

# Research on the Reform of Vocational Education Talent Cultivation Models Based on the OBE Education Philosophy

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## Abstract

This study aims to explore the reform of vocational education talent cultivation models based on the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) philosophy. By analyzing the origins, development, and core characteristics of the OBE philosophy, the study reveals the deficiencies in the existing vocational education talent cultivation models. Furthermore, it proposes reform strategies based on the OBE philosophy, including repositioning educational goals, reconstructing the curriculum system, innovating teaching methods, reforming the evaluation system, and strengthening the construction of the teaching faculty. The objective is to provide a theoretical basis and practical guidance for the continuous improvement of China's vocational education talent cultivation models.

**Keywords:** vocational education talent cultivation models, OBE, reform strategies

## 1. Overview of the OBE Educational Philosophy

### 1.1 Origins and Development of the OBE Educational Philosophy

The origin of the OBE educational philosophy can be traced back to the educational reform movement in the United States in the 1980s (Lin & Li, 2023). At that time, the American educational community widely believed that the traditional educational model placed too much emphasis on the imparting of disciplinary knowledge, while neglecting the development of students' abilities. Against this backdrop, American scholars proposed the OBE educational philosophy, advocating that the educational process should revolve around students' competencies and outcomes.

With the practice and promotion of the OBE philosophy in the United States, it has gradually gained attention from countries around the world. In the 1990s, the OBE philosophy began to be applied in countries such as Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. Entering the 21st century, the OBE philosophy has seen further development globally, with many regions and countries incorporating it into their educational reforms as a significant component. In China, the OBE philosophy was introduced at the end of the 1990s. After nearly 30 years of development, it has achieved certain results in the fields of vocational education and higher education. Currently, the Chinese government places a high value on the development of vocational education, and the application of the OBE philosophy in the reform of vocational education talent cultivation models has important practical significance.

### 1.2 Core Features of the OBE Educational Philosophy

As an emerging educational philosophy, OBE is characterized by the following aspects: First, the outcome-oriented educational objectives, where the OBE philosophy emphasizes the clarity and measurability of educational goals (Midraj, 2018). Educational objectives should be specific, clear, and reflect the knowledge, skills, and qualities that students should possess upon graduation. This goal-oriented educational model requires educators to first determine the expected educational outcomes and then design curricula, teaching methods, and evaluation systems based on these outcomes. Outcome-oriented educational objectives help ensure the relevance and effectiveness of educational activities, enabling students to meet the needs of society and professional development after completing their studies.

Second, the competency-based educational content, where the OBE philosophy emphasizes competency-based educational content and focuses on the development of students' practical and innovative abilities. In curriculum design, it emphasizes the integration of theory and practice and focuses on the cultivation of students' vocational skills and comprehensive qualities. This design of educational content helps improve students' professional adaptability, so that they can quickly integrate into the workplace and competently perform related work after graduation.

Third, the student-centered teaching methods, where the OBE philosophy advocates student-centered teaching methods, emphasizing the central role and participation of students. In the teaching process, teachers should pay attention to students' individual needs and adopt a variety of teaching means and strategies to stimulate students' interest and motivation in learning. Additionally, the OBE philosophy also promotes teaching methods such as cooperative learning and project-driven approaches to develop students' teamwork and problem-solving abilities.

Fourth, the continuous improvement evaluation system, where the OBE philosophy emphasizes the importance of the evaluation system and believes that evaluation should permeate the entire process of educational activities. The evaluation system should possess the following characteristics (Hong, 2023): First, clear evaluation criteria. The criteria for evaluation should correspond to educational objectives, being specific and clear for measurement and assessment. Second, diverse evaluation methods. A variety of evaluation methods should be employed, such as exams, assignments, practical reports, project assessments, etc., to comprehensively reflect students' learning outcomes. Third, feedback on evaluation results. Evaluation results should be promptly fed back to students to guide them in adjusting their learning strategies and improving their learning effectiveness. Fourth, continuous improvement. Based on the evaluation results, educational objectives, curriculum design, and teaching methods should be continuously adjusted and optimized to achieve a sustained enhancement in the quality of education.

## **2. Analysis of the Current Situation of the Vocational Education Talent Cultivation Model**

Currently, after undergoing long-term development and reform, China's vocational education talent cultivation model has achieved significant results. However, with the rapid development of China's economy and the continuous upgrading of industrial structures, vocational education, as an important way to cultivate high-quality skilled talents, still has some issues that do not meet the demands of the times in its talent cultivation model (Tian, 2024). At present, the orientation of vocational education talent cultivation goals mainly focuses on the cultivation of skilled and applied talents. Although this goal aligns with society's demand for talents, in practice, some vocational colleges have overly singular cultivation goals, neglecting the cultivation of students' comprehensive qualities. This kind of cultivation model easily leads to a single knowledge structure in students, making it difficult for them to adapt to the future social development needs. Secondly, the curriculum system is not set up rationally. Many vocational education curricula are outdated and lack close alignment with industry development trends and actual needs. The content of courses often emphasizes the imparting of theoretical knowledge, while ignoring the cultivation of practical skills, which makes it difficult for students to adapt quickly in real work. Furthermore, teaching methods are monotonous and lack innovation. In current vocational education, teachers often use traditional lecture-based teaching methods, where students passively receive knowledge and lack opportunities for active participation and practice. This teaching style fails to ignite students' interest and creativity and is also not conducive to cultivating their practical operational skills. Moreover, the evaluation system is unreasonable. The existing vocational education evaluation system often places too much emphasis on exam scores and ignores the comprehensive quality evaluation of students. This evaluation method easily leads to students pursuing scores while ignoring the cultivation of practical skills and comprehensive qualities. The fifth issue is the insufficiently close school-enterprise cooperation. There is not enough involvement from enterprises in the cooperation between vocational education institutions and enterprises in talent cultivation, which leads to a large gap between talent cultivation and market demands. Finally, the construction of the teaching faculty urgently needs to be strengthened. Vocational education teachers generally lack practical experience, making it difficult for them to combine theoretical knowledge with actual work.

## **3. Reform Path of Vocational Education Talent Cultivation Mode Based on OBE Education Philosophy**

### *3.1 Reorientation of Training Objectives*

As an important way to cultivate application-oriented and skilled talents, vocational education must set its training goals to keep pace with the times and adapt to social development and market demand. In the reform of vocational education talent cultivation models based on the OBE educational philosophy, the repositioning of training objectives is particularly important.

Firstly, training objectives should shift from the traditional focus on knowledge transfer and ability cultivation to a greater emphasis on the improvement of students' comprehensive qualities. Specifically, training objectives should not only include the mastery of professional skills but also encompass abilities such as innovation, teamwork, critical thinking, and the capacity for lifelong learning. This shift means that vocational education is no longer simply about skills training, but about developing students' all-round abilities to adapt and develop in a rapidly changing social environment.

Secondly, training objectives should be closely aligned with industry needs (Mao & Que, 2023). Vocational education should actively cooperate with industrial enterprises to understand the industry trends and talent requirements, so as to ensure that the students trained can better meet the actual market demands. This requires that vocational education

training objectives be more targeted and able to adjust in a timely manner based on industry changes. Additionally, the repositioning of training objectives should also focus on students' sustainable development. This means that vocational education should cultivate students' ability to continuously learn and self-develop to adapt to the ongoing changes in their future careers. Specific measures include encouraging students to participate in practical activities, providing diverse learning resources, and fostering students' self-learning abilities.

Finally, the repositioning of training objectives should also emphasize students' sense of social responsibility and professional ethics. Vocational education should not only cultivate students' professional skills but also pay attention to the development of their professional ethics and social responsibility, enabling them to uphold correct values and behavioral norms in their work.

### *3.2 Reconstruction of the Curriculum*

Currently, in vocational education, the curriculum system often lacks a close alignment with the actual needs of the industry, resulting in a significant gap between talent cultivation and market demands. Based on the OBE educational philosophy, the curriculum system should be reconstructed from the following aspects:

Firstly, the curriculum content should be integrated with professional standards. This means that the content should not only cover fundamental theoretical knowledge but also incorporate the skills and quality requirements of real-world work scenarios. By deeply analyzing industry trends and professional job requirements, the latest technologies and practical case studies should be incorporated into the curriculum design to ensure that what students learn keeps pace with industry demands.

Secondly, the curriculum should emphasize practicality and applicability. The OBE educational philosophy emphasizes outcome-oriented learning, so in terms of curriculum design, the proportion of practical elements such as experiments, internships, and training should be increased. Through these practical activities, students can consolidate their theoretical knowledge in actual operations and improve their ability to solve real-world problems.

Additionally, the curriculum system should have a certain degree of flexibility and adaptability. To cope with the rapidly changing professional environment, the curriculum should allow students to flexibly choose course modules based on their personal interests and career plans. At the same time, the curriculum system should be regularly evaluated and updated to ensure its alignment with industry development.

Finally, the design of interdisciplinary courses is also an important aspect of curriculum system reconstruction. Vocational education should not be limited to the transfer of knowledge within a single discipline but should encourage interdisciplinary learning to cultivate students' comprehensive qualities and innovative abilities. By offering interdisciplinary courses, students can better understand the connections between different disciplines and improve their ability to solve complex problems.

### *3.3 Innovations in Teaching Methods*

In the reform of vocational education talent cultivation models based on the OBE educational philosophy, the innovation of teaching methods is a key link in enhancing educational quality and achieving educational objectives. Firstly, vocational education should advocate a student-centered teaching model (M. K. Chan, 2022). Under the OBE educational philosophy, students are no longer passive recipients of knowledge but active learners and practitioners. Teachers should shift their roles from knowledge imparters to facilitators and assistants. Specifically, the following teaching methods can be adopted: project-based learning, which combines theoretical knowledge with real-world projects, enabling students to learn through the process of solving practical problems, thereby enhancing their practical abilities and innovative thinking. Case-based teaching, which involves analyzing cases that are close to real-world work scenarios, guiding students to engage in discussion and reflection, and cultivating their abilities to analyze and solve problems.

Secondly, the use of modern information technology means to achieve optimal allocation of teaching resources. In vocational education, online teaching platforms can be utilized to provide students with a wealth of learning resources, realize interactive communication inside and outside the classroom, and improve teaching effectiveness. Through VR and AR technology, a realistic simulation environment is created for students to improve their operational skills and adaptability.

Furthermore, strengthening practical teaching is essential for cultivating students' hands-on abilities and innovative spirit. Through experiments and practical training, students can master professional skills in practice and improve their hands-on ability. Collaborating with enterprises to arrange internships for students allows them to exercise their abilities in real-world work environments and understand corporate needs.

### *3.4 Reform of the Evaluation System*

In the reform of vocational education talent cultivation models based on the OBE educational philosophy, the reform of

the evaluation system is a vitally important aspect. Traditional vocational education evaluation systems often focus on knowledge acquisition and skill assessment, while ignoring the all-round development of students and the continuous improvement of students' abilities. (Chen & Zeng, 2022).

Firstly, the evaluation system should shift from a single form of assessment to a diverse range of evaluations. Under the OBE educational philosophy, evaluation is not limited to final exams or skill tests but is integrated throughout the entire learning process. This includes formative assessment, process assessment, and summative assessment. Formative assessment focuses on students' performance during the learning process, emphasizing timely feedback to promote self-adjustment and continuous progress. Process assessment pays attention to students' performance in practical operations, emphasizing the cultivation of practical skills. Summative assessment is a comprehensive evaluation of students' final learning outcomes.

Secondly, the content of evaluation should shift from a single focus on knowledge and skills to a comprehensive assessment of abilities. The content should cover multiple dimensions, including knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values. For example, when evaluating students' professional skills, it is not only necessary to examine their proficiency but also to pay attention to their innovative abilities, teamwork, and problem-solving skills. Such an evaluation system can more fully reflect students' comprehensive qualities.

Furthermore, the methods of evaluation should also be innovative. While traditional written tests and practical assessments are important, they are not sufficient to comprehensively evaluate students' abilities. Therefore, diverse methods such as project-based assessment, peer assessment, and self-assessment can be introduced. Project-based assessment requires students to complete a comprehensive project and evaluate their abilities through their performance during the project implementation. Peer assessment encourages students to evaluate each other, cultivating critical thinking and teamwork. Self-assessment allows students to reflect on their learning process and outcomes, promoting self-monitoring and self-development.

Additionally, the evaluation system should be dynamic and sustainable. Evaluation criteria should not remain static but should be adjusted according to the changing needs of society and professional development. At the same time, the application of evaluation results should also be continuously monitored, such as guiding teaching improvements and students' career planning.

### *3.5 Teacher Development*

In the reform of vocational education talent cultivation models based on the OBE educational philosophy, the construction of the teaching faculty is a critical component. As the leader in educational instruction, a teacher's quality and capability directly impact the quality of talent cultivation.

First of all, it is crucial to improve the professional quality of teachers. Vocational education institutions should strengthen the professional training for teachers, and through regular professional lectures, seminars and academic exchanges, teachers can keep abreast of industry dynamics and technological development, and improve their professional knowledge and skills. In addition, teachers are encouraged to participate in enterprise practice and closely integrate with the industry so as to enhance their understanding and practical experience of vocational education.

Secondly, the improvement of teaching ability is an important task in the construction of the teaching faculty. Vocational education institutions should emphasize the cultivation of teachers' teaching ability and provide the necessary teaching resources and support, such as training in modern education technology and seminars on teaching methods and strategies. At the same time, an assessment system for teachers' teaching ability should be established to promote teachers' self-reflection and continuous improvement through peer evaluation and student feedback.

Furthermore, the incentive mechanism for the teaching faculty is also indispensable. Vocational education institutions should establish a scientific teacher incentive system, including title promotion, salary incentives, research project support, etc., in order to stimulate teachers' enthusiasm for teaching and research. Through the incentive mechanism, teachers are encouraged to actively participate in education and teaching reform and improve the quality of education and teaching.

## **4. Conclusion**

The reform of vocational education talent cultivation mode based on the OBE educational philosophy can better meet the social demand for high-quality technical and skilled talents. Through the repositioning of educational objectives, the reconstruction of the curriculum system, the innovation of teaching methods, the reform of the evaluation system and the strengthening of the construction of teachers, vocational education will place greater emphasis on the cultivation of students' abilities and the improvement of their comprehensive quality. This path of reform is characterized by its strong relevance to the times and its forward-looking nature, contributing to the high-quality development of vocational education and facilitating a positive alignment between talent cultivation and industrial needs.

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