

## *Original Paper*

# Reflections on the Cultivation of Applied Talents in the Economics Major under the OBE Concept

Na Li<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> School of economics and management, Sichuan Minzu College, Kangding, Sichuan, China

\* Na Li, female, lecturer in school of economics and management, Sichuan Minzu College, Research field: Economics and Finance, Kangding, Sichuan, China

Received: March 2, 2023

Accepted: March 23, 2023

Online Published: March 31, 2023

doi:10.22158/rem.v8n1p56

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/rem.v8n1p56>

### ***Abstract***

*Under the traditional teaching concept, students are in a passive learning state, accepting knowledge and completing tasks step by step according to the teacher's requirements. In the process of cultivating talents in economics, there are problems such as "emphasizing theory over practice, emphasizing deduction over analysis, emphasizing assessment over application". Starting from the OBE concept, this paper takes XX University as an example and proposes optimization and improvement ideas for the talent cultivation in economics, focusing on aspects such as setting talent cultivation objectives, investigating social demands, emphasizing ability cultivation, clarifying the roles of teachers and students, designing teaching methods, and evaluating learning outcomes.*

### ***Keywords***

*applied talents, economics, OBE concept*

## **1. Introduction**

On July 15, 2020, the Higher Education Department of the Ministry of Education issued a notice forwarding the "Announcement of the China Engineering Education Accreditation Association on the List of Accredited Engineering Education Programs" by the Higher Education Teaching Assessment Center of the Ministry of Education, which clearly stated, "Please implement the concepts of 'student-centered, outcome-based, continuous improvement' in all universities and promote the construction of first-class majors, enhance the 'quality awareness,' and promote a 'quality revolution' in higher education nationwide, and create a 'Quality China' brand." Among them, the emphasis is on outcomes-based education (OBE), which requires the achievement of goals, social adaptability, condition assurance, quality assurance, and result satisfaction of talent cultivation.

Economics is a discipline that tends to focus on theoretical research, mainly studying issues related to social resource allocation, economic growth, income distribution, input-output, marginal analysis, and money. Through professional learning, students are required to understand the basic principles of economics, grasp the basic laws of market economy operation, and be able to solve various practical problems that affect development and stability in the process of economic and social operation. At present, the educational concept of economics majors in most local universities in China has been transformed into an applied type, aiming to cultivate applied talents suitable for socialist economic construction. Due to the characteristics of the research content of economics majors, the learning content of economics majors tends to focus on theoretical analysis and mathematical reasoning, and attaches importance to theoretical analysis. However, the talent cultivation of economics majors in universities under the market economy must meet the requirements of social subjects and be able to participate in social practice division of labor and analyze and solve practical problems in order to have market value. This paper takes the example of XX University to analyze the problems in the process of talent cultivation in economics majors, and proposes an optimized and improved thinking on talent cultivation in economics majors from the perspective of OBE, focusing on “setting talent cultivation goals, researching social needs, focusing on ability cultivation, positioning the roles of teachers and students, designing teaching methods, and evaluating learning outcomes.”

## **2. Analysis of the Current Situation of Economic Talent Cultivation**

### *2.1 Heavy on Theory, Light on Practice*

In recent years, as a local university, XX University has been fully promoting the application-oriented education of the college, and the economics major of the School of Economics and Management has also taken the cultivation of applied economics talents as the goal of the school. The economics major attaches great importance to the improvement of teaching methods. In the process of course teaching, it combines case teaching, task teaching, project teaching, flipped classroom and other methods with theoretical teaching methods organically. Although the teaching methods of the economics major have become more abundant, the teaching effectiveness is still not satisfactory, and students' understanding and application ability of economic theory are still limited. The main reason for these situations is that the teachers mainly focus on theoretical teaching and lack practical application explanation, and lack of deep understanding of the inherent logic of various theoretical knowledge points and the use of research methods, leading to the lack of in-depth understanding of the entire economic system by students, resulting in unsatisfactory teaching results.

Applied local university economics education should emphasize local and applied characteristics, and talent cultivation and teaching research should highlight the service to the local economic and social development, local pillar industries development. Currently, China is vigorously promoting urban development, urban construction, rural revitalization, and industrial development around the goal of high-quality development of local economy and society, and realizing the goal of common prosperity.

China's characteristic market economy should learn from the Western economic development experience and Western economic theory, but should also start from China's national conditions, public opinion and market situation, analyze the problems in China's development process, and summarize China's economic development theory and experience. The reality is that in our current economic teaching process, our teaching content is still entirely the principles and content of Western economics, and the prerequisite assumptions are still the capitalist development theory of Western developed countries, without introducing the basic environment of China's socialist market economy development. The existing economic teaching cases have not started from the actual economic development in various regions of China, and economic principles and laws lack combination with regional and industrial economics, which is far from the goal of cultivating applied talents serving the local regional economic development. For example, in the process of teaching economic growth and income distribution, we can carry out practical research on the marginal increasing industry benefits of the tourism industry and the process of promoting residents' income increase, increasing students' understanding of the impact of regional economic development and GDP and residents' income increase in ethnic areas. The above research process can often enhance students' theoretical understanding depth and practical ability improvement.

### *2.2 Emphasizing Deductive Reasoning over Analysis*

Western economic theory is a valuable theoretical and experiential wealth for the development of human society. With its scientific theoretical assumptions and rigorous logical reasoning methods, Western economics has developed general experiences for human economic development. Its economic theory and research methods are classic content for economics students and professionals around the world. In the process of teaching Western economics theory, we pay great attention to its scientific nature and often spend a lot of time explaining to students how to deduce economic conclusions from economic assumptions, especially the mathematical deduction process, which is the focus of our study. Under the current theoretical assessment methods, the assessment of the deductive process is simple and easy to quantify, and it can also improve students' test scores. However, we have found that even if we are familiar with the deduction method and reasoning process and apply Western capitalist countries' development theories and experiences, we still find it difficult to solve our economic development problems, especially in ethnic regions where economic development factors are difficult to quantify, such as irrational emotional factors, and ecological constraints. Because we have not started with our culture and national conditions to make theoretical assumptions and environmental analysis, once the assumptions change, the resulting economic conclusions will inevitably deviate.

### *2.3 Emphasizing Assessment over Application*

The study of economics is abstract, theoretical, and complex. Economics has a strong systematic and theoretical nature, and requires a lot of use of mathematical methods and statistical analysis. Its learning difficulty is relatively high, which leads to teachers emphasizing the learning of mathematical analysis in the process of teaching economics. For the sake of fairness, quantifiability, and ease of operation, the

current teaching and assessment content and form of economics courses mainly adopt the form of closed-book exams. Exams can assess students' understanding and mastery of theoretical knowledge points, but solving social problems in practice requires students to use their ability to reason and apply theories to practical situations. In the process of social practice, solving economic problems often requires teamwork, joint analysis, discussion, and execution of plans. The process of teamwork can strengthen students' understanding of the social and economic environment and enable students to think about economic problems as social workers. In the process of exploring and analyzing economic and social problems, students with different experiences and viewpoints need to analyze, exchange, and collide ideas to come up with universal and applicable economic theories and solutions. Therefore, teamwork ability is a very important ability in the process of social practice, and this is also true for the training of applied economics talents.

### **3. Implications of the OBE Concept for the Training of Economics Professionals**

The OBE concept emphasizes the development and training of students' abilities, requiring instructors to design teaching plans that are targeted towards achieving expected learning outcomes based on the characteristics and objectives of the course. Under the OBE concept, teaching design, processes, and evaluation differ significantly from traditional models, as teaching activities are centered around the student and integrate theoretical knowledge from the field of economics. Instructors encourage students to independently design and undertake teaching projects and activities to promote task-based learning, independent learning, diversified learning, comprehensive learning, and generative learning. Additionally, students' learning outcomes are presented visually and evaluated using specific methods to assess the degree to which each objective has been achieved, serving as an objective basis for continuously improving the curriculum and teaching design. This entire process follows the principle of "backwards design," placing the student's learning at the center of the training model, and using evaluations of student learning outcomes to improve the original objectives and modify expected learning outcomes.

### **4. Optimization and Improvement of Applied Economics Talents Cultivation Under OBE Concept**

#### *4.1 Establishing Ability Cultivation Standards Based on Talent Cultivation Goals*

Education reform aims to produce more applied talents that meet market demands. The economic and social development in western ethnic regions is undergoing an unprecedented revitalization and transformation, requiring a large number of applied economics professionals to contribute to this development. Traditional theoretical economics talents focus on macroeconomic theory learning and classical economic theory research, but lack understanding of regional and industrial development issues, making it difficult to solve practical problems in the economic and social development process of western ethnic regions. Therefore, considering the needs of social reality development, drawing on the teaching ideas and methods of OBE concept, and based on thorough investigation and research of the

characteristics and ability requirements of graduates' work environments, specific requirements for abilities and qualities of applied economics professionals are structured to determine the course teaching objectives. These objectives include:

Cultivating students' mastery of the basic principles and methods of economics and the professional spirit and ability to analyze and solve social economic and management problems using economic methods;

Cultivating students' critical thinking and perseverance in problem-solving;

Cultivating students' strong innovation and entrepreneurial spirit, self-esteem and confidence, sustained development ability, and lifelong learning awareness.

#### *4.2 Researching Social Demands and Enriching Case-Based Teaching Content*

The OBE concept with the core of outcome orientation emphasizes the close relationship between talent cultivation and industry and field. Therefore, significant reforms and explorations have been made in the teaching content of applied economics majors. On the one hand, the teaching time of each section of the content is adjusted, the deduction of economic principles is simplified, and the application of economic theory is strengthened. On the other hand, some large, vague, and abstract teaching materials and cases are abandoned, and a case library relying on local economies and industry enterprises is established.

For example, starting from Y Prefecture where the XX University is located, based on the planning and development of the northwest Sichuan ecological economic zone, economic data from the pastoral areas in the Tibetan area are collected through field investigations to form teaching cases. Relevant teaching materials are also collected through field interviews with governments, enterprises, and industry organizations. When teaching economic theory, students' familiar local economic development cases are applied to theoretical analysis to carry out scientific research and discussion, which improves students' interest in theoretical learning and research and cultivates their ability to observe and analyze economic problems using economic theory.

#### *4.3 Improve Theoretical Teaching and Perfect the System of Theoretical and Practical Teaching*

Theoretical teaching is the foundation for cultivating abilities, and practical teaching is the key to developing students' application abilities. To promote the cultivation of application abilities, a combination of classroom teaching and extracurricular practice should be adopted, using a combination of theoretical teaching and case studies, with social investigation and case study methods as the main line to redesign the practical teaching elements of economics courses. Firstly, the economic theoretical principles, assumptions, and research methods related to the relevant topics are explained in the classroom. Then, students are asked to think and research based on economic phenomena from regional social development or case studies. Secondly, students are guided to conduct problem analysis and research design. After that, students form research teams to conduct social investigations and analyses and propose solutions. Finally, the solution is simulated and operated to produce the final research results. When designing theoretical and practical teaching, it must be an organic combination of theory and practice, combined with regional economic development hotspots or issues of concern to people's livelihood and industries. For example, the current issue of rural revitalization and the development of

characteristic industries can allow students to choose economic development topics, conduct literature readings and investigations, and share the research on the theme of “rural revitalization in Tibetan areas” to raise issues. For example, the Y prefecture’s Bingtangxin apples are grown in villages in several counties. We can use the price game model to conduct research on the pricing strategies of Bingtangxin apples in the residual cloud market competition and finally determine a reasonable price strategy to promote the Y prefecture’s Bingtangxin apples nationwide. In summary, starting from local realities and combining textbook theory with practice improves students’ interest in theoretical learning and cultivates their abilities to apply and analyze knowledge principles and solve problems.

#### *4.4 Improve Assessment Methods and Emphasize both Theoretical Mastery and Application Abilities in Assessment*

Course assessment reform is another challenge after the teaching reform of applied undergraduate colleges. Without assessment, there is no way to ensure teaching effectiveness. For thousands of years, we have been accustomed to closed-book exams as the best assessment method for learning. The traditional theoretical assessment method makes students only focus on theoretical learning, even to the extent of cramming for exams, making learning a process of coping with exams, resulting in insufficient practical mastery and application abilities. The OBE concept provides useful references for the traditional theoretical assessment method. Combining talent training goals and course characteristics, changing the past emphasis on theoretical assessment methods, and decomposing attitudes, values, theoretical mastery and application, research methods, and all other components into assessment content. At the same time, changing the assessment form is no longer entirely a written test and can adopt the form of a written test plus defense.

In summary, the reform of talent training for applied economics undergraduate majors is ongoing, and continuous improvement is based on the continuous summary of previous teaching achievements and experiences. The introduction of the OBE concept into applied economics teaching will form a foundation of theoretical teaching and subdivision of professional qualities, knowledge objectives, and ability requirements, strengthen theoretical learning and practical application through project process, and promote students to form a learning habit of active exploration and practical application, comprehensively improving students’ ability to master and apply theory to solve practical problems.

#### **Fund Project**

Research project of Characteristic Research Institute of Sichuan Minzu College: “Research on the Protection and revitalization Path of Traditional Villages in Kangba Region from the perspective of Cultural Capital” (Project No.: XYZB2208JG)

## References

- Chen, W. P. et al. (2021). Exploration and practical research on teaching reforms of engineering practice center based on 3I - CDIO - OBE talent - training mode. *Computer Applications in Engineering Education*, 29(1), 114-129.
- Florida, R. (1999). The role of the university: Leveraging talent, not technology. *Issues in science and technology*, 15(4), 67-73.
- Liu, L., & Li, Y. (2022). Teaching Paradigm Reform of Economic and Management Courses Based on the Integration of OBE Concept and PAD Mode. *Advances in Applied Sociology*, 12(9), 470-483.
- Pan, Y., & Zheng, Z. (2023). Research on Talent Training and Platform Cooperation for Logistics Engineering Undergraduates Based on OBE Concept[M]//Advances in Artificial Systems for Medicine and Education VI. *Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland*, 2023, 411-425.
- Ruipeng, T. (2018). Research on talent training mode for safety engineering major at universities. *China Safety Science Journal*, 28(3), 1.
- Xi, Q. (2021). Talent Training Mechanism of School Enterprise Cooperation for Economic and Trade Majors Based on Obe Mode. *Journal of Frontiers in Educational Research*, 1(8), 94-99.