

Research on the Reform of International Trade Practice Curriculum Based on the Concept of OBE

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Abstract: As a significant region of the Silk Road Economic Belt, Shaanxi is witnessing an increasing number of enterprises going global through investment and collaboration with foreign countries under the "One Belt and One Road" initiative. This has created a demand for specialists who possess a strong theoretical foundation in international economy and trade, as well as expertise in international economic cooperation policies [1]. To meet this demand, we have reformed the curriculum of the International Trade Practice course, with a focus on improving the quality of student learning and cultivating application-oriented talents. The innovative curriculum reform revolves around the concept of OBE and aims to enhance the theoretical knowledge of students, develop their professional acumen, and improve their ability to think critically. The course will equip students with the necessary skills required by enterprises, such as independent learning, innovation, and problem-solving. Ultimately, this will help students better adapt to the demands of society.

1. Introduction

International Trade Practice is a crucial component of the curriculum for international trade majors, providing both theoretical knowledge and practical experience. The course is designed to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and quality required for foreign trade business positions. Students are expected to grasp the fundamentals of international trade theory and policy, understand import and export business processes, and master import and export business operations, as well as become familiar with international trade practices and rules. The course covers a wide range of topics, including the development of international trade, concepts, types, and modes, international trade theory and policy, import and export business foundations, import and export business operations, and new trade patterns [2]. By implementing the OBE concept through the reform of the international trade practice course, students can better adapt to market demands and become the talents that society needs.

2. Research Status

Guan Zhijie, Chen Li, and Jiang Guogang (2018) conducted a comprehensive analysis of the

talent cultivation objectives of international economics and trade majors of Changzhou University, using the concept of OBE education. They took the example of formulation of these objectives and discussed various aspects such as school orientation, professional social demand, cultivation objective disclosure methods, cultivation objective evaluation mechanism, reasonableness evaluation, and cultivation objective revisions during the cultivation process.

Haizhi Hu and Fengjiao Wu (2021) discussed the repositioning of talent cultivation objectives and the effective improvement of teaching mode, curriculum system, and innovation and entrepreneurship education for the high-quality development of international economics and trade majors. They used the concept of OBE education as a guide to provide a reference for the construction of high-quality development.

Yu Shuxiu and Zhou Ende (2019) proposed countermeasures such as the reform of the curriculum system to meet internationalization demand, the exploration of diversified learning modes through the Internet, the construction of faculty around the "Belt and Road" strategy and the demand for "innovation and entrepreneurship", and the active integration into the construction of the national innovation knowledge system. They used the concept of OBE education to guide the reform of the curriculum system and explore diversified learning modes.

Yu Dan and Li Jing (2022) have introduced the concept of outcome-based education (OBE) into the talent cultivation of international trade majors in applied colleges and universities. They have made adjustments and improvements in talent cultivation objectives, teaching methods, and approaches to cultivate foreign trade talents with good cross-cultural communication ability, international business development ability, and innovation and entrepreneurship ability.

Fengjiao Wu (2023) analyzed the connotation elements of the OBE concept and followed the principle of reverse design and one-to-one correspondence. Through the design of the implementation path of "industry demand - training objectives - graduation requirements - curriculum system," they adjusted the talent cultivation program for international economics and trade majors. The personnel training program for international economics and trade majors was adjusted to achieve the organic combination of professional knowledge, ability structure, and vocational quality cultivation to meet the talent needs of the current foreign trade development.

To sum up the literature, the approach to education is designed to ignite students' passion for learning through a variety of teaching methods. From scenario setting and role playing to flipped classroom and blended online and offline learning, we employ a range of techniques to engage students. By incorporating heuristic and task-driven teaching, as well as real-world case studies and diversified assessment, our aim is to equip students with the skills they need to address complex international trade challenges and experience a sense of accomplishment.

3. Problems in Teaching International Trade Practice

Currently, the teaching approach for international economics and trade majors is focused on implementing the Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) concept. This approach emphasizes the crucial role of students in the learning process, and focuses on evaluating their performance and learning outcomes, as opposed to solely relying on exams and test scores. The aim is to continuously improve the course teaching and enhance students' professionalism and application skills [3]. For instance, the course on International Trade Practice incorporates project-based teaching, which helps to refine professional and technical skills, and aligns with the actual needs of enterprises. Nonetheless, despite these efforts, there are still some challenges encountered during the teaching process:

(1) The relationship between the course undertakings is not clear

Currently, the knowledge module of International Trade Practice is a self-contained system.

However, the content of subsequent courses, such as International Settlement, has both repetitive and separate parts, and their relevance is not strong. This means that students who take the "International Trade Practice" course may lack comprehensive understanding of the entire process of international trade due to incomplete practical training programs. As a result, their knowledge and application of skills may be limited [4].

(2) Teaching content is not optimized

The curriculum of International Trade Practice is primarily based on what educators believe students should learn. However, since professional teachers have little practical experience, they cannot fully develop teaching content that caters to the needs of society and students. Meanwhile, social progress continues to demand high efficiency and rapid development on a daily basis. However, the current teaching content lacks the introduction of new knowledge and skills [5], making it unable to fully meet the demands of society and enterprises, and unable to adapt to new training objectives.

(3) Disconnect between theory and practice

The course has two components - theoretical teaching and practical operation. However, the practical operation only involves arranging traditional practices for students, which is not in line with current social developments. Moreover, there is no integration of enterprise demand and feedback; students lack a proper understanding of actual trade processes such as bill making, auditing, dispute resolution, and other practical issues [6].

(4) Low motivation of students

The international trade practice course combines theoretical knowledge with practical application, requiring students to demonstrate professional abilities.

4. International Trade Practice Course Reform Content

(1) A teaching system that combines "professional knowledge and skills" with "comprehensive practical training" can be built by combining "international trade practice" with "international trade comprehensive practical training" [7]. This system aims to create a strong connection between the front and back of the teaching process, by closely linking teaching content with student ability training. "International Trade Practice" is a module-based learning and training program that covers all the cutting-edge knowledge relevant to international trade, as shown in Figure 1. "Comprehensive Practical Training in International Trade" is a follow-up to the course, which builds on the knowledge acquired during the "International Trade Practice" program and applies it across the entire process of international trade.

(2) The teaching content is being reshaped to become more output-oriented, based on the concept of OBE. This involves reforming the teaching content and integrating real-life problems, disciplinary competitions, actual trade disputes in enterprises, teachers' scientific research, and teaching and research projects throughout the teaching process. This integration will help students to understand the content in depth and keep it updated [8]. Additionally, the teaching results will serve as a basis for disciplinary competitions, enterprises' actual trade disputes, and teachers' scientific research and teaching and research projects. This will help to support and prepare for discipline competitions and actual trade disputes in enterprises. Figure 2 shows the specific relationship between teaching results and these competitions and disputes.

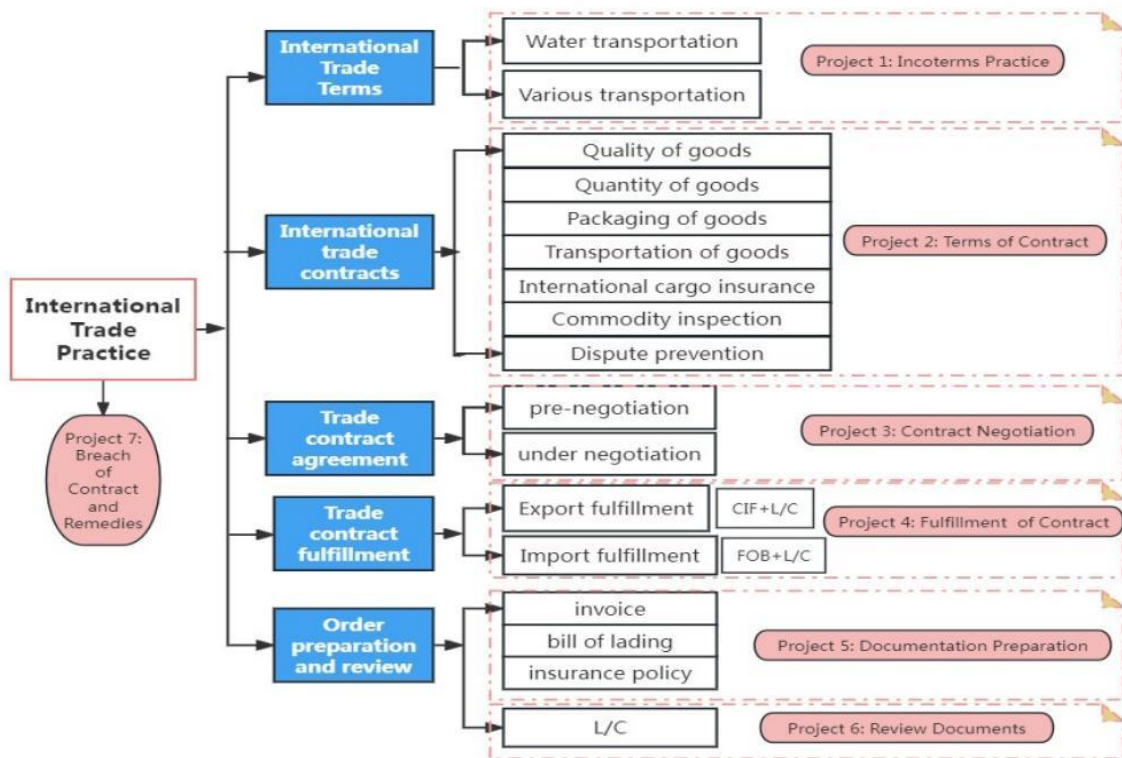


Figure 1: Project-based teaching of international trade practices

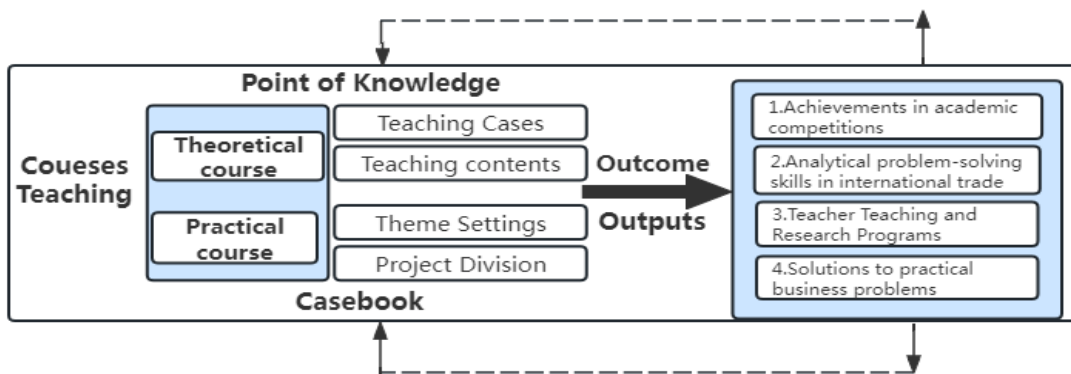


Figure 2: Teaching of international trade practice courses

(3) The teaching method of "student-centered" is based on the concept of OBE and follows the talent cultivation program. It emphasizes the central position of students in education, and aims to change the traditional teacher-centered teaching mode to a student-centered one. The new mode is focused on students' learning outcomes and personal development, and provides teaching activities and educational resources that prioritize these aspects. To achieve this, highly participatory methods such as scenarios, role-playing, task-driven methods, flipped classroom, and combining online and offline resources are adopted. This ensures that students are able to actively participate in the learning process and that their personalized needs are met. By prioritizing their learning outcomes and personal development, students are able to smoothly transform their knowledge into professional skills. This ensures that the training objectives of the course are achieved, and that they acquire the professional skills they need [9].

(4) A combination of scenario setting and role-playing can be used in the classroom to teach

International Trade Practice. By combining different scenarios, we can fully engage students and encourage them to participate in role-playing activities. This method can also be used to integrate the teaching content of various projects, allowing students to understand the knowledge through their role identity, and helping them to master relevant employment skills;

① To enhance college students' learning experience, we can utilize resources such as Rain Classroom and MOOC. By combining online and offline teaching methods, we can take students as the main focus and expand their knowledge horizons using online resources. Offline teaching should be tailored to students' needs. We can use Rain Classroom to improve the preview, learning and consolidation of the content before, during and after class;

② The combination of flipped classroom and diversified assessment methods is a proven way to transform traditional teaching methods. By adopting a flipped classroom approach, students become active learners and are encouraged to participate in teaching. Incorporating students' mutual evaluation into the assessment mechanism enriches the learning experience. With diversified assessment methods, students can showcase their knowledge and skills in various formats. This approach not only improves student engagement but also enhances learning outcomes [10].

(5) To ensure high-quality teaching, it is crucial to have an evaluation process that focuses on continuous improvement. This can be accomplished by optimizing the course assessment and establishing a comprehensive assessment mechanism that considers the learning progress of students before, during, and after the class. The evaluation results should be based on the course assessment, feedback from students and teachers of subsequent courses, and questionnaire surveys from graduates and employers. These results can serve as a valuable tool for teaching improvement, case base updates, and knowledge point enhancements [11]. By continuously analyzing and linking each evaluation result, we can effectively optimize teaching and promote growth in every aspect of the process. For a more detailed understanding, please refer to Figure 3.

① Before the class, it is necessary to strengthen the connection between schools and enterprises, increase the practice opportunities for professional teachers and increase the practical experience;

② During the class, the smoothness of the network of teachers in the class, online and offline combination; Coordination of the college training room to provide simulation sites, practical experience of situational teaching;

③ After class, we need to collect graduates, employers questionnaire survey results, combined with the results of the survey to update the teaching content.

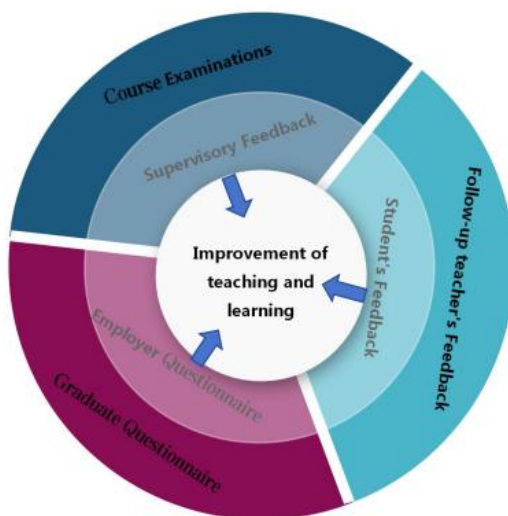


Figure 3: Teaching Evaluation System for International Trade Practice Course

5. International Trade Practice Program Reform Goals

(1) To enhance the application and innovation system for training students, it is important to clearly define the relationship between courses. A good approach could be to unify the knowledge points of "International Trade Practice" and "Comprehensive Practical Training in International Trade". The former should serve as a foundation for special training while the latter should be a collection of skills and knowledge to cultivate students' systematic and comprehensive application skills [12]. The students' evaluation of their practice improvement is shown below in Figure 4 (Scores range from 1 to 5, with the larger scores representing the higher levels of improvement).

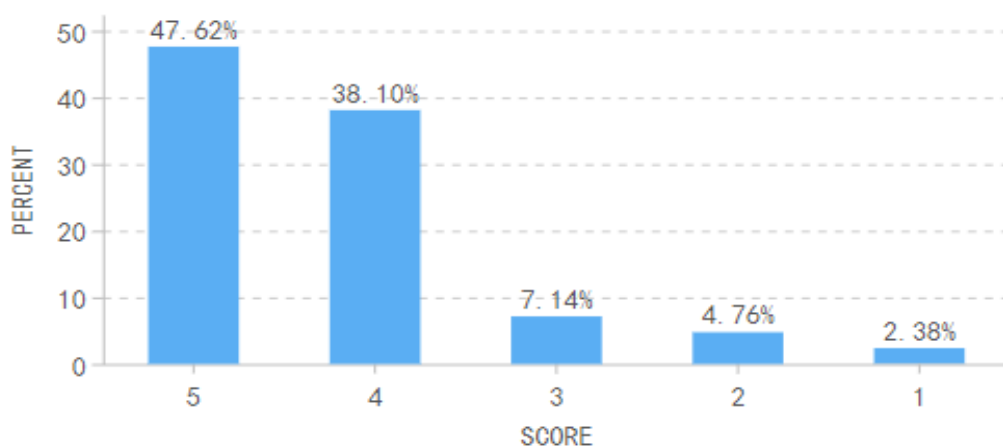


Figure 4: Percentage increase in student practice skills

(2) The goal is to integrate resources and improve the quality of teaching content. This will be achieved through the application of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) principles, as well as adhering to the guidelines of the talent cultivation program and syllabus. The approach will involve conducting thorough research on the actual needs of the market and enterprises, by employing the "visiting enterprises and expanding jobs" method. Additionally, the characteristics of the competition of the discipline of international trade will be analyzed. To further optimize the teaching content, teachers' scientific research and teaching and research resources will be widely mobilized. This will be achieved by combining relevant network teaching resources with the aforementioned methods.

(3) To enhance the quality of teaching cases and bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical applications, we propose a strategy that involves incorporating international trade cases and disciplinary competitions. By utilizing real-life issues and exemplary cases from disciplinary competitions, we can create project tasks that teach students how to deal with complex problems related to international trade. This approach will help cultivate students' problem-solving skills and prepare them for real-world challenges.

(4) We use a variety of teaching methods to motivate students' thirst for knowledge. By incorporating scenario setting, role playing, flipped classroom, online and offline learning, diversified assessments, and more, we facilitate project and case-based teaching that is heuristic in nature. We focus on task-driven, competition-based learning to tackle real-world international trade problems, which gives students a sense of accomplishment.

6. Conclusion

The international trade major is actively promoting the implementation of the OBE education concept. When designing the talent cultivation program, they take the industry standards and education standards as the driving force. They formulate the cultivation objectives, refine the graduation requirements that should be possessed to reach the cultivation objectives, and design the curriculum system to support these graduation requirements. For each specific course, the syllabus links the course content and the course system. The purpose of supporting the course system is achieved by clarifying the course orientation, learning effect, and lecture content in the syllabus. To do this, they establish a comparison table between graduation requirements and professional cultivation objectives, a comparison table between the curriculum system and professional cultivation objectives and graduation requirements, a correspondence matrix between the curriculum system and graduation requirements, as well as a comparison table between the teaching content and the teaching effect. They break down the graduation requirements into first-level and second-level indicators and describe the methods and purposes of reaching them, as well as the corresponding related teaching activities. Based on the concept of OBE, International Trade Practice takes actual projects as the object. They comprehensively cultivate students' abilities in teamwork, trade negotiation, contract conclusion, document examination and dispute resolution. They also cultivate students' preliminary ability to reach international trade contracts; so as to contribute to the market needs of Shaanxi region and regions along the "Belt and Road".

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