Application of Project-based Task-driven Teaching Method in Cross-university Credit Courses—A Case Study of the Essentials of Management Course

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[**Abstract**] The sharing of high-quality online educational resources has become a new pathway for the development of higher education, especially in the post-pandemic era. Effectively enhancing the construction of cross-university credit courses has emerged as a critical issue in the current phase of higher education advancement. This paper introduces the connotation of the task-driven teaching method and elaborates on its design framework, including the preliminary learner analysis, the learning activity design, the integration of learning resources, the support for learning environments, and the evaluation of learning outcomes. It explores the implementation strategies of the task-driven teaching method in the cross-university credit course Essentials of Management, summarizes the effectiveness of its application, and offers valuable insights for other institutions seeking to improve teaching methodologies for cross-university credit courses.

[**Key words**] task-driven teaching method; the Essentials of Management course; course teaching and application

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The Essentials of Management course is an online elective course for students majoring in Finance and Business at Guangxi Financial Vocational College. The course is based on the "Chaoxing Learning" platform, adopting a blended teaching approach that integrates both online and offline modalities to achieve the course requirements. To enhance teaching quality and learning outcomes, the teaching team employs a task-driven teaching method, using engaging situational contexts to stimulate students' learning motivation and actively involve them in practical public relations activities, so that this approach aims to improve students' logical expression skills as well as their ability to address real-world management problems.

1 Connotation of task-driven teaching method

The task-driven teaching method originates from the educational philosophy proposed by American educator John Dewey, who emphasized that learners construct their own cognitive systems through the process of problem-solving. This method advocates learning by doing and is widely applied in courses with practical and operational components. It utilizes engaging situational contexts to stimulate students' motivation to learn. Knowledge is transmitted through tasks as carriers, enabling students to acquire knowledge and skills while completing learning

assignments. The core of the task-driven teaching method lies in the scientific and rational design of learning tasks. During instruction, teachers design knowledge objectives aligned with the goals of each learning module, with the learning tasks serving as a bridge between instructors and students. In the Essentials of Management course, instructors provide learners with clear overall learning objectives and help them analyze and break these down into several sub-tasks. Students are guided and encouraged to identify the core skills needed to accomplish each sub-task. This approach not only enhances learners' interest in autonomous learning but also progressively cultivates their comprehensive abilities to analyze management problems, formulate management strategies, and optimize organizational decision-making, thereby laying a solid foundation for their future roles in management.

2 Course design approach based on task-driven teaching method

2.1 Pre-course analysis

First, learner profile analysis. In implementing the online Essentials of Management course, students' cognitive levels and learning motivations are assessed through various methods, including questionnaires, learning portfolio analyses, and mining of learning behavior data. This comprehensive analysis identifies students' weaknesses in management theory, case analysis, and practical application. The diverse characteristics of the learner population—such as variations in academic year, disciplinary backgrounds, and prior online learning experience are thoroughly considered to enable a scientifically stratified and categorized design of teaching content and tasks. The course development prioritizes resource diversity and flexibility by constructing a multimodal resource system encompassing video lectures, knowledge maps, virtual simulations, online assessments, and learning guides. This multifaceted approach effectively overcomes the temporal, spatial, and interactional limitations inherent in traditional classrooms, enhances student engagement, and ultimately ensures precise alignment between course content and learners' developmental needs, thus facilitating the achievement of instructional objectives.

Second, analysis and design of teaching content. The course content is designed to balance practicality and theoretical value, ensuring students not only master theoretical knowledge but can also apply it effectively in real-world contexts. Specifically, this involves: (a) defining learning objectives clearly to guide subsequent content development and instructional activities; (b) selecting the learning themes and elements that stimulate learner interest and curiosity; (c) designing situational and task-driven learning activities to boost student participation and motivation, thereby fostering deep understanding and long-term retention of knowledge. Moreover, the instructional design follows a three-phase model comprising task-setting, task implementation, and error-guidance. During the task-setting phase, students are introduced to the background, goals, and requirements of each task. In the task implementation phase, students complete the tasks and acquire knowledge through active practice. Finally, the error-guidance phase addresses common mistakes and misunderstandings encountered during tasks, providing clarifications to strengthen comprehension.

Third, analysis of the learning environment. The teaching team is committed to establishing an effective online learning environment that ensures users' proficiency in navigating platform functionalities, which include video lecture viewing, practical exercises, and self-assessment tools. Specifically: (a) interactive video lectures integrate elements such as pop-up questions and discussion prompts to encourage learner engagement and critical reflection; (b) practical exercises simulate real-world scenarios or cases, enabling learners to apply their knowledge to problem-solving or task completion, with convenient submission processes and timely feedback to enhance practical skills and application capabilities; (c) self-assessment tools feature diverse formats including multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, and short-answer questions covering different knowledge levels and types. Prompt and constructive feedback supports learners in monitoring their progress and identifying areas requiring further attention.

2.2 Innovative teaching methods

First, it is essential to design the task-driven teaching method. Centering around specific learning tasks, both tasks and corresponding instructional activities are designed based on the course's learning objectives. By analyzing task content, instructors guide students in mastering the essential knowledge required for successful course

completion. Offline practical exercises are subsequently arranged to facilitate the internalization and external application of knowledge, thereby achieving the goal of theory-to-practice transformation. The approach includes: (a) establishing clear and measurable learning objectives aligned with the core course content to inform task design; (b) formulating learning tasks with defined goals and concrete requirements that progressively guide students to acquire targeted knowledge and skills; (c) analyzing the task structure and content to help students understand the context, objectives, and expectations; (d) providing timely instructional support and scaffolding throughout task completion; (e) organizing offline practice sessions in which students apply theoretical knowledge to real-world scenarios, consolidating and extending their learning outcomes.

Second, it is essential to adhere to the fundamental principles of the task-driven teaching method. First, the way of learner-centered approach should be adopted, with an emphasis on cultivating students' autonomous learning abilities. Instructors should design challenging and meaningful tasks that stimulate students' initiative and curiosity, enabling them to actively construct their own knowledge systems. Second, the authenticity and contextual relevance of task scenarios should be prioritized. Teaching tasks should be grounded in real-life or professional contexts to enhance the realism and practical value of learning, thereby improving student engagement and learning outcomes. Third, the development of students' collaboration skills should be emphasized. By organizing students into research-oriented teams, they are encouraged to engage in cooperative learning through resource investigation, problem analysis, and solution development, thereby strengthening their communication, coordination, and collaborative innovation capabilities during the task completion process.

Third, the design process of task-driven learning activities follows a structured sequence: context creation to stimulate interest—instructor guidance and task presentation—student clarification and collaborative completion—results presentation—evaluation and summary. For example, in a market research field study, students are guided to conduct on-site investigations to understand the market conditions and competitive landscape of a specific industry. The instructor introduces the industry background and current market status to spark students' interest and curiosity, encourages discussion on the significance and importance of market research, and assists in defining the research objectives and methods.

2.3 Integration of course resources

First, course learning resources should be fully considered to address the diverse learning needs of students. The course development team is encouraged to incorporate a wide range of materials that engage multiple sensory modalities visual, auditory, and audiovisual to stimulate learner interest and motivation. For examples they can use visual aids, audio content, multimedia resources, and other diverse instructional materials that enrich the learning experience.

Second, the task-driven online course framework should be scientifically and systematically designed to ensure a coherent progression of knowledge. Learning tasks should be organized in a hierarchical and modular fashion, enabling students to advance gradually from basic concepts to more complex applications. Each module should have clearly defined learning objectives aligned with the overall course goals, ensuring that all tasks contribute meaningfully to the achievement of intended learning outcomes.

Third, the teaching team should balance learners' cognitive development with the goal of holistic education. This includes broadening students' perspectives and enhancing their reading and cognitive abilities through the integration of rich educational resources such as video lectures, e-books, and academic literature. Furthermore, moral education, aesthetic appreciation, and physical education should be incorporated to foster teamwork, critical thinking, and social responsibility. Through academic exchanges, social practices, cultural engagements, and volunteer activities, the course framework can support well-rounded student development, expand their worldviews, enrich their knowledge systems, and enhance their overall learning capabilities.

2.4 Optimization of the learning environment

First, team collaboration and division of labor. The teaching service team for the Essentials of Management course consists of lead instructors, online teaching assistants, classroom practice instructors, and platform technical

support personnel. The lead instructor is responsible for designing and delivering course content, ensuring the systematic and coherent presentation of knowledge. The online teaching assistant provides real-time academic support and learning guidance, assisting learners with questions and monitoring their progress. The classroom practice instructor organizes and supervises hands-on learning activities to bridge theory and practice. Meanwhile, technical support staff ensure the smooth operation of the online learning platform and provide necessary troubleshooting services to guarantee students' smooth participation in online learning and interaction.

Second, technical support for the course. Effective technical support is essential to ensure students' smooth access to and engagement with the online learning platform. First, detailed user guides are provided to help students become familiar with platform navigation and functionalities. What's more, learning orientation modules and course notifications are used to guide learners in understanding the course structure, study pathways, and key learning milestones. In addition, instructors may leverage instant messaging tools such as WeChat and QQ to offer real-time academic consultation and individualized tutoring, thereby enhancing the efficiency and responsiveness of instructional support.

Third, learning resource support. Course resources include hardware, software, and extended learning materials. Hardware resources refer to multimedia classrooms, laboratories, and libraries. Software resources include student textbooks, audio-visual materials, and digital tools. Extended resources may include instructor-recommended readings, external links, and supplementary materials aligned with specific knowledge points, which together enrich the learning experience.

Fourth, learning environment support. The online learning platform supports core functions such as course access, video playback, material downloads, and assignment submissions. Learning resources include e-books, video lectures, and case analyses. The evaluation system adopts diversified assessment methods—including online quizzes, assignment grading, and discussion participation—to comprehensively measure students' learning progress and achievement. Interactive features such as discussion forums and instant messaging tools foster communication and knowledge sharing among students, contributing to a dynamic and engaging learning environment.

2.5 Improvement of course evaluation

When designing learning evaluation indicators, the teaching team mainly assesses learners' process evaluation and summary evaluation.

First, the instructor's guidebook. The guidebook includes sections on the course's background, design rationale, instructional design, course content, organization and implementation of teaching activities, and course evaluation. Instructors should tailor the guidebook content according to the specific context of the participating institutions. Given that different institutions may emphasize different aspects of the curriculum, the guidebook must be rich in content and present resources in a diversified manner.

Second, the student learning task sheet. This document systematically outlines the knowledge framework required for the course, helping students understand the relationships between different knowledge points. Notably, the task sheet should include learning objectives, activity titles, task requirements, task descriptions, and expected outcomes. Clearly defined learning objectives and tasks enable students to understand what they need to accomplish and the standards they must meet. The task descriptions provide detailed guidance on how to complete each task, thereby helping students organize their learning more effectively and improve learning efficiency.

3 Implementation path of task-driven method in cross-university credit course Essentials of Management

3.1 Learner situation analysis

First, student profile. The Essentials of Management course is offered as a cross-university credit course. Learners include all students enrolled in this course via the Chaoxing Learning platform. The course duration is 90 minutes. Before teaching begins, instructors release learning resources on the Chaoxing platform. Students receive an online learning task list and complete both the course instructional videos and practical exercises.

Second, teaching content analysis. The Essentials of Management course aims to cultivate students' mastery of

fundamental management theories and methods totally, and to improve their organizational management and decision-making abilities. The content centers around the logical mainline of management functions, integrating theory with practice. The course is organized into modules covering planning, organizing, leading, controlling, and innovation. Each module reflects the entire management process while emphasizing the interconnections among knowledge points. Through progressive modular teaching, students gain a deep understanding of the essence of management, master management tools and methods, and enhance their comprehensive abilities to analyze and solve organizational management problems.

Third, learning environment analysis. The course employs a blended teaching model combining online and offline learning. Online learning relies on the "Chaoxing Learning" platform, which features learning behavior data tracking and intelligent monitoring of learning progress. This system tracks learners' time investment, progress, and interactions throughout the course, providing instructors with real-time insights into students' learning status and enabling precise supervision to ensure task completion. Offline learning emphasizes learner autonomy and flexibility, allowing students to choose suitable study locations based on their personal circumstances to meet individualized learning needs, thereby enhancing learner initiative and learning effectiveness.

3.2 Learning activity design

First, clarify the overall learning goals and break them down into sub-goals. The course's overall task is structured around five modules: planning, organizing, leading, controlling, and innovation. Through a systematic study of these modules, students gain a comprehensive understanding of fundamental management concepts and methods. They master key analysis and response techniques in various management processes, thereby enhancing their abilities in organizational coordination, team collaboration, problem-solving, and innovative management. This foundation prepares them solidly for future careers in business or public management.

Second, specify concrete learning objectives and set sub-tasks. The teaching team designs clear and actionable learning objectives considering knowledge and skills, processes and methods, as well as emotional attitudes and values. They formulate a detailed learning task list for the Essentials of Management course. For example, in the organizing module, emphasis is placed on students' exploratory thinking and real-world connections, especially relating to their own experiences. Students are expected to extensively research relevant materials online and in academic literature, proposing insightful and in-depth viewpoints or theories. The instructor leads the discussion, with students primarily engaging in presentations and discussions, while the instructor provides critiques and highlights key theoretical points, emphasizing depth of theory. The training goals include enabling students to achieve breakthroughs in self-awareness within organizational management contexts, cultivating psychological adaptability and expressive abilities in management communication (encouraging active speaking); enhancing students' understanding and application of organizational communication logic, leadership language arts, and strategies (ability to speak effectively); and strengthening students' integrative thinking skills to connect management theories with real-life situations, analyze problems, and propose solutions.

3.3 Learning resource design

First, teacher's guidebook. The teacher's guidebook includes sections such as the background of course development, rationale for course design, instructional design, course content, organization and implementation of teaching activities, and course evaluation. Teachers should tailor the guidebook content according to the actual conditions of the institutions offering the course. Given that different institutions may emphasize different aspects of the course, the guidebook must be rich in content and present diverse resources to meet varied needs.

Second, student learning task sheets. A well-structured knowledge mind map is provided to clearly outline the course knowledge that students need to master, facilitating their understanding of relationships between concepts. The task sheets must include learning objectives, activity titles, task requirements, task descriptions, and expected outcomes. Clear learning goals and task requirements help students understand what they need to accomplish and the standards they must meet. Task descriptions offer specific guidance and methods for task completion, helping students organize their learning more effectively and improve efficiency.

Third, course teaching resources. These include micro-lectures, slide presentations, and knowledge expansion materials. To accommodate fragmented and mobile learning habits, micro-lecture videos are kept within 10 minutes to maintain student focus and learning efficiency. Slide presentations are designed with attention to color schemes for visual appeal. Knowledge expansion materials are selected to include communication and problem-solving training content, aiming to enhance students' practical skills and learning experience.

3.4 Learning assessment design

Teaching and learning occur across multiple schools and span time and space, making assessment challenging. Establishing a scientific and effective blended online and offline assessment system is crucial for implementing cross-school elective courses. The Essentials of Management course evaluation consists of formative assessments and final exam scores. Formative assessments include online self-study monitored by the system; online quizzes scored automatically; and offline practice submitted online with peer review. Final exam scores are graded by the system, supplemented by teacher-led offline Q&A, discussions, and in-person instruction. The assessment breakdown includes online learning, post-lesson quizzes and final exams (60 points), online discussions (20 points), and reflection reports (20 points). Students earn points by completing corresponding tasks, and final weighted scores reflect overall performance. Students meeting the course completion criteria receive an electronic certificate of completion, while those who do not meet standards are given opportunities to restudy the course.

4 Implementation effectiveness of the task-driven teaching method in the cross-university credit course Essentials of Management

4.1 Course model aspect

Based on the task-driven teaching method, the Essentials of Management course has been effectively implemented with deep practical engagement, resulting in innovative teaching models both online and offline. Firstly, the online mode integrates MOOCs with self-directed learning, leveraging rich course resources to create a scenario-based, problem-oriented classroom experience. During instruction, teachers assign specific tasks that motivate students to actively explore and learn by connecting the content with their interests and real-life experiences. Assessment combines class session, unit, and semester evaluations to concretely reflect student performance. Secondly, the offline mode incorporates practical activities such as flipped classrooms, emphasizing student engagement, initiative, and creativity during class participation. Thirdly, a blended approach combines online and offline modes to optimize communication channels, emphasizing the synergy between online learning and offline practice.

4.2 Teaching philosophy aspect

The course construction has significantly advanced innovation in teaching philosophy.

Firstly, the course design departs from traditional overloaded curricula by introducing specific learning tasks that guide students' active exploration, continuously optimizing the knowledge structure while eliminating redundant content, condensing the total course duration to under 10 hours.

Secondly, the task-driven model promotes interdisciplinary integration, encouraging students to extend learning beyond Essentials of Management to related disciplines such as psychology, communication studies, and sociology, thereby achieving a multidimensional fusion of theory and practice.

Thirdly, rooted in task-driven pedagogy, the course embraces learning characteristics of the Internet era and organizational change trends, striving to establish a "knowledge-ability-quality-practice" integrated development framework. Focusing on core management functions planning, organizing, leading, and controlling—the course innovatively designs a series of tasks that prompt students to analyze management concepts within emerging organizational contexts like virtual teams, digital offices, and remote communication. This fosters understanding of the evolution from traditional management paradigms to digital governance logic. In terms of teaching mechanisms, the course transcends traditional knowledge transmission by emphasizing immediate knowledge application and real-world skill development. Task-embedded teaching enhances students' theoretical application, teamwork, and reflective capacities within complex problem scenarios, enabling them to identify management blind spots and

personal growth areas through practice. Simultaneously, a deeply integrated online-offline teaching pathway is constructed: the online platform provides rich resources and learning process monitoring, while offline sessions emphasize scenario-based practice and in-depth discussions, realizing multi-scenario collaborative learning and pioneering educational reform concepts.

5 Conclusion

The cross-university credit course Essentials of Management offers abundant online resources that address diverse learner needs. Learners enjoy flexible study schedules that break traditional time constraints, and teaching materials can be revisited multiple times. This flexibility not only liberates learner individuality but also clarifies learning intentions, motivations, and goals, further enhancing autonomous learning and collaborative interaction skills. The task-driven teaching method's advantages are unmatched by other instructional approaches. However, learners in private higher education institutions often exhibit weaker self-directed learning and self-management skills, necessitating instructor guidance and supervision to ensure task completion. Teachers should encourage students to independently organize and construct their knowledge frameworks. With appropriate guidance, learners can correct misunderstandings and progressively develop robust cognitive structures. Therefore, task-driven online course learning constitutes an effective pathway to advancing pedagogical transformation in higher education within the Internet era.

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