

# Thoughts on the Reform of *International Trade Course*

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**Abstract:** *At present, Chinese universities still follow the traditional teaching mode, teaching content, teaching methods and evaluation methods. There are many drawbacks in these aspects, which have a restrictive effect on the cultivation of innovative talents. The course "International Trade" is an important professional basic course for majors in international trade, business administration, finance, etc. It has strong logic and relatively boring theoretical knowledge. At the same time, this course is very comprehensive because it has a certain degree of overlap with other economics and management disciplines. So students must organically combine the knowledge they have learned with practice in order to master the ability to participate in international trade activities. From this point of view, the "International Trade" curriculum must undergo substantial and effective reforms.*

**Keywords:** *International Trade Course; Reform; Measures*

## 1. Introduction

International trade course is a discipline that closely combines theory and practice. Its content includes international trade theory and international trade policy, as well as part of international trade practice. Among the economics majors in Chinese universities, the "International Trade" course is not only the core course of international trade, but of other majors such as finance, investment, and finance. Many universities also list it as the focus of discipline construction content.

International trade activities are characterized by cross-border, cross-cultural, multiple links, difficulty, and frequent changes. Therefore, the teaching task and purpose of the international trade course is not only to teach students the basic knowledge of international trade, but also to cultivate strong business processing capabilities and solve practical problems. This also means that teachers teaching international trade courses should not only pay attention to the teaching of basic theoretical knowledge, but also emphasize the training, mastery and application of practical business abilities.

## 2. The Necessity Of International Trade Curriculum Reform

### 2.1. The Needs of the Development of the International Economic Situation

Since China's accession to the WTO, my country's economy has been fully opened to the outside world, and foreign economic cooperation has been carried out in an all-round way. International trade, finance, international investment and other fields have carried out more extensive international exchanges. More companies will get involved in foreign trade business. There is a greater need for applied talents who understand the knowledge of international economics. At the same time, new changes have taken place in the structure of international trade and trade methods: multinational companies have become the main body of international competition, intra-subsidary trade has grown rapidly, and their operating behaviors have become increasingly complex. There are many heterogeneities in corporate scale, profits, and international operating behaviors. The field of international trade competition has shifted from trade in goods to trade in services. The financial crisis has made countries adjust their foreign trade policies and global trade protectionism has shown an expanding trend when trade disputes have been increasing. Obviously, traditional international trade theories can no longer solve the current new international trade problems perfectly, and new theories follow one after another such as competitive advantage theory, intra-industry division of labor theory, new trade theory, and new new trade theory. International trade courses must keep pace with the times so as to effectively guide students to use

theoretical knowledge to solve practical problems.

## **2.2. Defects of Traditional Teaching Methods**

### **2.2.1. There is Asymmetrical Information and Insufficient Interaction between Teachers and Students**

(1) In the teaching process, it is not uncommon for teachers to dominate the podium, and there is insufficient interaction between teachers and students. The current classroom teaching lacks vitality. Few people are willing to take the initiative to answer questions raised by the teacher. At the same time, students rarely ask the teacher for questions. This situation is not conducive for students to develop the habit of independent thinking and delving into problems, and to a certain extent reduces the enthusiasm of teachers to impart knowledge.

(2) The current university education leads to little contact and communication between teachers and students after class. The teacher leaves after teaching while the students leave after listening. Knowledge has not been fully absorbed under this model. From a research perspective, better communication between teachers and students is the focus of the teaching model reform. From a psychological perspective, strengthening mutual understanding of both parties can better provide teachers with a freedom to teach and students to absorb. Comfortable environment, thus forming a better learning atmosphere.

### **2.2.2. The Teaching Content is Repetitive and the Course Capacity is Limited and Relatively Outdated**

The current teaching courses of international trade majors mainly include public optional courses, required and optional courses for professional basic courses, and required and optional courses for professional courses. The content involved in courses such as finance and financial management, international investment, securities investment, international marketing and marketing have different degrees of overlap among them. Therefore, the reform of the teaching content of the international trade course mainly includes below. Reducing the repetitive content of the course, increasing the capacity of the course, and using the limited time to make the students master more knowledge content. Paying too much attention to the knowledge and experience of the predecessors but neglecting the training of creativity of students. neglect to guide students to the current situation of international economics and trade, as well as the practical teaching of the connection between international trade and real life. During the teaching period, the training of students' systematic scientific thinking and learning methods was not in place. Promoting students' creative ability, cultivating their thinking ability, and guiding them habitual thinking mode while cultivating students' reverse thinking ability or adding new content on the basis of the original formal logic to open social survey courses and teaching visit courses. It is also feasible to arrange reasonable semester internship and preparation for graduation thesis or cooperate with tutors to carry out research on topics, etc. Therefore, reforming the content of the courses and cultivating qualified international economic and trade talents gradually are in need.

### **2.2.3. Emphasize Theory, Neglect Practice, Theory and Practice are out of Touch**

(1) From the perspective of teachers: There are a group of inexperienced teachers with superior academic qualifications in universities. Regardless of whether they are qualified to become qualified teachers in theoretical knowledge and research, they are basically do not have any social experience. How can these teachers combine their teaching content with actual and effective combination? This will only cause a serious disconnect between the teacher's teaching content and practice;

(2) There is also a disconnect between students' study and practice. Undoubtedly, the undergraduate study only focuses on theoretical study, with few experimental operations and almost little social practice, which causes students to have wrong ideas such as "learning is useless", "false big empty theory" and so on. Although many colleges and universities have experimental courses, the experimental courses are just like completing a task and fail to achieve the expected results.

### **2.2.4. The Teaching Procedure is Unreasonable, and the Practice Teaching is Too Formal**

Although practical platforms such as ERP enterprise sand table simulation and Simtrade foreign trade simulation operation are gradually introduced in the international trade courses, the practical teaching is still too formal, and the experimental arrangement and theoretical course learning are not well connected. The two links are separated and the cycle is too long so that students learn for learning and experiment for experiments, they cannot really apply the theoretical knowledge they have learned to experiments. Moreover, the number of experiments is small, which cannot provide students with sufficient opportunities for learning, manipulation, absorption, and digestion. This often results in failure to truly

understand the purpose of the experiment even after completing the experiment, let alone the state of the ideal experimental effect. This is undoubtedly Indirectly formed redundancy in the teaching process.

Only by forming a rigorous practical teaching system and perfect practical teaching links in the teaching process, can the organic combination of international trade theory and practice be achieved, and the comprehensive quality of students be truly improved. To truly achieve practical teaching, international economic and trade simulation experiments must be included in the teaching plan, and the number of practical teaching must be increased; equipped with excellent and full-time international economic and trade simulation experiment teachers; and then combined simulation experiments and network operation simulation experiments Together.

### ***2.2.5. The Evaluation Method is Divorced From Reality***

At present, most colleges and universities adopt closed-book examinations and focus on the content of textbooks. This conflicts with the highly practical international trade courses. First of all, keeping a close eye on the content of the textbook is not conducive to the cultivation of students' divergent thinking, causing students to become dull and unrealistic in their learning, even become "nerds". Secondly, teachers are not very independent in the design of test papers. Questions and assessments are made in the framework of this system, which makes it impossible for teachers to assess the level of students' knowledge as expected; Lastly, most of the assessments use 30% and 70% of the average score and 70% of the test score as the student's total score, which is not conducive to the transfer the enthusiasm of students in the classroom and cannot truly reflect the knowledge that students actually master.

## **3. Measures To Reform The International Trade Curriculum**

### ***3.1. Teaching Content Reform***

#### ***3.1.1. Reform Of Teaching Materials***

The content of the teaching materials is the core of the international trade course and the first condition for the development of national trade teaching. The lag in the content of teaching materials makes teaching content far away from the reality of international trade. As mentioned earlier, due to the development and changes of the international situation, even the latest teaching materials will lag behind. Undoubtedly, this will have an adverse effect on the teaching of international trade. The teaching content of international trade courses should be adjusted in time to follow the changes in the international situation. The new theories and new knowledge formed in the changes of the international trade market should be integrated into the teaching content, and the focus of teaching should be changed to modern trade theories. Students explain the current relatively new theoretical knowledge such as the new theory of international trade, service trade theory, international investment theory, etc. International trade teachers should pay attention to the combination of theory and actual international situation in the teaching process, actively integrate with international teaching models, and analyze some current international economic events. In the teaching of practical courses, it is necessary to effectively supplement relevant content in combination with the actual situation of foreign trade, and strengthen the learning of foreign trade knowledge.

#### ***3.1.2. Use of Teaching Aids***

With the development of modern educational technology and continuous improvement of teaching methods, multimedia teaching has become one of the main teaching aids in modern classrooms. Multimedia teaching, also known as Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI), is a reasonable teaching process structure to achieve the most optimized teaching effect, which is organically combined traditional teaching methods with use of modern teaching media on the basis of teaching design, rational selection, the characteristics of teaching goals and teaching objects. The parts participate in the whole teaching process together, act on students with multiple media information. The implementation of multimedia teaching enriches the teaching content, enhances the attractiveness of the course, and expands the thinking of students; the courseware made by PowerPoint and other materials not only express the basic content like a traditional teaching blackboard, but also can ask questions in an intuitive way, allowing students to use different way to think about problems, develop thinking, make students' thinking more flexible and broad; expand the amount of students' information; cultivate students' teamwork and analyze problem abilities; improve students' hands-on ability.

### **3.1.3. Teacher Training**

At present, the international trade course is a relatively popular major in many colleges and universities. Most of the teachers of this course graduated directly from the university to teach in the school, lacking foreign trade work experience. Therefore, the teaching is still based on theoretical teaching, from books to books, ignoring the timeliness and operability of the teaching content itself. Coupled with the lag of the textbook itself, the teaching effect is not ideal. From the rigid requirements of the teacher's foreign trade experience and the timely training in the later period, they are all necessary means of international trade teaching. It is advisable to encourage teachers to independently compile teaching materials from teaching to teaching. Teachers combine daily teaching experience and their own knowledge accumulation, actively feedback into the teaching materials, and give students real new knowledge. In addition, it is also necessary to establish a special international trade training room for teachers and students to personally participate in foreign trade practice activities to experience and operate the whole process of foreign trade business.

### **3.2. Teaching Method Reform**

#### **3.2.1. Practical Four-Module Teaching Method**

"Four modules" teaching mode: namely, curriculum understanding and practice modules to consolidate basic knowledge; on-campus practice base modules to provide students with a good practice simulation environment; off-campus practice base modules to provide students with real practice; "go out", "Please come in" to create an integrated practical teaching model. After such training, the theory has been completely transformed into vivid practical teaching. Students are not only impressed, but also learn how to use economic theory to analyze and solve practical problems. The students have a systematic understanding of the three-year professional knowledge, which strengthens the knowledge they have learned before, and through this simulation training, they cultivate the professional ability of the students in the actual work in the future, so that the students can be better at the job to get started and have the stamina for sustainable development. Establishing several stable agreement-style off-campus internship bases provides a bridge for common development for students and foreign trade companies, which not only facilitates students to have a deeper understanding of the work they will be engaged in, but also facilitates foreign trade companies to discover and select talents from them. On the other hand, it also makes full use of non-agreement practice bases to allow students to see real cargo ships, train wagons, large trailers, containers, storage yards, cargo packaging methods, customs supervision sites and other physical objects. Teachers should encourage students to directly consult shipping companies, insurance companies, customs and inspection and quarantine bureaus. Before entering the society, students should understand the society better, understand the fierce market competition and the hardship of entrepreneurship so as to further improve the self-consciousness of learning and cultivate the entrepreneurial spirit and innovative ability.

#### **3.2.2. Bilingual Teaching**

Bilingualism means English and mother tongue. The use of bilingual teaching means the perfect combination of English and mother tongue in the study of international trade courses. International trade is a discipline that is in line with international standards in all aspects of theory and practice. English is the most widely used foreign language in the world. Therefore, it is a general trend to attach great importance to English in international trade. In teaching work, English teaching related to professional knowledge should be strengthened. The form of teaching in mother tongue and writing on the blackboard in foreign languages can be implemented to expand students' accumulation of professional English vocabulary. Using mother tongue to explain is conducive to students' thorough understanding of professional knowledge, which will not cause students with weak English ability to lose their learning interest. In addition, when selecting textbooks, teachers can choose foreign language textbooks suitable for students according to the difficulty of the courses and refer to years of teaching experience. Foreign language textbooks are not universal enough although they have been used in the current teaching. It is far behind compared with the important position of trade in the development of international economy and trade. Therefore, the use of bilingual teaching not only meets the needs of international trade courses, but is also an inevitable requirement for the development of international economy and trade.

### **3.3. Reform of Assessment Methods**

From the traditional assessment standards: attendance, homework, examinations to "new standards" to avoid traditional defects, and enhance the richness and procedural nature of the assessment methods.

It can be done by way of cooperative discussion. The specific implementation steps are as follows: the first step is grouping before class; the second step is topic selection; the third step is finalized draft; the fourth step is exchange presentation; the fifth step is teacher summary; the sixth step is performance evaluation. Through these six steps, teachers' "classroom lectures" and students' "cooperative seminars" are organically combined. While imparting theoretical knowledge, students are fully motivated to learn independently and cultivate their teamwork spirit.

### **3.4. Implement "Diversified" Evaluation System**

The diversification of evaluation subjects means the establishment of an evaluation system in which students, teachers, managers, experts, etc. participate and interact with each other. The evaluation content is integrated, focusing on the development of comprehensive qualities other than knowledge, especially the development of innovation, inquiry, cooperation and practice capabilities. This reflects the latest educational concepts and the development trend of curriculum evaluation which involves diversified evaluation methods, combining quantitative evaluation and qualitative evaluation methods. In the whole evaluation process, it is adapted to the transformation of the curriculum function. The purpose of evaluation should focus more on the development of students, inspiring the motivation of students, teachers, schools and curriculum development, promoting their continuous progress, and realizing their own value.

## **4. Summary**

The reform of international trade courses has a long way to go. Teachers and students are required to work together and learn from each other to reform from partial theoretical teaching to focusing on practical teaching,

At the same time, the road to reform has not been smooth sailing. It is a process of crossing the river by feeling the stones. Through continuous adjustments and researches, the most suitable model for the teaching of international trade courses has been found to contribute to the study of international trade.

Finally, the ultimate goal of international trade reform is to cultivate innovative talents who can adapt to the new era and the new economic development situation, so as to promote the transformation and optimization of the entire world's economic situation.

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