Research on Teaching Reform of International Finance and Trade as General Education Course

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Abstract. With the liberalization and globalization of the world economy and the integration of China's economy into the world economic system, it is a glorious and arduous task for our economics teachers to actively explore the teaching reform of international finance and international trade and train qualified international economic and trade talents for our country. This paper introduces the measures and effects of the teaching reform since the author became a general education course teacher of International Finance and Trade in 2013, and discusses with you in order to promote the teaching reform of International Finance and Trade course.

Introduction

Economic liberalization and economic globalization are the two major themes of world economic development in the 21st century. Trade liberalization, globalization and financial liberalization and globalization are the two pillars of economic liberalization and globalization. It can be said that the ultimate goal of China's reform and opening-up is to integrate into the trend of economic liberalization and globalization, and eventually catch up with the developed western countries. As a teacher of international finance and international trade, it is our duty to train qualified talents for the future development of international trade and international finance. Therefore, since 2013, I have been actively exploring the teaching reform of the general course International Finance and Trade in order to maximize the teaching effect and enable students to master as much knowledge of international finance and trade as possible within a limited period of time.

Characteristics of International Finance and Trade as a General Education Course

In order to improve the teaching reform of the general course of International Finance and Trade, it is prerequisite to understand the characteristics of the course of International Finance and Trade itself and the characteristics of a general course.

Characteristics of the Course International Finance and Trade

In the general higher education institutions, the International Finance and Trade course is divided into two professional courses of International Finance and International Trade, but our university takes it as a course. The course of International Finance and Trade has the following characteristics:

The Combination of Extensiveness and Abstruseness. International finance is centered on foreign exchange and exchange rates, which main research interests include balance of payments, international reserve, foreign exchange rate and exchange rate system, foreign exchange transactions and exchange rate conversion, foreign exchange risk management, foreign exchange control, international financial markets, international credit, international capital flows and international Debt, the international financial system and the international monetary system, as well as China's foreign-related finance, which is quite extensive; research objects of international trade include international trade theory, contemporary international trade development trends, international trade policies and measures, international trade terms, and international trade contracts, international trade mode, the World Trade Organization, and China's foreign trade situation, which is also extremely rich. This course not only covers a wide range of contents, but also has profound...
contents. For example, in teaching balance of payments theory, exchange rate theory, international trade theory, etc., many mathematical models and graph models are used. It takes a lot of time to understand them.

The Combination of Macro and Micro. Whether in the part of international finance or in the part of international trade, some contents are quite macro, while others are extremely micro. The contents in the part of international finance such as international balance of payments, international reserves, exchange rate system, international debt and those in the part if international trade such as the development trend of contemporary international trade in international trade, international trade policy and measures, etc., refer to things at the national level or even at the global level, which are extremely macro-level; while the contents of foreign exchange transactions, and foreign currency conversion in the part of international finance, and the contents of trade terms, trade contracts, international settlement in the part of international trade, are about things at the enterprise or company level, which is quite micro. In addition, there are also many contents between macro and micro. This requires students to have both macro and micro thinking.

The Combination of Theory and Operability. The theory of international balance of payments and the theory of exchange rate determination in international finance and the theory of international trade reasons and results in international trade are not only mathematical analysis, but also graphic analysis, which is highly theoretical. However, the contents of foreign exchange transactions, exchange rate conversion, foreign exchange risk prevention measures in international finance and international trade contracts, international settlement in international trade are purely practical. This requires students to have both theoretical thinking ability and practical hands-on skills.

The Combination of Economics and Mathematics. International Finance and Trade is a secondary course based on economics, finance, business economics and other professional basic courses, so it requires students to have a certain economic foundation. At the same time, because many mathematical models are used in theoretical analysis and mathematical operations are involved in business operations, it also requires students to have good mathematical skills.

Characteristics of General Education Course

As a general education course, International Finance and Trade, which can be selected by students from all departments in the university, has the following characteristics:

The Characteristics of More Electives and Large-size Class. Because International Finance and Trade is a public elective course in our university and its name sounds good, the number of students who take the course is particularly large, so the class is generally very large. Generally, there are at least seventy to eighty people in a class. At most, there are more than 150 people in a class. Classes are large, and the classrooms are large. Classes are big and then the classroom has to be big. Therefore, in order to maintain good classroom discipline and ensure that every student can hear clearly and understand what the teacher is talking about, the teacher need to have a superb art of lecturing.

The Characteristics of Students' Different Foundations. The students who choose International Finance and Trade are mainly from the Foreign Language College, but in addition to the Foreign Language College, there are also some students from liberal arts colleges such as the History Department, Literature College, Politics and Law College, Music Department and Education College, and some students from science colleges such as Mathematics College, Physics Department and Resource and Environment Colleges. Some of them have good foreign languages, some have good mathematics, and some even have a certain economic foundation. However, there are also many students who are not good at foreign languages, mathematics, and have no economic basis. How to use the same standard to require students with such different backgrounds and foundations so that they can better master the contents of the course, it is a test of the teacher's work.

The Characteristic of Being Popular But not Valued. Since it is now a reform and opening-up society, this course of International Finance and Trade, with the word ‘international’ in its name, is very popular, and students are quite enthusiastic in class selection. However, because it is only an
elective course, the ordinary students do not attach importance to its study. Although most students choose this course to learn something, it is not excluded that some students only want to get credits, just for the sake of good grades. So, after experiencing the freshness of the first few classes, some students would rather stay in the dormitory during the class, and even go home.

The Characteristics of Less Course Hours. In regular financial colleges and universities, international finance and international trade are taught as two separate courses, each with generally 18 weeks one semester, 3 lessons per week, 50 minutes per lesson. Moreover, even the class is arranged in this way, the lecture still feels that the class is quite tense when he teaches. But in our university, as a general education course, International and Trade, which combines international finance and international trade as a course, only is given 16 weeks a semester, three lessons a week, 40 minutes each lesson.

Practice of Teaching Reform of the General Education Course of International Finance and Trade

In view of the above characteristics of International Finance and Trade as a general education course in the university, I have been actively reforming its teaching from the aspects of teaching objectives, teaching system and content, teaching methods and means, and evaluation system of learning effect since undertaking the teaching work of the general education course of International Finance and Trade in 2013.

Determination of Teaching Objectives

The determination of teaching objectives determines the setting of teaching content and curriculum system. In view of the above characteristics of International Finance and Exchange as a general education course, I define the teaching objective of the course as ‘the organic unity of knowledge, ability and interest’. That is to say, through this course, students should not only master the basic knowledge of international finance and trade in an all-round way, lay a certain theoretical foundation of finance and trade, but also cultivate interest in international finance and trade, so that they can truly have the ability of comprehensive application of theory and self-renewal and self-improvement of knowledge.

Reform of Teaching System and Teaching Content

In the teaching of the general education course of International Finance and Trade, I emphasize the simplification and the structuralization of the curriculum system, and strengthen the comprehensiveness, integrity, foresight and inquiry of the curriculum content. On the basis of redefining the issues and development of the research on international finance and international trade, I have constructed a new teaching system with clear main line, strict logic, open content and clear framework, and organized the teaching content on the basis of world economic liberalization, globalization and the increasingly reform and opening-up of domestic economy, so as to make the content of the course consistent with the rapid development of social reality.

Improvement of Teaching Methods and Means

The improvement of teaching methods and means is an important condition to guarantee teaching quality and improve teaching effect. In the teaching of the general education course of International Finance and Trade, in view of its characteristics of more content and less class time, I have abandoned the teaching concept of “cramming” and replaced it with the new concept of “unification of learning and teaching”, that is, on the basis of the teacher's leading role, the students' independence, initiative and creativity are actively exerted. For example, when analyzing the impact of exchange rate changes, I only analyze the impact of exchange rate depreciation, leaving the impact of exchange rate appreciation to the students themselves to analyze; when teaching the calculation of forward foreign exchange rate based on the point exchange rate, I only talk about the situation under the direct Quotation, while leaving the situation under the indirect quotation to the students themselves to calculate.
At the same time, in view of the fact that International Finance and Trade is a course with the word of ‘international’ in its name, the knowledge of this course will be ultimately applied to the practice of international finance and international trade, so the level of English language is an important factor related to whether or not the knowledge can play a role on practice and how much it can play. Therefore, I often arrange students some up-to-date English materials on international finance and international trade to translate into Chinese. In this way, students can not only consolidate their knowledge, master new knowledge and improve their interest in learning, but also improve their English proficiency through translation.

**Reform of the Evaluation System of Learning Effects**

Teachers usually use one or two written exams to determine the students’ academic performance and judge their learning effects. This kind of evaluation system is too one-side and single, so that students form a passive learning attitude of "taking notes in class, memorizing notes before exams and writing notes from memory during exams", which can pass the examination by rote memorization. Some students even just borrow their classmates' notes to copy before the exam and then memorize the notes to pass the exam luckily, which leads to the situation that they doubt the usefulness of the knowledge they have learned because they have not mastered the knowledge completely and have not the ability to use it. In order to overcome this situation, I not only guide the students to solve the problems in real life directly with the knowledge they have learned in class, but also actively carries out the reform of the evaluation system of learning effects. I incorporate the students' written examination scores, attendance, answers to questions in class and homework completion into the evaluation system. Each aspect stipulates a percentage. So the students' final score is a summary of the scores in these aspects, and it is definitely not just a written examination result at the end of the semester.

**Results of the Teaching Reform of General Education Course of International Finance and Trade and Follow-up Thinking**

Through the implementation of the above teaching reform measures, the teaching of the general education course of International Finance and Trade in our university has achieved an ideal teaching effect and achieved the expected goal of teaching reform.

**Teaching Tasks Being Successfully Completed**

The course of International finance and Trade covers a wide range of subjects, many of which are difficult. However, as a general education course whose class is large, International Finance and Trade has only 32 lessons a semester. Under normal circumstances, it is difficult for a teacher to teach all the contents. After the teaching reform, a lot of teaching time has been saved. With 32 lessons, I can basically complete the teaching of the main contents of International Finance and Trade.

**Students' Understanding of the General Education Course Being Changed**

Before the reform, some students thought that the general education class in the university was just an elective course. They didn't pay attention to it. One day they had an interest, they went to listen to a section; another day they didn't have an interest, they wouldn't go to the classroom at all. Even if they went to the classroom, they would listen to one ear if they felt interested; or did other things if they felt uninterested. Due to the change of teaching methods and evaluation system, the enthusiasm of the students in class is unprecedentedly high. They concentrate on class, take notes carefully and answer questions enthusiastically, because the students know that there is a fundamental difference whether they learn or not and whether they learn well or bad.

**Students' Interest in Economics Being Enhanced**

Before selecting the course of International Finance and Trade, many students were full of mystery about economics, and they believed that economics was unattainable and unfathomable.
Through the study of International Finance and Trade, the students realize that economics is closely related to their lives and that it is used to explain and solve problems in their economic life. Many students have developed a strong interest in finance, trade and economics, and, in addition to listening carefully to the lessons, find their own extracurricular economic books to read. There are also some students express that after graduation they will apply for postgraduate studies in Economics.

**Students’ English and Mathematics Being Improved**

Because the professional vocabulary in the course of International Finance and Trade is written on the blackboard in English, and the methods of memorizing these professional words were taught to the students by the way, the students' ability of memorizing words and their overall English level are improved to a certain extent. At the same time, because of the use of mathematical deduction in many places, the knowledge of students' higher mathematics is reviewed and their mathematics level is improved to a certain extent.

Of course, in the teaching reform of the general education course of International Finance and Trade, many problems have been encountered, and there are still many places worthy of further reform. Among them, the biggest difficulty is how to make students understand that strict demands on them are actually good for them; the most need for improvement is that bilingual teaching should be used to teach International Finance and Trade, because after all, it is a course for learning to deal with foreigners. However, in order to accomplish all this, the cooperation of the relevant departments of the university is requisite.

**Conclusion**

The course of International Finance and Trade, as a general education course in the university, has many contents but few hours. However, through the reform of teaching objectives, teaching content system, teaching means and evaluation system, the author has successfully completed the teaching task and achieved the expected goal.

**References**


