

# Exploration And Practice Of Constructing An Education Master's Curriculum System Based On The OBE Concept

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## Abstract:

*Against the backdrop of promoting the classified development of academic and professional degree graduate education, deepening the reform of teaching and learning in professional degree graduate education under the guidance of the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) concept has become an important aspect of talent cultivation and professional development in higher education institutions. The thesis takes the curriculum reform of the Education Master's program at Anyang Normal University as an opportunity to explore the theoretical curriculum system design and research based on the OBE concept, providing a beneficial attempt to cultivate high-level applied talents that meet the needs of national basic education.*

**Keywords:** OBE concept; Education Master's; curriculum system construction

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## I. Introduction

Coursework is an essential component in ensuring the quality of graduate education, playing a comprehensive, integrative, and foundational role in the growth and development of graduate students. Strengthening curriculum development and improving course quality are among the key tasks in deepening graduate education reform. Curriculum design refers to the systematic arrangement of courses offered by higher education institutions for different professional talent cultivation objectives, including the specific scheduling and requirements of each course. It is a complex systematic project. Curriculum design must strictly align with the knowledge and skill requirements set by the graduation standards of the program, and the rationality of the curriculum system is a crucial guarantee for the quality of graduate education.

The thesis takes the Education Master's (English Language Teaching) program at Anyang Normal University as an example to study the talent cultivation objectives and curriculum system design for professional degree graduate students. Guided by the OBE concept and centered on competency cultivation, this paper explores and practices curriculum system construction to enhance teaching quality and improve the overall effectiveness and comprehensive quality of talent cultivation.

## II. The Connotation And Practical Significance Of The OBE Concept

OBE (Outcome-Based Education), also known as outcome-oriented education, competency-oriented education, goal-oriented education, or demand-oriented education, is an educational model based on learning outcomes. The theory was first proposed by Spady and others in the 1980s and initially appeared in basic education reforms in the United States and Australia. It follows a student-centered approach, focusing on expected learning outcomes and adopting a reverse-thinking method for curriculum system construction.

In China, this educational concept was first applied to engineering programs. In November 2017, the issuance of the Implementation Measures for the Certification of Normal Programs in Regular Higher Education Institutions (Interim) marked the official nationwide implementation of the three-level monitoring certification for normal programs. The OBE concept advocated in the certification—"student-centered, outcome-oriented, continuous improvement"—provided theoretical support for the reform of teacher education. The "reverse design, forward implementation" approach offered an effective method for normal program construction. The promulgation of this document signified that the OBE concept had become the foundational philosophy for normal program construction and talent cultivation in China, attracting widespread attention and research.

As a professional degree with a specific educational vocational background, the Education Master's program aims to cultivate high-level applied talents who can meet the needs of basic education and secondary vocational education, capable of adapting to the reform and development of teaching and management. Competency cultivation is a key feature of applied talent development, and the OBE concept emphasizes focusing on outcomes. Whether in curriculum design or actual teaching, the focus should be on the final learning outcomes students achieve after completing their studies. These outcomes are both the endpoint and the starting point of

OBE. Outcomes are not merely temporary performances but processes internalized by students; they are not just what students know or understand but, more importantly, the formation of abilities after learning. This aligns perfectly with the attributes of professional degrees, which are oriented toward specific societal vocational needs and aim to cultivate students' practical and innovative abilities.

### III. The Basis For Curriculum Design In The Education Master's Program

#### The Cultivation Objectives of the Education Master's Program

The OBE concept adheres to an outcome-oriented approach, where "outcomes" in talent cultivation refer to "cultivation objectives." All cultivation efforts should start from these objectives and follow a reverse design. Based on the needs of national and societal development, the positioning of different levels of higher education institutions, and the requirements of students and employers, the cultivation objectives for specific programs in higher education institutions are determined.

The Education Master's professional degree is a category within China's graduate education system with a specific educational vocational background. To ensure the quality of talent cultivation, the National Education Professional Degree Graduate Education Steering Committee has provided guiding opinions and basic requirements for the formulation of institutional training plans, the implementation of practical teaching, and the writing of dissertations. The general cultivation objective of the Education Master's program is to cultivate high-quality subject teachers and administrators who can meet the needs of basic education and secondary vocational education and adapt to the reform and development of teaching and management. The specific cultivation objectives can be subdivided into seven aspects: professional ethics, professional knowledge, practical abilities, research abilities, professional development abilities, digital teaching abilities, and foreign language abilities.

#### The Graduation Standards for the Education Master's Program

To ensure the quality of degree conferral in China, in 2015, the Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council, based on the Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Academic Degrees and its interim implementation measures, formulated the Basic Requirements for Doctoral and Master's Degrees (hereinafter referred to as the "Basic Requirements") according to the characteristics of academic and professional degrees. The basic requirements for professional degrees were developed by the National Professional Degree Graduate Education Steering Committee for each professional degree category (or field), providing strong guidance and specificity. These requirements represent the minimum standards that professional degree graduate students must meet to be awarded degrees.

Upon careful review, it was found that the basic requirements for the Education Master's degree include five aspects: basic qualities, basic knowledge, professional training, professional practice, and dissertation. Each aspect is explained in detail by the Steering Committee.

Table 1: Basic Graduation Requirements for the Education Master's Professional Degree

Basic Qualities	Academic Ethics	Uphold academic norms and oppose academic misconduct
	Professionalism	Advanced educational concepts and a broad professional perspective in education
	Professional Spirit	Willingness to teach, educate, and innovate
Basic Knowledge	Foundational Knowledge	Master educational professional knowledge, basic theories, and methods
	Professional Knowledge	Master the subject knowledge system, including general pedagogical knowledge, subject knowledge, subject pedagogical knowledge, and educational situational knowledge
Practical Training	Teaching Practice	Participate in teaching practice activities, practical training, and case teaching
	Practical Training	Concentrated practical teaching time of no less than six months
Basic Abilities	Self-Acquisition of Knowledge	Ability to learn independently and reflect on practice
	Educational Practical Abilities	Teaching and management practical abilities
	Educational Practical Research Abilities	Identify, propose, and solve problems in educational practice
Dissertation	Topic Requirements	Focus on basic education practice and solve practical problems
	Form and Standard Requirements	Diverse dissertation forms, compliant with academic norms and structural standards
	Level Requirements	Dissertation topics must meet cultivation objective requirements

To achieve the talent cultivation objectives, graduation requirements must be met. To fulfill graduation requirements, cultivation processes must be standardized, appropriate cultivation models selected, scientific curriculum systems designed, suitable teaching models chosen, and scientific assessment criteria established. A support relationship matrix between cultivation objectives and graduation requirements must be formed, with clear mapping to the curriculum system structure. Cultivation institutions must combine their own positioning and characteristics to conduct reverse design, using scientific and reasonable cultivation plans and diverse cultivation models to support the basic requirements and achieve the cultivation objectives through forward implementation.

#### **IV. Exploration Of Constructing An Education Master's Curriculum System**

##### **Elements and Standards of Curriculum Design**

Curriculum design refers to the planned and systematic process of organizing and designing teaching content, subject arrangements, class hour allocation, teaching forms, and evaluation standards for a specific educational stage or program based on educational objectives, disciplinary knowledge systems, student development needs, and societal demands. Its core lies in the scientific integration of disciplinary knowledge, practical components, and educational resources to construct a scientific, reasonable, and systematic curriculum system, achieving the comprehensive educational goals of knowledge transmission, competency cultivation, and value shaping. Higher education curriculum design has the following three characteristics:

**Goal Orientation:** Higher education curriculum design centers on cultivation objectives, aligning the curriculum system with the professional talent cultivation plan to clarify the knowledge, abilities, and qualities students should possess. This ensures that students meet the expected professional level and comprehensive quality requirements upon graduation.

**Systematicity:** Curriculum design includes general education courses, disciplinary foundational courses, professional core courses, and practical teaching components, among others. These parts are interconnected and mutually supportive, forming an organic whole. Courses are linked in content, difficulty, and class hours to avoid repetition and disconnection, collectively building a complete knowledge system and competency cultivation framework.

**Dynamism:** With the development of the socio-economy, technological progress, and the continuous updating of disciplinary knowledge, higher education curriculum design must be adjusted and optimized in a timely manner. For example, the emergence of new disciplines, the integration of traditional disciplines, and changes in industry talent demands require institutions to update course content and adjust curriculum structures to maintain the timeliness and adaptability of curriculum design.

##### **Exploration of Constructing the Curriculum System for the Education Master's (English Language Teaching Program)**

Based on the graduation requirement indicators of the Education Master's professional degree, a professional curriculum system for the Education Master's program is constructed. The curriculum system is divided into four modules—public compulsory courses, professional compulsory courses, professional elective courses, and other compulsory components—based on the three dimensions of basic qualities, basic knowledge, and practical abilities, forming the curriculum system for the Education Master's (English Language Teaching) program.

**Establishing Strong Connections Between Public Compulsory Courses and Professional Quality Cultivation.** The content of public compulsory courses is selected and adjusted based on cultivation needs, primarily focusing on cultivating students' academic ethics and professional qualities. In addition to the courses required by the Full-Time Education Master's Professional Degree Graduate Guidance Training Program (2023 Edition), distinctive courses such as Scientific Ethics and Academic Integrity, Introduction to Artificial Intelligence, and Hongqiqu Canal Spirit and Rural Education Revitalization Research are offered.

**Integrating Educational Professional Knowledge and Optimizing Professional Course Modules.** On the one hand, courses with overlapping content are adjusted, and relevant knowledge is organically integrated to optimize course content, ensuring the transmission of professional knowledge while reducing teaching time. For example, during the review, it was found that the degree foundational course Educational Research Methods and the professional elective course English Education Research Methods and Thesis Writing had overlapping content. Ultimately, the two courses were merged. On the other hand, knowledge expansion module courses are offered based on the career development needs of Education Master's students, including Language and Culture, Research on Basic Education Reform, and Information Technology and Teaching Applications and so on.

**Constructing a Practical Teaching Curriculum System Centered on Competency Cultivation.** The "Basic Requirements" stipulate that Education Master's students must "be able to identify and propose problems from the experiences and lessons of educational practice, using appropriate methods to solve them," thereby

enhancing their practical and innovative abilities. The professional compulsory course module includes courses such as Research on English Curriculum and Teaching Materials in Secondary Schools and Research on English Teaching Design and Implementation in Secondary Schools. The on-campus training component includes courses such as Case Analysis of English Teaching in Secondary Schools and Microteaching Guidance. The program also leverages the positive role of extracurricular activities by organizing a series of teaching skill competitions for Education Master's students.

## V. Exploration Of The Scientificity Of The Education Master's Curriculum System

The correlation between the designed courses and the types of knowledge to be mastered is analyzed to examine the scientificity and rationality of the curriculum design. Regarding the professional knowledge graduate students should master, the "Basic Requirements" state: "This includes professional course knowledge directly related to subject teaching and educational management, which can be divided into four categories: general pedagogical knowledge, subject knowledge, subject pedagogical knowledge, and educational situational knowledge. Among these, subject pedagogical knowledge is the most important." During the review, two indicators—"strong correlation" and "weak correlation"—were set to examine the correlation between the courses offered in the English Language Teaching program and the various types of knowledge.

Table 2: Correlation Between Courses and Types of Knowledge to Be Mastered

Course Category	Course Name	General Pedagogical Knowledge	Subject Knowledge	Subject Pedagogical Knowledge	Educational Situational Knowledge
Degree Foundational Courses	Educational Principles	Strong			
	Curriculum and Teaching Theory	Strong			
	Educational Research Methods	Strong			
	Adolescent Psychological Development and Education	Strong			
Professional Compulsory Courses	Research on English Curriculum and Teaching Materials in Secondary Schools			Strong	
	Research on English Teaching Design and Implementation in Secondary Schools			Strong	Strong
Professional Compulsory Courses	Theories and Methods of Foreign Language Teaching			Strong	
	Language Testing and Evaluation			Strong	Strong
Professional Elective Courses	English Teacher Oral Communication		Strong	Strong	
	Language and Culture		Strong		

Course Category	Course Name	General Pedagogical Knowledge	Subject Knowledge	Subject Pedagogical Knowledge	Educational Situational Knowledge
	History of English Teaching in China			Strong	
	Second Language Acquisition		Strong		
	English Education Research Methods and Thesis Writing			Strong	
	Classroom and Teaching Management				Strong
	Information Technology and Teaching Applications	Strong			Strong
	Application of Educational Statistical Software	Strong			
	Hongqiqu Canal Spirit and Rural Education Revitalization Research				Strong

Through systematic review, it was found that the curriculum design for the English Language Teaching program not only fully meets the guiding training plan of the Education Steering Committee but also effectively supports the "Basic Requirements." This is reflected in the following aspects:

- Emphasis on the foundation of Education Master's student cultivation, with standardized courses on general pedagogical knowledge.
- Focus on the transmission of subject pedagogical knowledge, aligning with the basic requirements of the Education Master's degree.
- Attention to enhancing students' digital teaching abilities, with courses such as Application of Educational Statistical Software, Information Technology and Teaching Applications, and Language Testing and Evaluation.
- Emphasis on cultivating distinctive features, with the distinctive course Hongqiqu Canal Spirit and Rural Education Revitalization Research.

## VI. Conclusion

In summary, the Education Master's program at Anyang Normal University adheres to the OBE concept, starting from national, societal, and industry needs to clarify graduation requirements and core competencies based on talent cultivation objectives and institutional positioning. Indicators are then set and implemented in courses, exploring scientific curriculum design through internal and external demands to ensure strong support for graduation requirements and cultivation objectives. This approach motivates students' learning enthusiasm, enhances their innovative spirit and practical abilities, and cultivates high-quality applied talents who dare to innovate and create.

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