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Research on the SPOC + PBL Blended Teaching Reform of the "International Trade Practice" Course Based on "Integration of Competition and Teaching"

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Abstract:
Under the development guideline of "undergraduate education as the foundation" and the requirements for building "golden courses" in the new era, International Trade Practice, as a core course for economics and trade majors, faces prominent problems such as a disconnect between teaching content and practice application, a single teaching method, and a rigid assessment system. Guided by the core concept of "integration of competition and teaching", and combining the resource integration advantages of SPOC with the autonomous inquiry characteristics of PBL, this study constructs a blended teaching reform model for the International Trade Practice course. Following a research path of current situation investigation, scheme design, practice verification, and reflection-optimization, and supported by a sufficient amount of valid questionnaire data, the study systematically analyzes the implementation effectiveness and existing problems of the teaching reform, proposes targeted optimization strategies, and provides practical references for the cultivation of application-oriented and interdisciplinary talents in international economic and trade.

Keywords:
Integration of Competition and Teaching, SPOC, PBL, International Trade Practice, Blended Teaching

1. Introduction

Crafting "golden courses" that feature high level, innovation, and challenge is a core requirement of undergraduate education reform in the new era. With the rise of the term "Internet+", massive open online courses (MOOC) and small private online courses (SPOC) are rich carriers for teaching. In recent years, the SPOC+PBL blended teaching model has been practiced in course teaching at the University. Through the integration of high-quality online courses with offline project-based inquiry learning, more ideal teaching effects have been achieved. (Zheng et al.[1]; Wang et al.[2]; Wan et al.[3]).

As a core course for economics and trade majors, the International Trade Practice course directly affects the

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quality of talent cultivation of the double service. Yet, under the practical teaching of this course, there are three pain points: First, the teaching content lags behind; it is disconnected from industry practice and high-end competitions, and there is little training in the business negotiation process and contract performance. To add, the teaching model is one-dimensional, relying heavily on lectures and simulation software, which makes students fail to have agency. Thirdly, the teaching evaluation is relatively one-sided; the assessment methods are primarily concerned with written examination and computer operation. Hence the comprehensive evaluation of students' practical abilities and innovative competence is difficult.

In response to the aforementioned problems, there are many educational researchers who focus on the International Trade Practice course and carry out a series of practical explorations. To some extent, the international trade practice teaching reform is guided by the discipline characteristics, which is helpful in cultivating students' ability to integrate theory with practice. Their professional cognition and practical operation ability are oriented to vocational skills. Moreover, under the guidance of job market demand, improving students' professional quality and employability (Wu [4]; Zhao [5]). The teaching methods, in the process of actually teaching the course, introduce various teaching methods, such as bilingual teaching, case-based teaching, situational teaching, curriculum-based ideological and political education, online-offline blended teaching, project-based teaching and so on (Long [6]; Fan [7]; Zhou [8]; Li [9]; Xu et al.[10]).

Still others, based on the reality of skill competitions, propose that organizing students to participate in skill competitions related to international trade can stimulate their learning motivation and interest, and thereby lead the teaching reform of integrating competition and teaching in the International Trade Practice course (Zhang [11]; Tang [12]; Cheng et al.[13]). More importantly, through the "integration of competition and teaching", teachers can incorporate authoritative competition content from the discipline into the course teaching plan, allowing students to integrate competition with teaching in the practical process of participating in competitions during class, thereby enhancing their practical abilities (Xu et al.[14]).

In light of this, this paper aims to construct a SPOC+PBL blended teaching model for the International Trade Practice course based on the "integration of competition and teaching", clarify its implementation pathways and guarantee mechanisms, and examine its effectiveness in knowledge acquisition, practical operation, and self-directed learning abilities through empirical analysis. It also puts forward optimization strategies for the problems found in practice, providing theoretical support and practical reference for teaching reform of similar courses. The objective is to accomplish the organic integration of theoretical knowledge, competitive practices, and industrial demands through optimized design for teaching content; to fully mobilize student initiative and creativity through innovation of teaching organizational forms; and to assist colleges and universities in implementing the policy requirement of "strengthening talent support for foreign trade development" with the improvement of the talent cultivation system, thus cultivating applications economics and trade talents that meet industry needs.

2. Theoretical Basis

2.1 The "Integration of Competition and Teaching" Teaching Model

The concept of "integration of competition and teaching", refers to incorporating the content, standards

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and concepts of relevant subject competitions into the whole process of course teaching, so that through the "competition to promote learning, reform and management, integration of construction with competition", the efficiency of teaching and the comprehensive ability of students are improved in a virtuous cycle. The primary attribute of the method is to turn the useful, competitive and stimulating nature of the competitions into teaching motivation, such that students can use what they have learned, enhance their practical skills, and improve their innovative thinking in the process of engaging in competition projects. The integration of competition and teaching has become an important bridge between classroom teaching and industry practice. It is especially suitable for the teaching of practical courses. An example is the course of International Trade Practice.

2.2 SPOC and PBL Teaching Models

The personalized online teaching model called SPOC (Small Private Online Course) is founded on the model of MOOC. With a restriction on the number of learners, an alignment of course needs, and the improvisation of resources like good quality teaching videos, online quizzes, and a discussion forum, it enables students to learn at their own pace. This model preserves the advantages of MOOC in terms of resources, but through small-class management, it also achieves accurate and interactive teaching, which is suitable for the online teaching components of core professional courses.

Project-Based Learning is designed so that students do not just receive information through one-way communication. It recommends bringing real-world international trade scenarios to the classroom, requiring students to complete tasks through self-research and teamwork, thereby shifting their role from passive listening to active problem-solving. Under the International Trade Practice course, the introduction of modular projects like international contract drafting, international trade negotiation and international documentation can reinforce students' proficiency in the realm of practice.

The close synergy between SPOC and PBL can form a collaborative model of on-line guided learning with off-line seminar-type discussion that realises the integration of on-line basic knowledge acquisition with off-line project-type inquiry. The SPOC is the knowledge repository of the PBL while the PBL is the practice ground for the transfer of knowledge from the SPOC. The SPOC + PBL blended teaching model opens a learning loop for students, linking theory with practical enhancement, as well as subtly improving their all-round competence.

3. Teaching Reform Design

3.1 Overall Approach

The SPOC+PBL blended teaching reform of International Trade Practice Course, based on integration of competition and teaching, is implemented in a step-by-step manner. The reform starts with an in-depth investigation of teaching pain points. The current situation investigation must start from the truth and the whole, to truthfully and comprehensively identify specific problems and actual needs in teaching. With this basis, the feasibility of the reform is analyzed and demonstrated, which may lay the foundation for subsequent teaching reform activities. The next step is to implement system fingers designs overall plan clarifying the overall

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framework and key measures preparing and relevant teaching materials that will lay a solid foundation for the implementation stage the sustainable. During the implementation phase of teaching reform, the designated teaching plan is applied to the basic actual teaching scene for transformation, and the deviation is corrected through practical application. In the end, the experiences and difficulties arising from the implementation of the teaching reform process are sorted through review and summarization. After optimization and refinement of the plan, efforts will be made to create conditions conducive to the wider application of this project, ultimately forming a model of stable, feasible, sustainable and replicable teaching, to continuously deepen and expand the effectiveness of the reform.

This reform intends to build high-level, innovative, and challenging "golden courses", with the integration of competition and teaching as the core, and with the SPOC+PBL as the implementation plan. It develops a blended teaching model, consisting of three main modules: teaching content, teaching method, and evaluation system. The overall framework encourages theoretical linkages with practice and online-offline collaboration, as well as the combination of teaching and competition, and the comprehensive improvement of students' professional competence and practical ability.

3.2 Teaching Content and Tasks

Following the basic content of international trade competitions and the teaching requirements of the course, we restructured the teaching content into three main core teaching tasks. First of all , start with "Drafting an International Market Expansion Plan for Export Products", which clarifies the writing specification of the plan, market research methods and plan design logic. It can cultivate students' analysis of the market to find strategies. The second activity, titled "Trade Negotiation and Contract Signing", utilizes immersive simulation of the scene of international trade negotiation to explain negotiation skills, contract clause interpretation, signing procedures, etc. This not only strengthens students' communication and expression skills, but also prevents risks and improve professional competence. The third component, "Contract Performance", engages students in simulated operations such as preparation of documents. This allows students to master the practical processes involved at every stage of performance of a contract. The design of the entire teaching content fully takes into account the evaluation requirements of the National University Business Elite Challenge International Trade Competition, effectively ensuring that the teaching content is in line with the competition content and relevant industries.

This course adopts a logic of "task-driven, course-competition mapping". The task "Export Expansion Planning" aims at internalization of market research techniques and plan designing logic with a view to instilling strategic thinking among students. The second Task, Business Negotiation and Contract Signing, integrates business negotiation strategies and legal clause analysis. Further, it achieves this by simulating scenarios. The third package "Contract Performance Practice" is focused on consolidation of skills related to document flow and compliance operations.

3.3 Teaching Methods and Means

The primary platform for the online SPOC teaching of the International Trade Practice course is the national-level premium course Zhihuishu. Through in-depth integration of teaching video resources, case databases, and online assessments, a digital learning space is built that runs through the entire teaching process. Prior to

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the actual class module, a preview module is set up to help explain professional terminologies. An in-class auxiliary module is for analyzing key and difficult point and interactive discussion of the same. A consolidation module after class provides exercises and further resources, tailored to the personalized learning needs of students.

The PBL project practice mainly decomposes the teaching task into a stepped chain of projects. Students collaborate in groups of three to five for project-based inquiry. Prior to class, students will preview professional knowledge in the SPOC platform, divide tasks in groups to gather materials, and make preliminary plans. Students present the results of their projects during class, along with teachers' participation in discussions about the project and assistance in simulated practical operation. After class, the students further fine-tune their project reports and prepare for the competition under the supervision of the teachers.

The empowerment through the integration of competition and teaching relates primarily to the incorporation of international trade competitions into the whole teaching process. An internal school level selection competition is organized in the middle of the course for the selection of outstanding teams to represent in provincial and national competitions.

3.4 Evaluation System

We will create a multi-faceted assessment framework. The first is process evaluation (40%), including – learning progress on SPOC platform (10%), quality of pre-class preview (5%), classroom interaction and participation (10%), and project team (15%). The final exam (25%) and project report quality (15%) will be judged in "outcome evaluation" (40%). The third is competition achievements (20%), which are allocated scores according to which level or something students have received an award in an international trade competition.

The evaluation system will emphasize the evaluation of students' practical ability, innovative thinking, and teamwork spirit, breaking away from the traditional single evaluation system.

4. Implementation and Effect Analysis

4.1 Implementation Process

This teaching reform took two cohorts of business English undergraduate majors, which were the Class of 2022 and the Class of 2023, as the research subjects, and was carried out in two rounds. In the first round, the reform plan was piloted with the Class of 2022, and students were organized to participate in the 2023 international trade discipline competition. Feedback was collected through questionnaires, classroom observations, and in-depth interviews, and the achievements and problems of the reform were reviewed and summarized. Based on the reflections from the first round, the teaching plan and materials were revised for the second round, which was implemented with the Class of 2023. Students were organized to participate in the 2024 international trade discipline competition, followed by another round of effect evaluation and plan optimization. A sufficient number of valid questionnaires were collected in this survey, covering dimensions such as students' basic learning conditions, course cognition, teaching experience, and effect evaluation, providing data support for the effect analysis.

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4.2 Student Learning Outcomes

In terms of knowledge acquisition and ability improvement, survey data show that 60.46% of students believe the teaching reform has a "noticeable" or "very noticeable" effect on enhancing teaching effectiveness. 72.09% of students recognize the reform's role in cultivating self-directed learning ability, and 62.79% believe their problem-solving skills have significantly improved. Regarding practical skills, 69.77% of students find that this model "makes it easier to improve hands-on operational ability", and 65.12% indicate that they have enhanced their practical skills through competitions.

In terms of learning engagement and interest, 53.49% of students demonstrated a "very active" or "relatively active" attitude toward participation in the blended teaching model, and 72.1% of students maintained a "very focused" or "focused, rarely distracted" state while learning on the SPOC platform. Regarding course interest, 32.56% of students were "very interested" or "interested" in the course, which is a significant improvement compared with traditional teaching models.

In terms of competition participation and achievements, nearly 20 student teams were selected to participate in international trade competitions at various levels over the two rounds of practice. Among them, they won 2 first prizes, 8 second prizes, 2 third prizes, and several excellence awards, fully demonstrating the effectiveness of "integrating competition and teaching, and promoting learning through competition".

4.3 Comparison of Teaching Effects

Compared with the traditional teaching model, the SPOC+PBL blended teaching model based on the "integration of competition and teaching" demonstrates the following advantages. In terms of knowledge application, only about 30% of students in traditional teaching could proficiently apply professional knowledge to solve practical problems, whereas this proportion increased to 65.12% after the reform. In terms of ability cultivation, the new teaching model's effectiveness in cultivating self-directed learning ability, collaboration skills, and problem-solving ability was recognized by over 80% of students, significantly outperforming traditional teaching. In terms of learning experience, 65.14% of students were willing to continue using this model for learning, much higher than the satisfaction rate of traditional teaching.

Although certain achievements have been made in the teaching model reform, the survey also revealed some existing problems. 48.84% of students felt that "learning efficiency is not high", reflecting a contradiction between task load and time management. 23.26% of students perceived a "disconnect" between online resources and offline seminar-style discussions. In addition, the deep coupling of competition content with the course and the real-time nature of the teaching feedback mechanism still need further refinement.

5. Conclusion and Outlook

5.1 Research Conclusions

The SPOC+PBL blended teaching model for the International Trade Practice course, based on the "integration of competition and teaching", effectively resolves the common problems in traditional classroom teaching, such as the disconnect between theory and practice, low student engagement, and a single evaluation

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system, by integrating online resources, project-based inquiry, and disciplinary competitions. Practice has shown that this model achieves significant results in enhancing students' professional knowledge, practical skills, self-directed learning ability, and teamwork skills, and has received recognition and support from the majority of students.

However, teaching reform inevitably faces a period of growing pains, and the promotion of this teaching model has revealed bottlenecks that urgently need to be addressed. First, limitations in students' cognition and foundational knowledge, including that students require a long adaptation period for SPOC+PBL blended learning, and their insufficient basic professional knowledge affects higher-order learning outcomes. Second, modularized learning has triggered a crisis in learning efficiency, including that the survey shows that some students experience a disconnect when switching between online and offline scenarios, and the integration of competitions with the course is not yet seamless. Third, students do not take the initiative in preparation before class and go through the motions through limited methods, thus hindering the effectiveness of the pre-class stage and limiting the depth of offline classes.

5.2 Suggestions for Improvement

To tackle the above issues, four optimization recommendations can be put forth. To begin with, first strengthen the guidance and groundwork of the early stage. At the beginning of the course, there should be one basic module on SPOC blended learning and bridge content on basic international trade knowledge to aid student acclimatisation with the teaching model. Also, optimize the integration of competition and teaching and the rhythm of teaching. The tasks in design competitions will closely match the course content; the proportion of online and offline teaching will adjust dynamically; platform interactivity will be improved; and students will receive timely feedback on their questions. Third, come up with motivation and resource support before class. Design targeted and engaging pre-class tasks, promote diversified pre-class learning methods such as online courses and case databases, and strengthen the integration of high-quality resources. Fourth, improve the evaluation and feedback mechanism. Improve process evaluation indicators, open real-time feedback channels, and dynamically adjust teaching strategies based on student feedback.

5.3 Future Outlook

The blended teaching model developed in the study can provide a repeatable and scalable practical teaching experience for the teaching reform of International Trade Practice and other similar Economics and Trade courses. At a later time, the research sample will be further expanded with students from other classes and majors for practical validation. The meaning of "integration of competition and teaching" will be continuously deepened, further cooperating with enterprises to develop competition projects, and deepening the integration of teaching, competition and industry demands. Simultaneously, the application of artificial intelligence, big data and other technologies will optimize SPOC platform functions, enhance personalized and intelligent teaching and cultivate more applied and interdisciplinary international trade talents that meet the requirements of the new era.

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