

Integrating Courses with Competitions to Promote Learning: Driving Innovation in General Education Pedagogy--A Case Study of the 'Public Relations and Social Etiquette' Course

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Abstract: *The integration of courses and competitions is one of the important paths for the reform of the teaching model in colleges and universities. This study presents the overall process of the integration of courses and competitions in the course "Public Relations and Social Etiquette". Through exploring and practicing the new teaching model of integrating courses and competitions, it provides useful references and models worthy of reference for the talent cultivation of economics and management majors in colleges and universities. Meanwhile, it is proposed that improvements and enhancements should be made in multiple aspects such as curriculum design, teaching staff construction, competition system and incentive mechanism, as well as practical teaching and school-enterprise cooperation in the future, so as to promote the development of higher education in a direction that attaches greater importance to quality, efficiency and characteristics.*

Keywords: *the Integration of Courses and Competitions; General education courses; Teaching Reform*

1. Introduction

With the advent of the era of globalization and informatization, the society's demand for talents in economics and management is becoming increasingly diverse. They are required not only to possess solid professional knowledge and practical skills but also to have a broad vision, interdisciplinary thinking ability and good humanistic qualities. However, despite the continuous innovation of educational technologies, the teaching models of many general education courses in economics and management in colleges and universities remain rather traditional. The teaching of general education courses often focuses on the imparting of theoretical knowledge and lacks innovation. This is mainly manifested in aspects such as single teaching methods, outdated course content and insufficient teacher-student interaction^[1]. These problems not only affect students' learning interests and enthusiasm but also limit the cultivation of their innovation and practical abilities. And the integration of courses and competitions, that is, "learning in competitions and competing in learning", is undoubtedly an effective path to promote the teaching reform of general education courses in colleges and universities, and relevant research has important theoretical and practical significance.

2. Background of the application of the teaching model of integrating courses and competitions

The theoretical basis of the courses-competitions integration teaching mode is mainly derived from modern learning theory and its practical application. The main connotation of modern learning theory is: the multi-dimensional nature of the learning subject^[2]. That is, the purpose of learning is not only to acquire knowledge, but also includes individual growth, social service, career development and other multiple dimensions. For example, through the introduction of project competitions, students can not only master professional knowledge in the learning process, but also improve their practical abilities, team spirit and professional qualities to meet the dual needs of individual growth and social development^[3]. In the teaching model integrating courses and competitions, teachers are not only the transmitters of knowledge, but also the guides and supporters of students in the process of competitions^[4].

Under the background of current higher education reform, the integration of courses and

competitions, as an innovative teaching mode, can not only promote the development of disciplines, but also be an inevitable choice for talent cultivation by integrating the elements of disciplinary competitions into daily teaching^[5]. For example, “Management Communication” and “Public Relations and Social Etiquette” are all basic courses of human resource management major, and these courses can adopt the teaching mode of “race in the middle school, learning in the race” to stimulate the internal drive of students’ learning and enhance their innovative ability and employment competitiveness. These courses can all adopt the teaching mode of “integrating courses and competitions” of “learning through competitions and competing through learning” to stimulate students’ internal driving force to learn, enhance their innovative ability and strengthen their competitiveness in employment. The following takes the course “Public Relations and Social Etiquette” as an example for illustration.

According to the knowledge points of the course, “Public Relations and Social Etiquette” can be divided into four competition modules according to the content of the course: basic theory of public relations, crisis public relations, public relations activities planning and social etiquette norms. Each module adopts the unit competition form in units of team groups to promote learning through competitions and replace evaluations with competitions. In the module of “public relations activity planning”, the teaching programme of discipline competition is designed to be deeply integrated with “Liaoning Provincial Human Resources Big Data Competition”. Through the integration of courses and competitions, it helps students to master the basic theoretical knowledge of public relations planning and at the same time, to be able to keep up with the times, to use human resources big data skills to solve practical problems, to improve data analysis and decision-making ability, to further enhance the practical nature of the course, and to improve the students’ teamwork ability and vocational literacy.

3. Process of innovative teaching model design

3.1. Teaching objectives

Knowledge objectives: Master the basic concepts, principles and application scenarios of public relations event planning.

Ability objectives: Cultivate students’ innovative thinking and executive ability, and enable them to optimize public relations strategies by combining data analysis knowledge and contribute to the development of cultural tourism brands in hometown.

Quality objectives: Cultivate students’ team spirit and professional qualities.

3.2. Teaching key points and difficulties

Teaching key points: Students need to collect and analyze information such as hometown cultural tourism resources, brand status, market trends and other information, to understand the advantages and disadvantages of hometown brands.

Design teaching cases for public relations event planning and implementation.

Teaching difficulties: In designing teaching cases, how to stimulate students’ internal driving force for learning.

3.3. Teaching methods and reference materials

Teaching methods: Unit competitions and replacing evaluations with competitions. Such forms can make full use of the current Internet and communication technologies, which can fully stimulate students’ curiosity and sense of participation, and increase the interest of courses.

The reference materials are generally mainly textbooks edited by teachers of our school, especially practical training textbooks.

3.4. Teaching content and design of integrating courses and competitions

Design competition projects closely related to course knowledge modules. For example, the public relations themed activity planning module sets up a “simulated press conference”, “I speak for myself and cheer for my hometown”, “It’s good to know you!” and other unit competitions. The following takes the “I speak for myself and cheer for my hometown” module competition project as an example

for illustration.

3.4.1. Participants and grouping

Participants: All students who have elected this course.

Division of labor and preparation: Students will be grouped in units of three, with the team leader taking the responsibility. It is encouraged to form teams across different classes, dormitories and genders, so as to promote the complementarity of knowledge and skills. The division of labor within each group should be clear, and tasks should be completed through collaboration.

3.4.2. Topic selection and planning

With the rapid development of the integration of culture and tourism, all regions are actively creating cultural and tourism brands with local characteristics to enhance the popularity and attractiveness of their hometowns. This project aims to provide strong support for the competition project of endorsing hometown brands through the combination of public relations planning and human resources big data. According to the knowledge points of the course “Public Relations and Social Etiquette”, there are public relations planning and social etiquette norms.

Based on the theme of the competition unit, the groups will determine specific topics and formulate detailed public relations planning schemes through the flipped classroom, including goal setting, audience analysis, strategy formulation, implementation plan, budget and so on. To facilitate the integration of courses and competitions and ensure the controllability of the time and quality of the evaluation, 3 to 4 team groups are ensured to participate in the same unit competition project.

3.4.3. Training and guidance

In line with the current domestic development trend of public relations that emphasizes brand image and in accordance with the basic requirements of the Liaoning College Students' Human Resources Big Data Competition, the requirements of the competition project activities are set as follows:

Teams will participate in the competition in groups. The content mainly consists of two parts: First, introduce yourself and cheer for yourself; second, hold up signs to cheer up your hometown! Create and shoot a positive-energy PPT and short video that fully reflects the sunny and energetic spirit of contemporary college students and showcases their cultural confidence. The video should last for 3 to 6 minutes.

Video requirements: In accordance with the requirements of formal competitions, the images and sounds should be clear (with a resolution of 1920*1080). Shoot in landscape mode, and the format should be MP4. The length of the video should be 3 to 5 minutes, and the size should not exceed 700MB. It should be accompanied by a simultaneous commentary recording. Group members should pay attention to their dress and demeanor and appear in the video with their faces shown.

The teaching team offers necessary guidance such as public relations theories, case analyses, and planning techniques. Meanwhile, students who won awards in previous competitions will be invited to share their practical experience online through communication aids such as Tencent Meeting.

3.4.4. Execution and display

The activity groups will implement the competition projects according to the planning schemes, prepare project display materials (such as PPTs, videos and any other materials.), and present the planning process on-site in the classroom at specific times.

3.4.5. Competition presentation and evaluation

The participating groups will display their competition projects within the specified time for the topic. A student jury group consisting of seven people will conduct scoring and make comments. The scoring system adopts a 100-point scale, and the evaluation will cover five aspects including project creativity, teamwork, PPT production, video effect, and demeanor and appearance (with 20 points for each aspect). On-site, the student jurors will give scores, make comments and explain the reasons for the scores. Finally, the teacher will summarize.

3.4.6. Explanation of replacing evaluation with competition

The composition of students' final grades is as follows: the team performance accounts for 40%, the individual's usual performance accounts for 30% and the in-class tests account for 30%. The score of the group in this unit's competition project belongs to the team performance and makes up 40% of an

individual's final grade at the end of the semester.

4. Innovative features and effects of the teaching model

4.1. Innovative features

4.1.1. Integrate courses with competitions and replace evaluations with competitions

The unit competition projects under the content knowledge modules are closely aligned with the requirements of relevant domestic competitions. They are included in the students' overall grades throughout the whole process. Guided by innovative thinking, replacing evaluations with competitions helps to enhance students' teamwork abilities and professional qualities.

4.1.2. Taking students as the main body, establish a detailed feedback mechanism

The judges composed of students, together with the audience team, will conduct on-site scoring and comments, and finally the teacher will make a summary. Through the ways of the interaction of students and putting themselves in others' shoes, students can better understand the essence of public relations activity planning and promote the continuous improvement of the unit competition projects.

4.2. Teaching results

The teaching model that courses-competitions integration has achieved remarkable teaching results. After the training of competition and evaluation under the integration of courses and competitions, students majoring in Human Resource Management at Shenyang Aerospace University began to take the initiative to form teams and participate in relevant domestic competitions starting from their sophomore year. For example, in the past three years, students from the 2017 to 2019 cohorts majoring in Human Resource Management have successively won many awards, such as the national third prize of the Liaoning Provincial Collage Students' Market Survey and Analysis Competition, the first prize of the Liaoning Provincial Human Resources Big Data Competition and the second prize of the Challenge Cup Liaoning College Students' Extracurricular Academic Science and Technology Contest. Among them, multiple papers submitted for the competitions have been publicly published. For instance, five articles including the work titled "An Empirical Study on the Impact of the Marketing Method of Grabbing Red Packets at Network on the Purchasing Behavior of College Consumers", which won the second prize in the Liaoning Provincial College Students' Market Survey and Analysis Competition, have been publicly published in academic journals such as "Foreign Economic Relations & Trade". Meanwhile, the course "Public Relations and Social Etiquette" has been rated as an offline first-class course in Liaoning Province and is also a pilot course for non-standard examination answers at Shenyang Aerospace University. The teaching model of "integrating courses with competitions and promoting learning through evaluation" has been well received by students, and its teaching effectiveness has been further verified in practice.

4.3. Application promotion

The integration of courses and competitions has provided useful references and exemplary value for the teaching reform and innovation of general courses in management. The person in charge of the teaching team has successively edited and published four relevant general textbooks, including "Theory and Practice of Public Relations", "Practical Etiquette Training Course", "Crisis Management Practice and Skills" and "Perfect Eloquence Training Course". In addition, 10 educational reform papers related to this have been written and published.

Micro-lectures for this course have already been recorded, and online materials such as test question banks, exercise question banks and case banks have been established. It is planned to be launched on the "Xueyin Online" platform affiliated with the Superstar Group in Liaoning Province in 2025. As a course for cross-university credit transfer, this teaching model of integrating courses and competitions can provide more support for cultivating high-quality and innovative talents across disciplines, grades and schools.

5. Analysis on the path of the future development of the teaching form of “the integration of courses and competitions”

Through the above discussion and analysis of the teaching reform cases of integrating courses with competitions in economic and management general courses in colleges and universities, this paper holds that there are certain inspirations for the teaching reform of integrating courses with competitions in economic and management general courses in colleges and universities. However, the teaching reform of "the integration of courses and competitions" should be an all-round and multi-level reform. In the future, economic and management general courses can consider making improvements from the following aspects in order to further enhance the teaching quality and students' learning outcomes.

5.1. Optimize course design and teaching content

Colleges and universities should continuously optimize the course design of economic and management general courses to ensure that the course content not only conforms to the frontiers of the discipline but also stays close to practical applications. In the course design, more practical cases and hot issues related to economic management can be incorporated to enhance students' learning interests and participation. Meanwhile, teaching content should be flexibly adjusted according to students' professional backgrounds and interest characteristics to achieve personalized teaching.

5.2. Strengthen the construction and training of the teaching staff

It is very important to strengthen the construction of the teaching staff for economic and management general courses. Colleges and universities should intensify the training of teachers to enhance their professional qualities and teaching abilities. In particular, teachers should be encouraged to actively participate in academic research and practical projects so as to improve their ability to transform theoretical knowledge into practical abilities. Besides, an effective incentive mechanism should also be established to encourage teachers to innovate teaching methods and means and promote the in-depth development of the teaching integrating courses with competitions.

5.3. Improve the competition system and incentive mechanism

Colleges and universities should establish diversified competition platforms to provide students with more opportunities to showcase themselves and exercise their abilities. Meanwhile, clear reward policies should be formulated to commend and reward students and teachers who have achieved outstanding results in competitions, so as to stimulate the enthusiasm and initiative of both teachers and students. In addition, the transformation and application of competition achievements should be strengthened to promote the in-depth integration of competitions with teaching and scientific research.

5.4. Strengthen practical teaching and school-enterprise cooperation

Strengthening practical teaching and school-enterprise cooperation is also of great significance for improving the teaching quality of economic and management general courses. Colleges and universities should enhance cooperation and exchanges with enterprises, jointly develop practical teaching projects, and provide students with more opportunities for practical training. Meanwhile, enterprise experts can be invited to enter the classroom to share industry experience and the latest trends, broadening students' horizons and ways of thinking. In addition, school-enterprise cooperation training bases can also be established to enable students to learn and practice in a real working environment and improve their ability to solve practical problems.

6. Conclusions

In conclusion, the teaching reform of integrating courses with competitions for economic and management general courses in colleges and universities is a systematic project. It is far from enough to rely solely on the abilities and enthusiasm of individual teachers to promote the integration of courses with competitions. Improvements and enhancements need to be made in multiple aspects such as course design, construction of the teaching staff, competition system and incentive mechanism, as well as practical teaching and school-enterprise cooperation. Only in this way can it better adapt to the changing demands of economic and management talents in today's society, continuously promote the

improvement of the teaching quality of economic and management general courses, and cultivate more high-quality talents with innovative spirit and practical abilities.

Acknowledgement

(1) Research on the Construction and Sharing of High-quality Teaching Resources in the Undergraduate Teaching Reform of General Higher Education in Liaoning Province: Teaching Practice and Exploration of the Course "Organizational Behavior" for Credit Acquisition through Cross-university Study;

(2) The Graduate Education Teaching Reform Project in Liaoning Province: "Exploration and Practice of the Integrated Teaching Reform of the Core Course Group for Postgraduate Majoring in Business Administration under the OBE Concept" (Project Number: LNYJG2022084);

(3) The Phased Research Results of the Teaching Reform Project of Shenyang Aerospace University: AI-Driven Exemplary Curriculum Reform Initiative

(4) Educational Science Planning Project of Liaoning Province: Evaluation and Countermeasure Research on Ideological and Political Effectiveness of College Curriculum in Liaoning Province (No JG21DB415), 2022.4-2025.4

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