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INTEGRATING EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES INTO
INNOVATIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION
CURRICULUM REFORM AND PRACTICE — A CASE STUDY
AT THE GUANGDONG ECOLOGICAL ENGINEERING
VOCATIONAL COLLEGE

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Abstract:

Integrating extracurricular activities into innovative entrepreneurship education establishes a rational and effective linkage between extracurricular and curricular activities, laying a crucial foundation for building a comprehensive university-level innovation and entrepreneurship education system. This paper investigates the current state of innovative entrepreneurship education among students at Guangdong Ecological Engineering Vocational College. The analysis of the results, obtained through a questionnaire survey conducted among students, reveals that the teaching methods in the class are monotonous, course content lacks engagement and practicality, and extracurricular activities, although diverse, lack innovation and yield unsatisfactory results. Consequently, integrating innovative entrepreneurship education into extracurricular activities becomes pivotal in reforming curriculum delivery, transforming traditional teaching modes, and innovating pedagogical approaches, thereby enhancing students' acceptance and satisfaction with innovative entrepreneurship courses. The study's findings indicate that students acknowledge and perceive the integration of extracurricular activities into university-level innovation and entrepreneurship education as an effective means of achieving educational reform objectives. This recognition underscores the positive impact of this integration on the attractiveness and practicality of innovative

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entrepreneurship courses among students. Thus, it not only contributes to the reformation of curriculum delivery but also promotes innovative pedagogical approaches that can be tailored to Guangdong Ecological Engineering Vocational College, serving as a reference model for deeper reforms in innovative entrepreneurship education within higher vocational schools.

Keywords:

Extracurricular Activities; Innovative Entrepreneurship Education; Educational Reform

Introduction

Problem Statement

In China, the employment of university students presents several challenges, including the following main issues. Firstly, there is a mismatch between educational supply and market demand, as certain university majors and curriculum content have not been timely adjusted to align with market needs, resulting in a disparity between graduates' skills and knowledge and the actual requirements of employers (O'Neill, 2023). Secondly, the number of graduates has been steadily increasing, leading to intense competition in the job market and a limited availability of employment opportunities across various fields (Sun, 2023). Lastly, the issue of salary disparities is prominent, with some graduates expecting compensation levels higher than the prevailing market rates, contributing to employment difficulties (Tang Yuanxin, 2020). These challenges underscore the complexity and diversity of the university student employment landscape in China.

To address the issue of college student employment, the Chinese government has put forward an improvement approach, namely, the implementation of the innovation-driven development strategy outlined in the 19th National Congress Report of China. Universities across the board have been implementing entrepreneurship education in the form of the first curriculum to enhance students' entrepreneurial and employability skills (Ren Lixiao et al., 2018). However, the teaching methods and approaches in the first curriculum tend to be monotonous, and the course content lacks engagement, specificity, and effectiveness, resulting in suboptimal outcomes (Zhang Xiaolian, 2017). The integration of entrepreneurial activities into university courses, referred to as the second curriculum, has been proposed as a means to boost students' capabilities in entrepreneurship and innovation (Dai Yu, 2020). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to integrate the second curriculum into entrepreneurship education for university students, establishing a rational and effective linkage between the second curriculum and the first curriculum through the reform of the second curriculum. This aims to lay a crucial foundation for the development of an integrated system for entrepreneurship education among university students, effectively promoting the breakthrough of limitations in the first curriculum courses and enhancing the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education.

Literature Review

Deepening the reform of entrepreneurship education in higher education is a critical initiative in line with the innovation-driven development strategy outlined in the 19th National Congress report in China and addresses the practical demands of educational supply-side structural reform by higher education institutions (Guo et al., 2009). In the era of "mass entrepreneurship

and innovation" in the internet age, university students, as the driving force behind innovation and entrepreneurship, play a particularly vital role in societal development (Hu Fangfang,2023; Shi Juan,2017). To address the employment and entrepreneurship challenges faced by college students, the government has introduced various policies and recommendations, encouraging graduates to actively engage in entrepreneurship and innovation endeavors (Chen Yang et al., 2014). Vocational colleges, in response to the country's high-quality development needs, are placing increasing emphasis on entrepreneurship education courses (Sun Lingzhi;2021; Yang Jiangwen,2018).

The "Basic Requirements for Entrepreneurship Education in Regular Undergraduate Schools (Trial)" stipulates the integration of entrepreneurship education into the talent cultivation system and advocates a holistic approach to talent development (Wan, S. ,2019). Within China's higher education system, professional education predominates, providing students with specialized knowledge and skills to enter the workforce. Entrepreneurship education activities aim to help students refine their professional skills, accumulate practical experience, and thereby enhance their entrepreneurial and employment capabilities (Zhao, D. et al.,2021; Chen, Y. ;2021). To fully harness the enlightening and guiding role of entrepreneurship education courses in fostering innovation mindset, entrepreneurial awareness, and entrepreneurial skills in college students, these courses are offered as mandatory subjects at vocational colleges (Li, T., & Gan, S. ,2014).

Currently, entrepreneurship education primarily takes place in the form of first curriculum at various universities, with a focus on theoretical knowledge in the field. The second curriculum involve diverse and organized educational activities conducted by the school beyond classroom teaching tasks (Guo, Y., & Yin, D. ,2018). College students' innovation and entrepreneurship require an assessment of their overall quality, as proficiency in their respective fields of study alone is insufficient (Liu Gaopeng,2021). Therefore, integrating second curriculum into college students' entrepreneurship education, establishing a rational and effective connection between first and second curriculums, serves as a crucial foundation for the development of entrepreneurship education for college students. This integration can effectively break the limitations of first curriculum and enhance the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education, among other benefits (Zhou Yanling,2017; Zhao Yan ,2017).

Analysis Of The Current Status Of Entrepreneurship Education In The Second Curriculum

The second curriculum serves as the primary arena for practical activities undertaken by college students, offering diverse formats and a high degree of selectivity. To assess the current status of entrepreneurship education at Guangdong Ecological Engineering Vocational College, this study conducted a survey among all students in the College of Information Engineering. A total of 620 questionnaires were distributed, with 600 valid responses collected, resulting in a response rate of 96.74% (see Table 1).

The survey results indicate that 42.1% of the enrolled students express dissatisfaction with the current state of entrepreneurship education at our institution, while 35.6% consider it to be of average quality. Only 22.3% of the students express satisfaction with the current state of entrepreneurship education at our institution. Moreover, 41.8% of the students exhibit low interest in entrepreneurship education, 25.4% display a moderate level of interest, and only 32.8% are highly interested in entrepreneurship education. These findings reflect a relatively

low level of interest among students in the College of Information Engineering regarding entrepreneurship education. Furthermore, they highlight the need for improvement and enhancement in the current effectiveness of entrepreneurship education within the College.

Furthermore, in the evaluation of entrepreneurship education courses in the first curriculum(see Table 2), 45.8% of students find the content to be dull and lacking in engagement, with an overload of theoretical knowledge and a single-focused structure. This reflects an unsatisfactory classroom teaching effect, falling short of the expected outcomes. In the questionnaire survey regarding the second curriculum, 47.9% of students indicated familiarity with the concept, 32.3% mentioned only hearing about it, and only 19.8% expressed a lack of clarity regarding the second curriculum. Consequently, students have high expectations for the second curriculum, recognizing its educational significance. Survey results reveal that 56.5% of students believe that practical activities, campus events, and club activities are suitable for entrepreneurship education, in descending order. Therefore, integrating the second curriculum into entrepreneurship education course delivery can effectively enhance students' interest and practicality, broaden the platform, and diversify the teaching methods.

Table 1
A Survey Of Current Innovative Entrepreneurship Education Conducted Among Enrolled Students

Issue Identified	Surveyed Students	Percentage (%)
Unsatisfactory curriculum Effectiveness	600	42.1%
Average curriculum Effectiveness	600	35.6%
Satisfactory curriculum Effectiveness	060	22.3%
Lack of Interest in Innovative Entrepreneurship Education	600	41.8%
Moderate Interest in Innovative Entrepreneurship Education	600	25.4%
No Interest in Innovative Entrepreneurship Education	600	32.8%

Table 2
Survey Questionnaire On The Second Curriculum For Enrolled Students

content	participants	percentage
Familiar with Extracurricular Activities	600	47.9%
Heard of Extracurricular Activities Only	600	32.3%
Unfamiliar with Extracurricular Activities	600	19.8%
Ranked Suitable Activities for Innovative Entrepreneurship Education as Follows: Practical Activities, Campus Events, Club Activities	600	56.5%

The Significance Of The Second Curriculum In Entrepreneurship Education For College Students

The second curriculum, as an extension, supplement, and development of the first curriculum, serves as a platform for students to apply the theoretical knowledge acquired in the first curriculum to practical life learning. Furthermore, it provides students with a channel for interdisciplinary communication, expands the platform for the integration of professional knowledge from the first curriculum, encourages personalized and diversified student development, and contributes to the creation of an atmosphere conducive to innovation and entrepreneurship.

The Second Curriculum Supplements The Practical Deficiencies Of The First Curriculum

The first curriculum primarily focuses on the delivery of foundational theoretical knowledge within specific academic disciplines, while the second curriculum's primary goal is to enhance students' practical abilities and foster individual development. Knowledge that remains unused or excessively theoretical can potentially diminish students' willingness and capacity for innovation and entrepreneurship. The second curriculum serves as an effective platform for transforming knowledge imparted in the first curriculum into practical skills through activities such as social practice, skills competitions, and entrepreneurship training. These experiences facilitate the application of knowledge, enhance hands-on capabilities, and provide an effective platform for students to engage in innovative entrepreneurial practices.

The Second Curriculum Expands The Interdisciplinary Communication Platform Of The First Curriculum

Entrepreneurship education in the second curriculum differs from the theoretical education in the first curriculum. The second curriculum is primarily designed based on students' self-interests and hobbies, and it often comprises students from various academic disciplines. Due to the diverse academic backgrounds of students in different majors, the second curriculum environment is conducive to the formation of multidisciplinary and innovative entrepreneurship ideas, fostering a broadened perspective.

The Second Curriculum Promotes The Development Of A Personalized Environment For Innovation And Entrepreneurship

A positive atmosphere for entrepreneurship and innovation education can serve as a strong guiding and motivating force for students, leading to positive changes in their attitudes and behaviors. The second curriculum is closely aligned with students' learning experiences, offering an open, flexible, and diverse range of activities that resonate with the characteristics of young students. Moreover, the second curriculum improves communication between students and instructors, promoting a seamless integration of teaching and learning.

Methodology

Integrating the Second curriculum into Entrepreneurship Education Course Instruction involves bridging practice activities, campus events, and club activities with curriculum learning, stimulating students to reflect on imperfections in their learning and life experiences, fostering critical and creative thinking, and enhancing students' problem-solving and hands-on abilities. In terms of curriculum content, there is a need to improve the systematic and planned

development of courses, enhance overall design, and expand courses into two main components: entrepreneurship fundamentals and entrepreneurial practice. This leads to the formation of a scientifically rational curriculum structure.

Combining Online and Offline Teaching for Optimizing and Enriching Curriculum Content

Offline teaching content is fundamental for entrepreneurship education. Initially, an online "Entrepreneurship Fundamentals" MOOC is offered on the virtual platform, where students engage in self-directed online learning. Subsequently, students collaborate in groups to reflect on entrepreneurship theories and relevant case studies. In the physical curriculum setting, instructors facilitate offline discussions, guiding students in researching and summarizing common patterns among entrepreneurs' career choices and key success factors. This is accomplished through comparing the coursework assignments with the activities from the second curriculum, encouraging students to apply their discipline-specific knowledge for curriculum discussions and analyses.

Effective Integration of In-Class and Out-of-Class Activities to Emphasize the Development of Students' Entrepreneurial Practical Skills

During classroom practices, instructors guide students to identify imperfections in their learning and life experiences, sparking novel ideas and approaches to problem-solving, ultimately leading to the formulation of their innovative entrepreneurial projects. Students then proceed to write business plans, create presentation materials, and engage in defense, all while actively participating in business event planning and collegiate entrepreneurship competitions.

Establishing a New Teaching Model Emphasizing "Learning by Doing" and Practicality

Educators employ a mixed teaching approach, including "flipped classroom + simulation training + seminar sharing," extensively applied within the classroom. The classroom experience transitions towards "empathy, concentration, creativity, experience, reflection," and similar practical activities. Adapting to the specific circumstances of each academic discipline, educators integrate second curriculum activities and case studies, employing a range of teaching methods such as participatory, exploratory, and discussion-based approaches. Through the incorporation of second curriculum case studies, instructors assume the role of project guides, and students engage in project-based learning. To arouse students' interest in entrepreneurship, it is crucial to closely align learning with practical application. Educators place the student as the central figure, emphasizing experiential engagement, and leveraging their guidance, management, coordination, and organization roles in teaching. This shift in focus from traditional knowledge dissemination to skill development fosters students' enthusiasm, initiative, and creativity. The real-time integration with the second curriculum facilitates experiential learning through simulations, case studies, and practical experiences, promoting knowledge retention, skill development, and the cultivation of an entrepreneurial mindset, thus allowing students to participate actively in the wave of entrepreneurship and innovation.

Discussing

As a result of ongoing reform efforts, Guangdong Eco-Engineering Vocational College has achieved significant progress in its innovative entrepreneurship education curriculum. In 2021, a survey was conducted among students of the School of Information Engineering at Guangdong Eco-Engineering Vocational College by the faculty following the completion of their course delivery.

The survey results indicate that with regards to the overall teaching effectiveness (see table 3), 35.4% of college students consider it to be "very good," while 47.2% find it "good." A majority of students perceive the course as highly practical, with 37.2% believing it to be "very helpful" for future entrepreneurship and 41.4% considering it "helpful." A significant proportion of students express a positive sentiment towards the overall class atmosphere, with many acknowledging noticeable improvements. Students widely endorse the online course "Entrepreneurship Fundamentals," with 57.3% rating it as "quite good" and 32.9% as "very good." Analysis of the survey results indicates that students generally approve of the course instruction, and it aligns well with the goals of the reform.

Table 3
Student Survey On Course Reform

Content	Surveyed Participants	Results (%)
Found Teaching Effectiveness Very Good	600	35.4%
Found Teaching Effectiveness Good	600	47.2%
Believe the Course Is Highly Beneficial for Future Entrepreneurship	600	37.2%
Believe the Course Is Beneficial for Future Entrepreneurship	600	41.4%
Found Online Courses Very Good	600	32.9%
Found Online Courses Quite Good	600	57.3%

Conclusion

Based on the survey conducted at Guangdong Ecological Engineering Vocational College, the integration of the second curriculum (extracurricular activities) into university-level entrepreneurship and innovation education has yielded positive results in fostering innovation, entrepreneurial mindset, and capabilities among students, thereby enhancing their overall development in the context of entrepreneurship and employment. To consolidate and further enhance these achievements, several recommendations are proposed. These include ongoing improvement of second curriculum activities to ensure their practicality and diversity, the provision of specialized training for educators to enhance their guidance of students, the establishment of a robust feedback and assessment system, fostering collaboration and communication among students, and promoting partnerships with external entities to provide practical entrepreneurial opportunities. Finally, active promotion of the innovative and entrepreneurial activities within the second curriculum is crucial to attract greater student participation and expand its influence, both within and beyond the university. These recommendations aim to strengthen the role of the second curriculum in university-level entrepreneurship and innovation education, cultivating students with enhanced innovation and

entrepreneurial potential and offering them more extensive opportunities for career development and entrepreneurial success.

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