastered, all words can be decoded. She believes the phonics method is more suitable for activities involving listening to phonetic symbols and writing words. She has also developed a set of phonics tutorials and implemented them in teaching, advocating the use of the phonics method to assist deeper understanding after teaching the 48 international phonetic symbols. For example, when teaching the phonetic symbol “[æ],” students first learn its pronunciation rules, and then through the phonics method, students decode words such as “cat” and “hat,” thereby deepening their understanding and memory of the phonetic symbol.

Teacher Feng believes that phonetic symbols are difficult for students and advocates more for teaching through the phonics method. By categorizing sounds simply with phonics, students can grasp them more quickly and build confidence. For example, grouping words containing the “a-e” combination allows students to discover the pronunciation patterns and thus quickly read words such as “cake” and “make.”

Additionally, the interviews revealed a severe shortage of qualified English teachers, with many teachers taking on multiple roles. This results in limited teacher energy and insufficient guidance for each student. Most students in the classes taught had not been exposed to English before third grade and therefore have a relatively weak foundation. Parental attitudes significantly influence the implementation of English enlightenment teaching. All these teachers use the phonics method in their instruction, and according to feedback, about half of the students in each class are able to accept and understand it. Meanwhile, the majority of the interviewed teachers believe that the newly revised third-grade English textbook under this year’s new curriculum standards is relatively difficult, making it challenging for students to learn. The new textbook starts directly with sentences, which causes students to develop anxiety and a sense of frustration.

4. Optimization strategies

4.1. Enhancing teachers’ professional competence and teaching methods in English instruction

Strict screening should be applied when recruiting English teachers to ensure they have a solid English foundation and teaching experience. Strengthen in-service training by providing targeted workshops on the new curriculum standards, especially on teaching methods such as phonics, to improve teaching quality. Organize regular professional training and academic exchanges for teachers, such as the “National Training Program,” conducting pre-training surveys to understand needs and customize appropriate courses. Encourage teachers to research teaching methods suitable for their students and adopt participatory and “shadow” training models in contextualized scenarios. Establish communities of practice through collective lesson preparation, group discussions, and classroom observations. Schools should create a “people-oriented” environment, granting teachers greater professional autonomy to enhance their professional identity.

4.2. Emphasizing the improvement of home-school cooperation

Schools can organize English learning groups within classes to encourage peer support, cultivate a spirit of cooperation, and enhance both English skills and learning interest. Create multicultural classroom environments by integrating various cultural elements and appropriately using the mother tongue to assist teaching, alleviating cultural conflicts and motivating students to actively learn English. Regularly hold activities such as English corners and parent-child English competitions to provide students with opportunities to showcase their speaking skills, boost their confidence, and foster a positive learning atmosphere. Additionally, strengthen home-school communication through parent meetings and online platforms to help parents understand teaching methods and better support school education.

4.3. Paying attention to individual differences and constructing a diversified evaluation system

Teaching content should be designed based on students’ learning needs. Teachers can try to develop multilingual teaching materials or enrich existing textbooks with diverse texts to stimulate learning interest. Additionally, teachers should adopt a diversified evaluation approach combining teacher assessment, peer evaluation, and student self-assessment to comprehensively understand students’ learning situations and promptly address problems. Furthermore, teachers should actively utilize information technology to build platforms that promote the interaction and integration of multiple languages and cultures, enabling foreign language classroom teaching to steadily progress under the joint nourishment of diverse linguistic and cultural influences.

4.4. Adjusting teaching methods

To improve the effectiveness of primary school English classrooms, teachers can adopt methods such as game-based teaching and multimedia instruction. Games like word chain and “passing the drum” can enliven the classroom atmosphere and stimulate

student enthusiasm; when teaching animal vocabulary, playing audio and video makes the knowledge more intuitive and easier for students to understand. Teachers should flexibly choose teaching methods according to the teaching content and students' actual situations to enhance classroom participation and efficiency.

5. Conclusion

This study, taking Rende Fourth Primary School in Xundian County as the sample, explored the primary school English enlightenment teaching model under the new curriculum standards, finding both achievements and challenges that require multifaceted improvements.

Regarding achievements, most teachers are familiar with the new curriculum standards, and the phonics method is widely adopted. This has resulted in more than half of the students showing interest in English classes and actively participating in classroom activities. Some students have mastered word pronunciation through this method, laying a good foundation for English learning. This indicates that the current teaching direction aligns with the new curriculum standards, and the phonics method has shown initial effectiveness. However, prominent problems also exist. On the teachers' side, although many understand the new curriculum standards, some feel that teaching difficulty has increased, and there is a shortage of qualified teachers with limited energy. Students' oral and reading skills are poor, and their comprehensive language application ability is weak. Schools lack learning resources, and score-based evaluation methods are not conducive to the development of students' competencies. At the family level, parental involvement varies, with some parents showing insufficient concern for their children's English learning. Therefore, the proposed optimization strategies are crucial: enhancing teacher capabilities through strict recruitment and strengthened training; improving home-school cooperation and enriching collaborative activities; paying attention to student differences and establishing diversified evaluation systems; and adjusting teaching methods by flexibly applying various approaches. These strategies can effectively address existing problems.

In summary, optimizing primary school English enlightenment teaching requires joint efforts from all educational stakeholders. Only by forming a concerted force and continuously optimizing the teaching model can the new curriculum standards be implemented effectively, teaching quality improved, and students' English abilities and core competencies fully developed, thus laying a solid foundation for their future development.

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