Reform Practice of Vocational Curriculum: A Case Study of the "New Media Operations" Course[1]

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Abstract

In the digital era, the demand for professionals in new media operations has increased significantly. In response, Shandong Vocational College of Cultural Industries has carried out a reform of the "New Media Operations" course. Guided by the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) philosophy, the course content has been restructured and integrated with the "1+X" Media Convergence Certificate examination, realizing the integration of course learning and certification. Teaching effectiveness has been enhanced through the application of mind mapping and the Feynman technique. Students are also engaged in managing self-media accounts, with assessments based on both quantitative data and qualitative evaluation. The reform has yielded notable outcomes.

Keywords: Vocational colleges; New Media Operations course; curriculum reform; Outcome-Based Education (OBE); course-certification integration

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Introduction

In the context of the digital era, the rapid development of new media has not only transformed the way information is disseminated but also profoundly influenced the teaching models and content in the field of education. As key institutions for cultivating professionals who meet the evolving needs of society, higher vocational colleges are tasked with keeping pace with the times and innovating educational methods. Particularly with the fast-growing cultural industry, new media operations have emerged as an indispensable professional field, requiring students to possess not only solid theoretical knowledge but also strong practical experience and innovative capabilities.

Shandong Vocational College of Cultural Industries, a higher vocational institution specializing in the cultivation of talent for the cultural industry, has keenly recognized the changing demands for professionals in the new media environment and has proactively sought teaching reforms and practical pathways for the “New Media Operations” course. Traditional teaching approaches often focus heavily on theoretical instruction while neglecting the cultivation of students' hands-on abilities and creative thinking, making it difficult to meet the rapidly evolving needs of the new media industry. Therefore, it is particularly important to explore a teaching model that can both deepen theoretical learning and enhance practical skills.

This paper takes the School of Media at Shandong Vocational College of Cultural Industries as a case study to explore the teaching reform and practical implementation of the “New Media Operations” course. By analyzing the existing problems in the current curriculum and aligning them with the latest trends and development needs of the new media industry, a series of targeted teaching improvement measures are proposed, including but not limited to updating pedagogical concepts, increasing the proportion of practical teaching, and improving instructional methods. The goal is to construct a more scientific and industry-oriented training program for new media operations professionals, providing a reference for similar institutions and contributing to the cultivation of more high-quality, application-oriented talent for the new media industry.

2.Current Situation and Existing Problems

In the current teaching of new media operations courses, several problems have increasingly hindered students' professional development, such as teachers' lack of practical experience, short practical teaching cycles, and insufficient depth in school-enterprise cooperation (Huang Weixin et al., 2024).

2.1.Imbalance Between Theory and Practice

The original assessment model of "70% theory + 30% practice" fundamentally deviates from the core competency-based principles of vocational education. In this model, theoretical knowledge dominates the evaluation process, causing students to focus excessively on rote learning while neglecting the importance of hands-on training. Many students believe that cramming theoretical knowledge before exams is sufficient to pass, which leads to a disregard for practical skills. For teachers, due to the guiding effect of this assessment model, exam questions tend to focus more on theoretical content, while practical assessments often lack rigor and depth. For example, in practical classes, instructors may assign tasks that simply require students to follow predefined steps, without cultivating their capacity for innovative thinking or real-world problem-solving. This disconnect between theory and practice is directly reflected in employers' feedback: graduates are often proficient in theoretical discourse but are at a loss when faced with concrete operational tasks in the workplace. They are unable to independently manage new media accounts, create content, or implement promotional strategies—resulting in the embarrassing gap of "talking without doing." This not only weakens students' employability but also fails to meet industry demands, leading to a waste of educational resources.

2.2.Overly Simplistic Evaluation Dimensions

The theoretical assessments are overly traditional, relying solely on written exams to test students' memorization of knowledge. This method fails to evaluate students' comprehension, application, and innovation capabilities. Such an approach easily traps students in rote learning, while neglecting deep understanding and practical

application. Likewise, practical assessments are also flawed, often reduced to simple assignments or superficial reports, lacking comprehensive tracking and evaluation of students' performance throughout the practical process. For instance, students may be asked to submit a new media campaign proposal, and teachers evaluate it solely based on the written output, overlooking critical competencies such as teamwork, communication, and the ability to handle unexpected challenges during the planning process. Moreover, the absence of formative assessment results in a lack of timely feedback and encouragement for students' efforts and progress in practice, making it difficult for them to adjust their learning methods and strategies. This hinders students from identifying weaknesses in their practical skills and impedes the development of their applied abilities and overall competence.

2.3.Outdated Teaching Methods

The teaching process relies too heavily on textbooks, and textbook selection often prioritizes official labels—such as inclusion in "13th Five-Year Plan" or "14th Five-Year Plan" recommended materials—over alignment with actual teaching needs. Many textbooks are outdated and disconnected from the rapidly evolving new media industry. For example, some textbooks still focus on teaching basic operations like how to create a WeChat group, while offering little content on cutting-edge technologies, trending topics, or innovative practices in the field. Topics such as short video recommendation algorithms, live-stream e-commerce techniques, and advanced applications of new media data analysis tools are rarely covered. These outdated materials not only fail to stimulate students' interest but also cause their knowledge to lag behind industry trends, making it difficult for them to adapt quickly to workplace demands after graduation. At the same time, the lack of diverse teaching methods restricts the development of students' thinking skills. Classroom instruction often revolves around textbook lecturing, with limited student interaction and minimal in-depth case analysis. Students passively absorb knowledge without opportunities for active exploration and innovation. This teaching model does not foster students'

autonomous learning abilities or their capacity to solve real-world problems, thus falling short of industry requirements for innovative talent in new media operations.

3.Reform Strategies and Practice

Curriculum Philosophy: Guided by the OBE Concept

Based on the teaching concept of Outcome-Based Education (OBE), first proposed by American scholar William G. Spady in 1981, OBE is an educational model oriented toward student learning outcomes. It emphasizes that the design and implementation of the curriculum should revolve around what students are ultimately expected to achieve, rather than relying solely on teachers or textbooks.

The OBE approach highlights outcome orientation and student-centered instructional design, adopting a backward design strategy for course planning. According to the objectives of the course, the content of the New Media Operations course has been restructured into five core modules: user operations, content operations, activity operations, product operations, and community operations (Hu Ruiming, 2025). These modules are all designed based on real workplace scenarios, aiming to guide teaching through actual workflows and incorporating the assessment requirements of the "1+X" vocational skill certification. Certification results are included as part of the final grade, achieving effective integration between coursework and professional qualifications.

In the course, instructors follow a backward design logic of "enterprise employment needs → job competency standards → course objectives → teaching content" to reconstruct the curriculum. The focus is on the professional competencies students should achieve upon graduation, including: independently launching an account from scratch; collaboratively managing routine account operations; making data-driven operational decisions; and mastering platform rules and risk control.

4.Curriculum Content: Integrating Certificate Requirements into the "1+X" Framework

The “1+X” certificate system refers to the combination of “academic diploma + multiple vocational skill level certificates.” Students can obtain skill certificates alongside their academic degrees, thereby improving their employability (Ke Ke, 2023). As an innovative initiative in China’s vocational education, the “1+X” system aims to achieve an organic integration of academic education and vocational training through the combination of one diploma (academic certificate) plus multiple “X” level certificates (skill credentials). The certificate pursued by students in the School of Media focuses on media convergence, targeting comprehensive skills in new media, all-media, and cross-platform content production and dissemination, including editing, planning, operations, and technical applications.

According to surveys, most students in private colleges participate in “1+X” certificate training mainly through weekend-intensive sessions or pre-exam cramming. This approach limits students’ deep learning and understanding of the certificate content (Huang Zhen, 2025).

As a pilot partner institution for the “1+X” Media Convergence Certificate, the School of Media at Shandong Vocational College of Cultural Industries first integrated classroom instruction with “1+X” certificate test items, forming a cyclic model of explanation–practice–test consolidation–certification. In addition, the school actively built a “curriculum-certification integrated” instructional system, embedding the standards of the “1+X” certificate into its talent training program, restructuring course modules, and optimizing teaching content. Through the introduction of real-world project cases, the school created a triadic model of “theory instruction + skill training + certificate assessment,” enabling students to improve their vocational skills while mastering subject knowledge.

Furthermore, the School of Media proactively constructed a curriculum-certification integrated teaching system. By introducing authentic industry cases and project-based tasks, students enhanced their practical abilities while mastering theoretical knowledge. The school regularly organized mock exams and specialized skill

workshops to help students become familiar with the “1+X” certificate assessment standards and invited industry experts to provide targeted on-campus coaching.

To strengthen learning outcomes, the teaching team developed a digital learning platform that integrates course materials with certificate exam banks, achieving a seamless model of “learning–practice–testing.” This innovative model not only improved students’ professional competitiveness but also cultivated a high-quality cohort of technically skilled talent in media convergence, forming a replicable model of industry-education integration.

The school also regularly organized mock exams and specialized skills competitions, using contests to drive learning and assessments to reinforce practice. This innovative talent development model not only enhanced students’ employability but also contributed a large number of interdisciplinary professionals with practical media convergence skills to the industry.

5.Teaching Methods: Dual Implementation of Mind Mapping and the Feynman Technique

In the implementation of the 1+X Media Convergence Certificate pilot program, the School of Media innovatively introduced the mind mapping teaching method and the Feynman teaching method to further optimize the cyclical instructional model of "explanation–practice–test consolidation–certification." The specific implementation steps are as follows.

Using mind maps to sort out core exam points and structure knowledge.During classroom lectures, instructors use mind maps to visually present key knowledge points in media convergence, helping students build a systematic cognitive framework. Referring to the 1+X certificate exam outline, key and difficult areas are marked, with logical connections emphasized to facilitate student memory and understanding.

Breaking down practical projects to achieve task-driven visual learning.During practice sessions, students use mind maps to deconstruct real industry cases,

clarifying task steps, technical focuses, and evaluation criteria. Mind maps are collaboratively designed in groups, cultivating analytical skills and team collaboration awareness.

Consolidating exam preparation through mind maps and error tracing.During the review stage, students independently draw mind maps of exam topics, integrating fragmented knowledge into a networked structure to enhance comprehensive application ability. For incorrect responses in mock exams, students use mind maps to trace the blind spots in their understanding and reinforce weak areas.

The teaching team embeds the skill points required by the 1+X certificate into the branches of the mind maps, allowing students to clearly grasp vocational competency expectations. By dynamically updating the maps, the learning path becomes visualized and skill mastery becomes measurable.

The mind mapping teaching method not only enhances students' logical thinking and autonomous learning abilities but also strengthens the alignment between classroom content and vocational standards, providing an effective tool for course-certification integration. In the future, the college plans to extend this method to other majors to further deepen curriculum reform.

Feynman Teaching Method.The Feynman learning technique originated from Nobel Prize-winning physicist Richard Feynman, whose core idea was: "If you can't explain it to a six-year-old, you don't really understand it yourself."

The teaching team refined the essence of the Feynman method and adapted it into the classroom teaching of New Media Operations. Through a "learning by teaching" approach, students are guided to deeply understand media convergence concepts and improve their success rate in the 1+X certification exam. Specific strategies include the following.

Simplification and paraphrasing during knowledge explanation.Teachers first explain content in simple language, avoiding excessive use of technical jargon to ensure student comprehension. Then, students are randomly selected to paraphrase the concepts in their own words. Teachers correct misunderstandings in real time to ensure accurate comprehension. Complex theories are explained using mind maps or simple visual charts—e.g., using “Douyin vs. WeChat Official Account communication patterns” to explain features of media convergence.

Peer simulation and mutual learning in the practice stage.Students are grouped, and each group is assigned a specific module from the 1+X Media Convergence Certificate. Members take turns acting as “instructors,” explaining the operation process to teammates. During Q&A and feedback, the student acting as teacher must answer questions from peers, which exposes gaps in understanding, allowing teachers to provide targeted clarification. During media convergence practical training, students are required to use the Feynman method to present proposals to “clients,” strengthening their communication and logical thinking abilities.

Exam consolidation using the Feynman method for high-frequency errors.In the exam reinforcement phase, students handle frequent mistakes in three steps using the Feynman technique: write the standard answer, explain the reasoning in plain language, and remove professional jargon.

Certificate exam: using output to drive input.Students simulate certification exam scenarios by pairing up—one acts as the examiner, asking practical questions from the certificate exam; the other answers using the Feynman method, emphasizing clarity in procedure and concise expression. The Feynman teaching method proved highly effective: in the 2024 certification cycle, students achieved a 100% pass rate.

6.Team Collaboration: Managing a Self-Media Account

At the beginning of the semester, instructors assigned a practical task. Students voluntarily formed teams and completed a New Media Operations project in groups.

The task was as follows: each group carried out an operational task from 00:00 on Monday of Week 2 until 24:00 on the weekend of Week 15. The weekly publishing requirement was at least two videos. In Week 16, the number of posts, follower growth, likes, saves, and other data were collected to rank group performance. In Weeks 16 and 17, students gave class presentations.

Instructors were required to design an online form. At the beginning of the semester, students filled in group member names, the name of their operational account, and initial account screenshots. Before each weekly class session, students were required to upload information about their newly published content.

Instructor Supervision and Process Management:

Weekly progress checks: Instructors used the online form to track the progress of each group in real time. Groups that did not meet expectations were reminded, and an overall progress report was announced in class.

Midterm feedback: Team leaders presented reports on operational strategies, data performance, and encountered challenges. Instructors provided targeted suggestions.

Problem support: A WeChat group was created for Q&A. Students could consult anytime regarding content planning, platform rules, and technical operations.

Data Collection and Evaluation Criteria:

Number of published works (20%): Groups must meet the basic requirement of two videos per week; extra points awarded for exceeding the quota.

Account setup (10%)

Number of likes and saves (20%)

Follower growth (30%)

Engagement rate (10%)

Monetization performance (5%)

Team collaboration (5%)

Final Report Quality Evaluation:

Classroom presentation (20%): Clear logic, creative highlights, and depth of data analysis

Instructor evaluation (20%): Originality, relevance of topic selection, and production quality

Presentation Sessions:Two group presentations were held—at midterm and at the end of the semester. The midterm report focused on account positioning and operational strategies, current video performance, challenges encountered, solutions adopted, and teamwork progress.

Both students and instructors participated in scoring the group presentations. Student peer evaluations accounted for 60%, and instructor evaluations for 40%. Based on performance, teams voted for the “Best Operations Award” and the “Most Creative Award,” which were included as bonus points. The top three groups received bonus points for course grades or material rewards. Outstanding works were recommended for display on the college's official account. Groups that failed to complete the basic requirements were required to submit a written reflection report and had points deducted accordingly (Zhu Tingting, 2024).

Table 1. Assessment Components and Scoring Criteria

Component	Weight (%)	Description
Number of published	20	Minimum two videos per week; bonus points for

Component	Weight (%)	Description
works		exceeding
Account setup	10	Completeness and branding of the account setup
Likes and saves	20	Total engagement metrics from platform data
Follower growth	30	Increase in follower count
Engagement rate	10	Ratio of interactions (likes, comments) to views or followers
Monetization performance	5	Revenue-generating activity (if applicable)
Team collaboration	5	Overall division of labor and cooperation within the group
Class presentation	20	Logic, creativity, and data analysis in final reports
Instructor evaluation	20	Originality, relevance, and technical execution

At the end of the semester, the teaching team compiled the operational cases of all groups and created the Practical Handbook of New Media Operations, which serves as a reference for future students.

Conclusion

This study on the reform of the New Media Operations course primarily draws on a sample from the Media School of Shandong Vocational College of Cultural Industries, specifically within the major of Integrated Media Technology and Operations. Due to the relatively narrow sample scope, the findings may not fully reflect the actual situation of New Media Operations courses across the broader field of vocational education, thus limiting the generalizability of the research results to some extent. Furthermore, data collection relied heavily on student surveys and performance statistics, while the evaluation of students' practical performance in new media projects carried a certain degree of subjectivity. Given the rapid development of the

new media industry, the analysis of course content in this study lacks timely and in-depth integration of cutting-edge technologies and emerging business models, resulting in a certain disconnect between the curriculum and real-world industry needs.

Against the backdrop of the continuous development of vocational education and the evolving demands of society, curriculum reform in higher vocational institutions is an ongoing process with no fixed endpoint. As industrial upgrading accelerates, new technologies, concepts, and models constantly emerge, requiring vocational curricula to remain dynamic and responsive. Each cycle of curriculum reform not only addresses present challenges but must also confront new issues posed by an ever-changing environment.

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