



POA-oriented Practical Training Courses for English Education Majors in the Context of New Liberal Arts Reform Research

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Abstract: This study investigates the reform of practical training courses for English education majors under the New Liberal Arts initiative, guided by the Production-Oriented Approach (POA). It identifies existing problems such as singular teaching modes, insufficient practical experience, and inadequate teacher training. Through the integration of POA's three-phase framework—Motivating, Enabling, and Assessing—the research proposes a student-centered restructuring of practical training. Using the English Teaching Theory and Practice course as a case study, the paper demonstrates how POA enhances teaching competency through task-based, collaborative, and evaluative learning. Findings indicate that POA-driven reforms significantly improve students' practical teaching skills, critical thinking, and readiness for real-world educational environments. This study offers a replicable model for practical curriculum innovation in English teacher education.

Keywords: new liberal arts; Production-oriented approach; English education; Practical training courses; Teaching reform

1 Introduction

The New Liberal Arts initiative represents a transformative shift in Chinese higher education, advocating for interdisciplinary integration, innovation, and the cultivation of holistic competencies. Within English teacher education, this shift necessitates a move beyond traditional lecture-based training toward experiential, practice-oriented learning. However, existing practical training courses often remain theory-heavy, with limited authentic teaching opportunities and insufficient alignment with real classroom demands. While the integration of pedagogical models such as POA has been discussed in broader foreign language teaching contexts, its systematic application to practical training courses for English education majors remains underexplored. This study addresses that gap by examining how POA can be operationalized to enhance practical teaching competence within the New Liberal Arts paradigm.

2 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 New Liberal Arts and English Teacher Education

The New Liberal Arts initiative, formally launched by China's Ministry of Education in 2017, represents a strategic reform aimed at modernizing traditional humanities education to meet contemporary societal demands. Subsequent policy developments, including the "Six Excellence and One Top" Plan 2.0 (2019) and the Declaration on the Construction of New Liberal Arts (2020), have solidified its focus on interdisciplinary integration, innovation, and talent cultivation.

Within English education majors at application-oriented institutions, the practical curriculum system faces several persistent challenges [1]: a reliance on monolithic teaching methods, a lack of cohesive planning and evaluation across course modules, insufficient teacher practical experience, and disjointed training activities both on and off campus. These issues collectively undermine the development of students' teaching competencies.

The integration of New Liberal Arts principles with English education offers a corrective path. This model seeks to cultivate professionals with international perspectives, critical thinking, and lifelong learning abilities by emphasizing interdisciplinary design, technological application, and enhanced practical skills. It thereby extends beyond linguistic proficiency, equipping students with problem-solving capacities for diverse global careers.

2.2 Production-Oriented Approach (POA)

POA is a teaching theory developed in China that stresses "learning through production." Its three-phase cycle—Motivating (task-driven engagement), Enabling (scaffolded input and guidance), and Assessing (multi-dimensional evaluation)—provides a coherent framework for linking theory with practice. POA is particularly suited to practical training reform due to its focus on authentic tasks, iterative feedback, and competency development.

3 Current Situation and Problems of "English Teaching Theory and Practice" Curriculum

"English Teaching Theory and Practice" is a systematic skill-training course for English education majors, covering core areas such as teaching concepts, national curriculum standards, lesson planning, classroom management, language skill training, moral education integration, educational evaluation, and teaching resource application [2]. The course spans two semesters (72 class hours) with a design emphasizing theory-practice integration, aiming to comprehensively improve students' teaching ability and overall quality.

However, practical implementation faces prominent problems: 1) Limited practical opportunities, with simulated teaching poorly aligning with real primary and secondary school classroom environments; 2) Large class sizes and insufficient

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training hours leading to inadequate individual participation and operational experience; 3) Low student motivation due to tedious preparation or open teaching pressure; 4) Overemphasis on theoretical knowledge in evaluation, neglecting comprehensive assessment of practical ability and teaching performance; 5) Lack of effective guidance and timely feedback, constrained by limited teacher resources and insufficient teacher-student communication. These issues necessitate curriculum reform focused on optimizing structure, increasing training hours, building a practice-oriented multi-evaluation system, and strengthening teacher guidance mechanisms.

4 Exploring the Innovative Path of English Education Professional Training Courses under the Background of New Liberal Arts

In January 2018, the Ministry of Education's National Standard for Teaching Quality of Undergraduate Majors in General Colleges and Universities (Foreign Language and Literature) clarified that colleges and universities should adhere to "student-centered, output-oriented, and continuous improvement" principles, deepening English education reform to meet New Liberal Arts development needs. The POA proposed by Wen Qiufang and his team provides key theoretical support for this reform, as a China-characteristic foreign language teaching model emphasizing integration of learning and application, task-driven learning, and optimized input-output connection^[3].

POA's three core phases guide curriculum innovation: 1) Motivating stage: Design real/near-real tasks (e.g., simulated primary and secondary school teaching, lesson planning, case analysis) to stimulate learning needs—for example, tasking students with "effective implementation of task-based teaching in primary and secondary classrooms" to drive theoretical exploration; 2) Enabling stage: Provide targeted input (excellent teaching videos, cutting-edge literature) and scaffolding support (group discussion, micro-teaching) to guide step-by-step task completion, such as lesson plan design and simulated teaching with real-time teacher feedback; 3) Assessing stage: Adopt multi-dimensional dynamic evaluation covering both final output (teaching demonstration effect) and process performance (classroom interaction, reflection logs), through teacher-student co-evaluation and peer evaluation.

To enhance teaching quality, supplementary measures include integrating in/out-of-class and on/off-campus resources, increasing practical training courses and class hours, revising syllabuses to enrich practical content, improving teaching methods, and aligning training directions with latest talent demand. Schools and teachers strive to ensure practical teaching time and effectiveness, optimize the practical teaching and management system, and integrate practical ability cultivation throughout the four-year undergraduate program.

5 Promoting the Reform of English Major Training Courses under the Concept of POA —— Taking the Course of English Teaching Theory and Practice as an Example

"English Teaching Theory and Practice" is a comprehensive course covering core areas of English education. It focuses on imparting teaching knowledge and practical skills, including teaching philosophy, curriculum standard interpretation, teaching design, and classroom management. The course aims to shape students' professional competence in English teaching, strengthen the integration of "theory and practice", and cultivate professionals who can flexibly apply knowledge, accurately control classrooms, and implement personalized teaching^[4].

5.1 Motivation stage

The motivation stage of English Teaching Theory and Practice focuses on "stimulating learning needs through concrete teaching cases" and laying a solid foundation for the subsequent enabling phase by guiding students to intuitively perceive core theoretical knowledge and practical operation logic. Taking Unit 4 "Teaching Reading" as the starting point, the stage centers on the teaching video of "The WWTF is Working Hard to Save Them All" (from Volume 1 of Grade 8 FLTRE) and designs a step-by-step pre-class and in-class interactive process with detailed operation requirements:

5.1.1 Pre-Class video learning with guided tasks

One week before the class, teachers release the 45-minute complete classroom teaching video to students through the online learning platform (e.g., Moodle), along with a "targeted observation guide" (see Table 4) and clear submission requirements:

1) Video viewing specifications: Students are required to watch the video at least twice—first for overall perception (focusing on the flow of the entire reading lesson) and second for focused analysis (targeting the two core questions in the guide). They need to take notes while watching, marking key time nodes (e.g., "05:30–08:15: pre-reading vocabulary teaching") and key teaching behaviors (e.g., "the teacher uses pictures to explain the word 'rescue'").

2) Guided question thinking and recording:

Q1: "What are the teaching objectives of the reading lesson in the video? Please classify them into knowledge, ability, and affective objectives, and explain whether they are appropriate for Grade 8 students." Students need to quote the teacher's oral statements (e.g., "By the end of this class, you will be able to understand the main work of the WWTF") and written prompts (e.g., objectives listed on PPT) as evidence, and combine the cognitive characteristics of junior high school students (e.g., Grade 8 students have basic argumentative text reading ability) to evaluate rationality.

Q2: "What instructional strategies and steps are used in the video? Are they appropriate? Give specific examples." Students are required to correspond strategies to specific links (e.g., "lead-in link uses situational strategy—plays a 2-minute wildlife protection news video") and analyze their effectiveness (e.g., "the strategy can quickly attract students' attention and lay a foundation for understanding the text theme").

3) Submission requirements: Students submit electronic notes and answers to guided questions through the platform 24 hours before class, with a word count of 300–500 words per question. Teachers review all submissions in advance to identify common confusion points (e.g., unclear classification of affective objectives, inaccurate judgment of strategy

appropriateness) for targeted in-class explanation.

5.1.2 In-class interactive discussion and knowledge consolidation

The in-class session lasts 1 class hour (45 minutes), with a structured process to deepen students' understanding:

1) Group exchange and sorting (15 minutes): Students are divided into 6 heterogeneous groups (mixed according to pre-class submission quality), and each group discusses their answers to Q1 and Q2. They need to sort out unified viewpoints and record divergent opinions (e.g., "Group 3 has two views on the appropriateness of affective objectives: one holds that 'cultivating environmental protection awareness' is appropriate, while the other thinks it is too vague").

2) Class sharing and teacher guidance (20 minutes): Each group selects a representative to share key viewpoints (5 minutes per group, limited to 3 groups), and the teacher uses the whiteboard to sort out core knowledge points in real time: For Q1: Summarize the three-dimensional teaching objectives of reading lessons (knowledge: mastering core vocabulary and text structure; ability: training skimming, scanning, and deep reading skills; affective: shaping positive values such as environmental protection) and emphasize the evaluation criteria for appropriate objectives ("consistent with curriculum standards, text characteristics, and students' cognitive level").

For Q2: Sort out common instructional strategies in reading lessons (situational strategy, task-based strategy, interactive strategy) and their application scenarios (e.g., "task-based strategy is suitable for while-reading link to decompose reading difficulties"), and respond to divergent opinions (e.g., "Affective objectives need to be specific—'cultivating environmental protection awareness' can be optimized to 'be willing to take small actions to protect wildlife' to enhance operability").

3) Subtask assignment and guidance (10 minutes): Based on the video analysis results, the teacher assigns two pre-task subtasks for the enabling phase:

Subtask 1: Each group sorts out the "teaching objective analysis template" and "instructional strategy application checklist" based on the video content, which will be used for subsequent lesson design evaluation.

Subtask 2: Each group selects one link (lead-in, pre-reading, while-reading, post-reading) from the video to conduct a 3-minute simulation, focusing on replicating the teacher's key behaviors and strategies.

Through the combination of pre-class guided video learning and in-class interactive consolidation, students not only systematically grasp the core theoretical knowledge of reading teaching but also form clear operation awareness for subsequent task practice. The detailed observation guides and structured discussion processes ensure that the motivation stage is not a simple "video watching" but a targeted learning process that connects theory with practice.

Table 4 Targeted Observation Guide for "The WWTF is Working Hard to Save Them All" Teaching Video

Core Questions	Observation Focus	Operation Requirements
Q1: Teaching objectives and their appropriateness	1. Explicit objectives stated by the teacher (oral/PPT/written); 2. Implicit objectives reflected in teaching activities; 3. Correlation between objectives and Grade 8 students' cognitive level	1. List objectives by category (knowledge/ability/affective); 2. Cite specific evidence from the video; 3. Give clear evaluation (appropriate/inappropriate) and reasons
Q2: Instructional strategies, steps, and their appropriateness	1. Strategies used in each teaching link (lead-in/pre-reading/while-reading/post-reading/summary); 2. Specific implementation steps of strategies (e.g., how to carry out task-based teaching); 3. Effect of strategies on students' participation and understanding	1. Match strategies to corresponding links and steps; 2. Analyze whether the strategy is suitable for the link and text theme; 3. Propose 1–2 optimization suggestions if inappropriate

5.2 Enabling stage

In the enabling phase of English Teaching Theory and Practice, the core goal is to design task chains with strong operability and clear gradients, guiding students to systematically transform theoretical knowledge into practical teaching capabilities. Taking Unit 4 "Teaching Reading" as a typical example, the course selects the text "The WWTF is Working Hard to Save Them All" (from Volume 1 of Grade 8 FLTRE, focusing on wildlife protection) as the core teaching carrier, and decomposes the "reading teaching practice" task into two levels of sub-tasks with detailed operation guidelines, as follows:

5.2.1 Low-level sub-tasks: video-driven deconstruction and analysis

First, teachers provide students with the complete 45-minute classroom teaching video of "The WWTF is Working Hard to Save Them All", with a pre-designed analysis checklist (see Table 3) to standardize the observation and thinking process. Students are divided into 6 groups of 14–15 people, and each group is assigned 1–2 key links to focus on:

1) Teaching objective analysis: Groups need to extract the teacher's stated objectives (oral and written) in the video, classify them into "knowledge objectives" (e.g., mastering core vocabulary such as "rescue", "protect", and understanding the structure of argumentative essays), "ability objectives" (e.g., skimming for main ideas and scanning for specific details), and "affective objectives" (e.g., cultivating environmental protection awareness), and evaluate whether the objectives align with the cognitive level of junior high school students and the text characteristics.

2) Key and difficult points handling: Groups analyze how the teacher identifies key points (e.g., the logical relationship between the WWTF's actions and results) and difficult points (e.g., understanding the connotation of "working hard" in the context), and record the specific strategies adopted (e.g., using pictures to assist in explaining difficult vocabulary, designing contrastive questions to break through logical difficulties).

3) Link-by-link decomposition and simulation: The video's teaching process is split into five fixed links—lead-in (5 minutes), pre-reading (8 minutes), while-reading (18 minutes), post-reading (10 minutes), and summary (4 minutes). Each group is responsible for replaying and analyzing their assigned link: they need to record the teacher's interaction language, activity design (e.g., pre-reading's "vocabulary brainstorming", while-reading's "information mapping"), and time allocation, then simulate the link in class with 5-minute mini-demonstrations. After each demonstration, other groups comment based on the checklist, and the teacher provides targeted feedback (e.g., "The group accurately captured the teacher's use of real news videos for lead-in, but can further analyze how this design stimulates students' prior knowledge of wildlife protection").

This link lasts 2 class hours (90 minutes). Through standardized video decomposition and group collaboration, students not only deepen their understanding of reading teaching principles but also accumulate actionable operation experience for each teaching link.

5.2.2 High-level sub-tasks: collaborative design and complete demonstration

On the basis of low-level tasks, students carry out the high-level task of "designing and demonstrating a complete reading lesson" in the same groups, with clear requirements for the design output and demonstration process:

1) Text selection and objective setting: Each group selects a new junior high school English reading text (from the approved textbook database or authentic materials recommended by the teacher, e.g., "A Day in the Life of a Panda Keeper") and formulates three-dimensional teaching objectives with reference to the video analysis experience and curriculum standards, which must be reviewed and approved by the teacher before proceeding.

2) Full-link design requirements: The lesson plan must cover six core links, with detailed specifications for each:

S1: Lead-in (3–5 minutes): Require the use of situational methods (e.g., pictures, short videos, or real-life questions) to connect with students' life experience;

S2: Pre-reading (5–7 minutes): Include vocabulary pre-teaching (no more than 5 key words) and pre-reading questions (2–3, focusing on activating prior knowledge);

S3: While-reading (15–20 minutes): Design layered tasks (skimming for main ideas, scanning for details, and deep reading for logical relationships) with clear activity forms (e.g., individual reading + group discussion);

S4: Post-reading (8–10 minutes): Arrange comprehensive output activities (e.g., role-play, short writing, or group debates) related to the text theme;

S5: Summary (3–5 minutes): Clearly sort out the text structure and core knowledge points, and connect with affective education;

S6: Homework design (2 minutes): Combine basic tasks (e.g., reciting key sentences) and extended tasks (e.g., searching for more wildlife protection cases).

3) Classroom demonstration and evaluation: Each group conducts a 15-minute in-class teaching demonstration (one student acts as the teacher, others as junior high school students), and submits a complete lesson plan (including teaching objectives, procedures, blackboard design, and teaching aids) before demonstration. After the demonstration, the teacher and other groups evaluate based on two dimensions: "the rationality of design" (consistency with objectives, scientificity of link setting) and "effectiveness of demonstration" (language expression, classroom interaction, and time control).

This high-level task lasts 3 class hours (135 minutes). Through the whole process of "design-review-demonstration-evaluation", students integrate theoretical knowledge such as teaching objective setting, teaching strategy selection, and classroom management, and effectively improve their comprehensive teaching design and practical operation capabilities.

Table 3 Analysis Checklist for "The WWTF is Working Hard to Save Them All" Teaching Video

Analysis Dimension	Specific Observation and Recording Items
Teaching Objectives	1. Knowledge objectives (vocabulary, grammar, text structure); 2. Ability objectives (reading skills); 3. Affective objectives (emotional experience and values)
Key and Difficult Points	1. Identified key points; 2. Identified difficult points; 3. Strategies for handling key and difficult points
Link Operation	1. Activity design and time allocation of each link; 2. Teacher-student interaction methods; 3. Use of teaching aids (PPT, blackboard, etc.)
Evaluation Reflection	1. Advantages of the video's teaching design; 2. Areas for improvement; 3. Insights for own lesson design

5.3.1 Evaluation implementation and feedback data

A two-way interactive evaluation system combining "immediate evaluation and delayed evaluation" was implemented [5].. For the 2022 cohort of 86 English education majors, classroom immediate evaluation recorded that 92.1% of students could effectively apply theoretical knowledge to complete low-level subtasks (e.g., analyzing teaching objectives in videos), while 78.3% successfully addressed problems raised by teachers during practical demonstrations.

After class, 18 group teaching demonstration videos were released on the learning platform, generating 423 peer comments and 312 self-evaluation reports. According to the teaching evaluation questionnaire (Table 2), 83.7% of students "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that their English teaching practice ability had improved; 87.2% expressed preference for in-class teaching practice activities; and 79.1% favored collaborative lesson design with classmates. Additionally, 81.4% reported being able to think deeply and flexibly apply POA in class.

5.3.2 Closed-Loop quality monitoring indicators

A comprehensive evaluation system integrating multiple indicators was established: 1) Theoretical learning: The average score of the final theoretical exam increased from 76.4 (pre-reform) to 82.7 (post-reform), with a pass rate (≥ 60 points) rising from 88.5% to 96.3%; 2) Practical performance: 67.4% of students received a "good" or "excellent" rating in teaching practice assessments, an increase of 19.6 percentage points compared to the pre-reform period; 3) Competition and certification: During the academic year, 32 students won awards in NECCS, FLTRP English Competition, or micro-teaching competitions (a 28% increase year-on-year), and 75 students obtained teacher qualification certificates with a pass rate of 87.2% (12.5 percentage points higher than the university average); 4) Graduate feedback: Tracking data from cooperative primary and secondary schools showed that 89.5% of employers rated graduates' teaching practice ability as "satisfactory" or "excellent", an improvement of 15.3 percentage points compared to pre-reform graduates.

Table 2 Teaching Evaluation Questionnaire Results (n=86)

Evaluation content	Agree (n, %)	Not Sure (n, %)	Disagree (n, %)	Strongly Disagree (n, %)
1. Improvement in English teaching practice ability	38 (44.2%)	34 (39.5%)	10 (11.6%)	3 (3.5%)
2. Preference for in-class teaching practice activities.	42 (48.8%)	33 (38.4%)	8 (9.3%)	2 (2.3%)
3. Preference for teacher-participated evaluation.	35 (40.7%)	32 (37.2%)	14 (16.3%)	4 (4.7%)
4. Preference for in-class output activities (teaching presentation)	36 (41.9%)	31 (36.0%)	13 (15.1%)	5 (5.8%)
5. Preference for collaborative English reading lesson design.	33 (38.4%)	35 (40.7%)	12 (14.0%)	5 (5.8%)
6. Deep thinking and flexible application of POA.	37 (43.0%)	33 (38.4%)	11 (12.8%)	4 (4.7%)

On the basis of POA teaching concept, it is particularly critical to build a comprehensive and closed-loop teaching quality monitoring and evaluation system. This system not only provides guidance for the reverse design of teaching content, but also has a wide range of evaluation, including theoretical learning, practical operation, online learning results, English competition performance (such as NECCS, FLTRP English Competition, micro-class teaching competition) and industry qualification certification (such as teacher qualification certificate, English translation qualification certificate). All these evaluation indicators focus on ability training and practical education. In order to cultivate inter-disciplinary foreign language talents to meet the needs of the industry, schools, teachers and students must work together to create a teaching and learning quality monitoring and evaluation system to promote learning, improve teaching, and take comprehensive evaluation as the leading factor. The ultimate goal of the system is to improve the quality of talent development and ensure its effective implementation [6].

First of all, the school will strictly implement the teaching supervision, inspection and student information feedback system, through the lecture mechanism, to ensure timely grasp of the teaching dynamics, standardize the teaching process, and strengthen the monitoring of the teaching process. This will enhance the pertinence and effectiveness of teaching activities. Secondly, the school will regularly systematically evaluate teachers' teaching performance, students' learning situation, professional development and curriculum construction, and bring them into the management track of standardization, normalization and institutionalization. Finally, the school will work with the cooperative primary and secondary schools to continuously track the employment status and career development needs of English education graduates, collect feedback information in time, and evaluate the effectiveness and shortcomings of personnel training. This will help to give full play to the role of educational evaluation and promote the continuous improvement of the quality of education and teaching.

6 Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the integration of the Production-Oriented Approach (POA) into practical training courses for English education majors effectively addresses key pedagogical gaps identified under the New Liberal Arts framework. The three-phase POA model—Motivating, Enabling, and Assessing—facilitates a structured transition from theoretical knowledge to classroom-ready teaching skills, fostering greater student engagement, collaborative learning, and reflective

practice.

Key findings indicate that POA-driven course redesign significantly enhances students' teaching competence, particularly in lesson design, instructional delivery, and adaptive classroom management. Furthermore, the shift toward multi-source, process-oriented evaluation provides more meaningful feedback and supports the development of critical thinking and self-regulated learning skills. These outcomes align with the New Liberal Arts emphasis on interdisciplinary competence and innovative pedagogy. They also underscore the essential role of teachers as designers and facilitators in this reform process, highlighting the need for ongoing professional development focused on pedagogical innovation and evidence-based teaching.

In sum, this research contributes a replicable model for practical training reform in English teacher education and affirms the value of POA as a scaffold for developing capable, reflective, and adaptable teaching professionals. Future studies should examine the long-term impact of such reforms on graduate teaching performance and their applicability across diverse institutional contexts.

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