Article

Research on Practical Teaching Reform of the Course "Cross-Border E-Commerce Theory and Practice" Based on OBE Concept

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Abstract: Guided by the principles of Outcome-Based Education (OBE), this paper focuses on the course "Theory and Practice of Cross-Border E-commerce" as a case study for pedagogical improvement. The study addresses several key challenges within the course's practical teaching component, including misalignment between course objectives and current industry demands, limited student engagement and initiative during the learning process, and a lack of diversity in assessment methods. To tackle these issues, the course is redesigned and optimized across four critical dimensions: instructional objectives, curriculum content, teaching methodology, and evaluation strategies. By integrating the OBE philosophy throughout the entire instructional cycle, the study aims to strengthen the effectiveness of course delivery and significantly enhance students' practical competencies, critical thinking, and adaptability in real-world e-commerce contexts.

Keywords: OBE concept; cross-border e-commerce; teaching reform

1. Introduction

As a transformative model of international business, cross-border e-commerce has emerged as a vital engine reshaping the global trade landscape. In recent years, the sector has experienced exponential growth across emerging markets, driven by rapid advancements in digital technologies, increasingly efficient logistics and supply chain systems, and the diversification of online trade platforms. With this evolution, the focus of cross-border e-commerce has shifted from simple scale expansion to refined, data-informed operations. As a result, the industry places increasingly stringent demands on the skill sets of its workforce.

Enterprises now seek professionals who are not only well-versed in cross-border e-commerce theory but are also capable of applying their knowledge in dynamic, real-world environments. These professionals must demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of international trade mechanisms, digital marketing, platform operation, and risk management, alongside strong practical competencies.

The course "Theory and Practice of Cross-Border E-commerce" serves as a core component of the curriculum for students majoring in International Economics and Trade. Designed with a strong emphasis on practical application, the course plays a crucial role in preparing students for future careers in this rapidly evolving industry. However, traditional teaching methods — characterized by rigid structure and limited real-world engagement — are increasingly inadequate for cultivating high-quality, application-oriented talent.

In response to these challenges, this paper proposes a reform of the course design guided by the principles of Outcome-Based Education (OBE). By aligning educational out-

comes with industry expectations, and by integrating practical skills training with theoretical instruction, the goal is to bridge the gap between academic preparation and professional readiness. This reform is both timely and necessary for cultivating adaptable, innovative, and globally competent e-commerce professionals.

2. OBE Teaching Concept

2.1. Emphasizing Student-Centered Practical Teaching

The OBE philosophy prioritizes a student-centered approach, particularly in the context of practical learning. It encourages educators to focus not only on content delivery but also on students' individual learning processes and needs. Teachers are expected to actively engage students, support their subjective initiative, and respond to their personalized learning experiences [1]. This can be achieved through diverse means, such as in-class discussions, after-class consultations, and digital feedback tools like online surveys. These channels help instructors collect timely insights into students' progress and challenges, allowing for responsive adjustments in teaching methods and classroom interactions.

2.2. Defining Clear and Measurable Learning Outcomes

A core tenet of OBE is the formulation of explicit, achievable, and outcome-oriented learning goals. In practical teaching, this involves identifying what students should know and be able to do by the end of the course — not only in terms of theoretical understanding but also operational and professional competencies. Educators should employ reverse curriculum design, where the learning outcomes guide the development of teaching content, methods, and evaluation systems. This alignment ensures that every element of the course contributes meaningfully to the achievement of learning objectives [2].

2.3. Promoting Continuous Improvement through Dynamic Feedback

OBE emphasizes the importance of ongoing reflection and improvement in the teaching-learning process. To achieve this, instructors must regularly assess students' learning outcomes using both formative and summative tools. However, assessment in the OBE framework is not merely for grading but is a vital part of a feedback loop. By analyzing student performance data, educators can refine instructional strategies, optimize curriculum structure, and even revisit the learning goals themselves if necessary. This continuous improvement process ensures that instruction remains responsive and effective, fostering better educational outcomes over time.

3. Problems in the Practical Teaching of the Course "Theory and Practice of Cross Border E-Commerce" Based on the OBE Concept

3.1. Insufficient Alignment between Course Objectives and Industry-Oriented Outcomes

The OBE framework promotes a backward design approach, wherein instructional goals are derived from clearly defined final learning outcomes. However, in the current implementation of the course "Theory and Practice of Cross-Border E-commerce", the formulation of course objectives remains overly focused on the transmission of conventional theoretical knowledge [3]. There is a notable lack of consideration for whether these objectives align with the evolving demands of the industry or the comprehensive competency profiles required of modern e-commerce professionals.

As a result, students may complete the course without acquiring the integrated knowledge, practical skills, and innovation capacity necessary for success in a rapidly changing digital trade environment. This misalignment can create a disconnect between academic preparation and workplace requirements, especially when students are expected to navigate complex, real-world scenarios that demand adaptability, digital literacy, and interdisciplinary thinking [3]. Consequently, the effectiveness and relevance of

course delivery are compromised, and the original intent of outcome-oriented education is undermined.

3.2. Limited Student Engagement and Lack of Personalized Learning Pathways

A cornerstone of OBE is its commitment to student-centered learning, which emphasizes active participation, learner autonomy, and differentiated instruction. However, in the current course design and delivery of "Theory and Practice of Cross-Border E-commerce", traditional lecture-based methods still dominate classroom activities. This teacher-centered approach reduces students to passive recipients of knowledge and fails to harness their initiative or creativity.

Moreover, the course tends to follow a uniform teaching trajectory, offering limited space for differentiation based on students' prior knowledge, interests, or career aspirations. This one-size-fits-all model restricts students' ability to pursue personalized learning paths and hinders the development of diverse competencies. As a result, learning outcomes often become homogenized, lacking alignment with students' individual goals or the diverse roles they may encounter in the cross-border e-commerce sector [4].

3.3. Lack of Diversity and Formative Depth in Assessment Mechanisms

Current assessment practices for the course are largely summative, with a disproportionate emphasis on final examinations. While some components — such as attendance, class participation, and homework — are factored into overall evaluation, these elements are often superficial and do not fully reflect students' progress throughout the learning process.

This limited assessment scope fails to capture critical dimensions of student development, such as the acquisition of applied skills, problem-solving abilities, and professional judgment. Additionally, the absence of ongoing formative assessment means that students receive minimal real-time feedback to adjust their learning strategies or improve performance. This is inconsistent with the core OBE principle of continuous improvement through feedback and reflection. Without robust, multi-dimensional assessment tools, it is difficult to gauge whether students have truly achieved the intended learning outcomes, especially in relation to their practical, interdisciplinary, and career-oriented competencies [5].

4. Reform Framework and Pathways for Practical Teaching Reform in "Theory and Practice of Cross Border E-Commerce" Based on the OBE Concept

4.1. Reform Framework for Practical Teaching

This study proposes a comprehensive framework for the reform of practical teaching in the course "Theory and Practice of Cross-Border E-commerce", guided by the core principles of Outcome-Based Education (OBE). The reform adopts a systematic approach that emphasizes backward curriculum design, aligning all instructional elements with clearly defined student learning outcomes.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the framework follows a student-centered and outcome-driven model, which integrates the four key components of curriculum design: instructional objectives, teaching content, instructional process, and assessment methods. Each component is closely interconnected and collaboratively structured to ensure consistency and coherence throughout the teaching process.
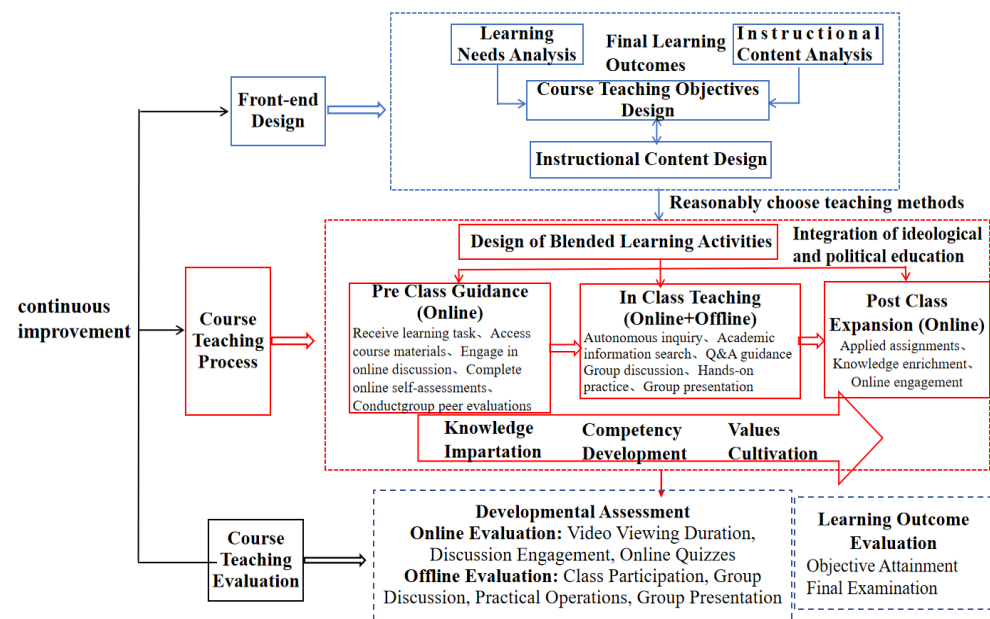
Figure 1. Reform Framework for Practical Teaching.

The reform model further incorporates a cyclical "Evaluation–Feedback–Improvement" mechanism, which enables continuous monitoring and adjustment of teaching practices. This mechanism plays a vital role in capturing real-time student learning performance, collecting feedback from multiple channels, and using this information to iteratively refine teaching strategies. By embedding this dynamic loop into course implementation, the teaching system becomes more responsive and adaptable, thereby promoting sustained improvement in instructional quality.

Ultimately, the goal of this framework is to foster the development of well-rounded, practice-oriented professionals in the cross-border e-commerce field — individuals who are equipped not only with theoretical foundations but also with the applied skills and strategic thinking required by the global digital trade environment.

4.2. Pathways for Practical Teaching Reform

4.2.1. Design of Teaching Objectives

The teaching objectives of the course "Theory and Practice of Cross-Border E-commerce", under the guidance of the OBE concept, are structured to respond to national development strategies, regional economic dynamics, and evolving industry demands. The overarching goal is to cultivate application-oriented professionals with strong practical competencies, aligned with the broader direction of talent development in international economics and trade. Accordingly, the course emphasizes not only knowledge acquisition but also skill development and competency-based growth.

Firstly, the course aims to ensure that students develop a comprehensive understanding of core theoretical knowledge related to cross-border e-commerce. This includes a mastery of key professional concepts and operational principles, such as the functioning of major international e-commerce platforms, international logistics systems, digital marketing strategies, and customer service frameworks. By building a solid theoretical foundation, students are better prepared to navigate complex global trade environments and make informed decisions in professional contexts.

Secondly, the course places significant emphasis on enhancing students' practical execution abilities. Learning objectives focus on hands-on competencies such as store registration on cross-border platforms, storefront design, product listing, order fulfillment, and international logistics coordination. Students are trained to apply their theoretical knowledge in real-world scenarios, including campaign planning, digital operations, and

data-driven optimization strategies. At the same time, the curriculum encourages the development of essential soft skills, including effective customer communication, collaborative teamwork, creative problem-solving, and intercultural communication — skills that are critical for thriving in diverse global e-commerce environments.

Thirdly, the course seeks to foster students' professional responsibility and global business awareness. Instructors are encouraged to embed values such as business integrity, consumer responsibility, and sustainable practices into the teaching process. Case studies from international logistics leaders and platform success stories can be used to highlight operational excellence and service efficiency, helping students understand the standards of global competitiveness while nurturing a professional mindset grounded in ethics and accountability.

4.2.2. Restructuring of Teaching Content

Driven by the course objectives, the practical course content of "Cross border E-commerce Theory and Practice" will be undergo modular restructurin, divided into modules such as basic theory of cross-border e-commerce, cross-border e-commerce platforms, cross-border e-commerce product selection and listing optimization, cross-border e-commerce logistics, cross-border e-commerce marketing, cross-border e-commerce customer service, and cross-border e-commerce data analysis. Under each module, detailed planning will be carried out from the perspectives of theory, practice, and ideological and political education to ensure that learning objectives are more clear and learning effects are more ideal，as detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. Practical Course Content of Cross Border E-Commerce Theory and Practice.

Knowledge Modules	Theoretical Instruction	Applied Instruction	Ideological and political elements
Fundamental Understanding of Cross-border E-commerce	Concept, characteristics, classification, transaction process, participating parties, policies and regulations of cross-border e-commerce	On-site Visits to Cross-border E-commerce Industrial Parks or Enterprises: Simulate trading process	Cultivate students' sense of national identity and international perspective; Strengthen the awareness of legal and compliant business operations
Cross border e-commerce platform	Understanding of mainstream cross-border e-commerce platforms both domestically and internationally; Platform entry process and store construction	Simulate registering accounts and filling in store information on different platforms	Enhance students' global competitiveness awareness; Establish a concept of brand building and long-term development
Cross border e-commerce product selection and product listing optimization	Principles and methods of product selection; Product release elements; Product optimization methods	Collect information using research tools and write market research reports; Simulate product selection and release operations	Developing market research and analysis skills; Establish product brand awareness and quality concept
Cross border e-commerce logistics	Cross border logistics model; Logistics cost calculation; Handling common logistics issues	Design cross-border logistics solutions; Simulate logistics operation processes and handle abnormal situations	Strengthen service awareness and responsibility; Cultivate awareness of cost control and efficiency
Cross border e-commerce marketing	Search engine marketing, social media marketing; Platform activities; Seller-Led store marketing	Using marketing tools for promotion; Plan and execute marketing activities	Cultivate team collaboration spirit; Enhance cultural confidence and awareness of promoting national brands

Cross border e-commerce customer service	Customer service process; Customer communication skills; Customer dispute resolution	Simulate customer service scenarios	Cultivate a sense of professionalism and teamwork; Strengthen the concept of customer first
Cross border e-commerce data analysis	Basic indicators for data analysis; Common data analysis tools; Data Analysis Methods and Applications	Use tools to process and analyze data; Write a data analysis report	Cultivate a rigorous and responsible attitude; Strengthen data security awareness

4.2.3. Design of the Instructional Process

The Outcome-Based Education (OBE) framework places significant emphasis on measurable student learning outcomes. In alignment with this philosophy, it is essential for instructors to adopt a student-centered approach supported by diverse and targeted teaching strategies. These strategies are designed to actively engage learners, foster independent learning, enhance students' practical competencies, and nurture innovative thinking — ultimately aligning the educational process with the evolving demands of the cross-border e-commerce industry.

To fully activate students' learning agency and improve instructional effectiveness, the course "Theory and Practice of Cross-Border E-commerce" can be redesigned into a three-stage instructional process: pre-class, in-class, and post-class activities.

1) Pre-Class Phase

Before formal instruction begins, instructors can upload preparatory materials — such as instructional videos, industry background cases, and reading resources — to digital platforms like Chaoxing. In conjunction with these materials, teachers assign preview tasks to guide students in independently exploring foundational knowledge and reflecting on key concepts. Students are encouraged to respond to pre-class prompts via the platform, allowing instructors to gather formative insights into students' understanding, identify knowledge gaps, and adjust the upcoming instructional content accordingly.

2) In-Class Phase

During classroom sessions, the focus shifts to active learning. Students assume the central role in learning activities through the implementation of interactive pedagogical methods, including group discussions, role-playing simulations, and case-based analysis. These approaches immerse students in realistic cross-border e-commerce scenarios and encourage them to apply theoretical knowledge in practical contexts. At the same time, such activities enhance collaboration, problem-solving, and decision-making skills. Instructors serve as facilitators, guiding students to think critically and reflect deeply on operational challenges, thereby cultivating their analytical and strategic capabilities.

3) Post-Class Phase

After class, students are assigned practical and reflective tasks to reinforce and apply their learning. Assignments may include data analysis of cross-border e-commerce operations, preparation of business operation reports, or digital marketing plan development. These exercises help students integrate theory with real-world application, promoting deeper understanding and skill transfer. Instructors are expected to provide timely, personalized feedback, highlighting both strengths and areas for improvement.

To support continuous learning, teachers can identify common areas of misunderstanding and provide targeted supplementary instruction, such as additional readings or micro-lectures. Online platforms can be leveraged for real-time tutoring, Q&A sessions, and asynchronous feedback, enabling students to resolve learning challenges efficiently. This flexible and responsive teaching model helps students consolidate their knowledge and strengthens their capacity for independent learning and practical application.

4.2.4. Design of an Assessment System

The OBE concept advocates a dynamic curriculum improvement cycle of evaluation, feedback, and refinement. Therefore, it is imperative to optimize and reconstruct the assessment system of "Theory and Practice of Cross-Border E-commerce", establishing a student-centered, process-oriented evaluation framework that drives continuous pedagogical enhancement.

Firstly, a diversified process-based evaluation approach should be established, encompassing both learning process evaluation and learning outcome evaluation. The learning process evaluation is divided into two stages: online and offline. Online evaluation utilizes the Chaoxing Learning Platform, leveraging its statistical functions to record student learning behaviors and provide personalized assessments. This includes metrics such as the duration of instructional video viewing, participation in themed discussions, completion of online quizzes, and submission of preview tasks. Offline evaluation focuses on classroom performance, offering a comprehensive assessment based on classroom participation, group discussions, practical operations, and group reporting.

Secondly, the evaluation of learning outcomes primarily assesses students' attainment of course objectives and their performance in the final examination. This summative evaluation complements the ongoing formative assessments to provide a holistic view of student progress.

Thirdly, by utilizing the Chaoxing Learning Platform, a real-time dynamic evaluation and feedback mechanism can be established. Teachers analyze students' learning data across pre-class, in-class, and post-class stages on a weekly basis and provide timely feedback. Common issues identified among students are addressed through unified explanations and Q & A sessions during class, while individualized guidance is offered to students facing specific challenges.

Fourthly, the application of evaluation results should be strengthened. Based on students' process-based evaluation data, personalized learning plans can be developed to target and improve individual weaknesses. Additionally, at the end of each semester, the teaching team summarizes and analyzes the collected evaluation data, updates and optimizes teaching content in response to the latest industry trends, and refines teaching methods according to student feedback.

Finally, continuous improvement should be grounded in the evaluation results. A continuous improvement tracking archive is established, which includes process-based evaluation data, summative assessment results, and teaching reflections. The course team regularly analyzes these data, develops targeted improvement measures, monitors their effectiveness, and works toward the ongoing enhancement of course quality.

5. Conclusion

This paper conducts in-depth research on the practical teaching reform of the course "Theory and Practice of Cross border E-commerce" based on the OBE concept. Through the design and optimization of teaching objectives, teaching content, teaching process, and course evaluation methods, the problems of insufficient alignment between course objectives and industry needs, the inadequate manifestation of student agency in the teaching-learning process, and the deficient diversity in course assessment in the past can be solved. Through comprehensive reform practices, this course aims to enhance students' learning initiative and practical abilities, and cultivate composite talents who better meet the needs of the cross-border e-commerce industry.

Age-Based on the BOPPPS Model (GKZLGC2024214) and 2024 Guangdong Province Undergraduate Teaching Quality and Teaching Reform Project, "Modular Teaching Reform and Practice of Cross border E-commerce Theory and Practice Based on OBE Concept".

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