

Research on the Optimization Path of Junior High School Curriculum Teaching Under the Guidance of Core Competencies

Xiaoyu Dong*

Chongde Middle School, Beijing No.8 High School, Tianqu New District, Dezhou 253000, Shandong, China

**Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.*

Copyright: © 2026 Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), permitting distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is cited.

Abstract: The introduction of the core literacy concept has pointed out a new direction for the development of junior high school education, driving its transformation from knowledge transmission to ability cultivation and value shaping. Currently, there are still many phenomena in junior high school curriculum teaching that do not align with the requirements of core literacy, thereby affecting the comprehensive improvement of educational quality. This paper begins with the significance of optimizing junior high school curriculum teaching guided by core literacy, systematically analyzes the practical deviations in current teaching practices, and proposes specific optimization pathways from three aspects: reconstructing teaching objectives, innovating teaching models, and reforming teaching evaluations. It aims to provide theoretical references and practical guidance for the reform of junior high school education and teaching, promoting the fulfillment of the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education at the junior high school stage.

Keywords: Core competencies; Junior high school curriculum; Teaching optimization; Moral education and talent development; Teaching evaluation

Online publication: April 26, 2026

1. Introduction

With the continuous deepening of basic education curriculum reform, core competencies have become the guiding concept that oversees the entire process of teaching and learning. Core competencies are the essential qualities and key abilities required for students to adapt to lifelong development and social needs, emphasizing the integrity and comprehensiveness of education. This calls for teaching activities to move beyond mere knowledge transmission and organically integrate knowledge, abilities, emotional attitudes, and values. The junior high school stage is a crucial phase for students' physical and mental development, as well as a critical period for the formation of core competencies. Traditional knowledge-centered teaching models can no longer meet the demands of talent cultivation in the new era. How to effectively incorporate the concept of core competencies into all aspects of junior high school curriculum teaching and systematically optimize the teaching process remains a significant challenge in current junior high school education reform. This paper primarily conducts an in-depth exploration of this core issue, aiming to provide references for improving junior high

school teaching practices.

2. The significance of optimizing junior high school curriculum teaching under the guidance of core literacy

2.1. The inevitable requirement for implementing the fundamental task of cultivating virtue and talent

Moral education is the fundamental task of education, and the core competency concept is the implementation and concretization of the fundamental task of moral education. Core literacy transforms the overall requirements of the country for talent cultivation into specific qualities and abilities that students should possess, and determines the direction of education in junior high school. By optimizing the curriculum teaching and integrating the cultivation objectives of core competencies into the entire teaching process, we can transform the concept of cultivating moral character into concrete teaching behaviors, enabling students to establish correct worldviews, outlooks on life, and values in the process of learning knowledge, cultivate a sense of social responsibility, innovative spirit, and practical ability, and lay a solid foundation for cultivating new generations who shoulder the great responsibility of national rejuvenation.

2.2. The core lever for promoting high-quality development of junior high school education

The essence of high-quality development in education is the improvement of the quality of education. For a long time, some junior high schools have tended to prioritize scores over quality and results over process, resulting in insufficient educational development. The optimization of education guided by core competencies requires schools and teachers to change their educational concepts, transform teaching methods, and attach importance to students' comprehensive and personalized development, as well as lifelong development. Not only can it improve the efficiency and quality of classroom teaching, but it can also improve the school curriculum system and enhance the professional abilities of teachers, shifting junior high education from external development to internal development and achieving comprehensive improvement in educational quality^[1].

2.3. Key support for promoting students' comprehensive and personalized development

Every student has their own unique personality and development potential, and the fundamental purpose of education is to promote the comprehensive and individualized development of each student. The traditional unified and standardized teaching model ignores individual differences among students and cannot meet their diverse needs. Teaching optimization guided by core competencies, emphasizing students' subjectivity and individual differences, valuing individualized teaching, and providing students with multiple learning options and development spaces. Creating diverse teaching scenarios and learning activities can stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning, tap into their potential, promote their all-around development, and enable them to grow strong.

3. The current deviation between junior high school curriculum teaching and core competency requirements

3.1. There is a knowledge-based tendency in the design of teaching objectives

Some teachers still regard the mastery of knowledge as the main purpose when setting teaching objectives, overly emphasizing students' memory and understanding of knowledge points, and neglecting the cultivation of abilities and value guidance. The expression of teaching objectives mostly stays at the level of knowledge, lacking specific requirements for the development of students' core competencies. The knowledge-based teaching objective design focuses on the imparting of knowledge in teaching activities, and students passively receive knowledge, which cannot form the ability to solve practical problems and correct values, resulting in a significant gap from the cultivation requirements of

core competencies.

3.2. Lack of deep interaction and exploration in the implementation of the teaching process

In the actual teaching process, some teachers still use the lecture-based teaching method, where the classroom is teacher-led, and students are in a passive receiving position. The teaching process lacks teacher-student interaction and student-student interaction, and students' enthusiasm for participating in the classroom is not high. Meanwhile, new teaching methods such as inquiry-based learning and collaborative learning are often superficial in practice and have not been deeply developed. Students rarely have opportunities for independent thinking, exploration, and problem discovery, and cannot develop critical thinking and innovation abilities, which is not conducive to the formation and development of core competencies^[2].

3.3. The teaching evaluation system focuses on outcome-based assessment

At present, the evaluation of junior high school teaching is still mainly based on outcome evaluation, with evaluation content mainly focused on students' academic performance. The evaluation method is single, and paper-and-pencil tests are often used. This evaluation system ignores the evaluation of students' learning process, as well as the evaluation of students' emotional attitudes, values, and practical abilities. The evaluation results are generally used to distinguish the strengths and weaknesses of students, without fully utilizing the diagnostic feedback and improvement functions of the evaluation. A one-sided evaluation system is not conducive to the development of students' comprehensive literacy and, to some extent, exacerbates the tendency towards exam-oriented education.

4. The optimization path of junior high school curriculum teaching under the guidance of core literacy

4.1. Refactoring the teaching objective system guided by literacy

Teaching objectives are the starting point and destination of teaching activities, and rebuilding a literacy-oriented teaching objective system is a prerequisite for achieving teaching optimization. Teachers should fully understand the connotation and requirements of core literacy, decompose the training objectives of core literacy into the teaching objectives of each lesson, and organically integrate knowledge objectives, ability objectives, emotional attitudes, and value objectives. When designing teaching objectives, teachers should start from the perspective of students, pay attention to their learning process and changes, and clarify the qualities that students can achieve through learning. The design of teaching objectives should have hierarchy and operability, which can guide specific teaching activities and facilitate the implementation of teaching evaluation. To further strengthen the foundation of nurturing students, schools need to establish a systematic teaching and research empowerment mechanism, so that teachers can break away from the fragmented thinking of designing class objectives, and establish a hierarchical and integrated system of literacy goals based on the overall educational needs of junior high school students. According to the stage-specific characteristics of students' cognitive development, teaching objectives for different grades are layered. In lower grades, emphasis is placed on consolidating basic learning literacy, cultivating students' good study habits and basic thinking abilities, while in higher grades, emphasis is placed on cultivating higher-order thinking, innovative consciousness, and comprehensive application abilities.

At the same time, actively promoting the interconnection and organic integration of the goals of various teaching modules, breaking down the barriers of single knowledge teaching, so that each teaching goal can accurately correspond to the key points of core literacy cultivation, realizing the synchronous promotion of knowledge learning and literacy growth, and making teaching goals truly become the core criteria for guiding classroom education. The education system of basic education in the new era attaches great importance to the integrity and systematicity of education. The reconstruction of teaching objectives should not be limited to the design of a single lesson, but should be planned from the perspective of overall education in junior high school. Schools can actively hold collective teaching and research activities, convene

teachers to sort out the overall quality cultivation of the learning stage, organize the key points of education for each grade and unit, and avoid the situation of repeated and homogeneous teaching objectives. Teachers should abandon the thinking that only focuses on knowledge point design, and explore the value of thinking cultivation, character shaping, and practical education contained in the curriculum content, transforming the content of implicit literacy cultivation into explicit teaching objectives. At the same time, the design of teaching objectives should balance universality and personalization, meeting the overall development needs of all students, ensuring comprehensive cultivation of basic literacy, and leaving a certain degree of flexibility to adapt to the development potential of students at different levels^[3]. Through systematic goal reshaping, the situation of traditional teaching objectives being one-sided and singular is completely changed, and the entire teaching process is always focused on the development of students' core competencies. This transformation of junior high school curriculum teaching from shallow education of knowledge transmission to deep education of literacy cultivation truly strengthens the foundation of students' lifelong development of literacy and meets the core needs of high-quality development of basic education in the new era.

4.2. Innovative interactive exploration teaching implementation mode

Teaching implementation is an important part of achieving the goal of cultivating core competencies. Teachers need to change their teaching concepts, put students in the main position, innovate teaching methods, and establish an interactive and exploratory teaching model. Teachers should create real situations in the teaching process to enable students to learn knowledge and develop their abilities while solving problems. We should vigorously promote self-directed learning, cooperative learning, and inquiry-based learning, leaving ample space for students to think independently, explore, and communicate, and encourage students to dare to question and innovate. At the same time, teachers should play the role of guides and organizers, providing timely guidance and assistance to students to enable them to engage in deep learning. Under the new concept of educating students, the implementation of classroom teaching should completely break away from the misconception of formal reform, rely on students' literacy to generate real needs, and create a deep, life-oriented, and normalized classroom education environment. Teachers can design a series of exploration tasks and practical activities that relate to students' daily lives and social reality issues, encouraging students to participate in the complete teaching process of knowledge sorting, problem exploration, and critical thinking and communication. Abandoning the traditional one-way indoctrination teaching method, creating a classroom environment of equal interaction between teachers and students, and cooperation between students, fully tapping into students' subjective initiative, and transforming students from passive listening to lectures to actively constructing knowledge. By conducting regular in-depth exploration and interactive learning, students can exercise their logical thinking, cooperation ability, and innovation ability, and turn the classroom teaching process into the main way for students to develop their core competencies steadily. High-quality teaching implementation is the main carrier for the implementation of core competencies^[4].

The innovation of classroom teaching models should not only stay at the surface level, but should start from the core needs of cultivating competencies and continuously deepen. Teachers should constantly update their teaching concepts, abandon traditional teaching models, and improve classroom teaching processes and activity designs based on the active thinking and exploratory nature of middle school students. Daily teaching can utilize life-oriented teaching scenarios and open-ended inquiry questions, breaking down the barriers between the classroom and daily life, allowing students to be in real inquiry situations, relying on their own knowledge reserves to actively think, identify, and operate. Teachers also need to control the pace of classroom teaching reasonably, balance the relationship between independent exploration and teacher guidance, and cannot completely control the learning process of students, nor can they allow students to learn in a disorderly manner. Set up hierarchical exploration tasks based on different learning contents, so that students with poor foundations can complete basic learning tasks, and students with strong abilities can be expanded and improved. Long term adherence to deep and interactive classroom teaching can gradually cultivate students' independent thinking qualities, cooperative consciousness of unity and cooperation, and innovative spirit of daring to explore, promoting the steady improvement of students' core literacy in all aspects, and making junior high school classrooms truly the main battlefield

for educating and improving students' quality.

4.3. Establish a diversified and comprehensive teaching evaluation mechanism

Teaching evaluation plays an important guiding role in teaching activities, and establishing a diversified and comprehensive teaching evaluation mechanism is an important guarantee for teaching optimization. We should change the single outcome evaluation method and establish an evaluation system that combines process evaluation and outcome evaluation. The evaluation content should comprehensively cover the development of students' knowledge mastery ability, emotional attitude, and values, and attach importance to their progress and growth. The evaluation methods should be diversified. In addition to paper and pen tests, observation, interviews, work exhibitions, practical operations, and other evaluation methods can also be used. At the same time, we should leverage the diagnostic feedback and improvement function of evaluation, timely provide feedback on evaluation results to students and teachers, enable students to adjust their learning strategies, and enable teachers to improve their teaching methods, achieving the goal of mutual learning and teaching. The quality-oriented teaching evaluation should completely change the core function of traditional evaluation, weaken the utilitarian nature of screening and selection, strengthen the core value of educational development, and integrate evaluation throughout the entire teaching process. Schools should establish standardized and refined quality evaluation criteria, which comprehensively evaluate students' learning attitudes, exploration abilities, collaborative performance, value recognition, practical achievements, and other aspects. Emphasis should be placed on students' individual progress and dynamic growth changes, rather than solely relying on academic scores to measure them. By relying on diverse evaluation data, we can accurately identify teaching shortcomings and student development deficiencies, improve teaching plans and strategies in a targeted manner, establish a closed-loop education model of evaluation feedback improvement, and continuously promote the deep integration of junior high school curriculum teaching and core literacy cultivation, achieving the goal of educating students through evaluation and promoting excellence through evaluation^[5]. The soundness of the teaching evaluation system is a powerful lever for the implementation of literacy teaching, and a long-term and stable evaluation system can provide sustained driving support for teaching improvement. Schools should start from the goal of nurturing students with core elements, establish a comprehensive and full process evaluation system, completely break free from the constraints of score-based evaluation, and make the evaluation fully adapt to the development requirements of students' comprehensive literacy. In the implementation process of evaluation, it is necessary to balance the overall and dynamic aspects, pay attention to the growth and changes of students throughout the entire academic stage, and abandon the one-sided evaluation method of using single assessment results to judge students' abilities. At the same time, it can enrich the evaluation subjects, break the single teacher evaluation mode, and add evaluation methods such as self-evaluation and peer evaluation, allowing students to participate in self-reflection and mutual learning, and improve their self-awareness and reflective ability. The purpose of multi-dimensional evaluation is not to judge the strengths and weaknesses of students, but to accurately identify the problems and highlights that arise in their learning and growth, so that students can face their own shortcomings, clarify the direction for further learning and improvement, and provide a real and reliable basis for teachers to adjust teaching pace and optimize teaching content. After the systematic evaluation reform, it can effectively promote the return of teaching to the essence of educating people, promote the mutual promotion and common development of teaching and learning, continuously consolidate the effectiveness of core elements in nurturing people, and promote the steady improvement of the quality of education in junior high school.

5. Conclusion

Optimizing middle school curriculum teaching guided by core competencies is a systematic project that requires the joint participation of school teachers and all sectors of society. In the context of the new era, middle school educators should fully recognize the importance of cultivating core competencies, actively transform educational concepts, be brave in exploration and practice, continuously optimize teaching objectives, teaching processes, and teaching evaluations, and

truly implement the cultivation of core competencies in classroom teaching. Only in this way can we continuously improve the quality of education in junior high school, lay a solid foundation for students' lifelong development, and cultivate more high-quality talents for the country and society. With the continuous deepening of basic education curriculum reform, the reform of junior high school teaching guided by core competencies will surely achieve more fruitful results and promote the development of junior high school education to a higher level.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

- [1] Liu Q, Li J, 2023, Gathering Similarities and Deep Experience: Gradient Cultivation of Core Competencies in Junior and Senior High Schools. *Reference for Middle School Political Teaching*, 2023(22): 39–41.
- [2] Zeng Z, 2023, Three Key Issues for Cultivating Core Competencies in Disciplines. *Reference for Middle School Political Teaching*, 2023(15): 38–40.
- [3] Jiang B, 2023, Guidelines for Artificial Intelligence Curriculum in Primary and Secondary Schools. *Journal of East China Normal University (Education Science Edition)*, 41(3): 121–134.
- [4] Shi W, Zhang J, 2023, Research on the Vertical Integration of Subject Core Literacy Based on Cognitive Goal Taxonomy. *Journal of Tianjin Academy of Educational Sciences*, 35(1): 87–94.
- [5] Chen M, 2021, Developing Thinking and Enhancing Literacy: Cultivating Core Competencies in the Discipline of “Thinking Development and Enhancement” for Junior High School Students. *Chinese Language Teaching Newsletter, Journal D (Academic)*, 2021(1): 23–24.

Publisher's note

Whoice Publishing remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.