

Exploration and Practice of Blended Teaching Reform in Macroeconomics and Microeconomics Courses for International Undergraduate Programs under the New Business

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Abstract

This article explores teaching reform in Macroeconomics and Microeconomics courses within the context of the new business discipline, emphasizing the need for blended teaching methods in international undergraduate education. Traditional teaching approaches are evolving to meet the demands of the digital economy, incorporating both online and offline learning strategies. The study examines how blended teaching enhances student engagement and learning outcomes, aligns with international education standards, and integrates modern business practices. Key aspects include the shift towards a student-centered approach, the use of innovative assessment methods, and the incorporation of real-world business scenarios.

Keywords

New Business; Macroeconomics and Microeconomics Courses; Teaching Reform; Blended Teaching; International Undergraduate Education.

1. Introduction

The "New Business" incorporates elements such as connectivity, AI, big data, and the sharing economy into the traditional business curriculum, blending new concepts, ideas, technologies, and models that define the digital economy and innovation-driven era. This approach merges interdisciplinary knowledge and resources to create a modern business education system that reflects current trends. New business education should be based on emerging business models, with courses designed to mirror real-world business activities. The rapid advancement of technologies like the Internet, cloud computing, big data, and artificial intelligence is increasingly reshaping social and economic development models, along with business practices. This digital revolution, which is driving economic transformation, has deeply influenced economic growth, industrial upgrades, and the reform of higher education. Consequently, universities should enhance the integration of multiple disciplines, powered by big data and AI, with a focus on practical application. The aim is to develop interdisciplinary business professionals who are equipped to meet the challenges of the digital economy and technological transformation.

Reforming macroeconomics and microeconomics courses under the New Business involves integrating contemporary trends, technologies, and interdisciplinary approaches into traditional economic theories, implementing blended learning techniques where students access lectures online and engage in interactive discussions, case studies, and simulations in the classroom, including more real-world projects, internships, and collaborations with businesses to give students practical experience in applying economic theories, and encouraging the use of economic modeling software and simulations to solve complex economic problems.

2. Challenges Faced by Macroeconomics and Microeconomics Courses under the New Business

2.1. Teaching Concepts Are Outdated, Course Objectives Lack Clarity, and the Curriculum Falls Short of Meeting the Standards for International Undergraduate Education Nowadays

In the context of International Undergraduate education, macroeconomics and microeconomics courses face significant challenges related to outdated teaching concepts, unclear course objectives, and a curriculum that does not align with contemporary standards. These issues impact the effectiveness of economic education and its relevance to current global and technological trends.

Traditional teaching methods in macroeconomics and microeconomics often rely heavily on classical theories and static models that do not adequately address the dynamic and rapidly evolving nature of today's economic landscape. The reliance on outdated concepts fails to incorporate recent advancements in technology and changes in global economic conditions, such as the rise of digital economies and the increasing influence of big data and artificial intelligence. Consequently, students may not develop the skills needed to analyze and interpret contemporary economic issues effectively.

For instance, the curriculum might not include essential topics such as the impact of digital technologies on economic systems, global market dynamics, and sustainable business practices. As a result, students may graduate without the comprehensive knowledge and skills necessary to navigate and succeed in today's complex economic environment.

2.2. The Teaching Content is Repetitive, Lacks Integration with Other Courses, and Fails to Address the Needs of Training New Business Professionals

In macroeconomics and microeconomics courses, several critical issues undermine their effectiveness in preparing students for modern business environments. One major problem is the repetitive nature of the teaching content. Traditional approaches often rely on established theories and models that have not evolved significantly over time. This repetition limits students' exposure to diverse economic perspectives and innovative practices that are essential in today's dynamic economic landscape. As a result, students may graduate with a narrow understanding of economic principles, lacking the breadth of knowledge needed to navigate complex and rapidly changing business environments.

Another significant issue is the lack of interdisciplinary integration in these courses. Economic theories are frequently taught in isolation, without connecting them to other relevant fields such as technology, data science, or environmental studies. In the contemporary business world, where economic decisions are increasingly influenced by technological advancements, sustainability concerns, and global market dynamics, a more integrated approach is necessary. Interdisciplinary learning can provide students with a more holistic understanding of how various factors interact and affect economic outcomes. For example, combining economic theory with insights from data science can help students analyze big data and understand its implications for economic modeling and decision-making.

Moreover, the existing curriculum often fails to meet the evolving needs of new business professionals. Traditional macroeconomics and microeconomics courses may not address contemporary issues such as digital transformation, global economic integration, and the growing importance of sustainability. The lack of focus on these areas means that students might not acquire the skills and knowledge required to thrive in modern business environments. For instance, understanding the impact of digital platforms on market competition or the role of artificial intelligence in economic forecasting is crucial for today's

business professionals. The current curriculum often falls short in preparing students for these realities, leaving a gap between academic training and practical application.

2.3. Teaching Methods are Inflexible, Emphasizing Instruction Over Student Learning and Offering Minimal Practical Experience, Which Does Not Effectively Engage Or Motivate Students

In macroeconomics and microeconomics courses, teaching methods often face criticism for their rigidity and lack of engagement. Traditional approaches to teaching these subjects typically emphasize direct instruction and theoretical content, focusing heavily on delivering information rather than fostering active student learning. This conventional method, characterized by lectures and rote memorization, does not effectively promote deeper understanding or critical thinking. As a result, students may find the material less engaging and relevant to real-world applications.

The focus on instruction over learning can also contribute to a disengaged classroom environment. When teaching methods are primarily lecture-based and do not actively involve students in the learning process, students may become passive recipients of information rather than active participants. This passive learning approach can result in diminished student motivation and interest. Students may struggle to see the practical value of the material, which can negatively impact their enthusiasm and commitment to the subject matter.

3. Blended Teaching Reform Practice in Macroeconomics and Microeconomics Courses

3.1. Clearly Define Talent Cultivation Objectives and Establish a Clear Course Positioning

To enhance the effectiveness of macroeconomics and microeconomics courses, it is essential to clearly define talent cultivation objectives and establish a precise course positioning. These steps are crucial for aligning the curriculum with the evolving needs of students and the demands of the modern business environment.

Clearly defining the objectives for talent development involves outlining specific skills and competencies that students should acquire by the end of the course. This includes not only a solid understanding of economic theories but also practical skills relevant to contemporary business practices. For example, objectives might include the ability to analyze complex economic data, apply economic theories to real-world scenarios, and make informed decisions based on economic analysis. By establishing these clear objectives, educators can ensure that the course content is designed to meet these goals, providing students with the knowledge and skills necessary for success in their careers.

Course positioning involves determining the unique focus and scope of the course within the broader educational context. This includes defining how the course fits within the overall curriculum and how it addresses the specific needs of students. Clear positioning helps in differentiating the course from others by emphasizing its relevance to current economic trends and industry requirements. For example, a course might be positioned as focusing on the intersection of digital economics and traditional economic theories, highlighting its relevance to students interested in technology-driven business environments. By establishing a clear positioning, the course can better meet the specific interests and career goals of students.

To effectively prepare students for the contemporary business world, both the objectives and positioning of the course should align with current industry trends and demands. This involves integrating modern economic issues such as digital transformation, global market dynamics, and sustainability into the curriculum. By doing so, the course can provide students with a

comprehensive understanding of how these factors influence economic decision-making and business strategies.

Once the objectives and positioning are defined, they should be integrated into the course design, including the selection of teaching materials, assessment methods, and practical experiences. Regular evaluation and feedback from students and industry professionals can help ensure that the course remains relevant and effective in meeting its objectives. Adjustments based on this feedback can further refine the course to better align with the evolving needs of students and the business environment.

Under the new business discipline context, the teaching objectives of macroeconomics and microeconomics courses need to be adjusted to meet the demands of the modern economic environment. Here are three key teaching objectives.

The first teaching objective is cultivating data analysis and application skills. In the new business context, data analysis has become a crucial component of economics. Macroeconomics and microeconomics courses should focus on developing students' ability to use data analysis tools. Students need to learn how to collect, process, and interpret economic data, and apply statistical and economic models for forecasting and decision-making. The curriculum should include an introduction to big data and artificial intelligence technologies, enabling students to use these tools to solve real-world economic problems and extract valuable insights from data.

The second teaching objective is enhancing interdisciplinary knowledge integration. Modern economic issues often involve the intersection of multiple disciplines. The courses should aim to integrate economic theories with knowledge from related fields such as management, finance, technology, and sustainability. By incorporating interdisciplinary case studies and problems, students can better understand the complexity of economic phenomena and their applications across various fields. For example, the curriculum could explore the impact of the digital economy on traditional markets or analyze the role of technological innovation in driving economic growth.

The third teaching objective is improving global perspective and internationalization skills. The globalized economy requires students to have a broad international perspective. Courses should set objectives to help students understand global market dynamics and their effects on national economies. By analyzing international economic policies, multinational corporate behavior, and global trade trends, students can gain a better grasp of changes in the global economic environment. Additionally, the curriculum should encourage students to participate in international exchange programs and case studies, enhancing their analytical and decision-making skills in an international economic context.

3.2. Revise and Enhance the Knowledge Framework in Alignment with the Teaching Objectives

3.2.1. Cultivate Data Analysis and Application Skills

The knowledge framework should be revised to include contemporary data analysis tools and methodologies. This involves introducing students to statistical software such as R, Python, or Excel for data manipulation and analysis. The curriculum should cover data collection techniques, data cleaning, and data visualization, allowing students to work with real datasets. Incorporating modules on big data and artificial intelligence (AI) can help students understand how these technologies influence economic analysis and decision-making. Practical training on these tools will enable students to apply theoretical concepts to real-world economic problems. The curriculum needs to be updated to include current trends and issues in data analysis relevant to economics. This involves integrating topics such as econometrics, machine learning applications in economics, and the use of data in policy analysis. For macroeconomics, this might include analyzing economic indicators, forecasting models, and understanding the

impact of digital data on economic performance. For microeconomics, the focus could be on consumer behavior analysis, market research techniques, and pricing strategies using data. By including contemporary topics, students will gain insights into how data is used to address current economic challenges.

Enhancing the knowledge framework involves providing students with opportunities for hands-on experience. This can be achieved through case studies, data-driven projects, and internships. For instance, students could work on projects that involve analyzing economic data from real-world sources, such as government databases or industry reports. Collaborative projects with businesses or research institutions can offer practical exposure and help students apply their skills in a professional context. Additionally, simulations and interactive tools can be used to mimic real-world economic scenarios, allowing students to practice data analysis and decision-making.

To further enhance data analysis skills, integrating interdisciplinary approaches is beneficial. Collaborating with departments such as computer science, statistics, and business can provide students with a broader perspective on data analysis techniques. Joint courses or workshops that combine economic theory with data science principles can deepen students' understanding and application of data in economic contexts.

3.2.2. Enhancing Interdisciplinary Knowledge Integration

The curriculum should be updated to include content from related disciplines such as management, finance, technology, and sustainability. For macroeconomics, this could mean integrating topics like global financial systems, technological impacts on economic policies, and sustainable development goals. In microeconomics, the focus might include consumer behavior analysis through psychological insights, market strategies influenced by business management principles, and the role of technology in shaping market structures. By blending these areas, students gain a comprehensive view of how various factors influence economic outcomes.

Develop specialized modules or courses that specifically address the intersection of economics with other fields. For example, a module on "Economic Impacts of Technology" could explore how innovations in AI and big data influence economic theory and practice. Another module could focus on "Sustainable Economics," examining how economic policies can be aligned with environmental and social sustainability. These cross-disciplinary modules help students understand how economic principles apply in various contexts and how different disciplines can inform economic analysis.

Implement case studies and real-world projects that require students to apply economic theories in conjunction with other disciplines. For instance, a project might involve analyzing the economic impact of a new technology on various industries or assessing the effects of sustainable business practices on market performance. Such projects encourage students to draw on knowledge from economics, technology, and business management, fostering a holistic understanding of complex economic issues.

Promote collaboration between economics students and those from other disciplines through joint projects, workshops, and seminars. For example, partnerships with computer science or environmental science departments can lead to interdisciplinary projects that address real-world problems from multiple perspectives. Collaborative learning helps students appreciate different approaches and methodologies, enhancing their ability to tackle multifaceted economic issues.

Revise assessment methods to evaluate students' ability to integrate knowledge from various disciplines. Assessments such as project reports, presentations, and research papers should require students to apply economic theories in conjunction with insights from other fields. This approach ensures that students not only grasp economic concepts but also understand their applications in broader contexts.

3.2.3. Improve Global Perspective and Internationalization Skills

Update the curriculum to include comprehensive content on global economic issues. For macroeconomics, this means covering topics such as international trade, global financial systems, and global economic policies. Students should study the effects of globalization on national economies, explore international economic organizations like the IMF and World Bank, and analyze global economic trends. In microeconomics, include discussions on how global competition influences market structures, the impact of international regulations on businesses, and the role of multinational corporations. This integration ensures that students understand the broader economic environment beyond their local context.

Use international case studies to illustrate economic concepts and practices. Analyzing case studies of global businesses, international economic crises, and policy responses to global challenges can help students understand how economic theories apply in different contexts. For example, case studies could explore the economic impacts of Brexit, the effects of trade wars, or the role of emerging markets in global economic growth. These case studies provide practical insights into how economic issues are managed on a global scale.

Encourage students to engage in cross-cultural learning experiences. This can be achieved through international exchange programs, virtual collaborations with students from other countries, and global internships. Such experiences help students gain firsthand exposure to different economic environments and cultural perspectives. Additionally, inviting guest speakers from international institutions or multinational companies can provide valuable insights into global economic practices and trends.

Incorporate international data and research into the coursework. Teaching students how to analyze global economic data, such as international trade statistics, foreign investment flows, and global market trends, enhances their ability to understand and interpret economic phenomena from a global perspective. Use international databases and research publications to provide students with access to up-to-date global economic information.

Educate students about international economic policies and institutions. Include content on the roles of international organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Understanding these institutions and their policies helps students grasp how global economic governance and international agreements affect economic practices.

3.3. Revise Teaching Models and Methods to Transition from a Focus on Knowledge Acquisition to a Focus on Developing Practical Skills

In the context of macroeconomics and microeconomics courses, traditional teaching models that emphasize mere knowledge transfer, teacher authority, and fixed classroom settings are increasingly inadequate. Modern educational reforms must embrace a student-centered approach that focuses on enhancing student learning outcomes and offers more robust instructor guidance. This shift is necessary because classrooms are no longer the sole source of economic knowledge.

To address these needs, it's crucial to incorporate high-quality online resources and adopt a blended learning model that combines both online and offline methods. In macroeconomics and microeconomics courses, this means integrating diverse learning materials such as interactive economic simulations, online databases, and economic forecasting tools. This approach should also include more frequent discussions, Q&A sessions, assignments, and quizzes, both within and outside of class. These enhancements will foster greater student engagement and transition the focus from simply acquiring knowledge to developing practical skills in economic analysis. Moreover, to better align with real-world economic practices, the curriculum should integrate case-based teaching methods that use real-world economic scenarios and data. Heuristic

teaching methods, which involve exploring economic theories through discovery and problem-solving, and project-based learning, where students tackle actual economic issues or projects, are particularly effective. Problem-based discussions that explore contemporary economic problems can also deepen students' understanding and analytical abilities.

Incorporating flipped classroom techniques, where students review lecture materials at home and engage in interactive, problem-solving activities during class, can further enhance learning outcomes. This method encourages active participation, fosters critical thinking, and helps students develop the ability to apply economic theories to practical situations.

Ultimately, these reforms aim to develop students' self-directed learning skills and their capability to analyze and solve complex economic issues. By shifting from a knowledge-based to a skills-based classroom, students in macroeconomics and microeconomics courses will be better prepared to meet real-world challenges and enhance their professional competencies.

3.4. Create a Varied Evaluation System and Build a Comprehensive Assessment Framework

Revise the traditional evaluation model that focuses solely on results to a system that integrates both "process and results," combining theoretical and practical aspects in assessments. Platforms like Zhihuishu, Rain Classroom, and Chaoxing Learning offer effective tools for online assessment and learning analytics, aiding in the development of a process-oriented and multifaceted evaluation system. By leveraging these technological tools for analyzing learning-through online attendance, exams, discussion forums, and resource distribution—students' participation and enthusiasm for online courses can be improved. This approach provides a well-rounded view of students' learning progress, knowledge acquisition, and depth of understanding.

Create an evaluation system that includes four key areas: attendance, online feedback, completion of post-class resources, and course grades, enabling a comprehensive, process-focused assessment that raises the level of challenge in course evaluations.

In addition to online assessments, introduce task-oriented, project-based assignments for offline evaluations to enhance student engagement and ensure effective learning outcomes. For example, assign projects where student teams research target companies online and develop planning documents based on theoretical concepts.

Adopt a flipped classroom model, where student teams lead presentations and stimulate class discussions, offering suggestions for the companies they present. Final assessments should include both written work and classroom performance, focusing on students' communication, teamwork, and practical skills development.

In the context of the new business, data collection on students' learning cognition will become more accurate and effective, making the evaluation of course outcomes more scientific and systematic. The big data analysis system of Chaoxing PanYa can provide data on students' online learning periods and durations, frequency of study, test scores, and answer accuracy. Teachers can monitor students' learning dynamics and results in real-time, allowing for flexible adjustments and management of course instruction. This enables a comprehensive assessment of students' performance, including homework, classroom interaction, attendance, chapter quizzes, task completion, study frequency, and discussions. This approach assesses not only students' learning attitudes but also their learning abilities and overall competencies.

Based on this, a multifaceted evaluation system should be established, combining diagnostic and formative evaluations. The system should incorporate multiple objectives such as knowledge, skills, values, and personal development, employ various methods such as quantitative and qualitative methods, formative and outcome-based methods, and involve

multiple parties such as self-assessment by students, peer evaluations, and teacher assessments.

4. Conclusion

1) In conclusion, the integration of new business concepts into Macroeconomics and Microeconomics courses underscores a significant shift in teaching methodologies aimed at enhancing international undergraduate education. Traditional pedagogical approaches, which predominantly focused on knowledge delivery and teacher-centric models, are increasingly being replaced by innovative blended teaching methods. This reform is driven by the need to better align with the evolving demands of the digital economy and the diverse learning needs of students.

2) Blended teaching offers a dynamic and flexible framework that supports the integration of practical business applications with theoretical economic concepts. This approach not only improves student engagement but also enhances their ability to apply economic theories to real-world scenarios. By leveraging digital platforms and online resources, educators can provide a more interactive and responsive learning environment, facilitating a deeper understanding of complex macroeconomic and microeconomic principles.

3) Furthermore, the shift towards a student-centered approach, supported by blended teaching methods, addresses the limitations of traditional evaluation models. By incorporating diverse assessment strategies and emphasizing process-oriented evaluations, educators can more effectively measure and support student learning outcomes. This aligns with the global standards for international undergraduate education, ensuring that students are well-prepared to navigate and contribute to the modern business landscape.

4) Ultimately, the reform of teaching methods in Macroeconomics and Microeconomics courses is essential for cultivating a new generation of business professionals who are adept at using digital tools, analyzing data, and applying economic concepts in a global context. As the field continues to evolve, ongoing adjustments and enhancements in teaching practices will be crucial for maintaining educational relevance and effectiveness in a rapidly changing world.

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