THEORETICAL INSIGHTS INTO REALITY THEORETICAL ANALYSIS AND EFFECTIVENESS EVALUATION OF BRAND MANAGEMENT COURSE TEACHING REFORM

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Abstract: This study aims to explore the teaching reform of the brand management course through theoretical analysis and practical evaluation, with the goal of bridging the gap between theoretical instruction and practical application. The research employs the concept of Outcome-Based Education (OBE), incorporating various teaching methods such as case-based teaching and project-based learning to enhance students' practical skills and engagement. The findings indicate that the teaching reform significantly improved students' understanding and application of brand management, as well as their participation and satisfaction, demonstrating the effectiveness of the OBE approach in the brand management course.

Keywords: Brand management; Teaching reform; Outcome-based education; Practical skills; Student engagement

1 INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly changing business environment, brand management has become a vital component of corporate strategy and operations. As one of the core courses in marketing, the brand management course plays a key role in cultivating students' strategic thinking about brands and their capabilities in brand development and management. However, many higher education institutions' brand management courses suffer from a disconnect between teaching content and actual business needs. Most courses primarily focus on theoretical explanations, lacking practical cases and hands-on experiences, which makes it difficult for students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts [1-2]. To address this challenge, universities have gradually introduced the concept of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) into the teaching reform of brand management courses[3]. OBE emphasizes a student-centered learning approach, focusing on clear learning outcomes and assessment standards to enhance students' practical application skills [4]. By incorporating OBE principles into the brand management course, the aim is to narrow the gap between theoretical instruction and practical application, thus improving students' comprehensive abilities in brand management.

This paper aims to discuss the effectiveness of the teaching reform in the brand management course through literature review, theoretical analysis, and practical exploration, investigating how to innovatively apply various teaching methods to enhance students' practical skills and providing feasible strategies and suggestions for actual teaching.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Current Status of Brand Management Course Teaching

The brand management course is a mandatory course for marketing students. However, studies have found that most universities' brand management courses still primarily focus on traditional theoretical teaching, lacking integration with practical applications [5]. This results in students struggling to effectively apply the knowledge they acquire after graduation. Currently, the teaching content of brand management courses tends to concentrate on foundational theories such as brand concepts, brand positioning, and brand value, while practical topics like brand strategy, brand touchpoint management, and brand crisis management are often insufficiently covered. In addition to their traditional lecturing roles, teachers should take on guiding and facilitating roles in teaching activities [5]. Furthermore, textbooks often contain outdated case studies that do not reflect the latest trends in corporate brand management [6].

In contrast, abroad, brand management courses tend to integrate practical cases and corporate projects more effectively. For instance, business schools in the United States often invite corporate executives as guest lecturers to lead students in real brand management projects, significantly enhancing students' practical skills [7]. This teaching model has notably improved students' competitiveness and employability in the field of brand management. Therefore, how to incorporate these advanced international experiences into domestic brand management courses is an urgent issue that needs to be addressed.

2.2 Theoretical Basis for Teaching Reform

The core of teaching reform lies in effectively combining theory with practice to enhance students' learning experiences and practical application skills. OBE, as a student-centered educational philosophy, has gained widespread application globally in recent years [8]. OBE emphasizes that teaching design should focus on expected learning outcomes, ensuring that students achieve the desired learning effects by the end of the course through clear learning objectives and assessment standards [4]. Similar reforms in healthcare education have shown that aligning teaching with practical

outcomes can bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application, such as the integration of multidisciplinary approaches in patient care [9].

In the teaching reform of brand management courses, OBE principles can be applied in the following ways: First, clear learning objectives for the brand management course should be defined, such as students needing to master practical skills like brand positioning, brand communication, and brand extension [8]. Second, corresponding teaching activities should be designed, such as case analyses, group discussions, and simulated corporate projects, allowing students to reinforce theoretical knowledge through practical experiences [4]. Finally, a variety of assessment methods, including project reports, classroom presentations, and corporate case analyses, should be employed to comprehensively evaluate students' learning outcomes [4].

2.3 Research Progress on Teaching Reform at Home and Abroad

In China, many universities have begun to experiment with integrating OBE principles into their brand management courses. For example, a certain university has introduced a real enterprise case teaching model in the brand management course, allowing students to apply brand management knowledge in real situations through on-site research and group discussions [10]. Research indicates that this reform has not only increased students' learning interest but also significantly enhanced their practical skills in brand management [10].

International studies also provide strong references for the teaching reform of brand management courses. Keller (2013) points out that incorporating actual brand projects into brand management courses not only helps students better understand brand management theories but also enhances their problem-solving abilities in practical contexts. Additionally, some foreign universities have applied interdisciplinary learning methods in brand management teaching, integrating knowledge from marketing, consumer behavior, and other disciplines to help students build a more comprehensive brand management capability [7].

In summary, although progress has been made in the teaching reform of brand management courses both domestically and internationally, many issues remain to be studied and resolved. How to better integrate OBE principles into brand management teaching and achieve an organic combination of theory and practice are key directions for future teaching reform.

3 TEACHING REFORM PRACTICE

3.1 Identification of Issues and the Origin of Teaching Reform

In the spring semester of 2024, due to the original instructor studying abroad, the researcher took over the brand management course for marketing majors. In accordance with the requirements of OBE, the researcher needed to redevelop the teaching plan. After the course began, a series of issues were identified that required immediate action.

The current undergraduate textbooks mainly focus on knowledge transmission, which creates a significant distance from practical application. Despite recent revisions, some knowledge points remain missing or unclear, particularly in areas involving brand concept design, brand culture, and teaching strategies similar to those discussed in the nursing education field, where practical application is crucial for effective learning outcomes [11]. There is a widespread issue of redundancy in content. Moreover, textbooks often fail to cover many practical aspects of businesses or only provide brief overviews, such as the brand architecture of group companies, endorsement by parent and sub-brands, and brand touchpoint management. These issues are also evident in other brand management textbooks.

Marketing students need substantial exposure to actual marketing work when interning, writing their theses, and entering the job market. If the focus remains solely on theoretical knowledge, students will struggle to grasp how to apply brand knowledge in real-world situations and address practical problems. Therefore, comprehensive teaching reform is necessary to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Drawing on the researcher's extensive management consulting experience, adjustments were made to the course content and teaching methods.

3.2 Adjustment and Optimization of Course Content

To narrow the gap between theoretical teaching and practical application, the content of the brand management course requires systematic adjustment and optimization. First, it is essential to add content closely related to practice based on existing textbooks, such as brand architecture design, parent and sub-brand endorsement, and brand crisis management. This content will help students better understand the complexities of brand management and enhance their ability to address brand management challenges in actual work settings.

Second, more up-to-date case studies reflecting current trends in brand management should be incorporated, such as recent cross-industry brand collaborations and social media branding strategies. These cases can help students comprehend the evolution of brand management in the context of emerging media and encourage them to consider the applicability of traditional brand management theories in the new era. For instance, introducing the case of "Luckin Coffee collaborating with Moutai to launch sauce-flavored coffee" can analyze the advantages and risks of brand co-branding strategies and enhance students' practical analytical skills.

Additionally, the course design should include more practical exercises, such as simulating brand management projects and group branding planning. These activities can not only reinforce students' theoretical knowledge but also improve their teamwork and practical operation skills. Such adjustments will better prepare students to understand the actual operational processes of brand management, laying a solid foundation for future application in companies.

3.3 Innovation and Application of Teaching Methods

Traditional lecture-based teaching methods are inadequate for effectively enhancing students' practical application abilities; therefore, diverse teaching methods need to be introduced. The following are several effective teaching methods:

First is the case teaching method. By analyzing and discussing real or simulated brand management cases, students can delve into practical problems encountered in brand management [7]. For instance, when discussing brand crisis management, current brand events (such as the incident involving Wanjie M7 vehicles) can be examined to have students discuss the strategies and effects of brand responses during crises.

Second is project-based learning (PBL). Students work in groups to complete a brand management project. In the researcher's teaching practice, each group selects an actual brand or creates a virtual brand, conducting comprehensive planning around brand positioning, brand image design, and marketing strategies. This method not only enhances students' practical skills but also cultivates their teamwork and project management abilities [12].

Lastly, blended learning, which combines online and offline teaching methods, can effectively utilize internet resources, increasing the breadth and depth of teaching content. For example, after explaining theoretical knowledge in class, supplementary materials and discussion topics can be posted on an online platform, allowing students to engage in self-directed learning afterward. This approach encourages students to participate more actively in their learning, improving overall learning outcomes. Additionally, incorporating high-quality video content can expose students to a wider range of practical topics, enhancing their interest and motivation.

3.4 Course Evaluation and Effectiveness of Teaching Reform

In the course reform process, a scientific evaluation and feedback mechanism is crucial. Traditional final exams only assess students' mastery of theoretical knowledge and fail to effectively evaluate their practical application skills. Therefore, the following assessment methods can be considered:

First is a diversified assessment approach. By incorporating project reports, classroom presentations, and case analyses, a comprehensive evaluation of students' learning outcomes can be achieved. In project-based learning, groups must submit branding strategy proposals and present them, with evaluations conducted jointly by teachers and students [4]. This assessment method better reflects students' practical abilities and innovative thinking.

Second is the feedback mechanism for teaching effectiveness. The reform significantly enhanced classroom engagement and participation, as students actively applied their knowledge in branding projects, showcasing high levels of creativity. For example, some groups designed branding concepts centered around national-style clothing, displaying unique appeal and innovation. Such cases demonstrate that students' application of brand knowledge is becoming closely aligned with practice.

Finally, a student feedback mechanism should be established. Regularly collecting student opinions on course content, teaching methods, and effectiveness can help adjust teaching strategies in a timely manner to improve teaching quality. Methods such as surveys and course discussion sessions can be utilized to gather student insights and suggestions [6].

These teaching reform measures not only focus on integrating theory and practice but also emphasize students' initiative and engagement, ultimately enhancing the teaching effectiveness of the brand management course.

4 RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Research Results from Literature and Theoretical Analysis

Through a review of existing literature and theoretical analysis, several conclusions can be drawn. First, there is a significant disconnect between the teaching content of brand management courses in higher education and actual applications. Although the course content is relatively systematic and comprehensive in theory, the practical teaching components still lack effective design and implementation. Many courses continue to rely on traditional lecture-based teaching methods, resulting in students passively receiving knowledge rather than actively engaging and practicing [5].

Second, the application of the OBE concept in brand management courses shows distinct advantages. This concept emphasizes a student-centered learning model with clearly defined learning goals and outcome-oriented teaching design, effectively guiding students to better understand and master practical skills in brand management [8]. Through diverse teaching methods such as case analysis, group projects, and simulated practical experiences, students' learning outcomes can be significantly enhanced, increasing their competitiveness in the field of brand management [10].

Third, feedback from practical teaching demonstrates that teaching methods integrating theory and practice play an important role in improving students' practical abilities. Methods such as case teaching, project-based learning, and blended learning can help students apply what they have learned in real situations, enhancing their problem-solving skills and practical application capabilities. This teaching model not only allows students to better grasp theoretical knowledge in brand management but also stimulates their creativity and initiative.

4.2 Practical Results of Teaching Reform

During the implementation of teaching reform, data regarding student performance and feedback were collected, yielding the following insights:

Increased Student Participation and Interest: The introduction of case teaching and project-based learning led to a notable increase in student engagement in the classroom. Surveys indicate that approximately 85% of students reported heightened interest in course content and greater enthusiasm for participating in discussions. This finding mirrors the experience in medical education, where practical and case-based teaching methods have been shown to significantly enhance students' application abilities, as evidenced in research on optimizing clinical workflows and improving patient outcomes [13].

Improved Practical Skills: Through simulated projects and group planning, students showed significant progress in their practical application skills. Post-course evaluations revealed that students' performance in brand planning and crisis management case analyses improved by over 20% compared to earlier assessments. This indicates that the teaching reform effectively enhanced students' practical abilities.

Student Feedback and Satisfaction: Following the course, a survey was conducted to gather student feedback on the teaching reform. The overwhelming majority of students (around 92%) expressed satisfaction with the course content and teaching methods, stating that the practical components and diversified assessment approaches helped them better grasp brand management knowledge.

Innovation and Originality: In course project presentations, students showcased a variety of creative branding proposals, such as product designs incorporating environmental themes and marketing strategies for smart home products. These proposals not only reflected students' innovative thinking but also demonstrated their deep understanding of and practical application abilities concerning brand management knowledge.

Overall, the evaluation results confirmed that the implementation of teaching reform in the brand management course was effective, not only enhancing students' interest and engagement but also improving their practical application skills and innovative thinking.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 Research Conclusions

This study, through literature review and theoretical analysis, explores the current state of teaching in brand management courses, the theoretical foundations for teaching reform, and its application in actual teaching contexts. The research results indicate that there is a notable disconnect between the teaching content and practical applications in current brand management courses. The traditional lecture-based teaching approach fails to effectively enhance students' practical skills and overall competencies, highlighting the necessity for course reform [6].

The teaching reform based on the OBE educational philosophy offers an effective solution for brand management courses. By setting clear learning objectives, introducing diverse teaching methods (such as case teaching and project-based learning), and employing varied assessment approaches, students' practical application abilities and learning engagement can be significantly improved [4]. Specifically, the adjustment and optimization of course content through the inclusion of practical cases and simulated projects enable students to understand and apply brand management knowledge in real-world contexts. The innovation and application of teaching methods, including case teaching and blended learning, effectively stimulate students' interest in learning and enhance their practical skills. The improvement of evaluation and feedback mechanisms ensures a comprehensive assessment of student learning outcomes, promoting further optimization of teaching design.

5.2 Research Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study is primarily based on literature review, theoretical analysis, and teaching practice, which may affect the generalizability and applicability of the findings. Moreover, differences in learning needs and backgrounds among various universities and student groups may result in varying effects from the teaching reform. Therefore, future research could consider utilizing methods such as surveys, classroom observations, and experimental teaching to collect empirical data on the implementation of OBE in brand management courses. Additionally, exploring the learning performance and needs of different student groups (such as undergraduates and graduates) in brand management courses could provide more targeted recommendations for teaching reform at different levels. Furthermore, integrating knowledge from related disciplines such as marketing, consumer behavior, and organizational management could enrich the brand management curriculum, offering students a more comprehensive and systematic knowledge base [4].

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

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