

Research on the Teaching Practice of “Western Economics” Under the Background of Vocational Undergraduate Education

Jianlan Deng¹, Songbin Wu^{1*}, Quan Zhu²

¹School of Economics, Shenzhen Polytechnic University, Shenzhen 518055, Guangdong, China

²School of Management, Shenzhen Polytechnic University, Shenzhen 518055, Guangdong, China

**Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.*

Copyright: © 2025 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: Vocational undergraduate education emphasizes the integration of “higher education nature” and “vocational nature”, which puts forward an urgent requirement for the teaching of “Western Economics” to transform from theoretical teaching to applied competence cultivation. However, there are still significant problems in current teaching practice: in terms of teaching philosophy, the conflict between theory orientation and competence-based education leads to goal deviation; in terms of teaching content, classic theories are disconnected from both vocational positions and Chinese reality, with outdated cases and separation of learning and application; in terms of teaching methods, one-way indoctrination is dominant and practical links are weak, making it difficult to cultivate students’ ability to solve practical economic problems. To this end, this study proposes systematic optimization strategies: reconstruct teaching objectives, focusing on economic thinking and application ability in vocational scenarios; reconstruct teaching content with modular, professional and localized design, closely connecting with industry needs and Chinese practice; innovate teaching processes and methods, fully implement project-based teaching and business simulation, and create an interactive classroom of “student-centered and task-driven”, so as to realize the fundamental transformation of the course from “theoretical teaching” to “application empowerment” and support the training goal of high-quality technical and skilled talents.

Keywords: Vocational undergraduate education; Western Economics; Teaching practice; Applied competence; Teaching reform

Online publication: December 31, 2025

1. Introduction

The core mission of vocational undergraduate education is to cultivate high-quality talents with both solid theoretical foundation and excellent technical application ability. This unique positioning poses new challenges

to the teaching practice of theoretical courses such as “Western Economics” and triggers a series of practical contradictions that need to be solved urgently. The course itself is highly theoretical and abstract. In traditional teaching, it focuses on model derivation and school debate. However, under the “application-oriented” goal of vocational undergraduate education, the use of this method highlights three core problems: first, the disconnection between theory and application. The existing teaching content is difficult to establish an effective connection with students’ future specific vocational positions (such as cost control and market analysis), leading students into the predicament of “learning in vain”. Second, the mismatch between teaching mode and ability goals. Third, the single teacher-centered teaching mode cannot effectively cultivate students’ ability to transform economic principles into solving practical business problems, which is contrary to the cultivation of core literacy such as “decision-making thinking” and “market research and judgment” emphasized by vocational undergraduate education. Therefore, the core question of this study is: under the specific framework of vocational undergraduate education, how to carry out teaching reconstruction and practical innovation of “Western Economics” to realize its fundamental transformation from “theoretical teaching” to “application empowerment”, thereby truly supporting the training goal of high-level technical and skilled talents?

2. Literature Review

The rise of vocational undergraduate education is a key link in constructing China’s modern vocational education system, aiming to cultivate applied talents with profound theoretical literacy and superb technical skills. In this specific background, as a core basic course for economics and management majors, the teaching practice of “Western Economics” faces unprecedented challenges and opportunities. This paper aims to sort out the current research status at home and abroad to clarify the direction and value of this study. Existing research can be roughly summarized into three levels: discussions on the connotation and characteristics of vocational undergraduate education, analysis of the teaching dilemmas of traditional “Western Economics”, and exploration of the teaching reform path of economics in vocational education.

2.1. Research on the Connotation and Characteristics of Vocational Undergraduate Education

Academic circles have conducted in-depth discussions on the nature of vocational undergraduate education, generally believing that it is neither a “simplified version” of ordinary undergraduate education nor an “extended version” of junior college vocational education, but an independent type of education. Domestic scholars generally emphasize that the fundamental characteristic of vocational undergraduate education lies in the integration of “higher education nature” and “vocational nature”^[1]. Its “higher education nature” is reflected in students’ learning and mastery of systematic knowledge such as technical principles and management theories, which is different from the focus on experiential technology and operational skills in secondary and higher vocational education; its “vocational nature” is reflected in the fact that talent training must face industrial needs, be competence-based, and emphasize technical application and innovative problem-solving abilities^[2]. This essential positioning defines the basic direction for the teaching reform of all courses, including “Western Economics”: the course must serve the formation of students’ comprehensive vocational abilities and realize the organic unity of theoretical teaching and practical application. Based on the above positioning, researchers point out that the curriculum teaching of vocational undergraduate education must transform from “knowledge

storage” to “knowledge application”^[3].

2.2. Research on the Teaching Dilemmas of Traditional “Western Economics”

A large number of literatures focus on the common problems in the teaching practice of “Western Economics”, which are particularly prominent under the background of vocational undergraduate education. First, the disconnection between theory and practice in teaching content. Scholars point out that most current textbooks and teaching follow the system of ordinary undergraduate education, focusing on mathematical model derivation, graphical analysis and academic school debates. Cases often select macro and classic European and American cases, which are far from China’s microeconomic operation, especially the actual situation of industries and enterprises corresponding to students’ majors^[4]. This “empty-to-empty” teaching makes it impossible for students to connect abstract economic concepts (such as marginal cost and market structure) with specific tasks in future positions (such as pricing decisions and competitive analysis), thus generating the cognition of “learning in vain”^[5-6]. Second, the singleness and inefficiency of teaching methods^[7]. The indoctrinative teaching of “teacher speaking and students listening” is likely to make students fall into a passive acceptance dilemma for economics, which requires a lot of logical thinking, and it is difficult to stimulate learning interest and critical thinking.

2.3. Research on the Teaching Reform Path of Traditional “Western Economics” Teaching Dilemmas

In response to the above dilemmas, researchers at home and abroad have put forward reform ideas and strategies from different perspectives, providing rich references for this study. First, the reconstruction of teaching content: from “disciplinary system” to “action system”. This is the core of the reform. Researchers generally advocate the “localization” and “application-oriented” transformation of teaching content. Second, the localization and specialization of cases to strengthen the scientific system of Chinese economics: scholars^[8] emphasize the introduction of current Chinese economic hot topics, local industrial cases and enterprise examples closely related to students’ majors. Third, the “dimension reduction” and “transformation” of theoretical knowledge: scholars^[9] propose that it is not to lower theoretical standards, but to transform profound theories into “practical knowledge” that students can understand and apply. Third, the improvement of teaching methods. In response to the problems in the teaching of Western Economics, relevant teaching methods have emerged, such as BOPPPS method^[10], transfer learning method^[11], heuristic teaching method^[12], etc.

3. Problems in the Teaching Practice of “Western Economics” Under the Background of Vocational Undergraduate Education

As a key link in China’s modern vocational education system, vocational undergraduate education aims to cultivate compound talents with solid theoretical foundation and superb technical skills. The existing problems are not single and isolated, but systematic dilemmas throughout teaching philosophy, teaching content, teaching methods, assessment and evaluation, and teaching staff.

3.1. Misalignment of Teaching Philosophy: Fundamental Conflict Between Theory Orientation and Competence-Based Education

This is the root cause of all problems. The core philosophy of vocational undergraduate education is

“competence-based” and “application-oriented”, but the teaching practice of “Western Economics” still largely follows the “discipline-oriented” logic of ordinary undergraduate education ^[13]. Goal deviation: emphasizing knowledge transmission while neglecting ability empowerment. Many teaching implementers subconsciously set the course goal as enabling students to systematically master the theoretical system, model derivation and school viewpoints of Western Economics, pursuing theoretical systematicness and logical rigor. Ambiguous positioning: wavering between “academic nature” and “vocational nature”. The positioning of the “Western Economics” course in vocational undergraduate education often falls into a dilemma: if too much emphasis is placed on theoretical depth, students will find it difficult to digest and it will be disconnected from practice; if the theory is overly simplified, it may lose the rigor of a discipline and be criticized as “junior college-level”.

3.2. Disconnection of Teaching Content: Double Isolation Between Classic Theories and Vocational Scenarios

Teaching content is a direct carrier of philosophy, and the current curriculum content has a significant phenomenon of “double isolation” ^[14]. Isolation from vocational positions: lack of professional pertinence and application interfaces. The current teaching content is generally universal and standardized, with very low correlation with the vocational scenarios of specific majors such as accounting, marketing, logistics and e-commerce. Students cannot see the application value of abstract theories in their future positions, and naturally feel that “learning is useless”, resulting in a serious lack of learning motivation. Isolation from Chinese reality: outdated cases and detachment from local context ^[15].

3.3. Singleness of Teaching Methods: Serious Imbalance Between One-Way Indoctrination and Practical Participation

Teaching methods are the means to achieve teaching goals, but the current method system is difficult to support the requirements of competence cultivation ^[16-17]. Teacher-centered lecture method dominates. The mainstream classroom mode is still one-way knowledge transmission where teachers speak and students listen. For economic theories full of complex graphics and mathematical derivations, this “cramming” method is likely to make students fall into a dilemma of passive reception and mechanical memory. Critical thinking, independent inquiry ability and team collaboration ability are not exercised in these processes. Practical teaching links are weak and formalized.

4. Optimization Strategies for the Teaching Practice of “Western Economics” Under the Background of Vocational Undergraduate Education

Based on a profound understanding of the connotation of vocational undergraduate education and an analysis of the existing teaching dilemmas of “Western Economics”, its teaching reform must undergo a systematic and fundamental reconstruction. The specific optimization strategies are as follows:

4.1. Reconstruction of Teaching Objectives: From “Knowledge Mastery” to “Thinking and Ability Empowerment”

The positioning of teaching objectives is the starting point and destination of teaching reform. Under the background of vocational undergraduate education, the teaching objectives of “Western Economics” should achieve three transformations: Value objective: cultivating “economic thinking” rather than “economic

knowledge”. The primary goal is to enable students to think like economists and understand how core concepts such as scarcity, choice, cost and incentive operate in the real business world. This means that the focus of teaching should shift from memorizing complex models and conclusions to understanding the logic behind the models and their applicable boundaries. Literacy objective: shaping “rational business decision-makers”. Through the study of economics, students are cultivated to develop the habit of making rational decisions based on data and logic, enhance their sensitivity and insight into market environment and policy changes, and form professional literacy that respects market laws and dares to innovate, laying a foundation for their future growth into high-quality technical and skilled talents or grass-roots managers.

4.2. Reconstruction of Teaching Content: Building a “Modular, Professional and Localized” Content System

To achieve the above ability objectives, it is necessary to carry out drastic “application-oriented” transformation of teaching content. Modular integration: breaking disciplinary barriers and connecting with work processes. Abandon the chapter structure that narrates according to the micro and macro theoretical systems, and build teaching modules oriented to core economic problems. Within each module, the presentation of theoretical knowledge directly serves to solve the core problems of the module. Professional grafting: realizing “precision drip irrigation” with professional courses. This is the key to the success of the reform. Teaching content must be deeply integrated with students’ professional backgrounds. For marketing majors: in-depth deconstruction of “demand theory”, “consumer behavior theory” and “market failure”, combined with vivid cases such as platform economy, network effects, big data price discrimination and influencer economy for teaching.

4.3. Innovation of Teaching Processes and Methods: Creating an Interactive Classroom of “Student-Centered and Task-Driven”

The reform of teaching methods is the guarantee for the effective transmission of the new content system. Fully implement project-based learning (PBL): take comprehensive projects as the main line throughout teaching. For example, design a penetrating project of “establishing and operating a micro-enterprise”. Students form teams and complete tasks such as market research (demand analysis), cost estimation (cost theory), pricing strategy (market structure), competitive analysis (game theory) and macroeconomic environment assessment in different stages of the course. In this process, the learning of theoretical knowledge becomes a “just need” to complete project tasks, thus realizing “learning by doing”. Deep integration of situational simulation and case discussion: Business simulation: use online business simulation software such as ERP to allow students to make multiple rounds of decisions in a highly simulated market environment, intuitively feel how their own decisions (such as price, output and advertising) affect enterprise profits and market position, and deeply understand abstract economic laws.

Fund Projects

2023 Characteristic Innovation Research Project of General Colleges and Universities in Guangdong Province — “Research on the Mechanism, Effect and Countermeasures of the Industrial Chain Leader System” (Project No.: 2023WTSCX248)

2023 “14th Five-Year Plan” Project of Shenzhen Educational Science — “Research on the Effect Evaluation and Improvement Strategy of the Construction of Vocational Undergraduate Industry Colleges” (Project No.:

yb23032)

Research on Uncertainty Risk Perception and Innovation Behavior of Heterogeneous Top Management Teams: Influence Mechanism and Governance Mechanism (Project No.: 23YJCZH032)

Research on the Influence Mechanism of Enterprises' Uncertainty Risk Perception on Innovation Decision-Making Behavior — Based on Text Analysis of Listed Companies' Annual Reports (Project No.: GD23XLJ05)

Research on the Coordination Mechanism and Optimization Path of Higher Vocational Education Empowering the Development of Regional New Quality Productive Forces in Guangdong Province (Project No.: 2024GXJK771)

Theoretical Mechanism and Empirical Research on R&D Tax Incentives Optimizing Export Structure (Project No.: GD24YLJ01)

Research on the Teaching Practice of “Western Economics” Under the Background of Vocational Undergraduate Education (Project No.: 2023JG430)

Research on the Teaching Practice of “Western Economics” Under the Background of Vocational Undergraduate Education (Project No.: 7022310141)

Research on the Macroeconomic Effects of Financial Opening in Hainan Free Trade Port: Based on a Multi-Country DSGE Model (Project No.: 722MS066)

School-Level Social Science Supporting Project of Shenzhen Polytechnic University (Project No.: 6025310026S)

Author Profiles

Deng Jianlan (1988-), female, associate professor, Doctor of Economics, Shenzhen Polytechnic University.

Wu Songbin (1990-), corresponding author, male, lecturer, Doctor of Economics, Shenzhen Polytechnic University.

Zhu Quan (1987-), male, associate researcher, Doctor of Economics, Shenzhen Polytechnic University.

References

- [1] Wang D, Liu Y J, Wang J J, 2025, Discipline Construction of Vocational Undergraduate Education: Connotation, Practical Dilemmas and Optimization Paths. *Vocational and Technical Education*, 46(31): 21-27.
- [2] Zhang W M, Jiang Y, Wang J X, 2025, Institutional Dilemmas and Their Resolution in Independent Vocational Undergraduate Major Construction by Higher Vocational Colleges. *Vocational and Technical Education*, 1-7.
- [3] Zhou A J, 2025, Research on the Type Orientation, Development Path and Guarantee Mechanism of Vocational Undergraduate Education. *Modern Vocational Education*, (31): 173-176.
- [4] Wang H H, 2025, A Discussion on Methodology Teaching in Theoretical Economics Courses. *Scientific Consult*, (09): 151-154.
- [5] Ye Q L, Wang C, Li J Q, 2024, Exploration and Practice of “PAD Class” Teaching in the Construction of “Golden Courses” for Economics and Management Majors — Taking the Course of Western Economics as an Example. *Financial Theory and Teaching*, 42(06): 87-93.
- [6] Peng L Y, 2025, Research on the Reform Practice of Intelligent Teaching of Western Economics. *Time-Honored Brand Marketing*, (01): 205-207.

- [7] Deng Q, 2020, Analysis on the Teaching Reform of Western Economics in Applied Undergraduate Universities. *Rural Economy and Science-Technology*, 31(04): 370-371.
- [8] Xiong J W, Jia H, Gao H Y, 2025, Using the Mirror of Western Economics to Cast the Foundation of Chinese Economics. *Financial View*, (06): 64-65.
- [9] Wu S B, Yang R M, 2022, Thoughts on the Teaching of Western Economics in Higher Vocational Colleges — Taking the Explanation of Asymmetric Information Theory as an Example. *Journal of Taiyuan Urban Vocational College*, (05): 59-61.
- [10] Li Y Q, Liu X H, 2024, Research on the Teaching Model of Western Economics Based on BOPPPS. *Science & Technology Economy Market*, (12): 149-151.
- [11] Zheng Y F, 2022, The Application of Transfer Learning Method in the Teaching of “Western Economics”. *Journal of Suzhou College of Education*, 25(04): 50-55.
- [12] Cao Y, 2020, Discussion on the Reform of Teaching Methods for the Course “Western Economics”. *Encyclopedia Knowledge*, (30): 44-45.
- [13] Zhang S J, 2024, Research on the Teaching Reform of “Economic Foundation” in Vocational Undergraduate Education in the Digital Economy Era. *Journal of Xiangyang Polytechnic*, 23(02): 74-77+117.
- [14] Yan S Y, 2023, Curriculum Reform of “Western Economics” in Vocational Undergraduate Education Integrating Innovation Ability Cultivation. *Journal of Xingtai Polytechnic College*, 40(02): 10-13.
- [15] Wu S B, Yang R M, 2022, On the Application of the Combination of Number and Shape. *Method in Economics Classroom. Foreign Economic Relations & Trade*, (03): 148-152.
- [16] Zhang X M, 2023, Theoretical Basis, Development Path and Quality Standards of Vocational Undergraduate Major Construction from the Perspective of Enterprise Knowledge Creation. *Education and Vocation*, (14): 11-18.
- [17] Zhang W, 2023, The Realization Path of Curriculum Ideological and Political Education in Economics Courses of Vocational Undergraduate Education Under the View of New Development Pattern. *University Education*, (09): 96-99.

Publisher's note

Bio-Byword Scientific Publishing remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.