

# **Innovating Marketing Education: Blending OBE and Value-Infused Learning in Applied Undergraduate Courses**

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**Abstract:** With the rapid development of society and economy, the demand for applied marketing professionals with strong social responsibility continues to grow. In response to educational reform initiatives, this paper explores how to drive teaching reform in applied undergraduate marketing courses through the integration of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) and value-infused education. By designing a classroom experiment, the study combines both educational models and evaluates their impact on students' knowledge mastery, practical skills, and sense of social responsibility. The results indicate that integrating OBE with value-based education not only enhances students' marketing skills but also strengthens their professional ethics and social responsibility, thus improving overall teaching quality. This research provides a theoretical foundation for teaching reform in marketing education and offers valuable insights for the reform of other management-related courses.

**Keywords:** Marketing Education; Outcome-Based Education (OBE); Value-infused Curriculum; Teaching Reform; Social Responsibility; Applied Undergraduate Education

## **1. Introduction**

With the rapid development of society and economy, the demand for highly skilled, applied talents continues to grow, particularly in the field of marketing. Enterprises now expect graduates not only to possess solid professional knowledge but also to exhibit innovative thinking, practical skills, and a strong sense of social responsibility. Consequently, marketing courses at applied undergraduate institutions face significant challenges and opportunities for transformation. To respond to the national call for educational reform in the new era, and to fulfil the

fundamental mission of “cultivating virtue and nurturing talent,” higher education institutions must actively explore and implement effective paths for teaching reform that enhance students' overall qualities and market competitiveness.

Within this broader educational reform context, Outcome-Based Education (OBE) has increasingly become a guiding principle in university curriculum reform. OBE focuses on student-centred learning by designing clear learning outcomes and implementing rigorous assessment systems to ensure students' well-rounded development in academic, practical, and social responsibilities. This approach is especially suited to the reform of marketing courses in applied undergraduate programmes. However, the mere introduction of the OBE concept is still insufficient to fully enhance the teaching effect. It is also necessary to combine it with the infusion of ethical-social values (value-infused curriculum) to foster students' sense of social responsibility and professional ethics.

Value-infused curriculum, as an important part of the higher education reform in the new era, emphasizes the permeation of value-oriented education into various professional courses to achieve an organic combination of knowledge imparting and value guidance. By deeply exploring the value-related concepts within professional courses, it can effectively enhance students' sense of national identity, social responsibility and professional integrity, further strengthening the educational function of teaching. In the context of the marketing course, the integration of value-infused curriculum not only helps to cultivate students' moral awareness and social responsibility, but also, through its combination with professional knowledge, guides students to correctly understand the complexity of the market economy and the multi-dimensional nature of corporate social responsibility, thus improving the overall teaching quality of the course.

Therefore, this paper aims to explore how to promote the teaching reform of the marketing

course through the organic combination of the OBE teaching concept and the infusion of character-building and value-shaping elements in the context of applied undergraduate education in the new era. Based on outcome-based education, centred around the cultivation of students' positive values and character, and with the goal of enhancing students' market adaptability and social responsibility, this paper will combine classroom practice and theoretical research to propose a practical teaching reform path. This research not only has high theoretical value but also helps to solve the prominent problems existing in current teaching practices, providing reference and inspiration for the teaching reform of the marketing discipline and other management-related courses.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 The Application of OBE in Higher Education**

Outcome-Based Education (OBE) has emerged as a widely adopted instructional design approach in higher education worldwide in recent years. OBE is centred on clearly defined learning outcomes, guiding the teaching process, and establishing effective assessment systems to ensure that students achieve these outcomes [1]. In the context of higher education reform in China, the adoption of the OBE model has not only advanced the modernisation of teaching methods but also provided theoretical support for enhancing students' professional skills and sense of social responsibility [2]. Studies indicate that implementing OBE can significantly improve student engagement and academic performance, especially within applied undergraduate education, where the development of practical skills is essential [3].

### **2.2 The Current Status of the Integration of Character Education into the Curriculum**

In recent years, character education has been widely implemented in Chinese higher education as an important means to fulfil the fundamental task of "cultivating virtue and nurturing talent" [4]. The aim of character education is to foster students' sense of social responsibility and correct values. The concept of integrating character education into the curriculum emphasizes embedding elements related to character building and value formation into various professional courses, thereby enhancing students' ideological awareness and moral qualities through classroom instruction [5]. Existing research shows that the

organic integration of character education into professional courses not only can improve students' ideological and moral levels but also strengthen their professional ethical awareness in the process of professional learning [6].

In the teaching reform of marketing, the integration of character education has gradually become an important way to improve teaching effectiveness and cultivate students' comprehensive qualities. Research indicates that combining character education with marketing professional courses can guide students to pay attention to corporate social responsibility and business ethics issues, and cultivate their sense of responsibility and moral awareness in marketing practice [7]. In addition, character education can also help students establish correct consumption concepts and enhance their critical thinking ability through discussions based on real-life cases.

### **2.3 Research and Practice on the Combination of OBE and Value-Infused Curriculum**

In the educational reform in recent years, the combination of the OBE teaching concept and value-infused curriculum has gradually become the focus of academic attention. The combination of the two can cultivate students' ideological and moral awareness and professional ethics while enhancing their professional competence. OBE focuses on learning outcomes, and value-infused curriculum guides students to establish correct values through value-oriented education. This complementary effect has played an important role in applied undergraduate courses [8]. For example, in the marketing course, teachers can organically combine the outcome-orientation of OBE with the value guidance of value-infused curriculum by designing case studies or project-based learning with a sense of social responsibility. In this teaching model, students can not only master marketing skills but also learn how to maintain social responsibility and moral integrity in a business environment. Practical studies have shown that through this learning model, students can not only improve their professional knowledge level but also achieve significant improvement in moral cognition and sense of responsibility.

### **2.4 Trends in the Teaching Reform of Marketing Courses**

Marketing, being a highly applicable course, has witnessed numerous reforms in both teaching content and methods in recent years. Traditional marketing courses have usually placed excessive emphasis on the imparting of theoretical

knowledge and have been deficient in the cultivation of practical capabilities and professional qualities. However, with the introduction of the OBE teaching concept and the infusion of value-shaping elements, the teaching reform of marketing has entered a new phase. Through the combination of OBE and value-oriented education, marketing courses are able to better guide students to understand the practical operations of marketing and enhance their ability to solve practical problems [9].

### **3. Design and Implementation of Teaching Reform**

#### **3.1 Research Methodology**

The main research method employed in this study is the classroom experimental approach, which has been carefully designed to evaluate the effects of combining the principles of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) with a form of education centred on values and behavioural norms in the applied marketing course. The reason for choosing this method is that it can effectively capture the real-time interactions happening in the classroom, providing observable evidence regarding students' participation, degree of understanding, and the changes in their awareness of proper conduct and social implications. By directly implementing a new teaching model based on reform in the classroom, this study makes it easier to observe the changes in teaching effectiveness, analysing not only academic achievements but also students' overall performance in aspects such as problem-solving, social awareness, and teamwork. The selection of the classroom experimental approach allows for the creation of a controllable environment where variables like teaching methods, classroom atmosphere, and student participation can be systematically managed. The experimental approach is especially suitable for educational research since it enables researchers to measure the specific impacts of different teaching models on learning outcomes. In the context of this study, the OBE framework provides a structured focus for defining and evaluating the learning outcomes expected from students. The form of education centred on values and behavioural norms, which is an education based on the curriculum to cultivate certain values and behavioural norms, is introduced as a supplementary element to enrich students' professional knowledge from the perspectives of proper conduct and social implications. Through the combination of these two approaches, this study aims to explore to what extent the

combination of professional teaching and education on values and behavioural norms can enhance learning outcomes in both practical and aspects related to proper conduct.

The research model of this study is designed to compare the situations of two groups of students-the experimental group and the control group-under different teaching models. The courses that the experimental group participates in combine OBE and the form of education centred on values and behavioural norms, with clear learning objectives and assessment strategies that focus on both academic mastery and the development of an awareness of proper conduct. In this group, teaching activities such as case analyses, group discussions, and project-based learning not only impart technical skills but also foster students' consideration of proper conduct. In contrast, the control group is taught using traditional teaching methods that focus on lecture-based instruction and textbook learning, with limited exposure to content related to proper conduct or values and behavioural norms. This comparison aims to highlight the measurable advantages of the reform-based teaching model in terms of learning outcomes, thereby validating the effectiveness of this comprehensive approach.

#### **3.2 Research Subjects and Scope**

The subjects selected for this study are 100 third-year marketing students from an applied undergraduate institution. This particular cohort was chosen because they have achieved a suitable balance between fundamental knowledge and impending professional application. By the third year, students have generally acquired the basic theoretical knowledge necessary to understand marketing concepts, which enables them to engage more effectively in applied and project-based learning. Third-year students are also approaching entry into the professional realm, where both technical skills and social awareness are highly regarded. Consequently, they would benefit substantially from an approach that combines practical marketing expertise with an education centred on values and behavioural norms, helping them to prepare for the challenges related to proper conduct in real-world marketing roles.

The sample was evenly divided into two groups-50 students in the experimental group and 50 in the control group. This division allows for a direct comparison of the outcomes between those exposed to the reform-based teaching model and those receiving traditional instruction. Each student group covers the same content regarding

the core marketing syllabus, ensuring that the difference in outcomes is attributed to the teaching model rather than variations in curriculum content. The selection of 100 participants provides sufficient data to yield reliable insights into the effectiveness of the integrated approach, enabling qualitative observations of student engagement and quantitative assessments of learning performance.

The scope of this study is to examine learning outcomes over a full academic semester, which is considered an appropriate period for observing meaningful changes in students' knowledge acquisition, practical skills, and awareness of proper conduct. The assessment of student outcomes in both groups is conducted through continuous classroom observations, project evaluations, and final examinations. Observations are made to track classroom engagement and participation levels, providing an understanding of how actively students interact with the course material under each model. Project evaluations allow for a direct assessment of students' ability to apply their knowledge and skills in real-world scenarios, especially in terms of incorporating social awareness into marketing strategies. Finally, final examinations provide a summative assessment of students' retention and understanding of the core material, serving as a standardised measure of academic achievement across both groups.

In summary, the choice of third-year marketing students as the research subjects is deliberate, aligning with the goal of equipping students on the verge of graduation with the comprehensive skill set required for their professional careers. The classroom experimental approach, combined with the targeted selection of study subjects and a semester-long time frame, is designed to yield both breadth and depth in the collected data, thus supporting a thorough analysis of the impact of the integrated OBE and education centred on values and behavioural norms model on applied marketing education.

### **3.3 Methods of Evaluating the Effects of Reform**

The evaluation of the teaching reform's effectiveness in this study was mainly based on qualitative observation and project assessment, with a focus on the key aspects related to the integration of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) and elements centred on values and behavioural norms within the marketing curriculum. The assessment criteria were designed to measure the impact of the reform on students' engagement,

practical skills, and awareness of proper conduct. To this end, the evaluation was structured around three core dimensions: knowledge mastery, improvement in practical skills, and the achievement of objectives related to values and behavioural norms.

Firstly, knowledge mastery was evaluated to determine the extent to which students had grasped the fundamental marketing theories and tools. This dimension included understanding essential concepts such as market segmentation, consumer behaviour, and brand positioning. Throughout the semester, the instructor observed students' ability to articulate and apply these theories in class discussions, case analyses, and during project planning. By comparing the experimental group's engagement with these topics to that of the control group, the study aimed to identify whether the OBE framework had facilitated a deeper understanding of the theoretical content.

Secondly, the improvement in practical skills was assessed by examining students' performance in practical, project-based tasks. These projects required students to collaborate, simulate marketing activities, and develop strategic plans tailored to realistic business scenarios. During the project phases, the instructor paid close attention to students' problem-solving abilities, creative thinking, and teamwork dynamics. This hands-on approach allowed for the observation of essential skills in marketing, such as strategic planning, effective communication, and the application of market analysis tools. Comparing the practical outputs between the experimental and control groups provided insights into the effectiveness of the experiential, project-oriented learning model.

The third criterion, the achievement of objectives related to values and behavioural norms, focused on assessing whether students had incorporated considerations of proper conduct and social awareness into their marketing activities. The elements centred on values and behavioural norms in this teaching reform were intended to cultivate students' awareness of corporate social responsibility and moral decision-making in a commercial context. This dimension was evaluated by analysing how students dealt with topics related to corporate ethics, environmental sustainability, and consumer protection. For example, in project discussions, the instructor observed whether students included considerations of social impact in their strategies and how they balanced business objectives with moral imperatives. This criterion was crucial in determining whether the integration of education



centred on values and behavioural norms could successfully influence students' perspectives on the broader social role of marketing.

These evaluation methods provided a comprehensive means of assessing the experiment's effectiveness, covering both academic understanding and awareness of proper conduct. By observing students' participation, analysing project quality, and monitoring the integration of considerations of proper conduct, the study aimed to present a holistic picture of how well the reform model achieved its intended learning outcomes.

### **3.4 Implementation of the Teaching Reform**

The implementation of the teaching reform took place over a full academic semester from March to July 2024. During this period, the experimental group was introduced to a structured teaching model that integrated OBE principles with content centred on values and behavioural norms, aiming to enhance students' professional competence and awareness of proper conduct simultaneously. The curriculum was developed around three key instructional elements: theoretical lectures, case-based discussions, and practical project work, each strategically infused with themes related to values and behavioural norms relevant to marketing.

In the theoretical instruction component, the instructor adopted OBE's outcome-oriented approach to organise each lecture around specific learning objectives. Key marketing concepts such as branding, pricing strategies, and consumer psychology were taught alongside discussions on business ethics and corporate social responsibility. For example, in a lecture on consumer psychology, students were encouraged to consider how companies could influence consumer behaviour in an ethical manner, raising questions about the morality of marketing practices that exploit psychological triggers. This integration of considerations of proper conduct into theory teaching helped students critically assess marketing strategies, bridging the gap between technical knowledge and awareness of proper conduct.

In the case-based discussion sessions, the instructor selected real-world case studies focusing on social awareness. Students analysed cases involving major brands that had undertaken corporate social responsibility initiatives, such as sustainable packaging or community outreach programmes. The students in the experimental group worked in small groups to discuss how these companies balanced profit goals with social

contributions, debating whether these efforts represented genuine commitment or mere public relations tactics. These discussions helped students develop a nuanced perspective on the moral complexities of marketing and enhanced their ability to think critically about the role of businesses in society.

Additionally, the practical project required students to design a socially responsible marketing strategy, allowing them to apply their knowledge creatively and in an ethical manner. Each group was assigned a specific theme, such as green marketing or cause-related marketing, and tasked with developing a campaign that addressed both business objectives and social impact. For instance, one group proposed a green marketing plan that promoted environmentally friendly packaging, while another focused on a campaign supporting local charitable organisations. This project was not only an exercise in strategic thinking but also a test of students' ability to balance profitability and social awareness, which are crucial competencies in the modern marketing field.

In contrast, during the same period, the control group followed a traditional teaching model with a curriculum centred on lectures and textbook readings. This group had fewer discussions on moral issues and limited opportunities to apply their learning in real-world contexts. Although they completed similar projects, the control group's assignments focused more on conventional marketing tactics and lacked the emphasis on values and behavioural norms that characterised the experimental group's work.

By the end of the semester, the progress of the students in both groups was evaluated through classroom observations, project performance, and final grades. The results showed that the experimental group had a significant improvement in knowledge, skills, and awareness of proper conduct compared to the control group. Therefore, this teaching reform highlighted the benefits of combining OBE with education centred on values and behavioural norms, confirming its effectiveness in cultivating the professional and moral capabilities of marketing students.

## **4. Feedback and Evaluation of Teaching Reform Outcomes**

### **4.1 Student Performance During the Teaching Process**

Throughout the teaching process, the students in the experimental group demonstrated significantly better performance than those in the control group.

Through their participation in diverse teaching activities, the students in the experimental group were more proactive in classroom discussions, offering more profound insights during case analyses and effectively debating how enterprises could maintain ethical standards in highly competitive markets. Additionally, their performance in practical projects was particularly remarkable. In collaborative teams, the students were better equipped to handle complex project challenges, especially when designing marketing strategies with a focus on social awareness. They exhibited strong creativity and market insight. They not only considered ways to enhance corporate profits but also paid attention to the positive social and environmental impacts of their projects. These practical projects not only evaluated the students' market analysis abilities but also enhanced their capabilities to apply marketing theories in real-world business environments.

In contrast, the students in the control group mainly adopted a traditional lecture-based learning approach. Although they had a basic understanding of marketing concepts, the lack of discussions and practical activities led to lower participation in class and limited analytical abilities. When completing practical projects, the students in the control group focused more on the commercial effectiveness of marketing activities and paid less attention to social impact. This indicates that the traditional teaching model, with minimal integration of education centred on values and behavioural norms, restricted the development of students' social awareness.

#### **4.2 Evaluation of the Teaching Reform Effectiveness**

The comparative analysis of the experimental and control groups revealed that the teaching reform significantly improved student engagement and learning outcomes. The students in the experimental group outperformed those in the control group in classroom discussions and project work. Additionally, the experimental group demonstrated stronger vocational skills, such as market analysis, planning, and execution, especially in achieving objectives related to values and behavioural norms, as evidenced by their stronger social awareness and teamwork awareness. Interviews with teachers and students further highlighted the positive impacts of the new teaching model. Teachers generally believed that the reform enhanced students' learning motivation and participation, especially with the integration of elements centred on values and behavioural

norms, which helped students better understand business ethics and social awareness. Student feedback also indicated a high level of acceptance of the new model, with notable improvements in practical skills and awareness of proper conduct.

Despite the successes of the teaching reform, several challenges were noted. For example, some students had difficulties adapting to the new model, especially in project-based learning and differentiated instruction, as some students found it challenging to keep up with the learning pace independently. To address these issues, teachers could further optimise the learning support system, providing more personalised guidance and assistance. Additionally, future efforts should focus on finding effective ways to encourage lower-level students to actively participate in classroom discussions and project activities.

#### **5. Conclusion and Outlook**

This study shows that combining the principles of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) with an education centred on values and behavioural norms in the marketing curriculum has significantly enhanced students' knowledge, skills, and values. Students have not only made great progress in professional knowledge and practical abilities but also shown notable improvements in professional ethics and social awareness. The results of the teaching reform confirm that the integration of OBE and education centred on values and behavioural norms effectively improves the teaching quality of marketing courses.

Looking ahead, this teaching reform approach of integrating OBE and education centred on values and behavioural norms is expected to be extended to other applied undergraduate majors. To further optimise the impact of these reforms, teachers are encouraged to explore the use of intelligent technologies for differentiated instruction, especially by providing personalised learning support according to students' different abilities. Future research could also attempt to quantify the effects of this reform and explore the best practices for integrating OBE and education centred on values and behavioural norms in different disciplines.

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