

Research on Curriculum Teaching Resource Construction for Elderly Care Service Majors in Higher Vocational Education: A Case Study of Social Work Major

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Abstract: Against the backdrop of population aging, the demand for elderly care service professionals has surged dramatically. However, curriculum teaching resources for elderly care service majors in higher vocational education face challenges including fragmentation, disconnection from industry needs, and insufficient digitalization. Taking the social work major at a STEM-oriented higher vocational institution as a case study, this paper systematically elaborates on the concepts, framework, and pathways for constructing curriculum teaching resources for elderly care service programs. The study develops a teaching resource system under the "One Core, Four Extensions" curriculum cluster framework, establishes a resource construction model characterized by "school-community collaboration, industry-education integration, and STEM empowerment," and creates four categories of teaching resources: textual, digital, practical, and value-oriented. Practice demonstrates that this resource system effectively improves the quality of talent cultivation and social service capacity, providing a replicable practical paradigm for curriculum teaching resource construction in elderly care service majors in higher vocational education.

Keywords: Higher Vocational Education; Social Work Major; Elderly Care Service; Curriculum Resource Construction; Industry-Education Integration.

1. Problem Statement

1.1 Research Background

Population aging is a major social challenge facing China in the 21st century. By the end of 2023, China's population aged 60 and above had reached 296.97 million, accounting for 21.1% of

the total population, up from 13.26% in 2010. As the aging trend continues to deepen, the demand for professional elderly care services has become increasingly urgent, and the contradiction between the supply of and demand for elderly care service talents has grown more acute. High-quality elderly care service professionals are key to promoting the high-quality development of elderly care services in the new era.

In this context, vocational education has been entrusted with the important mission of cultivating elderly care service talents. The revised Vocational Education Law of the People's Republic of China (2022) stipulates in legal form the need to "accelerate the cultivation of technical and skilled talents in childcare, nursing, health and wellness, and housekeeping services." In 2024, twelve departments including the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the National Development and Reform Commission, and the Ministry of Education jointly issued the Opinions on Strengthening the Construction of the Elderly Care Service Talent Team, clearly supporting the multi-channel introduction of professionals in social work, rehabilitation services, elderly nutrition and psychological counseling. In 2023, the Ministry of Education issued the Guidelines for the Construction of First-Class Core Courses in Vocational Education, proposing the development of a curriculum system that meets the needs of the new era.

The social work major has unique advantages in cultivating elderly care service talents. As a profession centered on the core value of "helping people help themselves," social work plays an irreplaceable professional role in elderly needs assessment, case management, resource linkage, psychological support, and rights protection. However, the construction of curriculum teaching resources for the elderly care service direction of social work majors in higher

vocational institutions still faces numerous challenges and requires systematic research.

1.2 Practical Challenges

The current construction of curriculum teaching resources for elderly care service-oriented social work majors in higher vocational education faces the following prominent challenges.

First, resource fragmentation and lack of systematicity. Curriculum resources are scattered across different teaching platforms and carriers, lacking unified planning and integration. Existing research points out that vocational education curriculum resources "exist in a fragmented state, lacking semantic association" [1]. Teaching resources across different courses lack organic connections, making it difficult to form a synergistic educational effect.

Second, disconnection between resources and industry needs. The elderly care service industry is experiencing rapid technological iteration, but the updating of curriculum resources lags severely, with "their advancement far unable to keep up with changes in industrial technology" [1]. Textbook content is disconnected from enterprise job skills, resulting in graduates who struggle to meet the standards and skill requirements of industry talent needs [2]. Vocational education curriculum systems still exhibit structural contradictions in terms of practicality, job relevance, and assessment mechanisms [3].

Third, insufficient digital teaching resources. Although most higher vocational institutions have built hardware facilities such as smart classrooms, "resource types are becoming increasingly abundant, including texts, videos, simulation animations, virtual software, enterprise project cases, ideological and political education cases, etc., with digitalization and structuring continuously improving. However, these multimodal resources are stored in isolation on different platforms" [1]. Both the depth of development and the breadth of application of digital resources remain inadequate.

Fourth, unsystematic integration of value-based educational resources. Value-based educational elements lack systematic integration into professional courses. Some teachers exhibit problems such as "simple addition of ideological and political education to professional courses, detached from actual situations and teaching contexts" [4].

1.3 Research Significance

This study takes the social work major at a STEM-oriented higher vocational institution as a case study to systematically explore the concepts, pathways, and methods of constructing curriculum teaching resources for elderly care service programs. It aims to provide a referable practical paradigm for curriculum teaching resource construction in elderly care service majors in higher vocational education and to promote the improvement of talent cultivation quality.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Research on Curriculum Construction for Elderly Care Service Majors

In recent years, scholars have paid continuous attention to curriculum construction for elderly care service majors in higher vocational education. Liu Bo, using the Geriatric Rehabilitation and Training course as an example, proposed that curriculum construction should promote comprehensive "post-course-competition-certificate" education and establish a teaching resource sharing platform on the basis of fully leveraging the advantages of industry-education integration and school-enterprise cooperation [5]. The study emphasized that curriculum construction should "follow the principle of meeting professional post needs," "leverage the advantages of industry-education integration and school-enterprise cooperation," and "promote integration among post, course, competition, and certificate" [5]. Wang Li et al. analyzed the problems in teaching for elderly care service majors in higher vocational institutions against the background of industry-education integration, pointing out that "the knowledge system in professional course textbooks does not adequately match the professional knowledge and skills required by student employment positions," and "there are insufficient authentic or typical work tasks and projects included in professional core course textbooks" [2]. They proposed improvement strategies such as developing school-enterprise "dual-subject" textbooks, constructing contextualized teaching models, and improving teaching evaluation standards aligned with elderly care job requirements [2].

Against the background of the "1+X" certificate

system, scholars have explored reform pathways for elderly care service talent cultivation models. One study, taking the Elderly Health Care and Management major in higher vocational education as an example, explored talent cultivation model reform through the development of a talent cultivation plan integrated with elderly caregiver vocational skill levels, optimization of curriculum structure, and construction of a course-certificate integration system [6]. The comprehensive "post-course-competition-certificate" education model is considered an important component of the "Three Reforms" (teacher, textbook, and teaching method reforms), and the elderly care course is closely related to elderly care positions, elderly care service and health and social care vocational skills competitions, and 1+X elderly care and elderly caregiver vocational skill level certificates [7].

In terms of curriculum restructuring, research has pointed out that under the dual drivers of population aging trends and social digital transformation, the elderly care service field is experiencing structural changes in talent demand, and the current vocational education curriculum system for elderly care service and management majors still has structural contradictions in terms of practicality and job relevance [3]. The "progressive project-driven" practical teaching model based on "post-course-competition-certificate" integration, with professional competence cultivation at its core, establishes a stepwise progressive training framework from foundational to comprehensive levels [8].

2.2 Research on Gerontological Social Work Course Teaching

Research on the elderly care service direction of social work programs is also gradually deepening. Some scholars, starting with the "Gerontological Social Work" course in higher vocational education, have constructed growth practice projects to empower the elderly, adhering to the concept of "active aging" [9]. This study introduces empowerment theory into the practical training of gerontological social work courses, reflecting the unique value of social work in elderly care services—not only focusing on the daily care of the elderly but also on their capability development and life dignity. In terms of teaching methods, some studies have explored project-based teaching design for

gerontological social work courses, comprehensively elaborating on the ideas and practice of project-based teaching from three aspects: teaching design, teaching practice, and teaching effectiveness [10]. Gerontological social work course teaching from the perspective of life education has also attracted scholarly attention, emphasizing the integration of "love and care for life" into course teaching [11].

2.3 Research on Curriculum Teaching Resource Construction

At the theoretical level of curriculum resource construction, scholars have proposed various analytical frameworks. One study, from the perspective of the digital intelligence era, pointed out that curriculum resource development faces three major characteristic shifts: "the reconstruction of knowledge production models," "the digital transformation of resource forms," and "the personalized adaptation of learner needs." Resource development should shift from "preset transmission" to "generative co-creation," and from "physical carriers" to "virtual-real symbiotic intelligences" [12].

In terms of resource sharing mechanisms, one study proposed a four-in-one model of "platform support—interest coordination—intellectual property protection—feedback optimization," relying on technologies such as blockchain and federated learning to achieve trusted circulation and sustainable ecological development of curriculum resources [12]. Another study, taking the national-level teaching resource library for the Elderly Care and Management major in higher vocational education as an example, pointed out that "as a newly established and relatively weak major, Elderly Care and Management urgently needs scientific, systematic, and standardized teaching system support" [13].

In terms of value-based curriculum resource construction, one study proposed a "1+1+N" construction pathway based on the OBE (Outcome-Based Education) concept—building a digital value-based education service platform, forming a strong value-based education teaching team, and creating N value-based resource packages with student participation in mining and organizing. The study emphasized that "the construction of value-based curriculum is a systematic project" requiring "school—department—teacher—student

four-level integration" [4].

2.4 Research Commentary

Overall, scholars have achieved rich results in elderly care service major curriculum construction,

"post-course-competition-certificate"

integration, and curriculum resource development, laying a solid foundation for subsequent research. However, existing research still has the following shortcomings.

First, insufficient professional specificity. Existing research mostly targets elderly care service major groups as a whole, with relatively few studies specifically focusing on curriculum teaching resource construction for the elderly care service direction of the "social work major." Social work has a unique methodological system and value ethics in elderly care services, and its curriculum resource construction should differ from nursing, rehabilitation, and other majors, but systematic research in this area is currently lacking.

Second, insufficient attention to institutional types. Research on the distinctive curriculum resource construction of social work majors in STEM-oriented higher vocational institutions is particularly scarce. STEM-oriented institutions have disciplinary advantages in engineering and information technology. How to transform these advantages into distinctive teaching resources for social work majors is a topic in urgent need of research.

Third, insufficient systematic research. Existing research mostly focuses on single courses or single resource types, lacking systematic research along the full chain of "curriculum system—resource classification—construction pathway—application model."

Based on the above research gaps, this paper takes the social work major at a STEM-oriented higher vocational institution as a case study to systematically explore the concepts, frameworks, and pathways of curriculum teaching resource construction for elderly care service programs.

3. Concepts and Framework for Curriculum Teaching Resource Construction

3.1 Construction Concepts

The curriculum teaching resource construction in this study is guided by three major concepts.

First, the "Life Co-nurturing" concept. The

professional values of social work—"respect, equality, and helping people help themselves"—are integrated throughout the resource construction process. Different from traditional "knowledge-transmission-oriented" resource construction, this approach emphasizes that teaching resources are not only carriers of knowledge but also media for value shaping. The design of curriculum resources should serve the educational process of "influencing life with life," enabling students to experience professional values and cultivate professional ethics while using the resources.

Second, the "Dual-Region, Four-Integration" concept. Based on regional development needs, this approach promotes a "four-integration" resource construction pathway: integration of value-based education and practice—designing value-based educational resources and practical teaching resources in an integrated manner; integration of in-class and extra-curricular learning—developing classroom teaching resources and extra-curricular practical resources in a coordinated manner; industry-education integration—transforming authentic industry cases and job standards into teaching resources; and integration of science, education, and research—transforming research achievements and patent technologies into teaching resources.

Third, the "STEM Empowerment" concept. Fully leveraging the disciplinary advantages of STEM-oriented institutions in engineering and information technology to develop distinctive "technology-empowered social worker" teaching resources. Relevant technological resources are transformed into teaching resources for social work, forming a core competitiveness that distinguishes it from social work programs in liberal arts institutions.

3.2 Construction Principles

Curriculum teaching resource construction follows these principles: job alignment and competency orientation—resource development starts from the competency requirements of elderly care service positions; industry-education integration and school-enterprise collaboration—resource construction relies on school-enterprise cooperation platforms to achieve co-construction and sharing; digital empowerment and smart support—making full use of information technology to develop digital teaching resources; and value guidance and shaping—systematically integrating value-based

educational elements into all types of teaching resources.

3.3 Framework Design

Referring to the construction standards for vocational education professional teaching resource libraries, a "three-layer architecture" teaching resource system is constructed.

Curriculum layer: The "One Core, Four Extensions" curriculum cluster serves as the core framework. The "One Core" refers to the core methods of social work (case work, group work, and community work) as the professional foundation; the "Four Extensions" refer to the four major expansion directions: elderly care services, traditional Chinese medicine health and wellness, smart elderly care, and charity and psychological healing.

Module layer: Teaching content is modularized according to job competencies, decomposing course content into several independent teaching modules, each with clear learning objectives and evaluation standards.

Resource layer: Four categories of resources—textual, digital, practical, and value-oriented—are constructed collaboratively to form a resource supply system covering the entire process of pre-class, in-class, and post-class learning.

4. Practical Construction of the Curriculum Teaching Resource System

4.1 Curriculum System Optimization: The "One Core, Four Extensions" Curriculum Cluster

Based on industry research and job competency analysis, the original curriculum system was systematically optimized to construct the "One Core, Four Extensions" curriculum cluster framework.

Core Methods Curriculum Cluster (One Core): Supported by seven core professional courses including Case Work, Group Work, Community Work, and Social Work Administration, this cluster consolidates students' professional methodological foundation.

Elderly Care Services Curriculum Cluster (Extension 1): Includes courses such as Gerontological Social Work, Dementia Care Practice, Elderly Activity Planning and Design, and Elderly Exercise and Health, systematically cultivating students' specialized abilities in elderly services.

Traditional Chinese Medicine Health and Wellness Curriculum Cluster (Extension 2): Includes courses such as Traditional Chinese Medicine Health Techniques (entirely practice-based), TCM Dietetics, and Health Care, deeply integrating TCM health and wellness concepts and methods into social work professional training. Among these, Traditional Chinese Medicine Health Techniques is incorporated as a core professional course in the compulsory curriculum, reflecting the distinctive training feature of "deeply integrating TCM health and wellness concepts and methods into social work services."

Smart Elderly Care Curriculum Cluster (Extension 3): Includes Smart Health and Elderly Care and other courses, cultivating students' ability to use intelligent technologies in elderly care services.

Charity and Psychological Curriculum Cluster (Extension 4): Includes Charity Project Operations Practice, Psychological Healing, and Mental Health Assessment and Stress Relief, cultivating students' abilities in charitable project management and psychological services.

This curriculum system embodies the educational requirement of "post-course-competition-certificate" integration in vocational education. Course offerings are oriented toward job needs, integrating elderly caregiver vocational skill level standards and 1+X elderly care certificate assessment requirements into curriculum standards; practical courses are aligned with vocational skills competition standards; and course-certificate integrated courses directly connect to vocational skill level certificates.

4.2 Categorized Construction of Teaching Resources

4.2.1 Textual Resources

Loose-leaf and workbook-style new-form teaching materials are developed. Textbook compilation adheres to the school-enterprise "dual-subject" development model, with professional teachers and frontline elderly care institution staff co-writing to ensure textbook content closely matches job needs. Specialized training manuals for TCM health and wellness, elderly brain training, and other areas are developed. Curriculum standards for core professional courses are formulated, clarifying course objectives, content, and assessment requirements. Case libraries covering core

courses such as Case Work, Group Work, and Community Work are constructed, collecting and organizing authentic cases from the elderly care service field.

4.2.2 Digital Resources

University-level high-quality courses are developed, creating online-offline blended teaching resources. Brand courses from the Ministry of Education's County-Level Community Learning Center program have been approved and are openly shared nationwide. Digital educational resources for elderly care and accessibility knowledge popularization are developed. A professional science popularization public account is operated to achieve integrated online and offline science popularization services.

The development of digital resources follows the principle of "resource structuration." Multimodal resources are semantically associated to break down heterogeneous resource barriers; incremental learning technologies are used to automatically identify resource timeliness, capture industry data in real time, dynamically update industry technical standards and enterprise frontier technologies; and resource optimization signals are intelligently generated based on student learning behavior data to achieve personalized resource [2].

4.2.3 Practical Resources

Relying on multiple internship and practice bases, real project-driven practical training resources are developed. Practice bases cover multiple types including professional social work service organizations, elderly care service institutions, community and social organizations, and judicial and special education institutions. On-campus practical training facilities including case interview rooms, group work training rooms, and accessibility experience rooms are constructed.

Brand practical projects are developed, including rural elderly life story companionship projects, community governance and disability assistance service projects, "one-old-one-young" mental health service projects, and volunteer service cultivation platforms, forming a distinctive practical teaching resource system.

4.2.4 Value-Oriented Educational Resources

An elderly care service ethics case library is developed, collecting and organizing typical ethical dilemma cases in the elderly care service field. Outstanding collaborative education cases integrating "value guidance and professional

education" are formed, exploring educational models that deeply integrate value guidance with professional education. Distinctive service projects are transformed into value-oriented educational teaching resources.

Value-oriented elements are systematically integrated into core courses: "caring for others" and "core values of social work" are integrated into Case Work; grassroots social governance and related content are integrated into Community Work; and cultural confidence, inheritance and innovation, humanistic care, and respect for life are integrated into Traditional Chinese Medicine Health Techniques.

4.3 Resource Construction Pathways

4.3.1 School-Enterprise Collaborative Development

Deep cooperation with multiple industry enterprises is established to co-construct teaching resources. Enterprise technical personnel participate in curriculum standard formulation, textbook compilation, and case development to ensure the industry relevance of teaching resources. Multiple bases jointly establish industry-education integration communities.

4.3.2 Industry-Education Integration Community

Relying on the vocational education group platform, governments, industry enterprises, and relevant institutions are united to form industry-education integration communities. Community members jointly participate in curriculum resource development, practical training base construction, and talent cultivation plan revision, achieving the cultivation of compound talents integrating "profession + technology + service + training + education."

4.3.3 Competition-Driven Construction

Vocational skills competition standards are transformed into teaching resources. Students have won multiple awards in provincial-level vocational skills competitions in recent years, covering social work practice, health and elderly care, and other competition categories. Competition cases, scoring standards, and outstanding works are transformed into curriculum teaching resources to feed back into daily teaching.

4.3.4 Integration of Science, Education, and Research

Through the three pathways of "knowledge transformation, equipment transformation, and capacity transformation," research achievements

are transformed into teaching resources. Multiple teaching and research projects at various levels have been approved in recent years, multiple high-level papers have been published, and utility model patents and software copyrights have been obtained. Research achievements are transformed into internship task posts and teaching cases [14].

5. Resource Application and Teaching Model Reform

5.1 The "Post – Course – Competition - Certificate" Integrated Teaching Model

Elderly caregiver vocational skill assessment standards and 1+X elderly care certificate requirements are integrated into course teaching. Course assessment standards fully incorporate vocational skill standards and skills competition scoring standards, constructing a four-in-one curriculum evaluation system of "job requirements—course content—competition standards—certificate assessment" [7].

5.2 The "Dual - Community" Practical Teaching Model

On-campus community practice: Through practical training in courses such as Case Work, Group Work, and Community Work, students master professional skills in simulated contexts. On-campus practical training facilities including case interview rooms and group work training rooms are used for modular practical teaching. Off-campus community practice: Relying on multiple internship and practice bases, students engage in four-dimensional integrated practice of "internship for skill development, research for literacy improvement, science popularization for value dissemination, and training for service enhancement" in authentic community contexts. Each internship and practice base receives multiple interns annually on average, with sufficient internship cycles to ensure students' deep participation in practical work.

5.3 Online-Offline Blended Teaching

Blended teaching is conducted using digital teaching resources. Pre-class: preview materials and guided learning tasks are released through online platforms. In-class: information technology is used for interactive teaching. Post-class: knowledge consolidation and extended learning are carried out through platforms. An internship management platform

is used for internship process management, achieving standardized recording and evaluation of the entire internship process.

5.4 Value Guidance and Professional Education Integrated Ideological and Political Teaching Model

Value-based education is integrated throughout the internship and practice process. Collaborative education cooperation agreements are signed with multiple institutions to jointly carry out thematic practical education, volunteer service, and research activities. A distinctive service project system is formed, with faculty and students working with community workers and social workers to form joint service teams, exploring new mechanisms for collaborative grassroots governance.

6. Practical Outcomes

6.1 Resource Construction Outcomes

One brand course from the Ministry of Education's County-Level Community Learning Center program was approved; one university-level high-quality cultivation course was completed; multiple sets of digital educational resources were developed; multiple specialized training manuals were compiled; multiple on-campus practical training facilities were constructed; and multiple brand practical projects were developed, forming a relatively comprehensive curriculum teaching resource system.

6.2 Talent Cultivation Outcomes

Graduate employment rates remain at a relatively high level, with a professional alignment rate exceeding ninety percent. Students have won multiple awards in provincial-level vocational skills competitions. Outstanding graduates have emerged as "China's Most Beautiful Social Worker" and recipients of the Ministry of Education's Outstanding Grassroots Employment Scholarship. The major has been designated as a pilot unit for the Ministry of Education's 1+X elderly care and dementia elderly care vocational skill level certificates and a national-level teacher training base, demonstrating strong demonstration effects among similar institutions.

6.3 Social Service Outcomes

Social training reaching tens of thousands of

person-days was conducted, with vocational skill assessments for over one thousand person-times; both horizontal project funding and social training funding achieved significant results; over one hundred activities were published on the volunteer service platform, accumulating thousands of hours of volunteer service and serving tens of thousands of people; and dozens of reports from national, provincial, and municipal media outlets were obtained, effectively enhancing the professional social influence of the program.

7. Conclusion and Reflections

7.1 Research Conclusions

This study, with "Life Co-nurturing" as the core concept, "Dual-Region, Four-Integration" as the practical pathway, and "STEM Empowerment" as the distinctive support, has constructed a curriculum teaching resource system for elderly care service-oriented social work programs under the "One Core, Four Extensions" curriculum cluster framework. The study has formed the following main conclusions.

First, curriculum teaching resource construction should adopt systematic thinking for top-level design. Starting from curriculum system optimization, the "core methods + four extensions" curriculum cluster framework is constructed, and then four categories of teaching resources—textual, digital, practical, and value-oriented—are developed according to the framework, forming a full-chain resource construction loop of "curriculum system—resource classification—construction pathway—application model."

Second, industry-education integration is the core pathway for curriculum teaching resource construction. The four pathways of school-enterprise collaborative development, "post-course-competition-certificate" integration, competition-driven construction, and integration of science, education, and research support each other, jointly promoting the effective alignment of teaching resources with industry needs.

Third, digital empowerment is an inevitable trend in teaching resource construction. Digital resource construction should focus on the semantic association, dynamic updating, and personalized delivery of resources, achieving a transformation from "static archiving" to "dynamic optimization."

Fourth, social work majors in STEM-oriented higher vocational institutions have unique advantages. Transforming engineering, information technology, and other disciplinary resources into teaching resources for social work can form a core competitiveness distinct from social work programs in liberal arts institutions.

7.2 Existing Problems

The systematicity of resource construction needs strengthening. Some resource development remains fragmented, lacking unified resource construction standards and quality control mechanisms. The normalization mechanism for resource application is not yet perfect, and the normalized application of digital teaching resources in classroom teaching is insufficient. The depth of school-enterprise cooperation needs improvement, with some base cooperation remaining at a superficial level. The institutionalization of interdisciplinary resource integration is insufficient, with cooperation with other disciplines mostly taking the form of project-based temporary collaboration.

7.3 Improvement Directions

Align with the Ministry of Education's requirements for vocational education professional teaching resource library construction, and strive to upgrade the institutional-level resource library to provincial or even national level. Deepen the development of distinctive "technology-empowered social worker" resources, continuously integrating frontier content such as smart elderly care and age-friendly technologies into teaching resources. Expand regional resource sharing platforms to achieve cross-regional teaching resource sharing. Explore the application of new technologies such as artificial intelligence and virtual simulation in teaching resource development.

Acknowledgments

This work was supported by the 2024 Institutional Teaching and Research Project of Guangdong Mechanical & Electrical Polytechnic: "Research on Curriculum Teaching Resource Construction for Elderly Care Service Majors—A Case Study of Social Work Major" (No.YJYB2024-54); and the 2026 Institutional Continuing Education Quality Improvement Project of Guangdong Mechanical & Electrical Polytechnic (Construction Category): "Digital

Intelligence Empowering Grassroots Livelihood Services: Innovative Practice of Non-Academic Continuing Education Skill Improvement for Community Workers."

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