

Exploration and Practice of the Interdisciplinary Graduate Joint Training Model: A Case Study of the Educational Economics Course

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Abstract: The Educational Economics course needs to balance the curriculum objectives of both education and economics, with the aim of cultivating interdisciplinary competencies in contemporary graduate students and providing society with more highly qualified talents. As society continues to evolve and educational demands shift, the integration of education and economics has become increasingly vital. Against this backdrop, cultivating talent with a broad interdisciplinary perspective and comprehensive capabilities has become one of the key goals of higher education. Therefore, how to organically integrate education and economics and design a curriculum system that meets the demands of modern education has become an urgent issue for researchers and educators in the field of education. Using the Educational Economics course as a case study, this paper explores the current status of the interdisciplinary graduate joint training model. With the gradual development of educational economics, many universities have incorporated it as a core component of graduate-level courses. However, during the actual teaching process, several challenges persist. Thus, breaking through disciplinary boundaries and promoting the integration of interdisciplinary teaching has become a critical factor in the development of the Educational Economics course. Building upon this, this study attempts to explore new teaching strategies and implement them in classroom instruction. These innovative strategies not only enhance students' interdisciplinary capabilities but also stimulate their problem-solving thinking in real-world educational economic issues. This has significant implications for the development of the teaching model for the

Educational Economics course. Through the implementation of these innovative strategies, it can not only improve the quality of teaching, but also provide reference for the design and implementation of other interdisciplinary courses.

Keywords: Graduate Education; Educational Economics; Teaching Model; Disciplinary Integration; Innovation in Assessment Systems

1. Introduction

The cultivation of graduate students, as the highest level of higher education, serves as an important bridge and link that closely connects the fundamental functions of higher education, such as talent development, scientific innovation, and social service. Under the context of "university-enterprise cooperation", the exploration of graduate training models has become a focal point of growing societal attention. Adopting a training model in collaboration with enterprises specifically tailors talent development to meet the needs of industry, thereby maximizing the practicality and social value of the talent produced. As educational quality becomes a core requirement for the connotative development of universities in China, collaborative innovation has emerged as a critical strategic initiative within the Chinese higher education system. Interdisciplinary development has become both a trend and a necessity of the times. The joint training mechanism is destined to become the essential pathway for optimizing the allocation of resources among production, academia, and research sectors. Consequently, the interconnections among various models are increasingly garnering attention from all sectors of society [1-3].

2. Overview of the Course in *Educational Economics*

Following the teaching objectives of the Educational Economics course in universities, the graduate-level Educational Economics course similarly aims to impart foundational knowledge of educational economics, enhance the way students approach educational economic issues, foster the development of educational economic thought, and cultivate an awareness of educational economics. The course also seeks to improve students' abilities in this field and standardize their educational economic behavior. As for the Educational Economics course itself, it has become a core (or foundational) course or an elective in the talent development programs of many universities, particularly those offering education-related majors in normal universities, such as Ideological and Political Education, and Public Affairs Management. For instance, Nantong University has established a "Premium Educational Economics Course Website". Furthermore, in graduate programs, Educational Economics is widely offered as part of the curriculum in education-related disciplines [4, 5]. Universities with a focus on Educational Economics as a secondary discipline or research direction are in the process of constructing distinctive course systems that reflect their unique educational approach in this field.

3. Current Status of the Interdisciplinary Graduate Joint Training Teaching Model

The traditional model of graduate education has effectively met the requirement for students to master the depth of their respective fields. However, with the continuous development of society, expertise in a single discipline is no longer sufficient to address the complex challenges encountered in today's economic and social progress. The current graduate training model reveals significant issues such as pronounced professional independence, low interdisciplinary integration, and limited course coverage.

3.1 Pronounced Professional Independence

At present, the majority of graduate education institutions in China adopt a combination of collective teaching by faculty and mentorship systems, integrating coursework and research training, as well as teaching and exploratory

methods. However, the implementation of these strategies is often not robust [6]. In certain institutions, there is an overemphasis on mentorship while underemphasizing collective teaching. According to research, 83.6% of master's students follow a single-mentor system, 9.6% have dual mentors (one primary and one secondary), and only 6.2% are guided by a supervisory team. These statistics suggest that most graduate students are subjected to the "single-mentor" approach. In China's graduate education system, the predominant teaching style remains lecture-based rather than exploration-driven, leading to a deficiency in academic depth and critical thinking among students.

3.2 Low Interdisciplinary Integration

The primary objective of interdisciplinary integration is to apply knowledge and teaching methods from diverse fields, fostering collaboration and synergy between disciplines, thereby offering a more comprehensive approach to understanding and mastering a given field. However, in some so-called "interdisciplinary" classes, the integration manifests as a mere random assemblage, superficial juxtaposition, and forced combination of different subject areas. This approach often reflects an attempt to "cross" disciplines without a coherent, thoughtful integration [7]. In today's world, significant breakthroughs and innovations are often the result of cross-disciplinary collaboration and convergence. As centers of knowledge innovation, universities are at the forefront of fostering interdisciplinary interactions, which are critical for the growth of emerging disciplines, the development of competitive academic clusters, and the realization of major innovations. Unfortunately, there are several challenges in the interdisciplinary integration of graduate education, such as weak cross-disciplinary awareness among researchers, rigid disciplinary boundaries, and the absence of effective institutional mechanisms to support interdisciplinary research. For instance, within the field of educational economics and management, which is a sub-discipline of public administration, there is limited interaction with other related disciplines like administrative management, social security, and land resource management, leading to relatively low levels of output and innovation.

3.3 Limited Course Coverage

The term “course coverage” refers to the range of subjects taught to graduate students in their respective programs. Compared to undergraduate education, the number of courses required at the graduate level is significantly reduced, resulting in a limited scope of academic exposure for students. For example, should graduate students in a secondary discipline be required to take courses from the primary discipline? And for those in interdisciplinary fields, should they engage in cross-disciplinary studies to enhance their ability to submit innovative research proposals? These are critical considerations in the exploration of a joint training and interdisciplinary integration model for graduate students. Upon review, several factors contribute to the limited course coverage in graduate education. First, some programs have relatively low credit requirements, leading many students to adopt a minimal approach to fulfilling graduation requirements. Second, due to comprehensive assessments and graduation demands, students tend to focus solely on their specific discipline when applying for research projects or writing theses, limiting their ability to think innovatively and pursue interdisciplinary collaborations. Third, limited faculty resources also contribute to the problem. Professional teachers, who often have to balance teaching, research, and the supervision of graduate students, face time and energy constraints, which in turn affects the breadth of courses offered and the quality of interdisciplinary teaching [8-10].

4. Exploration and Practice of the Teaching Model for the Course *Educational Economics*

Based on the current situation, this study combines the research findings and practical implementation of the Educational Economics course to explore the interdisciplinary graduate joint training model in three aspects: constructing a matrix organizational structure training model, cultivating versatile research teams for project groups, and innovating the graduate management and assessment system.

4.1 Constructing a Matrix Organizational Structure Training Model

A matrix organizational structure refers to a

management form within an institution where a specialized task prompts the establishment of a project team, which works in coordination with the existing organization. This structure is characterized by intersecting rows and columns, representing a cross-functional approach in management. Introducing this model into graduate education aims to establish a mechanism for integrating different fields of study within academic research. It facilitates the targeted development of students from various disciplines, thereby breaking the relative independence of each discipline. For example, in the process of applying for research projects, students from different fields can be invited to participate, particularly fostering connections between disciplines such as education and economics. By integrating their expertise into the project, the professional value of each field can be maximized. The matrix organizational structure model draws on valuable experiences from the field of economics and applies them to educational studies. Research has shown that such a structure is widely utilized in corporate projects, where project team leaders and department managers share overlapping responsibilities, and team members function in both departmental and project roles simultaneously, merging and complementing both positions.

4.2 Cultivating Versatile Research Team Project Groups

Currently, graduate students' project applications are still largely confined to the research topics of their respective mentors, with a core focus on their supervisor's research agenda. However, applying for research projects involves various elements such as the research background, the current state of research both in China and internationally, research methods, and research pathways, among others. Sometimes, it is not feasible for a single mentor's team to handle all aspects effectively, leading to a lower overall success rate in applying for high-level research projects. Therefore, cultivating versatile research teams ensures a smooth process for conducting research and writing project proposals. The Educational Economics course provides a practical platform for interdisciplinary graduate training by bringing together students from both economics and

education fields into new project groups. This expansion allows for a broader range of research project applications. Furthermore, a versatile research team allows each member to focus on their strengths, accelerating the progress of research and increasing the output of academic results. Education students primarily focus on coursework, while economics students typically dedicate most of their time and energy in the first two years to specialized exams, making it difficult for them to form teams and apply for projects.

4.3 Innovating Graduate Management and Assessment Systems

While schools have made efforts in establishing interdisciplinary joint training mechanisms, they should also reform and innovate their management and assessment systems for graduate students. Schools should introduce a mid-term evaluation system for graduate students, issuing warnings or delays for those who fail to meet the required standards, without tolerating a passive or indifferent attitude towards research. Additionally, the management of academic scholarships should be improved. A blanket scholarship system has certain drawbacks, as it fails to motivate students to engage more deeply in research or social practice activities. Instead, the assessment criteria should take a comprehensive approach, considering factors such as academic performance, research outcomes, participation in academic competitions, attendance at academic conferences, involvement in social practice, and volunteer services. This multi-faceted evaluation system can effectively stimulate students' enthusiasm during their academic journey and enhance their overall capabilities. The introduction of the Educational Economics course enables education students to explore broader perspectives, and the assessment system should be innovatively reformed to account for both education and economics graduate students. The evaluation should take into consideration the practical aspects of the research projects or teams the students are involved in, rather than being limited to their specific discipline alone.

5. Conclusions

As society progresses, the demand for talent will inevitably become more refined and

multifaceted. This study provides a thorough examination of the interdisciplinary graduate joint training mechanism, evaluating the current state of graduate education while using the Educational Economics course as a case study to promote the enhancement of graduate training quality. In an era that emphasizes innovation and development, it is crucial to optimize resource allocation and accelerate the conversion of technological advancements. This study proposes developmental suggestions for the interdisciplinary graduate training model, highlighting the unique, critical, and urgent nature of the joint training mechanism. These insights are of substantial practical significance and offer valuable guidance for improving graduate education in Chinese universities.

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