Cultivation of Intercultural Communicative Competence in Middle School English Teaching

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Abstract

Language and culture are inseparable. Students learn language in order to use language for more effective communication. Only with high cultural literacy can learners successfully master the language. Therefore, in middle school English teaching, it is a very important task to strengthen the cultivation of students' intercultural communication awareness and improve their intercultural communication ability. In this paper, the author analyzes the problems and the reasons of these problems in the cultivation of intercultural communicative competence in middle school English classes. The author also puts forward some suggestions in order to provide some help to the cultivation of intercultural communicative competence in middle school.

Keywords

Intercultural Communication Competence; Intercultural Communication Awarness; Middle School English Teaching.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the research

Since the introduction of intercultural communication competence (ICC), intercultural communicative competence has been a widely discussed topic among scholars, and the cultivation of intercultural communicative competence in English teaching has also become a hot topic in English teaching circles. At the same time, the Compulsory English Curriculum Standard (2017) clearly proposes to cultivate the core English literacy of middle school students, including cultural awareness. Cultural awareness includes the awareness and ability of cultural knowledge, cultural understanding and intercultural communication. Subject characteristics are the logical starting point of subject teaching. An in-depth understanding of subject characteristics is the basis for effective teaching, and intercultural is the unique characteristic of English subject. Therefore, in the context of globalization and diversification, the cultivation of middle school students' intercultural awareness is even more important. According to the research of the above subject background and era background, it is found that the relationship between culture, education and people is inseparable. In order to improve the efficiency of middle school English teaching, it is quite necessary to cultivate students' awarness of intercultural communication in middle school English teaching.

1.2. Significance of the research

Language is carrying human culture and knowledge, which reflects the historical background of a nation and its unique way of life. Culture, as the foundation of language, promotes the development of language. English and Chinese cultures belong to heterogeneous cultures. It is precisely because of the existence of such cultural differences that it is possible for heterogeneous cultures to learn from each other. Cross culture is one of the characteristics that distinguishes this subject from other subjects. Its realization in teaching is to respect the discipline teaching rules, highlight the educational value of this discipline, and make middle school English from "knowledge and people" to "cultural education".

However, since the examination-oriented ideas has been dominated in teaching area fro a long time, many teachers generally ignore the cultivation of students' intercultural awareness in middle school English teaching. They believe that the most important task in the basic education stage is the transfer of knowledge, while introducing foreign cultural knowledge to students and cultivating students' intercultural awareness is the task of university teachers in the future, This kind of thinking leads to the students' lack of cultural knowledge and weak communicative competence to a great extent. Although many students have high scores in grammar and pronunciation tests, they often have "cultural errors" due to their lack of intercultural communication awareness and ability in actual language use, such as giving seats to the elderly on foreign public transport.

Although many foreigners have adopted a tolerant cultural attitude towards the meaning of some Chinglish expressions under the trend of globalization, as English educators, we have to admit that neglecting the cultivation of intercultural awareness is a big mistake in our work. Although students have mastered some basic vocabulary and grammar rules through learning, they have made communication mistakes due to lack of understanding of the target language culture, which has seriously affected the communication effect and hindered the development of communication ability.

At the same time, the cultivation of intercultural awareness in middle school English teaching not only helps to clarify the cognitive and attitude bias of junior middle school English teachers towards intercultural communicative competence, help teachers realize the importance of intercultural communicative competence for students' long-term development, and promote teachers to carry out intercultural teaching more actively in teaching and cultivate students' intercultural communicative competence. On the other hand, this study explores some aspects that should be corrected in the current English teaching in the process of cultivating middle school students' awareness and ability of intercultural communication and provive the corresponding solutions, which will help stimulate teachers' reflection on their own intercultural communication teaching, improve teachers' professional ability, and promote the benign development of English Teaching.

In recent years, people from different regions, cultures and societies have a strong desire to interact with each other with the in-depth development of globalization. It is precisely because of the mutual exchange and collision of such diverse cultures that cultural differences makeit difficult for those people from different cultural backgrounds to understand each other and live in harmony. Therefore, middle school English education should keep step with the trend of historical development, strengthen students' understanding of cultural differences, cultivate them into modern people with cross-cultural communication awareness and ability, and better participate in the international competition in all walks of life in the future to serve the motherland and the people.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Foreign Studies on the Cultivation of Intercultural Communication Competence

Foreign Studies on intercultural communication originated in the United States, because the United States is a typical immigrant country, and the local residents are composed of immigrants from Europe, America, Asia and other countries. Therefore, they have great differences in lifestyle, religious beliefs, customs and other aspects. At the same time, the process of globalization has accelerated the frequency of exchanges between the United States and other countries, and many foreign students go to the United States to study every year. All these factors have promoted the development of intercultural communication in the United States to a certain extent.

The Silent Language (1959) published by Edward Hall marks the birth of intercultural communication. Hall pointed out the differences in the use of time and space by people from different cultural backgrounds in his book. He believed that "culture is communication" and emphasized the far-reaching impact of culture on human behavior. Subsequently, scholars in various fields, including anthropologists and communication scholars, studied intercultural communication from different perspectives. For example, R.T. Oliver's Culture and Communication (1967) profoundly expounded the relationship between culture and communication.

The 1970s was an important period for the development of intercultural communication. In 1970, the International Communication Society established the Branch of Intercultural Communication; In 1974, Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research was established in Maryland, the United States; In 1977, the International Journal of Intercultural Communication was founded successfully. At the same time, scholars in various fields have also published a large number of treatises on intercultural communication. For example, Edward Steward's American Cultural Pattern in 1972 explained the operation law behind the specific constitution of culture, and deeply analyzed the differences between Americans and people from other cultural backgrounds in terms of thinking, behavior, concepts, etc. with the method of Kenyan cultural comparison. Condon and Yousef's an Introduction to Intercultural Communication (1975) introduced the important concepts and viewpoints of intercultural communication, the world outlook, values and practices of intercultural communication. The works of foreign scholars in various fields on intercultural communication and the establishment of relevant institutions have greatly promoted the cultivation of intercultural awareness.

2.2. Research on the Cultivation of Intercultural Communication Competence in China

Compared with the United States, the study of intercultural communication in China started late. However, in the past three decades, Chinese researchers, especially foreign language teaching researchers, have developed a strong interest in intercultural communication. As a result of the reform and opening up, Chinese people and foreign businessmen began to have close ties gradually. However, due to the lack of awareness and ability of intercultural communication, these communications often produce cultural shock and cultural conflict. Therefore, Chinese foreign language educators have realized this shortcong and began to pay more attention to the cultivation of students' awareness of intercultural communication to improve students' intercultural communication ability.

The article "Culturally-loaded Words and English Language Teaching" published by Mr. Xu Guozhang (1980) is regarded as a sign of the start of intercultural communication in China. In this article, he pointed out that words with the same literal meaning may hide different cultural meanings. In language, culture and foreign language teaching, Zhang Yiqun (1981) discussed some problems in French teaching by analyzing some cases in the real environment. He believed that on the one hand, teaching should cultivate students' skills in listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation, on the other hand, students should know the cultural knowledge of the target language, and they should know how to communicate effectively with people of different identities, on different occasions and for different purposes. He Daokuan (1986) used examples to compare and analyze the cultural differences between China and the West in his article "the status of culture in foreign language teaching" and explained in detail the reasons, objectives and contents of culture teaching. In the 1980s, the Ministry of Education put forward the college English syllabus. At this time, Beijing Foreign Language University, Hei Longjiang University, Nanjing University and other institutions of higher learning began to offer intercultural communication and other related courses.

From the late 1980s to the late 1990s, books on intercultural communication began to be published. In 1988, the book Intercultural Communication and English Learning was published. It is the 1st book to introduce in detail intercultural communication in English teaching in China. Hu Wenzhong (1994) published the book Culture and Communication, which collects articles on culture and communication from different fields, such as pragmatics, translation, sociolinguistics, second language acquisition and English teaching, cultural linguistics and other articles on cross-cultural communication, aiming to improve readers' intercultural sensitivity and inetrcultural communication ability. Hu Wenzhong and Gao Yihong (1997) discussed the significance of culture, the importance, purpose, content and methods of cultivating intercultural communicative competence in foreign language teaching and culture. The Introduction to Intercultural Communication published by Hu Wenzhong (1999) marks the beginning of systematization of domestic scholars' research on intercultural communication. In 2000, the Ministry of Education issued the syllabus for English majors and non-English majors, which clearly stated that students' intercultural communication awareness and ability should be cultivated. Since then, researchers have paid more attention to the study of intercultural communication awareness and ability.

According to the research of the above scholars and the research results of various scholars in recent years, at present, China's intercultural research is mainly concentrated in the field of colleges and universities. For example, Ma Ruixian (2018) proposed a new teaching model to adapt to intercultural communication according to many difficulties in intercultural communication teaching, that is, the integration of CBI and flipped classroom teaching model. This model aims to cultivate students' intercultural communicative competence from three aspects: establishing the operating mechanism of the new teaching model, establishing network autonomous learning resources, and designing learning tasks. Gu Xiaole (2016) put forward corresponding solutions based on the current confusion of university teachers about what and how to evaluate the cultivation of intercultural communication awareness and ability, and their dilemma that they do not have a good understanding of the concept of intercultural communication awareness and ability. He proposed that teachers should first clarify the concept of intercultural communication competence, then specify rich intercultural communication evaluation tools, and finally the management organization should provide support for the development of intercultural communication evaluation.

In recent years, the English Curriculum Standard for Compulsory Education (2017) has attached great importance to students' cultural awareness, and the topic on the development of students' cultural communication awareness has increasingly been widely discussed among foreign language educators. The English Curriculum Standard for Compulsory Education (2017) clearly states that "in the higher stage of learning English, it is necessary to appropriately extend the scope of students' exposure to foreign cultures, help students broaden their horizons, and improve their sensitivity and identification ability to the similarities and differences between Chinese and foreign cultures, so as to improve their intercultural communication ability." Zhai Lijuan (2014) analyzed the influencing factors of middle school students' intercultural communication ability from the perspective of culture, and put forward effective strategies for teachers to cultivate students' intercultural communication awareness in classroom and extracurricular activities. In his master's thesis, Wang Chao (2018) investigated the effect of EDA teaching model on cultivating students' awareness of intercultural communication through experimental methods. Zhong Xuehui (2016) took junior high school English textbooks as an example, conducted questionnaire surveys and interviews with teachers and students respectively, and discussed the feasibility of using textbooks to help students master effective English learning strategies and cultivate intercultural communication awareness and ability. In general, the research on middle school students' intercultural communication awareness in China started late, and there are few related integration theory studies. The existing studies

mainly focus on the importance of students' intercultural communication ability, experimental research on teaching models and analysis of teaching materials. Therefore, the author can study the problems existing in the cultivation of middle school students' intercultural communication awareness in the current English classroom and try to put forward corresponding solutions in order to provide some help to the follow-up research and middle school students' English teaching.

3. Core Concepts

3.1. Intercultural Communication

There are three ways to express inter-culture in English, namely cross culture, inter- culture and trans-culture. The emphasis of these three expressions is different. In this article, the author uses the word inter-culture. The word "Intercultural" emphasizes the interaction and meaning reorganization when two cultures meet. It is a complex and dynamic process of cultural interaction. In an intercultural society, we can achieve in-depth understanding and respect for all different cultures and build in-depth mutual relations. This intercultural exchange focuses on the exchange of common ideas and cultural standards, as well as the development of in-depth relations between different cultural groups. In such a society, everyone can change and make common progress.

3.2. Intercultural Communication Competence

Scholars at home and abroad have defined intercultural communication from different perspectives.

Ruben (1976) proposed that intercultural communicative competence is "the ability to have the same unique way of activities as individuals in a certain environment should have in order to achieve their personality, goals and expectations". It is a relative ability that can meet people's basic requirements, meet their personality, and achieve their goals and expectations." Fantini (1994) believes that intercultural communicative competence includes four dimensions: awareness, knowledge, positive attitude and skills. On this basis, Byram (2014) proposed four major factors of intercultural communicative competence: attitude, knowledge, skills and cultural criticism.

Domestic scholars have also made a systematic division of intercultural communicative competence. They believe that intercultural communicative competence refers to the ability that people from different cultural backgrounds have to follow the principle of adaptability of language to the environment and relationship, so as to achieve the purpose of communication. Specifically, it includes: first, accurately identify and understand the behavioral functions of different cultures; second, understand people's daily living habits and speech acts in different cultural backgrounds; third, be familiar with the cultural meaning of English vocabulary connotation and extension.

Although scholars have different interpretations of intercultural communicative competence from different perspectives, they have reached a general consensus on the basic characteristics of intercultural communicative competence, that is, intercultural communicative competence includes three dimensions: cognitive dimension, emotional dimension and behavioral dimension. In this paper, the author will adopt the definitions of intercultural communication by domestic scholars, because these definitions enrich the actual situation of Chinese students in the world. In addition, these definitions not only clarify the nature of intercultural communication competence, but also have more specific content, which have a practical guiding role for the author to study students' intercultural communication competence in middle school English teaching.

4. Existing Problems

4.1. Existing Problems of Students

There are some deficiencies in the cultivation of students' awareness of intercultural communication.

First of all, there is a certain gap between the actual level of students and the goal of cultural awareness. The Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standard (2017 Edition) clearly puts forward the contents to be mastered in order to meet the students' cultural awareness goals. In order to understand the actual level of students, Liu Wenqin (2020) conducted a survey on students through a questionnaire and obtained the following data: in terms of cultural knowledge, 4.7% of the students in the tested school still failed to meet the sixth standard in the goal of cultural awareness. At the same time, the survey results also show that some students are not clear about the food customs, main entertainment activities and general public transportation in English-speaking countries. In addition, in cross-cultural communication, 16.5% of the students did not know the greeting methods commonly used abroad. To sum up, students' mastery of cultural knowledge, cross-cultural language and nonverbal communication knowledge in English-speaking countries is not ideal, and there is a certain gap with the current cultural awareness goal, which needs to be further improved.

Secondly, middle school students' current view of English learning lacks intercultural awareness. English learning aims to help students understand foreign culture, provide more educational opportunities, gradually form an open and inclusive character in the process of learning English, so as to improve their awareness and ability of intercultural communication, and encourage students to make knowledge, scientific and technological innovation in the process of mastering this universal language. However, in the survey report of Liu Wenqin (2020), 77.3% of the students took the high school entrance examination with the goal of learning English, 52.3% of the students thought it was necessary for their future work, 44% of the students wanted to go abroad, and only 35.1% of the students expressed interest in English. It can be seen that most students learn English out of external motivation rather than internal motivation. This view of English learning separates the close relationship between language and culture, simplifies the purpose of English learning to English language learning, and seriously weakens the cultivation of cultural communicative competence in middle school English classes. According to the humanistic theory, this kind of learning experience does not help students find their own unique qualities, which is not conducive to students' personal development and the cultivation of cross-cultural communicative competence.

4.2. Existing Problems of Teachers

English teachers have a great influence on the cultivation of intercultural communicative competence in middle schools. They have many shortcomings.

First of all, most middle school teachers, especially those in rural areas, lack cross-cultural experience. When explaining the word "cultural awareness", the English curriculum standard clearly lists "cross-cultural communication awareness and ability" under this goal and classification, and puts forward some clear teaching ideas for teachers in teaching suggestions. However, when asked how to cultivate students' cross-cultural communication ability, many teachers raise questions. When teachers do not understand the real connotation of cross-cultural communication, it is not easy to cultivate students' intercultural communicative competence in middle school English classroom. In addition, some teachers understand the communicative competence and awareness of open culture, but they do not understand it deeply. As an international lingua franca, English carries not only the culture of a specific nation, but also different cultures from all over the world. Therefore, the real purpose of cross-cultural communication is to enable students to master basic cultural knowledge and have certain

cultural exploration and learning ability, so that they can adjust their communication behavior in real time and flexibly when communicating with people of different cultures in English, Constantly improve their cross-cultural communication skills.

Secondly, most of the cross-cultural communication activities designed by teachers are single, more static and less dynamic. When many teachers design cross-cultural communication activities, they often present declarative knowledge. Therefore, most of the cross-cultural communication knowledge received by students is stored briefly in their minds as declarative knowledge. However, with the loss of time, these knowledge will gradually be forgotten, resulting in the lack of practical exploration even if students are in a certain cultural situation, And can not carry out smooth cross-cultural communication activities. In addition, when teachers conduct cross-cultural communication activities in the classroom, they usually use their own oral narration and questions, with the help of video, pictures and other visual materials. The teaching activities are single and lack of new ideas.

In addition, teachers' intercultural communication teaching lacks systematic planning. In general, the cross-cultural communication activities in the middle school classroom are random, usually not carefully designed and prepared by teachers, and are not closely related to teaching. They usually exist in the form of "digressions", so they are subjective. This kind of cross-cultural communication teaching, which lacks systematic planning and has strong subjectivity, is easy to make students form a one-sided understanding of the culture of English-speaking countries and form a prejudice against the culture of the target language, thus hindering the improvement of students' cross-cultural communication ability.

5. Reason Analysis

After clarifying the above problems in the cultivation of middle school English intercultural communicative competence, it is necessary to explore the reasons behind them, so as to put forward improvement strategies for the existing problems, improve teachers' intercultural teaching, and finally improve students' intercultural communicative competence. Through the analysis, the main reasons include four aspects: education related departments, schools, teachers and students.

In education related departments, one reason is that the existing academic evaluation system does not involve or design a small part of the cultivation of intercultural communicative competence. Educational evaluation refers to the process of systematically collecting information, analyzing and interpreting the evaluation results, and making value judgments on educational phenomena by referring to certain educational objectives and using scientific means, so as to provide basis for continuously optimizing educational decision-making and educational process. Therefore, after a series of discussions on teaching reform, educators agreed that formative assessment and summative assessment should be used comprehensively to help students develop in an all-round way. However, in the process of implementation, most form of the evaluation of students in middle school English teaching are in written form. These papers focus on students' vocabulary, grammar, reading ability and writing ability, and rarely involve cross-cultural communication. Therefore, in teaching, when facing the pressure of entering a higher school, teachers and students will obviously pay more attention to the contents involved in the written investigation, and the cultivation of cross-cultural communicative competence will naturally be ignored. In addition, the fact that many teachers lack the training to develop intercultural communicative competence is also one of the problems of education related departments. Although our country pays more and more attention to teachers' on-the-job training and teachers' professional development, and more and more teachers transition from professional teachers to expert teachers, teacher training rarely involves the cultivation of cross-cultural communicative competence. Even though some

related topics were mentioned in some lectures, they only stayed at the theoretical level and were not implemented in teaching practice. Due to the lack of targeted guidance in the cultivation of cross-cultural communication ability, teachers can not guide students to learn the culture of English-speaking countries comprehensively and objectively in actual teaching because of insufficient cross-cultural communication knowledge and weak skills, resulting in students' weak cross-cultural communication ability.

In schools, first of all, influenced by traditional teaching concepts, quantitative indicators such as enrollment rate and excellence rate have become the key indicators to evaluate a school. Therefore, in order to win the favor of parents and students, the school will focus on the academic scores, and connect the teaching objectives, teaching models and teaching difficulties of the English subject with the examination steganography. Therefore, intercultural communicative competence is ignored. Secondly, the classroom teaching environment provided by the school is limited. One of the best ways to cultivate students' intercultural communicative competence is to let students communicate directly with people from different cultures, but not all students have such opportunities, especially for many rural middle school students. In the middle school English classroom teaching in China, the school provides fixed classrooms, and students use fixed teaching materials for learning. Although the teacher's activity design can expose students to certain cross-cultural communication knowledge, the environment created by the teacher is always inferior to the real cross-cultural communication situation, and a class is only 45 minutes. In the limited classroom time, there are few practices for chaotic cultural communication. Therefore, These aspects hinder the development of students' intercultural communicative competence.

In terms of teachers, the main reason is that teachers' theoretical knowledge is difficult to support cross-cultural teaching. Teachers' understanding of intercultural communicative competence wins the teaching of intercultural communication with teachers. However, many middle school teachers do not understand the real connotation of intercultural communication. Secondly, teachers are faced with great pressure of entering a higher school, cumbersome teaching work and interference from other aspects. It is difficult to focus on the cultivation of students' cross-cultural communicative competence. As a result, they seldom spend time on the cultivation of cross-cultural communicative competence. Reflection is not timely, and theoretical learning does not keep pace with the times. Therefore, a series of problems in the process of cultivating cross-cultural communicative competence have been caused.

In terms of students, first of all, students lack practical experience in translating cross-cultural communication knowledge into cross-cultural communication behavior. Although students can learn some cross-cultural communication knowledge in class through classroom activities designed by teachers, they lack the opportunity to apply this knowledge to real life. From this, it can be concluded that students' knowledge will remember the cross-cultural knowledge learned in class as declarative knowledge in their minds. This knowledge is static and isolated, They do not actively mobilize their own senses of listening, speaking, reading and writing, so it is difficult to promote and inspire each other with cross-cultural behavior. At the same time, Cheng Xiaotang (2016) pointed out that the current junior middle school students' actual level has not yet reached the requirements of cultural awareness. The lack of cross-cultural awareness in their English learning outlook is largely due to their failure to understand the differences and links between English and English learning, so they can not find other purposes for their English learning. Therefore, students' initiative in learning English is not strong, and they are in a passive position in learning.

6. Cultivation of Intercultural Communicative Competence

The author will give some advice on cultivating students' intercultural communicative competence in middle school English class.

Educational administrative departments should first improve the academic evaluation system and implement the training objectives of intercultural communicative competence in all links. In the formulation of the syllabus, we should clarify the purpose of cross-cultural teaching, the content and methods of cross-cultural teaching. At the same time, the syllabus makers should clarify the minimum standards of cross-cultural communication ability that students at different stages of primary school, junior high school, high school and university should have, and take cross-cultural communication ability as the ability that everyone should cultivate throughout his life. When compiling teaching materials, it is necessary to make overall arrangements for the unit content, and compile the cultural content into the teaching materials of all grades from simple to profound according to the cultural theme. Relevant departments should add testing and evaluation to the ranks of cross-cultural communication. At present, middle school English teachers are still influenced by "what to test and what to teach". Therefore, including cross-cultural communicative competence in the ranks of evaluation will help teachers and students pay attention to the cultivation of cross-cultural communicative competence. Secondly, relevant departments should train teachers' communicative competence around cultural knowledge, cultural awareness and cultural

Schools should update their educational concepts in a timely manner to cultivate cross-cultural communication. At the same time, they should create a good atmosphere for cross-cultural learning and help improve their cross-cultural communication skills. The school should recognize that English is a subject with both instrumental and humanistic characteristics. Therefore, the school should consider the needs of the times for cross-cultural communication talents. In terms of academic philosophy, it should not only reflect the instrumental nature of English teaching, that is, help students communicate with people of different cultures in the world through English, an international common language, but also give full play to the humanistic value of English teaching, That is to help students deepen their understanding of their own culture and other cultures, and be able to carry out appropriate cross-cultural communication activities with different people according to specific cultural situations, so as to become a person of cross-cultural communication. At the same time, the school can hold various cross-cultural communication activities to provide a display platform for Xueshen's crosscultural communication learning achievements, form a strong cross-cultural communication atmosphere, and promote the rapid development of students' cross-cultural communication ability.

Teachers should actively participate in the training of cross-cultural communication, timely update teaching ideas, give full play to the educational function of English teaching, deeply study the cultural elements in teaching materials, and reasonably integrate language teaching and cross-cultural teaching. The Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standard (2017) proposes that English teaching should shape the basic English literacy of social workers and promote the development of students' thinking ability. At the same time, teachers should use a variety of teaching methods to improve the quality and interest of cross-cultural teaching.

Students should form a correct view of English learning, re understand the purpose of English learning, actively participate in cross-cultural communication, and cultivate their autonomous learning ability in the process of English learning from three aspects: attitude, ability and environment.

7. Conclusion

Language and culture are inseparable. To cultivate students' awareness of cross-cultural communication and improve their ability of cross-cultural communication is the ultimate goal of English teaching. At the same time, we should also attach great importance on the publicity and education of local culture. We should fully understand our own cultural identity, more tolerant and actively understand other cultures, and improve cross-cultural communication skills. However, we must also realize that the cultivation and improvement of cross-cultural communication ability is not a simple task. Therefore, teachers should carry out cross-cultural communication in combination with teaching materials as soon as possible, fully excavate the content of cross-cultural communication in teaching materials, and strengthen the cultivation of students' awareness of cross-cultural communication. In addition to the efforts of teachers, the cultivation of middle school students' cross-cultural communicative competence also needs the efforts of educational administration, schools and students, in order to lay a solid foundation for students' future study and work.

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