

Exploration on Tutorial System Construction of English Major in Universities Based on OBE Educational Concept

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Abstract. The rapid development of society and economy requires the support of innovative and application-orientated talents. Graduates with good ideological qualities, excellent professional foundation, broad thinking, good practical and learning abilities are needed. Therefore, in order to meet the new needs of talents in the era, the talent training mechanism of universities must be deeply reformed. The Tutorial System, as an important part of the university talent training mechanism, in theory should play a positive role in meeting students' personalized and differentiated needs for professional learning, ideological cognition, academic planning, social communication, emotional exchange, etc. However, in the actual implementation process, the localized Tutorial System still has problems to be solved. This article explores the construction of the Tutorial System in English majors in universities based on the OBE education concept, aiming to implement the spirit of the National Conference on Undergraduate Education in the New Era.

Keywords: OBE; Tutorial System; English major; Talent training

1. Introduction

Since entering a new era, China's higher education has developed rapidly and achieved great success, supplying a large number of talents to various industries in society. The popular class teaching system is still the main teaching management model in universities. In the process of rapid development, in order to improve the quality of talent cultivation and adapt to the changes in learners' characteristics and market demands for talents, universities have been constantly carrying out educational reform. Guided by the OBE teaching philosophy, this article explores the construction of the English major "Tutorial system" to promote teaching reform and improve the effectiveness of talent cultivation.

In modern society, the learning paths for learners have become unprecedentedly rich and diverse. Learners no longer depend solely on traditional classroom teaching; on the contrary, the Internet and mobile phones have become their main sources of knowledge. In terms of English learning, various apps and websites are particularly abundant, and to some extent learners' knowledge of English has surpassed that of their teachers. However, due to the diversification of learning paths, the quality of learning content varies greatly. If learners do not discern or lack the ability to judge right from wrong and absorb the content they encounter in its entirety, it will seriously affect the establishment of their correct values. Furthermore, social development and the job market require English talents with strong ideological and moral integrity, specialization and versatility, and high creativity and practical abilities. The original curriculum system and arrangements cannot timely adapt to these changes. In this situation, the "Tutorial system" must be implemented in the cultivation of English talents to play a guiding role to meet students' personalized learning needs, and promote the comprehensive education.

2. OBE Theory

OBE, which stands for Outcome-Based Education, emphasizes the primacy of learning outcomes. It is a forward-looking approach to curriculum system construction, curriculum design, and educational activities. OBE was first proposed by American educator Spady and has gained broad recognition and

application particularly in engineering education. After years of development, OBE has formed a well-established theoretical system that continues to promote the development of excellence in education. In OBE, learning outcomes refer to the maximum ability students can achieve after a certain stage of learning, rather than the cumulative or average results of multiple outcomes during the learning process. These learning outcomes are not simply about acquiring knowledge but also internalizing knowledge to deeply influence values and emotions. The outcomes should be practical, demonstrating students' practical application ability of learned knowledge and skills.

Emphasizing the core principles of "teaching-centered-on-learning" and "student-centeredness", OBE advocates personalized assessment, using different methods to provide suitable learning opportunities for learners, enabling students to gradually challenge themselves in a learning process that suits them best, develop thinking skills, enhance problem-solving abilities, and be able to cope with independent problem-solving needs in future work and life. To achieve all of these, the key issue is to determine what students' learning outcomes are, why learning outcomes are set, how to achieve learning outcomes, and how to evaluate the achievement of learning outcomes.

Currently, OBE has been widely applied and researched in the process of education and teaching reform in Chinese universities, including major and curriculum construction, talent cultivation, teaching model reform, teaching design, and teacher training. The research results related to OBE between 2014 and 2018 have been summarized by Zhou Haihua, et al., pointing out that OBE-related research mainly focuses on engineering disciplines, while research on humanities disciplines is insufficient. However, practical training for applied talents is also crucial for humanities majors. The traditional applied talent cultivation mode in humanities disciplines is no longer suitable for the diversified talent demands generated by economic and social development. This has led to a disconnection between applied talent cultivation and the needs of the job market, resulting in a lack of talents suitable for employment needs. Therefore, the application of new elements to the applied talent cultivation mode is urgently needed. Guided by OBE, teaching reform is to strengthen the connotation of applied professional talent cultivation, aligning graduate requirements and educational goals with the job market, which has become a key focus of education and teaching reform in humanities disciplines.

3. Implementation and Research of the Tutorial System

3.1 The Origin of Tutorial System. The tutorial system in universities is widely believed to have originated from the University of Oxford and has had a profound impact on higher education. In 1922, Canadian scholar Stephen Leacock pointed out in his book "My Discovery of England" that the key to Oxford University's success lies in the role of tutors. The Tutorial System at Oxford University emphasizes cultivation, values intrinsic development, and focuses on personalized and rational thinking training. Leacock believed that "the truly valuable thing for students is the life and environment around them." The Tutorial System has a great influence on students, and Oxford University's Tutorial System has produced numerous distinguished figures, thus attracting attention and research in the field of education.

3.2 The development of Tutorial System in China. In China, this system was first implemented at Zhejiang University and was initially successful at the graduate level. The achievements prompted the gradual implementation of the Tutorial System in undergraduate education and even in some high schools. Currently, there are five main forms of the Tutorial System:

Full-time Tutorial system: Peking University was the first to implement this system in 2002. During the first and second years, mentors primarily guide students in their thoughts, learning, and daily life. During the third and fourth years, students can participate in their tutors' research projects to improve their innovation consciousness and practical abilities.

Early-stage Tutorial System: Tutors help students develop good study habits and daily routines, establish clear learning goals, and facilitate the smooth transition from high school to university.

Late-stage Tutorial System: During this stage, students' subjective initiative increases. Tutors mainly focus on promoting students' innovative consciousness, encouraging students to pursue higher education, and providing guidance and assistance in job seeking.

Talent-oriented Tutorial System: This system is generally targeted at students with higher college entrance exam scores. In their first year, students study foundational subjects, and in their second year, they choose a major and mentor based on their interests and strengths. Examples of this system include Peking University's "Yuanpei Plan," Sichuan University's Wu Yuzhang College, and Beijing Institute of Technology's Xu Teli College.

Peer Tutorial System: The school selects senior students as tutors for a freshman class. This system embodies the spirit of "coming from students and going back to students" and can help freshmen better adapt to their new environment and university life.

Since the implementation of the Tutorial System at the undergraduate level in China, it has been over twenty years. It is important to understand the specific situation and effects of research and implementation related. Based on the trend of annual publication in CNKI, from 2000 to 2008, the research on the Tutorial System was in the exploration stage. After 2008, there was a surge of research results, indicating that the influence of the Tutorial System in undergraduate education in Chinese universities has been continuously increasing, mainly concentrating in key universities, especially Zhejiang University, which was a pioneer in implementing the undergraduate Tutorial System. Fewer studies have been conducted in ordinary colleges and universities, but there is also a trend of gradual increase. In this period, the research has mainly focused on four aspects: educational reform, innovation ability, credit system, and cultivation models. The research can be divided into three stages. During the exploration stage (2000-2007), the keywords were "talent cultivation," "innovation ability," and "credit system." The research concluded that the Tutorial System is an important complement to the credit system, fully leveraging the tutor's role in education, enhancing student initiative, improving their innovation ability, and enhancing teaching quality and students' overall quality. During the development stage (2007-2011), the keywords included "professional ideology," "cultivation system," "innovative talent cultivation," "research-based teaching," and "practice-based teaching." Tutors should advocate research-based and practice-based learning, as well as integration of industry, academia, and research to emphasize the development of students' practical abilities. During the improvement stage (2012-2022), the focus shifted to "teaching reform," "technological innovation activities," "ideological and political education," "teaching management models," and "innovative talent."

3.3 The Construction Path of the Tutorial System. Based on the guidance spirit of General Secretary Xi Jinping's instruction of "guarding a section of canal and cultivating a field of responsibility" and the core issues and backward design principles of the OBE, the Tutorial System should start from the learning outcomes (the comprehensive performance of the students under their guidance in terms of thinking, knowledge, skills, socialization, practice, and innovation), with responsibility as the focus and teaching and educating people as the goal. The tutors should propose their suggestions based on the students' foundations, personalities, personal aspirations, family environment, and other objective conditions, and have thorough communication with the students, ultimately clarifying the learning outcomes to be achieved by the students after four years. The primary concern of the tutors in the English major is how well they can guide the students in terms of "language" and "thinking". The tutors should delve into available teaching resources and establish hyperlinked thinking, connecting the guidance content with Chinese and foreign history, cultural comparisons, interdisciplinary knowledge, current affairs, etc., and cultivate the students' ability to think critically through comparative approaches. In the guidance process, the tutors should guide the students to think deeply, explore independently, and cultivate positive emotions. At the same time, tutors should focus on the individual development of both mentors and students, follow the principle of "learning and application integration," form an educational and teaching guidance loop, and pay attention to students' personalized development, ensuring the students' autonomous, harmonious, and comprehensive growth.

The research emphasized students' individualized development, followed the principle of "learning and application integration," and sought to establish an educational and teaching guidance loop:

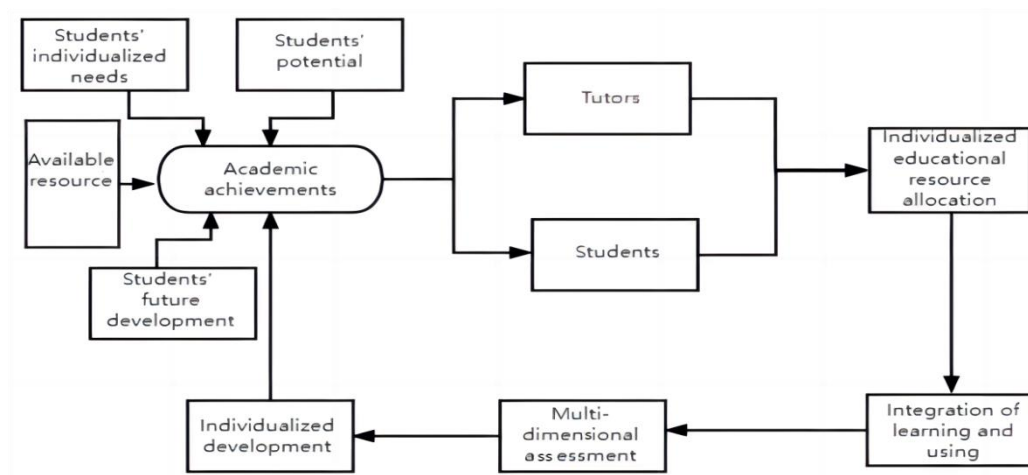


Figure 1. The Construction Path of Tutorial System Based on OBE

Based on the guidance of General Secretary Xi Jinping's "guarding a canal and planting a responsibility field" and the core questions and backward design principles of the OBE educational philosophy, the construction of the Tutorial System should start from learning outcomes (the comprehensive performance of students guided by the mentor in terms of knowledge, skills, social interaction, practice, and innovation). The system should be anchored in responsibility, with the educational and teaching effects as its objective, and should be comprehensive and focused. Tutors should provide guidance and suggestions based on students' backgrounds, personalities, personal aspirations, and family environments. Both parties should communicate fully and ultimately clarify the learning outcomes four years later. In the English major, tutors should primarily focus on guiding students' language and thinking abilities, tapping into available teaching resources, establishing hyperlinked thinking, and connecting guidance content with Chinese and foreign history, cultural comparisons, interdisciplinary knowledge, current events, and other related topics. Through comparison, tutors can cultivate students' critical thinking abilities. In the guidance process, tutors should guide students to think deeply, engage in independent exploration, and gain positive emotions. At the same time, tutors should focus on the individual development of both tutors and students, follow the principle of "learning and application integration," form an educational and teaching guidance loop, and pay attention to students' personalized development, ensuring the students' autonomous, harmonious, and comprehensive growth.

In the above construction path, multi-dimensional assessment is an important aspect of achieving learning outcomes and serves as a institutional guarantee for the successful implementation of the Tutorial System. Oxford University, which advocates for liberal education, does not have any specific evaluation system for the Tutorial System. Tutors' guidance to students is part of their work and takes the form of informal teaching through conversations and counseling in their respective fields. Moore believes that the success of Oxford University's Tutorial System lies in its focus on individual students, reliance on cooperation between mentors and students, and its unique attitude towards knowledge. This is consistent with what Han Yu mentioned in "On Teachers": "Teachers are responsible for imparting knowledge, teaching skills, and clarifying doubts. The transmission of knowledge and personal influence has always been the essence of traditional Chinese education." However, due to various factors, this tradition of transmitting knowledge and influence has not been well inherited, and various modern educational concepts under the banner of liberal education have not been fully realized in practice. Therefore, the Tutorial System is no exception, and blindly copying the form of Oxford University's Tutorial System in the process of localization is bound to lead to formalism. In fact, this situation and trend are not uncommon in the implementation of the Tutorial System at the undergraduate level.

3.4 The Challenges of Tutorial System in China. The common challenges of the Tutorial System include insufficient communication between mentors and students, unclear responsibilities of mentors, and low motivation of students. China's higher education system was adjusted under the

influence of the Soviet Union in the mid-20th century, leading to a separation of teaching and student management, resulting in a lack of communication between teachers and students beyond classroom lectures and knowledge acquisition, and low student motivation. The introduction of the Tutorial System was mainly to address this problem.

4. Summary

In conclusion, the positive impact of the Tutorial System on education, teaching, students' development, and teacher growth is undeniable. However, further exploration is needed to establish a scientific and effective evaluation system for the Tutorial System. Based on the OBE theory, evaluating the tutor's guidance requires clarity on what outcomes the tutor's guidance work aims to achieve, why these outcomes should be achieved, how to achieve these outcomes, and how to determine if these outcomes have been achieved. To address these questions, it is necessary to comprehensively consider the school's strategic development goals, the specific situation of tutors, students' foundations and potentials, parents' expectations, and societal demands based on thorough research.

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