

Research on the Teaching Reform and Optimization of University Economic History Courses Under the Background of New Liberal Arts and Digital Economy

Ying He*

School of Economics and Management, Shanghai University of Political Science and Law, Shanghai 201701, China

**Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.*

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Abstract: The in-depth advancement of new liberal arts construction and the comprehensive penetration of the digital economy have reshaped economic operation modes and industrial development forms, putting forward new standards for the cultivation of compound and innovative talents in economics and management in universities. Traditional economic history courses are confronted with many problems, including solidified teaching modes, lagging content updates, superficial integration of digital technologies, insufficient practical teaching, and utilitarian evaluation mechanisms, which fail to meet the talent cultivation demands of the new era. Based on the interdisciplinary, digital, and practical educational concepts of new liberal arts and combined with the digital transformation trend of university education, this paper systematically sorts out the core dilemmas and underlying causes of current economic history teaching. From four dimensions of curriculum content iteration, intelligent teaching innovation, practical teaching system improvement, and diversified evaluation reconstruction, a feasible teaching optimization system is constructed. This study promotes the in-depth integration of professional theories, digital technologies and industrial practice, and resolves the disconnection between classroom teaching, disciplinary innovation and industrial upgrading. The research results can effectively improve the teaching quality of economic history courses, optimize the talent cultivation system for economics majors, and provide theoretical and practical references for the digital transformation of humanities and social science courses in universities.

Keywords: University education; Economic history course; Teaching innovation; New liberal arts; Digital economy

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1. Introduction

The comprehensive promotion of new liberal arts construction has triggered profound reforms in university humanities and social science education and restructured the talent cultivation and curriculum teaching logic of economics and management disciplines. Different from the singular and closed teaching mode of

traditional liberal arts, new liberal arts takes interdisciplinary integration, digital empowerment and practical implementation as its core, breaks disciplinary barriers and classroom limitations, enables professional courses to adapt to new business forms of the digital economy, and constructs a new education system suitable for high-quality economic development ^[1].

As an interdisciplinary core course integrating economics, history, sociology and management, economic history serves as a crucial carrier for cultivating undergraduates' macro perspective, dialectical thinking and professional literacy in economics and management majors. By sorting out the iterative evolution laws of economic systems, industrial structures and development models and verifying abstract economic theories with historical cases, the course helps students build a systematic economic cognition system. It guides students to judge practical economic issues from a long-term macro perspective and cultivates their logical thinking and strategic judgment capabilities, thus possessing irreplaceable educational value ^[2].

The rapid development of digital technology has spawned emerging business forms such as the platform economy and digital trade, subverted the operational logic of the traditional industrial economy, and derived a variety of new economic governance problems. Most contemporary dilemmas of the digital economy can be traced and interpreted through the historical evolution of economic development ^[3]. Nevertheless, the teaching of economic history in most universities still adheres to traditional paradigms, overemphasizes traditional economic historical facts while lacking cutting-edge content related to the digital economy, and features superficial digital teaching, insufficient classroom interaction and inadequate practical links, resulting in poor teaching adaptability.

The disconnection among curriculum content, disciplinary development and market demand leads to students' low learning initiative and weak innovative awareness. Most students only memorize knowledge mechanically and cannot interpret modern economic phenomena based on historical laws, making them unable to adapt to the demand for compound talents in the digital economy. Therefore, promoting teaching reform and optimization of economic history courses is of great significance for improving the cultivation quality of economic and management talents, adapting to industrial development, and serving high-quality economic development.

2. The era connotation and reform necessity of innovative economic history teaching

2.1. Educational connotation of new liberal arts construction for professional teaching

New liberal arts construction leads the quality improvement and connotative development of humanities and social science education and provides policy guidance for the reform of economics and management courses ^[4]. Its core goal is to break the problems of disciplinary segmentation, monotonous teaching and outdated content, build a modern education system featuring technological empowerment and industry-education integration, realize the coordinated cultivation of knowledge, ability, thinking and values, and focus on cultivating innovative and applied industrial talents.

The interdisciplinary characteristics of economic history are highly consistent with the educational philosophy of new liberal arts. It can make up for the humanistic deficiencies of pure economic theory courses and strengthen students' dialectical thinking. Meanwhile, its core themes such as industrial iteration and economic governance are closely connected with modern economic hot issues, making it a high-quality carrier for interdisciplinary teaching. Teaching in the new era should abandon the superficial sorting of historical

facts, promote interdisciplinary knowledge integration, and implement the interdisciplinary talent cultivation goals of new liberal arts.

2.2. Necessity of economic history teaching reform in the digital economy era

The digital economy has comprehensively reshaped industrial forms and governance models, forcing the systematic innovation of economic history teaching systems^[5]. Traditional teaching focuses on the evolution of agricultural and industrial economies and centers on traditional fiscal, taxation, agricultural and commercial systems, while ignoring emerging fields such as digital industrialization and platform governance. The serious disconnection between curriculum content and contemporary economic development leads to insufficient temporal adaptability.

Curriculum reform is an inevitable choice for disciplines to adapt to the development of the digital economy^[6]. Adding special topics such as the origin of the digital economy, business iteration, and digital governance references can help construct a complete cognitive system covering the traditional economy and the modern digital economy. The introduction of digital technologies, including data visualization and virtual simulation, can visualize complex institutional changes and industrial evolution processes, solve the problems of dull teaching and difficult knowledge understanding, strengthen the connection between courses and digital economy industries, and improve students' ability to solve practical economic problems.

3. Current dilemmas and deficiencies in university economic history teaching

3.1. Single teaching content and backward knowledge system

Most current university economic history courses adopt a traditional chronological teaching framework, focusing on ancient agricultural and commercial economy, fiscal and taxation systems, and regional economic patterns, while rarely incorporating cutting-edge content such as digital economy, global digital governance and modern economic transformation. The knowledge system lags behind disciplinary innovation and industrial iteration.

In addition, current teaching generally emphasizes historical facts rather than operational laws^[7]. Most teachers merely sort out historical events without in-depth analysis of the underlying mechanisms and operational logic of economic phenomena. Cross-regional and cross-temporal comparative analysis is insufficient, and little attention is paid to guiding students to summarize development experience. The outdated and shallow teaching mode weakens the educational value of the course, fails to cultivate students' economic judgment ability, and reduces students' enthusiasm for autonomous learning.

3.2. Backward teaching methods and superficial digital application

Traditional economic history teaching adopts teacher-centered indoctrination, where students passively receive knowledge with limited space for independent thinking and exploration. The rigid teaching mode leads to a dull classroom atmosphere and low student initiative. Economic history features complex knowledge systems and abstract logic, which cannot be fully conveyed through simple verbal explanation and static textbooks, resulting in unsatisfactory teaching effects.

Digital teaching in economic history courses remains superficial^[8,9]. Most teachers only apply basic tools such as PPT and online courses, while ignoring advanced digital teaching methods including big data visualization, database empirical analysis and virtual simulation teaching. In addition, specialized digital

teaching resources are fragmented and insufficient, failing to support systematic intelligent teaching and meet students' personalized and intelligent learning needs.

3.3. Insufficient practical teaching and serious disconnection between theory and practice

Practical teaching is a core link connecting theory and practice in economic history courses. However, most universities have greatly weakened or even canceled systematic practical teaching, retaining only shallow forms such as literature research and course papers, while lacking standardized practical training including field investigation, data empirical analysis and in-depth case study.

The long-term absence of practical teaching leads to a serious separation between theory and reality ^[10,11]. Although students master basic historical facts, they cannot connect historical laws with contemporary economic phenomena or solve practical problems in the digital economy era. The goal of applied talent cultivation is difficult to achieve, resulting in insufficient practical competence and poor post-graduation adaptability of students and a structural mismatch between talent cultivation and market demand.

3.4. Single evaluation system and utilitarian educational orientation

The current curriculum evaluation mechanism is rigid and utilitarian. Most universities take final closed-book examinations as the sole evaluation criterion, which focuses on the mechanical memorization of knowledge points while ignoring the assessment of students' critical thinking, innovative ability and practical competence. This mode leads to passive exam-oriented learning and superficial cognition, restricts in-depth thinking and active exploration, and seriously hinders the cultivation of comprehensive literacy.

Furthermore, the evaluation system has a single subject and incomplete dimensions ^[12,13]. Evaluation is solely conducted by teachers without student self-evaluation and peer evaluation mechanisms. It fails to cover the whole learning process, including classroom performance, autonomous learning, and innovative practice, resulting in one-sided and subjective evaluation results that cannot objectively reflect students' comprehensive abilities and restrict the improvement of teaching quality and talent cultivation.

4. Innovative teaching reform strategies for economic history courses

4.1. Optimizing teaching content and constructing a modern dynamic knowledge system

To solve the problem of outdated curriculum content, this study optimizes the teaching content in accordance with the requirements of new liberal arts and the digital economy. While retaining core basic modules such as traditional economic systems and industrial iteration, it adds frontier special topics including the origin of the digital economy, platform economy evolution, and comparative digital governance, breaking the knowledge barrier between traditional economic history and the modern digital economy and enhancing the timeliness and practicality of the course.

The traditional single chronological narrative is abandoned, and a three-dimensional teaching framework of "vertical context + horizontal thematic analysis" is constructed. Five major thematic modules, including institutional innovation, industrial upgrading, technological progress, regional development, and risk governance, are set up to summarize general economic operation laws through cross-temporal and cross-regional case comparison. Meanwhile, interdisciplinary knowledge is integrated to break disciplinary boundaries and implement the interdisciplinary educational concept of new liberal arts.

4.2. Innovating digital teaching and building a diversified blended teaching model

Traditional teaching modes are innovated by relying on digital educational technologies to build an online-offline blended teaching system. Advanced tools such as big data visualization, professional economic history databases and virtual simulation platforms are adopted to visualize industrial evolution and institutional changes, construct immersive teaching scenarios, and resolve the abstraction and obscurity of traditional teaching.

A full-process teaching closed loop covering pre-class preview, in-class interaction and after-class expansion is constructed^[14]. Before class, micro-lessons and frontier cases are released to guide autonomous preview. In class, thematic discussions, group exploration, and case debates are adopted to activate the classroom atmosphere. After class, online Q&A and knowledge expansion are provided. Meanwhile, flipped classroom and project-based teaching are promoted to carry out inquiry learning targeting practical economic problems and cultivate students' innovative thinking and economic judgment ability.

4.3. Improving practical mechanisms and promoting in-depth integration of theory and practice

This study constructs a three-in-one practical teaching system consisting of on-campus training, off-campus investigation and disciplinary innovation, and incorporates practical teaching into the core assessment links. On-campus practical courses, including economic data analysis, in-depth case studies, and economic law deduction, are set up to strengthen students' data processing and problem analysis capabilities.

Universities deepen industry-education integration and build off-campus practical bases relying on local economic resources. Students are organized to carry out industrial investigations and analyze practical industrial problems combined with local economic transformation practices. Taking college students' innovation projects, disciplinary competitions, and social investigations as carriers, students are encouraged to conduct innovative research on the integration of economic history and the digital economy, so as to improve their practical abilities and industry adaptability comprehensively.

4.4. Reconstructing multi-dimensional evaluation and establishing scientific educational orientation

The single summative assessment mode is abandoned, and a multi-dimensional evaluation system combining process evaluation and summative evaluation is constructed. The weight of process evaluation is raised to more than 40%, covering pre-class preparation, classroom interaction, group cooperation, practical investigation and innovative achievements, focusing on assessing students' practical abilities and learning growth. The question structure of final examinations is optimized to reduce pure memorization questions and focus on examining students' knowledge application and innovative problem-solving abilities.

A diversified evaluation mechanism including teacher evaluation, student self-evaluation, and peer evaluation is established to avoid the subjectivity of a single evaluation. Based on four dimensions of knowledge mastery, ability improvement, innovative thinking and comprehensive literacy, a qualitative and quantitative evaluation index system is constructed to guide students to abandon utilitarian learning attitudes, focus on the improvement of comprehensive quality, and meet the cultivation needs of compound economic and management talents^[15].

5. Conclusion

The integrated development of new liberal arts and the digital economy forces the teaching reform of economic history courses, which is the key to improving the quality of economic and management talent cultivation and promoting the high-quality development of economics education. Traditional economic history teaching has systematic deficiencies in content, mode, practice and evaluation, which cannot adapt to the talent cultivation standards of the new era. Based on the contemporary background, this paper systematically analyzes the dilemmas of current economic history teaching, clarifies the value of reform, and constructs a four-in-one teaching reform framework covering content optimization, method innovation, practical improvement and evaluation reconstruction, forming a feasible and promotable optimization scheme.

The teaching reform of economic history courses should adhere to the student-centered educational philosophy, closely follow disciplinary development and market demand, and focus on interdisciplinary integration and practical innovation cultivation. Relying on digital technologies to break the shackles of traditional teaching, universities can realize the in-depth integration of theories, technologies and industrial practice and continuously enhance the contemporaneity and innovation of courses. Continuous teaching innovation can effectively cultivate students' macroeconomic vision and rigorous critical thinking, deliver high-quality economic and management talents for the development of the digital economy, and support the connotative and high-quality development of university economics education.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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