

Designing and Implementing Whole-Book Reading Instruction of *From the Soil* from the Perspective of Secondary Vocational Students' Career Development Needs

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Abstract: Against the backdrop of quality improvement and excellence enhancement in vocational education, the career development needs of secondary vocational students have shifted from single-skill improvement to the cultivation of comprehensive competencies. Whole-book reading instruction of *From the Soil* (*Xiangtu Zhongguo*) has become an important vehicle for addressing these needs. Based on secondary vocational students' career-related needs in cognition, affect, and ability, this paper explores the vocational education resources embedded in the book, constructs a reading instruction framework centered on occupational scenarios, and proposes a four-stage progressive pathway along with key instructional strategies. Through instructional redesign, the study achieves an in-depth integration of classical texts and vocational education, helping secondary vocational students consolidate professional ethics, cultivate local and rural awareness, broaden their horizons, and enhance core professional competitiveness as well as sustainable development capacity.

Keywords: Secondary vocational students; career development needs; *From the Soil* (*Xiangtu Zhongguo*); whole-book reading instruction

Introduction

At present, secondary vocational education in China emphasizes the integration of moral cultivation and technical skills (*deji bingxiu*) as well as the combination of work and study (*gongxue jiehe*). In this context, the career development of secondary vocational students faces transformational challenges. *From the Soil* (*Xiangtu Zhongguo*) aligns closely with the grassroots-oriented career

pathways of secondary vocational students. However, traditional reading instruction has failed to adequately address their career development needs, resulting in a disconnect between instructional outcomes and vocational cultivation goals. Exploring the design and implementation pathways of whole-book reading instruction for this work, and translating its vocational education value into effective teaching practice, is of great significance for improving instructional



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effectiveness and empowering students' professional growth.

1. A Three-Dimensional Deconstruction of Secondary Vocational Students' Career Development Needs

1.1 Career Cognitive Needs: From "Skill-Oriented" to "Culture-Oriented"

For a long time, secondary vocational education has centered on skills training, which has led some students to develop a cognitive bias of "emphasizing skills while neglecting culture." Their understanding of careers is often confined to the level of job operation, lacking insight into the cultural logic and social value underlying occupations. With the advancement of the rural revitalization strategy, a large number of secondary vocational students will enter fields such as grassroots services and rural industries. This trend urgently requires an upgrade in career cognition from a "skill-oriented" approach to a "culture-oriented" one. Students need to understand the operating rules of rural society and the characteristics of interpersonal interaction, and to clarify the intrinsic relationship between occupations and local (rural) society, so as to better adapt to the requirements of grassroots positions. For example, judging from the majors offered at our school, students majoring in Exhibition Services and Management within the tourism service category need to understand the relationship between local cultural characteristics and tourists' psychology in tourism services. Students in Logistics Service and Management and Business Assistant programs within the commerce and exhibition category must grasp the interpersonal rules and business logic of local markets in grassroots commercial activities. Students in automotive engineering programs—including Automobile Application and Maintenance, New Energy Vehicle Application and Maintenance, and Automobile Body Repair—also need to understand the local factors behind vehicle usage environments and maintenance demands in rural areas. These cognitive needs cannot be met through skills training alone and therefore call for deeper cognition through reading local-culture-oriented texts.

1.2 Career Affective Needs: From "Career Anxiety" to "Local Belonging"

Secondary vocational students are at a critical stage

of career exploration. Influenced by employment competition pressure and vague self-cognition, they commonly experience career anxiety, especially showing resistance toward grassroots-oriented career choices. Most secondary vocational students come from rural areas or will serve rural communities in the future, and the lack of local (rural) attachment further intensifies their crisis of career identity. Therefore, the core of their career affective needs lies in shifting from "career anxiety" to a sense of "local belonging," cultivating identification with and a sense of mission toward local occupations. By excavating the core professional spirit embedded in local culture, students can be guided to perceive the social value of grassroots occupations and build career confidence ^[1]. For instance, occupations such as grassroots technical services and rural cultural and tourism services realize their value in close connection with the development of local society. Guiding secondary vocational students to understand local society's demand for these professions can effectively alleviate career anxiety and help establish a stable emotional foundation for career development.

1.3 Career Competency Needs: From "Single Skill" to "Composite Competence"

In the new era, the demand for talent in vocational positions has shifted from single-skill types to composite-competence types. The enhancement of secondary vocational students' career competencies must therefore break through the limitations of isolated skills and foster comprehensive abilities such as communication and coordination, problem-solving, and cultural adaptation. In occupational practice within rural contexts, students need to deal with the interaction rules of acquaintance-based societies and the complex demands of grassroots positions, which requires the ability to integrate professional skills with the characteristics of local society. For example, rural e-commerce positions not only require operational skills in e-commerce but also demand the ability to explore the cultural connotations of local products and to communicate effectively with local customers. Grassroots early childhood education positions require an understanding of local families' educational beliefs so as to achieve localized adaptation of educational methods. The cultivation of such composite

competencies relies on reading local culture texts to enhance secondary vocational students' understanding of and adaptability to rural society.

2. Excavating and Transforming the Vocational Education Resources in *From the Soil (Xiangtu Zhongguo)*

2.1 Professional Ethics Mapping of Core Concepts

Core concepts in *From the Soil (Xiangtu Zhongguo)*, such as the “differential mode of association” (chaxu geju), the “ritual-based order” (lizhi zhixu), and the notion that “credit is not fully grounded in contracts” (xinyong bu bei yu qiyue), contain rich connotations of traditional professional ethics and can be transformed into key resources for cultivating professional ethics among secondary vocational students. The “differential mode of association,” which reflects a layered logic of interpersonal relationships, can be mapped onto occupational contexts as a stratified sense of responsibility toward clients, colleagues, and society, guiding students to understand the boundaries of responsibility and the principle of empathy in professional ethics. The “ritual-based order,” emphasizing moral restraint and self-regulation, corresponds to principles of integrity and dedication in professional activities, helping students establish an ethical foundation of “building one’s career through moral integrity.” Meanwhile, the credit mechanism in an acquaintance-based society provides direct guidance for cultivating honesty and responsibility among secondary vocational students in grassroots service positions.

2.2 Professional Spirit Metaphors in Local Narratives

The narratives in *From the Soil (Xiangtu Zhongguo)* depicting characteristics of local society—such as “contentment with one’s land and reluctance to migrate” (antu zhong qian), “mutual assistance and collective vigilance” (shouwang xiangzhu), and “steadfastness and pragmatism” (tashi wushi)—contain inner values that resonate with modern professional spirit and can offer cultural nourishment for cultivating professional spirit among secondary vocational students. The book’s portrayal of rural people’s attitudes of deep engagement with the land and the pursuit of excellence in labor metaphorically reflects

dedication and craftsmanship in modern professional spirit. Scenes of neighbors helping one another and collaborating in labor correspond to teamwork in occupational settings. Furthermore, the rural people’s survival wisdom of adapting to nature and acting in accordance with local conditions can be transformed into innovative adaptive capacities in professional practice. For example, the implicit narrative of rural artisans’ commitment to “preserving their craft” in the book provides a vivid cultural reference for cultivating craftsmanship among skill-oriented secondary vocational students, enhancing cultural identification in professional spirit cultivation ^[2].

2.3 Expanding Professional Horizons through Cultural Comparison

In *From the Soil (Xiangtu Zhongguo)*, Fei Xiaotong reveals the differences and transformation trends between two social structures through a cultural comparison of “rural (local) society” and “modern society.” This comparative perspective provides important support for expanding the professional horizons of secondary vocational students. The book’s comparative analysis of “acquaintance-based interactions” in rural society versus “contract-based interactions” in modern society, as well as “experiential transmission” versus “rational innovation,” helps students understand the trend toward integration of tradition and modernity in grassroots occupational contexts and clarifies the directions for enhancing professional competencies. For example, in the context of rural revitalization, emerging occupations such as rural tourism and agricultural product e-commerce are precisely the outcomes of the integration of local culture and modern industries. By applying the cultural comparison perspective presented in the text, secondary vocational students can be guided to perceive the broader trends of career development in the contemporary era, proactively cultivate composite competencies that meet the needs of industrial integration, and thereby expand both the breadth and depth of their career development.

3. A Reading Instruction Design Framework Based on Career Development Needs

3.1 Design Philosophy: Reconstructing Reading Logic through “Occupational Scenarios”

In designing reading instruction of *From the Soil*

(*Xiangtu Zhongguo*) based on the career development needs of secondary vocational students, the core philosophy is to break away from the traditional logic of “text-centered interpretation” and to reconstruct the reading framework around “occupational scenarios.” Instructional design should closely align with the grassroots service, rural industries, and local enterprises that students are likely to enter in the future. Taking into account the characteristics of the ten majors offered at our school—including tourism service programs (Exhibition Services and Management; High-End Hotel Operations and Management), commerce and exhibition programs (Logistics Service and Management; Business Assistant), automotive engineering programs (Automobile Application and Maintenance, among others), as well as Chinese Culinary Arts, Western Culinary Arts, and Digital Media Technology Application—the design integrates textual interpretation with occupational problem-solving, forming a closed loop of “reading–cognition–application.” For example, exhibition majors can be linked to scenarios of rural cultural and tourism exhibition planning; automotive majors to rural automobile maintenance service scenarios; and culinary majors to the development of local ingredients. In this way, reading instruction is aligned with the occupational needs of different majors and genuinely serves the deepening of career cognition, the cultivation of professional affect, and the enhancement of competencies among secondary vocational students.

3.2 Implementation Pathway: A Four-Stage Progressive Reading Model

3.2.1 Stage One: “Problem-Based Reading” Driven by Occupational Issues

“Problem-based reading” is initiated by occupational scenario issues corresponding to students’ specific majors. Core questions are designed around three major disciplinary clusters and ten program characteristics. For instance, tourism service programs focus on attracting visitor flows through rural cultural and tourism exhibitions and adapting homestay services to guests’ habits; commerce and exhibition programs address balancing interpersonal relationships and efficiency in grassroots logistics and maintaining client relations in small and medium-sized enterprises; automotive engineering programs consider how to

build reputation in rural automobile repair services; culinary programs explore the development of signature dishes based on local ingredients; and digital media programs integrate local cultural logic into short video production. Through the introduction of such questions, students are guided to locate relevant passages in *From the Soil (Xiangtu Zhongguo)*, turning reading into a process of resolving occupational dilemmas and thereby enhancing students’ initiative and engagement in reading^[3].

3.2.2 Stage Two: “Critical Reading” through Analysis of Cultural Logic

Building on problem-based reading, “critical reading” is implemented to guide students in deeply analyzing the cultural logic of rural society presented in the text and engaging in critical reflection in connection with occupational scenarios. This stage aims to achieve a transition from textual interpretation to deeper cognitive understanding. Instruction focuses on guiding students to compare points of alignment and tension between local culture and modern occupational demands. For example, exhibition majors analyze the advantages and disadvantages of acquaintance-based society for rural exhibitions, while automobile maintenance majors explore the integration of experiential transmission and modern technology. Through activities such as group discussions and thematic debates, students are enabled to clarify the contemporary vocational value of local culture and to form a dialectical understanding.

3.2.3 Stage Three: “Creative Reading” for Occupational Scheme Design

With an emphasis on the vocational application and transformation of textual knowledge, “creative reading” is carried out to guide students in producing innovative outputs based on interpretation and deepened cognition. Students design concrete occupational schemes in relation to specific scenarios, integrating the cultural logic of the text with their professional characteristics. For instance, tourism service students design promotion plans for rural exhibitions and service workflows for homestays, while commerce and exhibition students develop logistics service standards and business communication scripts. Through such scheme design, textual knowledge is transformed into practical competencies, further deepening students’

understanding of the vocational value embedded in the text.

3.2.4 Stage Four: “Transfer-Oriented Reading” through Reflection on Professional Behavior

As the concluding stage of reading instruction, “transfer-oriented reading” is implemented to guide students in transferring reading outcomes into reflection on professional behavior, thereby enabling long-term empowerment of career development through reading. Through methods such as occupational simulations and internship reflections, students are encouraged to reflect on their own performance in light of the text—for example, whether exhibition planning effectively incorporates local cultural logic. Students are further guided to construct personal career development plans that incorporate local cultural literacy into their competency enhancement systems, achieving a sustainable linkage between reading instruction and career development.

4. Key Teaching Implementation Strategies Aligned with the Needs of Vocational Education

4.1 Building a “Dual-Qualified” Teaching Team

The vocational-oriented transformation of *From the Soil (Xiangtu Zhongguo)* reading instruction relies on the construction of a “dual-qualified” teaching team to achieve an organic integration of textual interpretation and vocational guidance. The team should include both Chinese language teachers and professional skills teachers, with a clearly defined division of labor and collaborative mechanism. Chinese language teachers are responsible for guiding in-depth textual interpretation, helping students accurately grasp core concepts and cultural logic; professional skills teachers design occupational scenario problems based on disciplinary characteristics and guide students in connecting textual knowledge with vocational practice. Targeted team training should be strengthened to enhance Chinese language teachers’ understanding of vocational education and to improve professional skills teachers’ abilities in textual interpretation. Through collective lesson planning and instructional seminars, a strong teaching synergy can be formed to ensure the professionalism and relevance of instructional design and to enhance the effectiveness of teaching

implementation.

4.2 Creating Reading Scenarios through the Integration of “Virtual and Real”

Scenario-based teaching is key to aligning reading instruction with vocational needs and requires the construction of integrated scenarios combining “virtual simulation and real experience.” Virtual scenarios can be realized through multimedia technologies, such as producing animations of rural occupational settings and simulating professional communication situations, enabling students to engage in textual interpretation within immersive experiences. Real scenarios involve organizing students to conduct field research in grassroots settings such as rural areas, communities, and local enterprises, collecting authentic problems from vocational practice and then returning to the text to seek solutions. For example, students in agriculture-related programs can investigate the current state of rural industrial development, while commerce majors can visit grassroots markets. Through engagement in real occupational scenarios, students deepen their understanding of the text, enhance their ability to apply knowledge, and strengthen the practical orientation of instruction^[4].

4.3 “Process-Based + Performance-Based” Evaluation System

To comprehensively assess students’ reading outcomes and improvements in vocational competencies, a diversified evaluation system combining “process-based and performance-based” assessment should be established. Process-based evaluation focuses on students’ performance at each stage of the four-stage reading model, assessing reading engagement and cognitive development through classroom participation, group discussion records, and reading journals. Performance-based evaluation emphasizes the outcomes of vocational competence transformation, using occupational scheme design, performance in vocational simulations, and internship reflection reports as assessment instruments. These are evaluated in combination with professional standards and textual interpretation requirements to assess students’ ability to apply knowledge and their development of professional literacy. In addition, student self-assessment, peer assessment, and evaluation by enterprise mentors should be incorporated to ensure the

comprehensiveness and objectivity of evaluation, fully leveraging its guiding and motivating functions.

Conclusion

Conducting whole-book reading instruction of *From the Soil (Xiangtu Zhongguo)* from the perspective of secondary vocational students' career development needs represents an active exploration of innovative classical text teaching within the context of vocational education. By aligning with students' needs in career cognition, affect, and competence, excavating textual resources, and constructing a four-stage progressive reading model centered on occupational scenarios—supported by dual-qualified teaching teams, integrated virtual–real scenarios, and diversified evaluation systems—this approach enables deep integration of classical texts and vocational education. Future efforts should further optimize design in relation to specific majors and strengthen reflective practice, allowing classical texts to more effectively empower the career development of secondary vocational students and

contribute to the cultivation of high-quality skilled talent.

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