

Research on the Teaching Reform of College Students' Career Planning and Employment Guidance Courses Based on the OBE Concept

Youxin Lai¹ Mengling Deng²

^{1,2} Guangzhou City University of Technology, Guangzhou, Guangdong, China

¹Corresponding author. Email: laiyouxin@gcu.edu.cn

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the systematic reform of college students' career planning and employment guidance courses based on the Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) concept. With global economic transformation and technological advancement, university graduates face significant challenges in employment. Traditional course models have exhibited numerous deficiencies in terms of curriculum objectives, content, and evaluation mechanisms, failing to effectively enhance students' career planning capabilities and employment competitiveness. By analyzing the theoretical foundation of the OBE concept, this paper proposes specific measures to optimize curriculum objectives, teaching content, teaching methods, and assessment mechanisms. The core of the curriculum reform lies in backward design, with a focus on the actual professional competencies that students should possess upon graduation. This approach promotes the dynamic adjustment of teaching content and the implementation of diversified teaching methods. Additionally, the introduction of a diversified evaluation system ensures that the teaching outcomes are aligned with the demands of society. This study not only provides theoretical and practical guidance for the reform of career planning courses in higher education but also offers practical solutions for cultivating graduates with high-quality and career adaptability.

Keywords: Outcomes-Based Education (OBE), Career planning, Employment guidance, Curriculum teaching reform.

1. INTRODUCTION

With the rapid changes in the global economic landscape and technological advancements, the employment prospects of university graduates are facing unprecedented challenges. In recent years, the issue of employment for college students has become increasingly prominent, with an imbalance between labor market supply and demand, and a growing structural contradiction in employment. To address these challenges, national governments have issued a series of policy documents that clearly emphasize the need to strengthen career education and employment entrepreneurship guidance, aiming to enhance the employability and competitiveness of university graduates.

While traditional career planning and employment guidance courses have to some extent improved students' employment readiness, there

remain significant shortcomings in terms of curriculum objectives, teaching content, and methods. Some courses lack clear objectives, fail to timely reflect market demands, and rely on relatively limited teaching methods that do not effectively address the individualized needs of students. As a result, students, despite acquiring theoretical knowledge, often graduate without sufficient career planning abilities or job-seeking skills, making it difficult for them to meet the demands of society and employers. Therefore, it is crucial to explore a curriculum reform model that aligns with the demands of the modern era.

In recent years, Outcomes-Based Education (OBE), an advanced educational philosophy, has garnered increasing attention. OBE emphasizes backward design and outcome-based approaches, using the actual demands of society for talent as the foundation for redefining curriculum objectives,

content, and teaching methods. At its core, OBE focuses on being "student-centered", advocating for curriculum reform that ensures students graduate with skills and competencies that align with societal needs. The introduction of this concept provides a new solution to the challenges within career planning and employment guidance courses, and presents new opportunities to improve teaching quality and student employability in higher education.

This paper, based on the OBE philosophy, proposes a systematic reform of career planning and employment guidance courses tailored to the demands of the current job market. Through an in-depth analysis and exploration of curriculum objectives, teaching content, teaching methods, and evaluation mechanisms, this study aims to enhance students' competitiveness in the job market, promoting more comprehensive and higher-quality employment outcomes for university students.

2. PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

With the transformation and upgrading of the global economy, traditional industries are continuously being replaced by emerging sectors, resulting in profound changes in labor market demands for talent. At the same time, technological advancements and structural adjustments in industries have imposed higher requirements on the skills and competencies of university graduates. National policies have been consistently pushing higher education institutions to strengthen career education and employment guidance in response to the co-existing structural contradictions of "difficult employment" and "labor shortages". However, most universities' career planning and employment guidance courses still follow traditional models, failing to effectively adapt to the rapidly changing job market and students' individualized needs. This paper identifies several major issues present in the current curriculum:

2.1 Unclear Curriculum Objectives

Influenced by traditional exam-oriented education concepts, some universities lack clarity in defining the objectives of career planning and employment guidance courses, resulting in a disconnection between curriculum goals and the actual needs of society for talent. Current courses often focus more on helping students pass exams and earn credits, without aligning the course objectives with the development of students'

employability. This leads to weak awareness of career planning and inadequate job-seeking skills among students. Particularly when facing the requirements of emerging industries, students often lack the necessary adaptability and workplace readiness.

2.2 Outdated Course Content and Neglect of Individualized Needs

With the rise of emerging industries such as artificial intelligence and big data, the issue of outdated content in traditional career planning and employment guidance courses has become increasingly prominent. Course content often fails to keep pace with the latest industry developments, resulting in a disconnect between the curriculum and the realities of economic development and employment demand. Furthermore, the courses generally emphasize universal education, neglecting the individualized needs of students from different academic backgrounds. As a result, students lack career guidance that is tailored to their specific professional background and personal career goals, which adversely affects their career development after graduation.

2.3 Single Teaching Methods and Lack of Interaction

At present, traditional PPT-based lecture methods are widely used in career planning and employment guidance courses in universities, and such teaching methods are relatively singular, failing to engage students or stimulate their interest. In this model, classroom interaction is limited, making it difficult for instructors to understand the individualized needs of students. Consequently, students' active participation and feedback are significantly lacking. Additionally, some instructors do not systematically study teaching methods, and rarely use modern instructional techniques such as case studies, scenario simulations, or interactive discussions, greatly diminishing the effectiveness of teaching.

2.4 Inadequate Assessment Mechanisms, Neglecting Practical Skills

Current course evaluation mechanisms largely remain focused on final exams, classroom performance, and attendance, which fail to comprehensively reflect students' learning outcomes and employability. Especially in terms of assessment forms, there is an overemphasis on

theoretical knowledge evaluation, while the assessment of practical skills is often neglected. This evaluation system leads students to mistakenly believe that passing exams equates to mastering career planning and job-seeking skills, while their actual operational abilities are not effectively developed. Moreover, many universities still rely on open-book exams, a method that overlooks the practical application of students' career planning and job-seeking skills.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: OBE EDUCATIONAL CONCEPT

Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) is an advanced educational concept that has been widely applied in global education reforms in recent years. It was first introduced in the 1980s as part of primary education reforms in North America and gradually expanded to higher education. The core idea of OBE is "backward design" and "outcomes orientation," where the professional competencies and learning outcomes that students should possess upon completing their education become the central focus of curriculum design. OBE emphasizes a "student-centered" approach, in contrast to traditional education models, and focuses on cultivating students' ability to meet societal needs. The ultimate goal is to ensure that students graduate with the professional skills and workplace competitiveness required for their careers.

3.1 The Origin and Development of OBE

OBE was initially applied in the field of primary education to ensure that students, upon completing their studies, could meet societal and labor market demands. As global education reforms deepened, OBE gradually became more prevalent in higher education, particularly in engineering disciplines. Countries such as the United States, Australia, and South Africa were pioneers in integrating OBE into their higher education systems, restructuring teaching objectives and content, which significantly improved graduates' adaptability and employability. In China, OBE was introduced into the engineering education accreditation system in 2013 and has since expanded into vocational education and other disciplines. Particularly in the context of the new economic landscape, where there is a growing demand for high-quality, multidisciplinary talents, OBE's advantages in enhancing the visibility and measurability of educational outcomes have become increasingly evident.

3.2 Application of OBE in Curriculum Design

The key to OBE lies in "backward design," whereby the core competencies that students should possess upon graduation are identified, and curriculum objectives, content, and assessment systems are formulated accordingly. In career planning and employment guidance courses, OBE requires instructors to define clear learning outcomes based on societal and industry demands. For example, the curriculum objectives should focus on enhancing students' career planning skills and employability. The course content must align with the latest industry trends and be dynamically adjusted to reflect changes in the labor market. Additionally, OBE emphasizes individualized development, requiring instructors to provide targeted guidance based on students' academic backgrounds and career goals, thereby achieving more precise career education.

3.3 Innovation in Teaching Methods under OBE

OBE advocates for diverse teaching methods, highlighting the importance of active student participation and the development of practical skills. Compared to traditional lecture-based methods, OBE expects instructors to take on the roles of guides and facilitators, using case studies, scenario simulations, and project-based learning to increase classroom interaction and effectiveness. For example, in career planning courses, teachers can introduce workplace simulations and real-world business case studies to help students master practical decision-making skills in a professional setting. Moreover, OBE supports a diversified evaluation system, which not only relies on final exams but also assesses students' performance through projects, practical skills, and feedback from employers. This multi-dimensional assessment ensures that students graduate with the comprehensive skills needed to adapt to the workplace.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: OBE EDUCATIONAL CONCEPT

To effectively address the challenges of the employment market for university graduates in the new era, the reform of career planning and employment guidance courses based on OBE principles should involve comprehensive optimization across curriculum objectives, teaching

content, teaching methods, and assessment mechanisms. Through backward design, a clear focus on learning outcomes is established, with the core aim of enhancing students' employability and professional competencies, thereby driving the overall improvement of teaching quality.

4.1 Rationally Setting Curriculum Objectives

At the core of the OBE educational concept is backward design, where curriculum objectives are planned according to the practical skills and competencies students should possess upon graduation. This concept draws from constructivism and outcomes-based education theory, emphasizing that education should not only focus on knowledge transmission but should also prioritize the cultivation of practical student abilities. Consequently, curriculum objectives must closely align with the real-world demand for talent, especially the need for versatile, application-oriented professionals in today's workforce. The focus should be on developing students' career planning awareness, adaptability, and job-seeking skills.

In terms of specific design, curriculum objectives should be set in stages, helping students gradually develop the necessary career skills. In the initial stage, the course should emphasize building foundational career knowledge, enabling students to grasp the basic concepts and tools of career planning — this aligns with the "knowledge construction" phase of transfer theory. In the intermediate stage, through skill training, case simulations, and practical projects, students gradually enhance core competencies related to the workplace, reflecting the "practice-oriented" principle of OBE. Finally, in the advanced stage, courses should incorporate realistic workplace simulations, employing situational teaching and experiential learning to help students master specific job skills and job-seeking techniques. This situational learning method effectively transforms theoretical knowledge into practical capabilities.

This staged objective setting not only adheres to the "outcome-oriented" principle of OBE but also aligns with students' developmental pathways, fully considering the cognitive development patterns of learners and the changing demands of the workforce. Through scientific instructional design, the course can achieve an organic integration of

knowledge, skills, and professional qualities, laying a solid foundation for students' career development.

4.2 Enriching Course Content

In terms of course content design, reforms based on OBE principles should closely reflect current economic trends to ensure that course content remains cutting-edge and practical. Dynamic adjustments to the curriculum are crucial, especially when addressing the rapid growth of emerging industries. Course content should be updated in real-time to reflect the latest industry developments. For example, with the rise of artificial intelligence and the green economy, career planning courses need to incorporate knowledge of these emerging professions, helping students understand the demands of future workplaces and cultivate the corresponding competencies. This dynamic adjustment reflects the "learning environment adaptability" theory in educational science, which emphasizes that courses must adapt to external changes to develop students' professional adaptability.

Additionally, the curriculum should address individualized needs, tailoring content to students from different academic backgrounds to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of the course. For instance, for accounting majors, courses can incorporate industry-specific talent demand analysis and job matching strategies, enabling students to develop clearer career directions and skills reserves during the job search process. This customized instructional design aligns with constructivist theory, which emphasizes knowledge construction based on students' backgrounds and needs, thus improving the effectiveness of learning.

Furthermore, course content should incorporate career ethics and social responsibility education. This helps students consider not only their personal career development but also balance societal needs and national interests when making career decisions. The inclusion of ideological and political elements in the curriculum aligns with OBE's emphasis on cultivating students' comprehensive competencies and resonates with the "moral education" theory in educational science, promoting the holistic development of students in terms of knowledge, abilities, and ethical qualities.

4.3 Innovative Teaching Methods to Enhance Classroom Interaction

Under the OBE concept, the reform of teaching methods should focus on enhancing classroom interaction and practical application to better meet the learning needs of modern students. Traditional one-way lecture models no longer satisfy students' cognitive development, as educational theories like social constructivism emphasize that learning is deepened through interaction and collaboration. Therefore, reforms should be based on diversified teaching methods, aiming to increase student engagement, promote autonomous learning, and foster critical thinking skills.

Firstly, Project-Based Learning (PBL) can be introduced. This project-based approach transforms career planning and employment guidance courses into practical projects. Through teamwork, students complete tasks such as designing career plans or simulating recruitment processes, consolidating the knowledge they have learned through hands-on practice. PBL aligns with the constructivist learning theory in educational psychology and effectively improves students' teamwork skills and problem-solving abilities, helping them build a solid knowledge framework through active participation.

Secondly, virtual simulation technology and scenario-based teaching can be employed to create a virtual environment that closely mirrors real workplaces. By engaging in activities such as simulated interviews or job role-playing, students can experience and adapt to real-world work scenarios in advance. According to situational learning theory, learning in authentic or simulated contexts enables students to better understand and apply knowledge, improving their workplace adaptability and professional competencies. This scenario-based teaching approach not only stimulates students' learning interest but also enhances their practical skills and workplace competitiveness through experiential learning.

By employing these innovative teaching methods, the outcome-oriented teaching approach of OBE is fully realized, ensuring that students acquire measurable skills and competencies during the learning process, thus laying a solid foundation for their future career development.

4.4 Improving Diversified Assessment Mechanisms

To comprehensively evaluate students' learning outcomes, the assessment mechanisms must undergo diversified reforms. Based on OBE principles, the assessment system should move beyond the traditional reliance on final exams, shifting toward a process-oriented evaluation and multi-dimensional assessments. Such process-oriented evaluation not only considers students' mastery of theoretical knowledge but also assesses their learning process and practical application skills through various forms such as assignments, class participation, project work, and teamwork. Educational theory points out that diversified assessment mechanisms contribute to a comprehensive reflection of students' holistic development and competencies, avoiding the limitations of single-mode evaluations.

Within this diversified assessment framework, evaluations should cover three key areas: theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and professional qualities. The assessment of theoretical knowledge should ensure students' understanding of the core concepts of the course; practical skills should be evaluated through project work and case analysis to measure students' ability to apply knowledge in real-world contexts; and professional qualities should focus on assessing students' communication skills, professional ethics, and teamwork abilities, ensuring that by the end of the course, students not only grasp theoretical knowledge but are also able to effectively apply it to solve real problems.

Additionally, introducing third-party evaluations is a crucial approach to enhancing the effectiveness of the assessment system. Universities should actively collaborate with employers, utilizing external feedback to comprehensively assess students' actual employability. According to constructivist learning theory, third-party evaluations can provide a comprehensive assessment of students' professional capabilities from the perspective of practice and societal needs, helping universities adjust teaching content and methods in a timely manner. This alignment of university and industry evaluation mechanisms ensures that curriculum objectives are closely aligned with societal demands. Such university-enterprise collaborative evaluation not only addresses the shortcomings of internal assessments but also provides a more practice-oriented basis for

curriculum reform, further enhancing students' competitiveness in the job market.

5. CONCLUSION

The reform of career planning and employment guidance courses for university students based on the OBE concept is not only a key pathway for innovation in higher education teaching but also a critical measure to meet the future societal demand for highly skilled and diversified talents. With profound changes in the global economy and continuous adjustments in industrial structures, universities are facing an urgent need to cultivate graduates who possess adaptability, innovation, and practical skills. This paper systematically presents reform strategies based on the OBE concept from four perspectives: curriculum objectives, teaching content, teaching methods, and assessment mechanisms. Through backward design and outcome-oriented teaching, the reform aims to effectively enhance students' career planning abilities and employment competitiveness.

This study demonstrates that the OBE concept, with its clear outcome-oriented focus and diversified teaching methods, can effectively address the deficiencies of traditional courses in employment guidance, helping students better adapt to the complex and dynamic job market. Furthermore, the introduction of a diversified evaluation system, incorporating employer feedback, not only strengthens the depth of university-enterprise cooperation but also provides a more practical evaluation standard for curriculum reform.

In the future, as technological advancements and industrial upgrades accelerate, universities should continue to deepen the application of the OBE concept in their curricula, ensuring seamless alignment with industry demands and actively exploring innovative teaching methods to form a sustainable career education model. This will not only improve the employment quality of graduates but also lay a solid foundation for the long-term development of higher education.

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