



“Learn by Competing, Empower by Competing, Teach by Competing, Refine by Competing”

Research on the integration of teaching and discipline competition in Events Management major based on OBE concept

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Abstract: The event industry is a rapidly developing field in the world, which has also stimulated the demand for event professionals and the reform of event teaching methods. According to the development needs of the event industry, professional events talents should master interdisciplinary abilities, not only professional knowledge and skills, but also good communication skills, excellent marketing methods, and innovative critical thinking. However, many universities still adhere to traditional ideas in event teaching, which has led to many problems, such as weak practicality of professional courses, outdated course content, and insufficient students' cognition of the profession. The OBE theory emphasizes a student-centered approach and results oriented goals, representing a shift from a teaching centered to a learning centered educational paradigm. The "Competition-Education Integration" model based on the OBE concept is not only a practical approach for universities to cultivate innovative talents, but also helps optimize teaching design and promote the integration of students' theoretical and practical abilities. This article is based on the Outcome Based Education (OBE) concept and explores the integration of subject competitions and event teaching from four aspects: "Learn by Competing, Empower by Competing, Teach by Competing, Refine by Competing". This study aims to address existing issues, innovate course content and assessment methods, promote the development and innovation of event-related curricula, and ultimately enhance the quality of talent cultivation.

Keywords: OBE Concept, Events Management, Discipline Competition

1. Introduction

In 2020, the Ministry of Education of China issued the "Declaration on the Construction of New Liberal Arts", which clearly pointed out that liberal arts education is an important field for improving comprehensive national strength, strengthening cultural confidence, and cultivating new talents of the times. Event industry is a leading industry in the national economy and an important channel and platform for building a new open economic system^[1]. It has multiple effects of aggregation, driving, and comprehensiveness^[1]. As an emerging characteristic major, it aims to cultivate composite talents with event management knowledge and practical abilities. However, with the rapid development of the event industry, especially the digital transformation during the pandemic, traditional teaching methods are no longer able to meet the industry's demand for talents. Therefore, based on the OBE concept, this article explores the integration path of discipline competition and professional teaching, in order to organically integrate the subject competition mode into daily teaching, improve teaching quality, and cultivate high-quality talents that meet industry needs.

2. Theoretical Foundation

Outcomes-Based Education (OBE), an educational theory proposed by the American scholar Spady in 1981, is grounded in the principles of "clarity of focus on culminating outcomes, expanded opportunities and support for learning success, high expectations for all students, and designing down from the ultimate learning outcomes"^[2]. The OBE philosophy emphasizes a student-centered approach and outcome-oriented goals, representing a shift from teaching-centered to learning-centered educational paradigms^[3]. Unlike traditional education, OBE focuses on students' learning outcomes and prioritizes outcome-based evaluation systems. It uses students' learning achievements as the basis for assessing and improving teaching quality, aligning with the developmental trends of modern education and contributing to more effective educational outcomes^[4].

"Competition-Education Integration" refers to a teaching model that incorporates various types of discipline competitions into the entire curriculum. This model facilitates curriculum reform by integrating course content with pre-competition preparation, in-competition practice, and post-competition feedback. The "Competition-Education Co-Creation" model, based on the OBE philosophy, enhances students' comprehensive abilities through innovations in

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classroom teaching, assignments, and assessment methods^[5]. The integration of competitions and education serves as a practical pathway for universities to cultivate innovative talents, and optimizes practical teaching design, promoting the mutual integration of theory and practice for students^[6].

2. Issues in the Curriculum of Events Management major

2.1 Weak Practical Application in Courses

In 2020, the National Tourism Vocational Education Teaching Guidance Committee conducted a questionnaire survey on the demand for technical personnel among 173 exhibition enterprises^[7]. The survey revealed that the event industry has a complex industrial chain and diverse talent requirements. According to the findings, most graduates initially assume front-line positions, and companies perceive their job competency as relatively low. The lack of practical experience results in insufficient systematic understanding of the entire event process among graduates. As an applied major, the teaching system of the event course contains rich theoretical knowledge. However, some universities focus more on theory than practice, lacking opportunities for real exhibition project operation and simulation practice. The course design remains in the past, and the course content lacks integrity and hierarchy, resulting in a disconnect between students' theoretical learning and practical application, which is detached from the needs of modern event enterprises. This teaching mode results in students receiving relatively single teaching content. For example, they only know what the SWOT model is, but do not know how to apply this model to actual event project analysis. They only know how to set templates, which makes it difficult for students to transform theoretical knowledge into practical operational skills and cannot meet the industry's demand for high-quality applied talents. Song and Yin (2024) summarized relevant literature on teaching in exhibition programs and identified innovative practical teaching models and enhancing students' practical abilities as two key focuses in event education^[1]. He (2023), by reviewing domestic and international literature and analyzing cases of practical teaching system reforms in undergraduate exhibition programs in China, highlighted three major issues in current teaching reforms^[8]. Among these, the updating and improvement of practical skills and theoretical knowledge accounted for 40%, while the superficiality and lack of depth in students' social practice activities accounted for 30%. In addition, some schools lack practical teaching resources and have not established a relatively complete practical teaching system, such as a lack of school enterprise cooperation platforms, training bases, and other resources, as well as a lack of "dual mentor teaching system on campus and off campus", which further limits the cultivation of students' practical abilities

2.2 Outdated Teaching Content

In December 2021, the State Council issued the "14th Five-Year Plan for Digital Economy Development," explicitly proposing to accelerate the capitalization and supply of public service resources in fields such as culture, education, and exhibition tourism. From the perspective of national policy, it is evident that technological advancement have profoundly impacted the event industry. Traditional teaching content can no longer meet the demands of the industry, necessitating adjustments in the content and direction of exhibition talent cultivation under the guidance of policy^[9]. With the rapid development of the event industry, particularly the deepening integration of technological advancements, traditional teaching content has become inadequate in meeting industry demands. The pace of technological transformation in the event industry far exceeds the speed at which educational systems are updated, resulting in graduates struggling to adapt to the latest industry requirements^[10]. For instance, emerging technologies such as online exhibition platforms, virtual reality (VR) events, augmented reality (AR) technology, artificial intelligence (AI) technology, virtual simulation, the metaverse, and big data analytics are increasingly being applied in modern exhibitions. However, compared to other popular disciplines, the textbooks and resources for exhibition-related programs are updated more slowly and contain relatively limited information. As a result, these new technologies are often insufficiently represented in the current curriculum. The lag in teaching content not only hinders students' knowledge updating but also weakens their competitiveness in the job market. Therefore, there is an urgent need to optimize course content by incorporating more cutting-edge technologies and industry trends.

2.3 Insufficient Student Cognition

Under the background of the New Liberal Arts, the quality enhancement project for applied talents has become a significant issue in higher education^[11]. However, many students' understanding of Events management major remains at the level of a "service industry," perceiving employment in this field as merely performing the duties of a "service attendant." They underestimate the complexity and comprehensiveness of this discipline. They fail to consider that event management is a systematic and long-term process; while a project may only last for 3-5 days once implemented, its initial planning and refinement can take a year or even longer. This partial cognition leads to students' low enthusiasm for professional studies and a lack of motivation for in-depth exploration. Many Events Management students initially had a superficial understanding of event management, believing that the learning difficulty of this major was relatively low, which resulted in a lack of motivation in their subsequent studies. Modern event talents emphasize interdisciplinary education, requiring the integration of events with marketing, management, design, human resource management, and other fields^[12]. Scholar Jing (2023) conducted research on the development of a scale and the exploration of internal mechanisms regarding the professional identity of undergraduate students majoring in events studies^[13]. The study found that professional cognition positively influences professional emotion, professional belonging, and professional behavior. Moreover, professional cognition serves as the foundation for all these aspects.

Only when students possess a positive professional cognition are they willing to engage in professional learning and consider it as a future career path. However, due to insufficient personal knowledge among students and the lack of comprehensive and in-depth workplace analysis provided by some colleges during teaching, students lack understanding of the depth and breadth of the industry, which affects their learning outcomes and career development plans.

In summary, there are certain issues with regard to practicality, the updating of teaching content, and student cognition in professional courses. Introducing discipline competition mechanisms can effectively address these problems. Discipline competitions can not only enhance the practicality of courses but also introduce the latest industry technologies and trends. By inviting industry experts to provide feedback, students' understanding of exhibition management can be improved.

3. Integration Paths of OBE Concept and Discipline competitions in Practice Models

3.1 Learn by Competing, Redefine Assessment Systems

The OBE educational philosophy emphasizes a results oriented approach, therefore, under the guidance of the OBE (Outcome Based Education) philosophy, real discipline competitions can be used as an important supplementary form of curriculum assessment to promote innovation in assessment methods. Students can participate in competitions as a team, and the final score of the competition will be reflected in the process grade of the course. By linking the competition score with the course grade, students' participation and enthusiasm in the competition will be increased. In 2023, our institution introduced the assessment system of the China University Business Elite Challenge(CUBEC) in Exhibition Innovation and Entrepreneurship Practice into the curriculum. This requires students to undergo systematic and comprehensive training, from team formation and project planning to final implementation. This approach not only tests students' mastery of theoretical knowledge but also evaluates their practical operational skills and teamwork abilities. For example, the overall quality and standardization of the project proposal can reflect the learning outcomes of the 'Exhibition Copywriting' course, while the completeness of each section of the proposal can provide feedback on the learning effectiveness of the 'Exhibition Planning and Management' course. In addition, the results of the competition can be reflected in teaching, helping teachers discover shortcomings in teaching, optimize curriculum design and teaching methods, and adjust more suitable talent training programs. Particularly for young faculty members, understanding professional competitions can provide insights into the latest industry trends and talent development requirements. Guiding students in competitions also serves as a means to enhance course quality.

3.2 Empower by Competing, Revolutionize Teaching Practices

Teachers can use various forms such as project-based teaching, case teaching, flipped classroom, group presentations, sand table simulations, expert lectures, etc. to introduce the practical requirements of competitions into the classroom. This way can enhance the practicality and fun of teaching, and encourage students to actively participate in the classroom teaching process, allowing students to apply their learned knowledge in real situations and improve their problem-solving abilities. At the same time, teachers can reflect students' acceptance and participation in different teaching methods and courses, and assisting in the improvement of course quality. For instance, the simulation exercise for the 2023 China University Business Elite Challenge(CUBEC) - Event Industry Innovation and Entrepreneurship Practice Competition involved creating emergency response plans for exhibition safety and conducting sandbox simulations. Students are relatively unfamiliar with venue design and risk management in the real industry; therefore, industry experts were invited to conduct lectures in class, assisting students in understanding the current status of the real industry and helping them better comprehend the competition requirements. This "dual-teacher teaching mode" can help students increase their learning interest while also aiding them in better understanding industry trends, cultivating innovative thinking, and practical abilities.

3.3 Teach by Competing, Diversify Curriculum Offerings

Discipline competitions often requiring months of planning and preparation, are systematic team collaboration activities. Integrating them throughout the teaching activities can provide practical evidence for optimizing course content and help refine the course syllabus. Based on the knowledge and skill requirements, hot topics, and tracks of the competitions, teachers can set practical teaching themes, forming a "competition-driven" practical teaching mode.

For example, 2023 China University Business Elite Challenge(CUBEC) - event industry Innovation and Entrepreneurship Practice Competition introduced a new track for digital event project planning, which requires the digital presentation of exhibition projects.

However, during the teaching process, the teacher found that the digital event knowledge in the textbook could no longer keep up with the speed of technological development, especially after the rapid transformation of the online events after the epidemic. She found that the textbook knowledge still remained before the epidemic and had low reference value. Therefore, in course design, the teacher have added cutting-edge content such as online event technology, virtual reality (VR) technology, augmented reality (AR) technology, and big data analysis based on competition needs. She also collaborated with big data teachers across disciplines to help students better understand new technologies and make course content more relevant to industry reality. Competition requirements generally

reflect the latest industry hot topics and trends. Taking competition requirements as the direction of curriculum reform can improve the practicality and applicability of the curriculum, help students better master the core skills required by the industry, and enhance the cutting-edge and application-oriented nature of the curriculum.

Taking the compulsory course "Introduction to Exhibition and Convention" as an example, this course focuses on the development of the exhibition industry and teaches the concepts, functions, and planning and organization methods of exhibition activities such as conferences, exhibitions, festivals, and incentive travels. It is a basic compulsory course for exhibition students in their freshman year. The author has analyzed the keywords of award-winning works from recent event-related discipline competitions and examined the popular competition tracks. High-frequency terms such as *digital exhibitions*, *green exhibitions*, *cultural creativity*, *smart exhibitions*, and *cross-boundary integration* have emerged as prominent themes. Additionally, tracks like cultural and tourism exhibition planning, digital exhibitions, emergency planning, and rural exhibitions have gained significant attention in recent years. The course content of Introduction to Exhibition and Convention is highly relevant to these high-frequency keywords and competition tracks, and it can be flexibly integrated with any trending topics in the event industry.

Therefore, other courses in the field of Events Management can also break away from the traditional experimental approach that focuses on knowledge points, find the connection between course knowledge and discipline competitions, integrate competition requirements into the curriculum, and actively promote the incubation of subject projects. The emphasis of different subjects varies, for example, the course "International Exhibition Practice" focuses on exhibition planning, while "International Conference Practice" focuses on conference planning. Therefore, it is necessary to first allocate competition tracks according to teaching needs, and then set practical teaching themes based on the knowledge and skills requirements, hot topics, and different tracks of discipline competition, allowing students to divide tasks and plan teams. In this way, teachers can foster a more dynamic and application-oriented learning environment.

3.4 Refine by Competing, Strengthen Ideological and Political Education in Courses

Discipline competitions are not merely contests of professional competence but also serve as a significant vehicle for moral education^[14]. The major focuses on the overall development of China's exhibition industry. The teaching team of the course will introduce and analyze many excellent exhibition event cases, such as the Boao Forum For Asia, G20 Summit, Beijing Olympics and other international events. Through systematic analysis of the pre -, mid -, and post event periods, students can gain an understanding of the development of China's event industry, making it an excellent course for ideological and political education majors. This major adheres to a "student-centered" educational framework, constructing a comprehensive "four-in-one" system that encompasses knowledge acquisition, skill enhancement, quality cultivation, and character development. The success of a competition is the culmination of team collaboration, and such events also serve as an optimal platform for shaping the professional skills and personal qualities of future event industry talents.

Discipline competitions are a crucial conduit for educational and moral development. Through months of competition adaptation, individuals can develop their sense of responsibility and collaborative abilities. Discipline competition is also a channel for cultivating students' integrity. The competition rules require students to provide original works, and plagiarism checks are required for copywriting works. Every year, competition scores are cancelled due to plagiarism. Competitions can help students establish correct values and career perspectives, and help them understand the importance of honest competition. .

3. Implementation effect and prospect

The research on the integration of discipline competition and professional teaching based on OBE concept provides new ideas and methods for the course construction of exhibition economy and management major. Through the implementation of the strategy of "Learn by Competing, Empower by Competing, Teach by Competing, Refine by Competing", the subject competition mechanism is introduced in the curriculum reform, and the assessment methods, teaching methods and teaching content are innovated, which not only improves the teaching quality, but also cultivates students comprehensive quality and innovation ability. In 2023, our students have won a number of national competitions, and their practical ability, innovation ability and teamwork ability have been significantly improved. These honors also enhance students awareness of the major and learning enthusiasm. In the future, we will continue to deepen the teaching reform, explore more innovative paths to integrate with the discipline competition, and lay a solid foundation for cultivating high-quality talents that meet the needs of the industry.

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