

Research on the "Task + Project"—Driven Teaching Mode of Economics Course under the Background of New Liberal Arts

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Abstract: The new liberal arts construction concept puts forward new requirements for college teaching in the aspects of multidisciplinary coordination, remolding, and talent training. To implement the new liberal arts education concept in the teaching reform of economics course, based on the learning theories of cognitivism and constructivism, this paper puts forward a teaching mode driven by "task + project", which makes students learn in a specific situation and integrates resources such as learning tasks, projects, activities, and achievements. Combined with the practice of the economics courses, this paper discusses the design of the teaching mode from four aspects: the reconstruction of the curriculum system, the creation of task and project situations, the integration of resources, and the evaluation system. "Task + Project"- Driven teaching better integrates the new liberal arts education concept, but the setting of curriculum tasks and project scenarios needs to be constantly improved according to the curriculum and students' situation.

1. Introduction

High-quality development is the inherent requirement of China's educational modernization, and the construction of new liberal arts is an important part of the high-quality development of higher education. The focus of the construction of new liberal arts is to cultivate high-quality compound talents with firm ideals and beliefs, strong comprehensive quality, and innovative ability, who can combine basic theory with applied theory, and take serving national development, and carry forward Chinese traditional culture as their responsibility. Marx emphasized in "Hegel's Critique of Philosophy" that "the realization degree of a theory in a country depends on the degree to which theory meets the needs of this country". Constructing new liberal arts is not only the development need of the information age, but also stems from the understanding of the value and significance of liberal arts education itself. Liberal arts are the general name of humanities and social sciences. Among them, the humanities mainly study people's ideas, spirits, emotions, and values. Social science mainly studies various social phenomena and their development rules. Humanities and social sciences have played an important role in the process of human understanding and transforming the world. This role is especially reflected in education. First of all, liberal arts education helps individuals become all-round developed and accompanied by civilized society by

enriching emotions, cultivating sentiments, developing potential, and establishing correct life beliefs and ideals. Secondly, liberal arts education can enable the educated to master the values, moral norms, and codes of conduct of their time and society, to realize mutual recognition between individuals and time and society. Thirdly, liberal arts education is the garden of human civilization, inheritance, and innovation, which is not only the transmission activity of history and culture, but also the innovation activity of history and culture.

The "newness" of new liberal arts is relative to traditional liberal arts. Traditional liberal arts attach importance to professional training, with obvious professional division and clear discipline in construction tasks. However, personnel training is difficult to understand, and it is easy to form professional barriers, which restricts the all-round development of talent. In November 2020, "New Liberal Arts Construction Declaration" issued by the Ministry of Education of China emphasized this point: "encouraging and supporting universities to set up interdisciplinary and interdisciplinary emerging interdisciplinary courses and practical teaching courses, and cultivating students' interdisciplinary knowledge integration abilities and practical abilities". It can be seen that the construction of new liberal arts puts forward higher requirements for curriculum construction and teaching modes. This article will combine the background of the construction of new liberal arts, take the teaching of economics as an example, and discuss the innovation of teaching modes suitable for the construction of new liberal arts.

2. Characteristics of New Liberal Arts Education

After the new liberal arts was proposed as one of the four new strategies of "new engineering, new medicine, new agriculture, and new liberal arts", the discussion on "New Liberal Arts" in Chinese universities mainly focused on the necessity of building "New Liberal Arts", the concepts and ideas of building "New Liberal Arts", and the ultimate value demands of building "new liberal arts" (Fang, 2020; Zhou and Li, 2019) [1, 2]. When summarizing the essence of the new liberal arts, some scholars have highlighted the basic understanding of building new majors, promoting new intersections, practicing new models, and building new courses (Fan, 2021; Sun *et al.*, 2020) [3, 4]. Some scholars have further discussed the construction of teachers (Su, 2022) [5], teaching mode, and teaching methods under the background of new liberal arts construction. Taking the construction of new liberal arts as the guidance of curriculum reform, clarifying the characteristics and requirements of the new liberal arts is the priority.

2.1. Interdisciplinary Collaboration

The "New Liberal Arts Construction Declaration" emphasizes the following three basic principles of upholding integrity and innovation, leading to value and promoting by classification, and encourages colleges and universities to set up interdisciplinary and interdisciplinary emerging interdisciplinary courses and practical teaching courses, to cultivate students' interdisciplinary knowledge integration abilities and practical ability. The new liberal arts are an improvement of the traditional liberal arts, trying to break the barriers of professional theory and discipline, and providing students with literacy training that better meets the needs of modern society based on a broad academic perspectives, open problem awareness, and profound academic accumulation. Traditional liberal arts are divided more and more finely, and their utilitarianism is too strong. They do not understand and pay enough attention to the essence of liberal arts and lack humanistic education. As Professor Zhou Zhiqiang of Nankai University said, "New Liberal Arts" is a backwash to the refinement, specialization, and disciplinary distribution of liberal arts knowledge.

In particular, new technologies such as the Internet have not only changed the way of human production and life, but also brought unprecedented social and spiritual problems. To solve these

problems, it is obvious that we cannot rely on a single discipline, but must cooperate with multiple disciplines. Therefore, new liberal arts research fields and research methods have emerged on the edge of multidisciplinary intersections, such as intelligent social science disciplines produced by the combination of artificial intelligence with sociology, law, and ethics, and new majors such as social computing, spatial econometrics and computational linguistics produced by the penetration of information technology in liberal arts. It can be seen that comprehensive, interdisciplinary, and integrated multidisciplinary collaboration should be one of the main characteristics of the new liberal arts.

2.2. Reconstruction of Value Concept

"New liberal Arts" is not "new technology + liberal arts" or "liberal arts + new technology", nor can it be regarded as a simple application of new tools and methods. Instead, it is necessary to truly embrace and integrate new technologies, reshape our values and thinking systems with the help of modern science and technology, and better respond to and explain the logical relationship between science and technology and scientific research in humanities and society. Chinese traditional education highlights the dimension of morality and the cultivation of a gentleman's personality. In modern times, our education emphasizes discipline and training useful talents to better adapt to the social division of labor. These are all important, but based on the reality of the changing world, we should reestablish the concept of complete human beings. In the era of attaching importance to science and technology, the humanistic dimension should be emphasized. Scientific work lacking humanistic care may lead mankind into an uncertain future. Similarly, humanistic research lacking a scientific dimension can easily break away from the rapidly changing times. The two complement each other.

2.3. New Personnel Training

The significance of the new liberal arts lies in emphasizing the integration of the professional foundation of the liberal arts. The training mode of the new liberal arts will help students lay a solid foundation of the pyramid of knowledge reserve and then gradually enter professional studies. The "newness" of the new liberal arts should first be the new educational concept of liberal arts, which is embodied in five aspects. In the training goal, we should try to realize the unity of training "people" and "a certain kind of people". In the training mode, we should break down the barriers between departments and specialties, between disciplines and between discipline and society, promote the organic integration of teaching and educating people, organically integrate discipline construction with specialty construction, integrate teaching content with students' understanding of the real society, and strive to cultivate high-quality talents with a critical spirit, innovative consciousness, high social responsibility, interdisciplinary knowledge, and international vision. In the teaching content, we should strive to realize the unity of civilization, inheritance, and innovation. In the educational concept, we should strive to achieve the unity of improving ability and cultivating personality. In the evaluation of talent, we should strive to achieve the unity of "going up" and "going down". Methodologically, the traditional humanities and social sciences methods should turn to the use of modern science and technology, information technology, and artificial intelligence, especially the use of algorithms to unify the qualitative and quantitative methods of liberal arts and highlight the scientific nature of new liberal arts. Promoting the cross-integration of humanities and social sciences and the new scientific and technological revolution and training, philosophical and social scientists in the new era are the key directions and main goals of the construction of new liberal arts.

3. "Task + Project"-Driven Teaching Mode

There are two paths for the construction of new liberal arts, one is to set up interdisciplinary new liberal arts majors such as medical ethics and intelligent politics based on technology integration and interdisciplinary, and the other is to upgrade the traditional liberal arts majors from the aspects of teaching content, means and mode (Li, 2023) [6]. No matter which path, it is necessary to reform the teaching mode to meet the new requirements of the new liberal arts. Teaching mode is a comprehensive form based on the systematic combination of teaching forms and methods in teaching practice (Babanski, 1998) [7]. The teaching mode should adapt to the characteristics of disciplines and courses. The Social Behavioral Economics Department of the National Science Foundation pointed out in the discipline development strategy report "Building the Mosaic" from 2010 to 2020 that academic research in the next 10 years is characterized by Data-intensive, transformative, collaborative, and Problem-driven. These four characteristics all point to interdisciplinary integration, and the data is intensive. Interdisciplinary and strong cooperation is almost synonymous with cross-integration, while problem-driven is forced cross-integration, because no question is about a single discipline, and it is necessary to break down discipline barriers, comprehensively consider and make coordinated policies to solve the problem. Therefore, problem-driven is the reverse machine to realize interdisciplinary integration. Task-driven and project-driven are typical problem-driven teaching modes.

3.1. Literature Review

Project-driven teaching is a student-centered teaching method. In the existing research, Xu et al. (2022) took project-based learning as the traction to drive the reform of teaching modes, such as the integration of curriculum content, the reform of teaching methods, the renewal of evaluation methods, and the deepening of innovative practice [8]. Zhou *et al.* (2022) further combined with the background of new liberal arts construction, emphasized innovation in multiple dimensions such as interdisciplinary technology empowerment, and teaching mode, and thought that taking real project practice as the traction (situation embedding), taking a scientific research platforms or new liberal arts laboratories as the carrier (situation construction) and supplementing immersive case teaching (situation awareness) were the main ways to carry out project-based learning [9]. Project-driven teaching method is a teaching method of "making work with the concept and principles of discipline as the center, selling the works to customers for the purpose, carrying out inquiry activities with the help of various resources in the real world, and solving a series of interrelated problems within a certain period". Chang *et al.* (2023) discussed the application of project-driven teaching mode in curriculum ideological and political education, and pointed out that the process of students completing the project is not only a process of inquiry, communication, innovation, and cooperation, but also a process of internalizing ideological and political elements, to achieve natural and real teaching effects, thus realizing full-time, whole-process and all-round education [10]. Task-driven teaching method is a kind of teaching method, which is based on interesting scenes that can stimulate students' learning motivation and curiosity and is closely combined with teaching content, so that learners can acquire knowledge and skills in the process of completing specific tasks (Lan *et al.*, 2021) [11]. Task-driven teaching method helps students learn new theoretical knowledge and skills in the process of completing tasks in the class, while the project-driven teaching method helps students master and flexibly apply knowledge and skills in the process of completing more complex projects outside class. Improve students' ability to solve project problems through multitask training. On the contrary, through the implementation of the project and the achievement of internalization, absorption, consolidation, and improvement of knowledge points within the task domain. The two levels are progressive, and they can be promoted interactively.

3.2. Relevant Theoretical Basis

"Task + Project"-Driven teaching model is based on cognitive and constructivist learning theories. Cognitive learning theory emphasizes that learning is a process of actively forming a cognitive structure, which is composed of basic concepts, basic ideas, or principles of subject knowledge. This theory emphasizes the systematicness and hierarchy of knowledge. Students' initiative and enthusiasm in learning. According to cognitive learning theory, it can be seen that constantly optimizing the curriculum system, highlighting the connection between courses and knowledge modules, and realizing the hierarchy of theoretical learning are the basis of improving practical teaching. Innovating teaching modes and stimulating students' initiative in learning are the key to improving teaching quality. Constructivist learning theory emphasizes the initiative, sociality, and situation of learning. In the process of interaction with real situations, learners use certain auxiliary means to reunderstand existing knowledge and construct new knowledge. From the constructivist learning theory, it can be seen that the consolidation of students' theoretical knowledge and the improvement of their ability to apply knowledge need the help of real situations and certain auxiliary means, which lays a theoretical foundation for "task + project"-driven teaching to a great extent [12].

4. Design of "Task + Project" Driven Teaching Mode and Its Application in Economics

4.1. Problems in Traditional Economics Teaching

In recent years, Chinese economic circles have gradually completed international integration, and a large number of Chinese scholars have quickly learned and mastered Western standardized research methods. However, there are some defects in the teaching mode of economics in content, form, and method, especially in cultivating students' cross-domain knowledge integration ability, which leads to a serious shortage of students' learning enthusiasm and initiative, and the serious disconnection between practical ability and theoretical knowledge, which cannot meet the requirements and goals of the construction of new liberal arts. It is embodied in the following aspects [13].

4.1.1. Failure to Integrate Effectively with Interdisciplinary Subjects

Economics, as a basic course of economics and management, is the theoretical basis of other courses of economics and management. Economics course has the characteristics of abstraction, professionalism, systematicness, and comprehensiveness. The intersection of economics and other disciplines is very rich, especially with the increasingly prominent role of information and natural science knowledge in economic development, information economy, knowledge, economy, and digital economy are all products of interdisciplinary. However, due to the lag in updating the knowledge system of economics, and the relative definition of teachers' teaching and scientific research business in functional units such as teaching and scientific research in colleges and universities, the teaching content of economics is still dominated by traditional classical economic principles, lacking effective cross-integration with other disciplines.

4.1.2. Low Degree of Integration between Economic Theory and Practice

Practical teaching and theoretical teaching are two important parts of economics teaching, which complement each other and are unified with each other. However, in actual teaching, on the one hand, economic practice often lags behind economic theory teaching, and the teaching content of economic theory is not closely related to social practice, even if there is a certain lag, resulting in

the theoretical knowledge cannot be applied in practice in time and effectively. On the other hand, influenced by the class hours and venues of economics practice, training, practice courses are often carried out in the form of "visiting" and "investigating", which makes it difficult to achieve the effect of applying theoretical knowledge to solve practical problems, resulting in insufficient pertinence and poor training effect of the practice training. Students' understanding and mastery of economic theory lack systematicness, which fails to lay a solid theoretical foundation for economic practice.

4.1.3. Lack of Innovation in Teaching Forms and Students' Low Enthusiasm for Participation

The study of economic theory is more centered on instructors, and students passively receive relevant knowledge, lacking discussion, team, and project learning, which greatly reduces students' interest and enthusiasm in learning. At the same time, most of the practical teaching links of economics include curriculum experiments, curriculum design, cognitive practice, production practice, and graduation practice, etc. Practical teaching achievements are often evaluated based on experimental reports, curriculum design reports, practice reports, etc. The contents of relevant reports are difficult to effectively reflect students' ability to apply theoretical knowledge to solve practical problems. Therefore, it is crucial to innovate the teaching mode, combine theory with practice, and stimulate students' enthusiasm for participation.

4.2. Design of "Task + Project" Driven Teaching Mode

Under the background of new liberal arts, to carry out economics teaching in the mode of "task + project" driving, it is necessary to start from four aspects to better realize interdisciplinary integration, including curriculum system reconstruction, task + project situation creation, resource integration, and evaluation system. The purpose is to put students in a specific situation to learn and integrate multiple learning tasks, projects, activities, resources, and achievements, thus forming a teaching structure of "controlling more with one", that is, one task controls multiple knowledge points and one project controls multiple subject knowledge.

4.2.1. Reconstruction of Curriculum System

This paper reconstructs the curriculum system from four aspects: curriculum content, the proportion of theory and practice, and teaching forms and methods. The first is to reconstruct the theoretical curriculum system, to straighten out the logical relations among the courses, the logical relations among the modules of knowledge, and the cross-relations of subject knowledge, and to help students understand and accept theoretical knowledge. Secondly, we reconstruct the ratio of theoretical links to real links and further enhance the training ratio of real links. Thirdly, it will reconstruct the form and methods of practical teaching, and rely on discipline competition, innovation and entrepreneurship to carry out practical teaching links such as excellence products, elective courses, amateur tutoring, experiments and second courses to provide students with a wide space for independent learning. Advanced information technology is widely adopted, and students' learning initiative and enthusiasm are fully stimulated through the mixed teaching mode combining online and offline, and students' participation in practical learning is increased.

4.2.2. "Task + Project" Situation Creation

In order to implement the new liberal arts concept, it is necessary to fully consider the authenticity of the learning situation and the interdisciplinary nature when creating the learning situation. Learning tasks are consciously created from cross- and interdisciplinary topics. Task

refers to the work that can trigger students' learning actions. Students can learn economic knowledge, practice skills, and apply methods in the process of completing the tasks carefully designed by teachers. At the same time, teachers integrate ideological and political content into their tasks to guide students' emotional attitudes and values.

Concerning the creation of project scenarios, teachers can take root in China's economic management practices, make full use of the ever-changing management changes in the past 40 years of China's reform and opening up and "unprecedented changes in a hundred years", capture new problems and opportunities emerging in the economic changes through problem orientation, and reveal the theoretical logic and practical laws of China's rapid economic development. In addition, based on students' mastery of relevant theories and basic practical abilities, students can be organized to participate in discipline competitions and innovation and entrepreneurship competitions at corresponding stages through comprehensive mobilization. Taking practical problems in professional fields and cross-disciplinary fields as research objects, the construction of interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary competition teams effectively promotes the integration of cross-disciplinary knowledge and enhances students' teamwork ability and innovation ability. Teachers should train students to form a positive interaction of "classroom basic teaching + classroom task completion + competition project practical exercise + innovation and practice ability improvement", so as to improve students' practical ability, interdisciplinary cooperation ability and innovation and practice ability

4.2.3. Resource Integration

In the process of "task + project" - driven teaching of economics, it is necessary to promote the integration of teaching resources through the creation of tasks and projects, and embody the "newness" of new liberal arts by integrating book resources with multimedia resources, original resources with new discipline resources, campus resources and social resources. Instructional design should make comprehensive use of the above-mentioned resources to realize the reasonable collocation and combination of resources. In a task-led way, students are encouraged to read more, think more and do more, broaden their horizons, update their ideas, and train their abilities.

4.2.4. Evaluation System

The new liberal arts education concept requires that teachers should be given greater freedom. In the evaluation of teachers, the first thing is to loosen teachers moderately, reduce rigid requirements such as performance appraisal and publishing papers, eliminate utilitarian and impetuous school-running atmosphere, advocate academic autonomy and professors' research, establish an academic community evaluation system, and attach importance to teachers' real educational ability and contribution. On this basis, teachers have greater control over courses and freedom of teaching and assessment. In view of the economics course, it is necessary to establish a teaching quality standard system and evaluation system, and focus on cultivating students' theoretical thinking ability to grasp, refine, demonstrate, and solve the problems of the time. The specific assessment forms should be diversified, taking groups as the unit, and the assessment contents include: mastering knowledge points, achieving curriculum tasks, practical investigation reports, subject competitions and writing curriculum papers, etc. Students not only learn and consolidate theoretical knowledge, but also enhance the ability to refine research results.

To sum up, adopting the "task-project-driven" teaching mode is helpful to deepen the teaching reform of the economics courses, integrate the new liberal arts concept into every link of the teaching process, realize the renewal of course content, and help students master knowledge and skills skillfully, think carefully and flexibly, develop an attitude of paying attention to reality and

solving practical problems, and establish correct values. However, in the process of actual teaching reform, how to integrate the new liberal arts teaching concept into the curriculum teaching, how to effectively realize the interdisciplinary integration, and how to set personalized curriculum tasks and projects according to students' specific conditions still need to be considered repeatedly and strive for perfection.

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