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Higher-Order Thinking-Oriented Reconstruction and Practice of Course Content for "Introduction to World Economics"

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Abstract:
This paper presents the teaching practices implemented in the course Introduction to World Economics to cultivate students' higher-order thinking skills, covering aspects such as instructional design, teaching activities, and teaching evaluation. The instructional design is guided by Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, and the teaching process is guided by the ARCS Motivation Theory. Ideological and political education is integrated into the course content through philological/documentary materials. Case-based teaching is the primary instructional method, and teaching evaluation draws on the Collegiate Learning Assessment+ (CLA+) model developed in the United States. The reconstruction and practical implementation of the course content for Introduction to World Economics, grounded in the cultivation of higher-order thinking skills, places greater emphasis on students' intrinsic motivation to learn and offers a preliminary exploration of how to cultivate students' higher-order thinking skills.

Keywords:
higher-order thinking skills; ARCS motivation theory; content reconstruction and practice

1 Introduction

The Assessment and Teaching of 21st Century Skills project, jointly undertaken by Australia, Singapore, the United Kingdom, the United States, among others, advocates that students use information and communication technology (ICT) for collaborative communication. Through collaborative work, students develop creative thinking, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and decision-making abilities, thereby learning to learn. This indicates that higher-order thinking is a key direction for future talent development and an essential competency for 21st-century talent.

2 Reconstruction and Practical Implementation of the Teaching Content of the Course "Introduction to World Economics"

This teaching practice uses undergraduate students majoring in International Economics and Trade at the author's home institution as the research sample. The classroom study follows the principle of backward

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design and is student-centered. Teaching objectives are reconstructed based on Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. Guided by the ARCS Motivation Model, the teaching process, teaching content, and classroom activities are reconstructed. Teaching evaluation is conducted based on Bloom's Taxonomy. The implementation plan and research content of this course reform are as follows:

2.1Reconstruction and Design of Teaching Objectives

Questionnaires and prior teaching experience are used to analyze students' learning profile, so as to ensure a close match between the difficulty of learning objectives and learners' needs. Based on the talent development program, the teaching objectives take into account institutional characteristics and students' individual needs, with the aim of developing students' global perspective. In light of this, following Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, the overall teaching objectives are decomposed into six levels, from lower-order to higher-order. An online learning space is developed, and for each lesson, online and offline teaching objectives are designed separately. The two modes are interrelated: lower-order thinking objectives are achieved through online pre-class learning, while offline teaching focuses primarily on developing students' higher-order thinking skills. The teaching objectives are thus reconstructed around the development of higher-order thinking skills, namely application, analysis, evaluation, and creation.

2.2Reconstruction and Design of the Teaching Process

To extend learning beyond the constraints of time and space and to create an integrated online-offline learning environment that facilitates student learning, the teaching process is restructured into three stages.

First, pre-class preparation. This stage adopts a "micro-lecture + learning assessment system" approach, involving micro-lecture learning on key knowledge points, assessment of learning outcomes, and related pre-class tasks. It focuses primarily on stimulating students' interest in learning and developing their lower-order thinking skills.

Second, in-class teaching activities. Centered on generative questions arising from the pre-class stage, classroom teaching includes knowledge consolidation, application and extension exercises, and interactive teaching. Guided by the ARCS Motivation Model, students are guided to examine current issues in the world economy from a dialectical perspective. To meet students' developmental needs, teaching content is linked to their academic planning and career prospects, situating individual development within the broader domestic and international context. This helps students gain confidence and a sense of achievement from China's development.

Third, post-class extension. Teachers assign targeted, comprehensive learning tasks, such as critical analysis of materials and the creation of short social media videos. These challenging activities encourage students to take on challenges and promote the development of their higher-order thinking skills.

2.3Reconstruction and Design of Teaching Content

The reconstruction of teaching content involves both the reprocessing and redesign of textbook-based content and the redesign of its representation. It is carried out mainly through three stages.

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First, the pre-class stage. Based on the teaching content and objectives of each unit, ideological and political elements are identified and issues for integrating ideological and political education are explored, so that the selected topics are closely aligned with the teaching themes. For core content, corresponding micro-lectures are designed and recorded, condensing the teaching content into micro-lecture videos. Online media are also monitored to expand content provision in multiple ways and enrich online learning resources. By responding to current issues in the world economy circulating online, this stage stimulates students' interest in learning while developing their capacity for independent choice and rational thinking.

Second, the in-class teaching stage. Based on feedback from students' pre-class micro-lecture learning, the instructor provides supplementary explanations of key and difficult points and arranges appropriate teaching activities to help students understand the core content. The case method is used to transform abundant case resources into educational resources. First, literature reading and presentation: students read literature related to the teaching content in groups, with each piece of literature assigned to two groups. They are required to write reading notes and draw mind maps. After guidance and revision, they present their interpretations of the literature and engage in inter-group classroom competitions. Second, case discussion: current issues in the world economy are addressed by selecting materials presenting different viewpoints as cases. Students are required to analyze these cases using data from the United Nations database and China's National Bureau of Statistics as supporting materials, and to present their analyses in class competitions. After discussion, groups may record group videos. While guiding students to tell China's story well and communicate China's solutions, this also provides them with positive feedback that fosters a sense of achievement.

Third, the post-class teaching stage. On the basis of consolidating professional knowledge, this stage emphasizes the organic integration of ability development and ideological and political education, cultivating students' higher-order thinking skills through online analysis and discussion or subjective test questions.

2.4 Reconstruction and Design of Teaching Activities

The reconstruction and design of teaching activities in this course is student-centered. Students are guided to apply theoretical content to analyze current issues in the world economy, especially controversial ones, and to use economic methods to examine the positions and stances of different countries. Through critical inquiry and debate, students develop higher-order thinking skills and experience the joy of learning. To ensure student participation and improve the effectiveness of case-based classroom teaching, three aspects are emphasized.

First, the instructor identifies and distills the problems emerging from pre-class online learning and provides guidance and clarification.

Second, role-based case reconstruction. Through role-based interaction, students analyze the positions and attitudes of different "protagonists," the underlying causes, and the impact on each protagonist. Taking China as the "protagonist," they analyze the implications and possible countermeasures, or understand the countermeasures China has already adopted. This China-centered, role-based case discussion helps overcome the "two separate skins" problem of mechanically integrating ideological and political education into the curriculum.

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Third, the instructor assigns appropriate comprehensive training tasks that guide students to analyze the latest current issues in the world economy, conduct critical analysis and forecasting, and gain opportunities to apply and transfer knowledge, thereby increasing the challenge of learning.

2.5 Reconstruction and Design of Teaching Assessment

The teaching assessment for this course includes two aspects: assessment methods and assessment dimensions, with a focus on assessing students' higher-order thinking skills. Existing literature has refined the assessment of higher-order thinking skills at both macro and micro levels.

First, macro-level assessment of higher-order thinking skills. It includes two aspects. The first is literature reading. The process requires students not only to divide the work of searching for literature but also to draw mind maps and give classroom presentations. This process examines students' critical thinking, collaboration, and learning abilities. Assessment indicators include the quality of reading notes, the quality of mind maps, the degree of student participation and collaboration, and communication skills in classroom presentations and discussions. The second is creating social media works on current issues in the world economy, which examines students' comprehensive ability to integrate theory with practice and assesses their knowledge transfer ability and critical thinking skills.

Second, micro-level assessment of higher-order thinking skills. Yuliarti (2023), Retnawati (2020), and others argue that multiple-choice and short-answer questions can assess students' micro-level higher-order thinking skills. In fact, assessment should not be based solely on question types; it should also examine the questions themselves and students' ability to discriminate and analyze knowledge points. In addition, questionnaire surveys and interviews can be used to understand changes in students' affective factors, such as attitudes, values, and interests, during the process of knowledge and ability development, so as to assess students' competencies.

3 Summary and Reflection

By constructing a multidimensional online-offline classroom and analyzing teaching materials and interview data, this study finds that student-centered teaching reform is conducive to the development of students' higher-order thinking skills. The study suggests that the following three aspects are helpful for developing students' higher-order thinking skills.

First, multidimensional teaching activities help develop students' higher-order thinking skills. Instructional design is guided by Bloom's cognitive taxonomy, and case-based teaching and task-driven methods are used in classroom instruction. Through literature reading, students receive research training, and core authoritative literature is used in case analysis and classroom debates, improving students' comprehensive ability to respond to real-world issues in the world economy. A student-centered online learning space is created. It serves not only as a platform for pre-class learning and post-class extension but also, more importantly, focuses on developing case resources and question banks, providing an important vehicle for transforming students' knowledge into comprehensive abilities, enriching ideological and political education resources, and creating a multidimensional learning environment conducive to cultivating students' higher-order thinking skills.

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Second, attending to students' learning motivation helps develop their higher-order thinking skills. The ARCS Motivation Theory describes a complete closed-loop learning process from arousing students' interest to helping them gain satisfaction. Teachers, as the supply side of teaching, fully consider the needs and characteristics of college students, guide students from A (Attention) to S (Satisfaction), and attend to the obstacles that prevent students from entering A or completing S. Accordingly, the ARCS Motivation Theory is used to guide the instructional design and activity arrangements of this course, and questionnaire results and classroom performance indicate positive effects.

Third, teaching assessment draws on the American model. A difficulty in cultivating higher-order thinking skills is how to measure teaching effectiveness. Drawing on the Collegiate Learning Assessment+ (CLA+) model developed in the United States, this study combines qualitative and quantitative assessment methods and focuses on assessing students' task execution ability and comprehensive analytical ability. The diversification of assessment content and methods helps make assessment more scientific.

In conclusion, this course reform centers on how to cultivate students' higher-order thinking skills. Teaching objectives are designed under the guidance of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, with emphasis on developing students' ability to integrate theory with practice and their comprehensive evaluation ability. The ARCS Motivation Theory is applied to teaching practice, and teaching design and activities are arranged in light of students' needs and interests. Case-based teaching and task-driven methods are used in classroom instruction. Through the study and analysis of expert think-tank literature, students receive research training. The Collegiate Learning Assessment+ (CLA+) model is used to assess teaching effectiveness. However, teaching assessment remains qualitative, and quantitative analysis of teaching assessment is still lacking. Therefore, future research will focus more on assessing the effects of cultivating students' higher-order thinking skills.

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