
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Practical Study of University Curriculum Reform from the Perspective of Outcome-Based Education: A Case Study of the Course of *Academic English Writing and Research Methods*

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| ABSTRACT

Against the backdrop of globalization and the transformation of higher education, cultivating students' academic writing ability and research competence has become a crucial objective in university English education in China. However, the traditional teaching model of *Academic English Writing and Research Methods* still faces prominent problems such as unclear learning objectives, fragmented content, monotonous instructional approaches, and simplistic evaluation mechanisms, which seriously restrict the development of students' comprehensive academic capabilities. Therefore, exploring effective teaching reform strategies under the guidance of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) has become an urgent task in the field of English curriculum reform. This study aims to construct an OBE-oriented reform model for *Academic English Writing and Research Methods*, with a focus on improving students' academic literacy, research competence, and critical thinking ability. Adopting a mixed-methods research design, the study integrates questionnaire survey, in-depth interviews, and classroom observation to systematically investigate the current teaching practices, problems, reform strategies, and implementation effects of the target course. The research reveals that the implementation of OBE-oriented curriculum reform has significantly promoted students' academic writing ability, independent learning awareness, research skills, and classroom engagement. The innovative application of project-based learning, collaborative learning, and flipped classroom strategies has effectively transformed the traditional teacher-centered classroom into a student-centered, exploratory learning environment. Meanwhile, the construction of a diversified evaluation system and the dynamic feedback mechanism has provided strong support for students' continuous learning and ability improvement. Through further discussion, this study argues that the reform practice not only verifies the applicability and effectiveness of OBE in the field of university English education but also enriches the theory and practice of curriculum reform in higher education. In conclusion, this study provides valuable experience and practical reference for promoting OBE-oriented reform in English education in China.

| KEYWORDS

Outcome-Based Education (OBE); Curriculum Reform; Higher Education; *Academic English Writing and Research Methods*.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of globalization, higher education is undergoing unprecedented challenges and transformations, and cultivating students' academic literacy and research competence has become an important goal of university education in China (Li, 2022). As a fundamental component of university general education, English courses have attracted increasing attention with regard to their reform and development. For a long time, the traditional teaching model of English in China has been primarily characterized by knowledge transmission and exam-oriented training, with insufficient emphasis on cultivating students'

autonomous learning abilities, critical thinking skills, and practical application competence. This conventional model has proven inadequate in meeting the growing societal demand for talents equipped with international perspectives, innovative thinking, and robust academic and professional capabilities. In this context, the implementation of curriculum reform guided by Outcome-Based Education (OBE) has emerged as an inevitable trend in the transformation of higher education in China.

The concept of OBE advocates a student-centered approach to education, emphasizing that curriculum design and instructional practices should be oriented towards the knowledge, skills, and attitudes students are expected to demonstrate upon graduation. Since the late 1980s, the OBE philosophy has been progressively applied across various educational levels in the United States, particularly within higher education, leading to the continuous enrichment of its theoretical framework and the accumulation of extensive practical experience. In the 21st century, many countries and regions across Europe, Australia, and Asia have actively embraced and implemented the OBE approach, contributing to its global theoretical maturity and pedagogical refinement. In recent years, Chinese universities have gradually adopted and vigorously promoted OBE in curriculum development and educational practice, striving to realize a fundamental transformation of educational philosophy, teaching methods, and learning evaluation systems. At its core, OBE emphasizes "learning outcomes orientation," requiring the explicit articulation of learning objectives, expected outcomes, and assessment strategies, thereby directing educational resources and teaching activities towards the cultivation of students' essential competencies and holistic qualities.

Among various core courses of tertiary education, *Academic English Writing and Research Methods* plays a critical role in fostering students' ability to conduct academic communication, write research papers, and participate in global academic dialogues (Casanave, 2005). Particularly in the current era of accelerating internationalization and global sharing of academic achievements, there is an urgent need for students to acquire advanced academic writing skills and systematic research methodologies to meet the evolving demands of both academic and professional development. However, under the traditional instructional model, the teaching of *Academic English Writing and Research Methods* has revealed numerous limitations in practice, including ambiguous learning objectives, fragmented course content, monotonous teaching methods, and overly simplistic assessment approaches. These issues hinder the stimulation of students' learning motivation and fail to meet their diverse and individualized learning needs. Consequently, it is both urgent and necessary to undertake a comprehensive reform of this course based on the principles of OBE.

The reform of *Academic English Writing and Research Methods* from the perspective of OBE requires an in-depth examination of the specific problems existing in the current curriculum, along with the clarification of the core competencies and specific learning outcomes that students are expected to master in the field of academic writing and research methodology. Through the construction of outcome-oriented learning objectives, the optimization and integration of course content, the innovation of instructional strategies, and the diversification of assessment mechanisms, this reform seeks to shift the teaching paradigm from a teacher-centered model to a student-centered, exploratory learning model. Ultimately, it aims to enhance students' language proficiency, academic research capacity, and intercultural communication competence.

Given the pressing need for curriculum reform and the practical challenges of the existing teaching model, this study aims to explore the innovative reform of *Academic English Writing and Research Methods* from the perspective of OBE. It seeks to construct a systematic reform framework in terms of teaching objectives, content, methods, and evaluation, in order to enhance students' academic writing ability, research literacy, and critical thinking skills (Kennedy, 2006; Hyland, 2019).

2. Research Design

2.1 Data Collection

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach to collect the necessary data and materials, integrating literature review, questionnaire survey, in-depth interviews, and classroom observation to ensure the comprehensiveness and validity of the research findings.

Firstly, an extensive literature review was conducted to examine and synthesize relevant studies on the OBE educational philosophy, university English curriculum reform, and academic English writing both in China and abroad. This process aimed to clarify the theoretical foundations and current research landscape of the study, thereby providing a solid theoretical basis for the subsequent empirical analysis.

Secondly, a questionnaire survey was administered to students from a selected university who had participated in the *Academic English Writing and Research Methods* course. A total of 90 questionnaires were distributed, with 81 valid responses collected. The questionnaire was designed to capture students' learning experiences, perceived competency needs, and their evaluations of the course delivery and effectiveness.

In addition, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 participants, including course instructors and selected student representatives, to gain deeper insights into the implementation of the course and the challenges encountered. The interview protocol focused on teaching practices, learning difficulties, and participants' suggestions for course improvement.

Moreover, classroom observation was carried out through on-site attendance and systematic recording of classroom interactions, teaching models, and students' engagement levels. This method enabled the collection of first-hand teaching data and facilitated a more comprehensive understanding of the actual teaching and learning dynamics within the course.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Theoretical Connotations and Development of OBE

OBE, proposed by William Spady in the 1980s, emphasizes that curriculum design, teaching activities, and assessment systems should revolve around clearly defined learning outcomes (Spady, 1994). Achary (2003), building upon the research of previous scholars, systematically elaborated the fundamental principles for implementing OBE in his influential work *Outcome-Based Education: A New Paradigm for Learning*. In this article, he identified four essential principles that underpin the effective practice of OBE, namely: "clear focus," "expanded opportunity," "high expectations," and "backward design." Furthermore, Achary proposed a basic framework for OBE-oriented teaching models, which consists of four key procedural steps: Defining, Realizing, Assessing, and Using. This framework has since become the widely recognized and enduring practical standard for the implementation of OBE philosophy in educational contexts.

In recent years, OBE has been widely applied in higher education in many countries, such as the United States, Australia, and China (Harden, 2002; Biggs *et al.*, 2022). The core principle of OBE lies in orienting the entire educational process toward what students are expected to achieve upon the completion of their learning experience. Specifically, the essential characteristics of OBE can be categorized into three key dimensions: outcome orientation, competence orientation, and goal orientation.

Outcome orientation stresses the explicitness and specificity of learning outcomes, ensuring that expected achievements are measurable and observable. Competence orientation focuses on the development of students' practical capabilities, particularly critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and autonomous learning ability. Goal orientation requires that the entire process of curriculum implementation and instructional delivery should be closely aligned with clearly articulated learning objectives.

Globally, OBE has been extensively applied within the field of higher education. Countries and regions such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and China have developed mature theoretical systems and accumulated a wealth of practical cases, providing valuable experience and paradigms for curriculum reform in higher education worldwide.

2.2.2 Relevant Theories and Research on University Curriculum Reform

The reform also integrates constructivist learning theory, which advocates that knowledge is actively constructed through real tasks and social interaction (Jonassen, 1999). Meanwhile, the theoretical foundation of higher education curriculum reform primarily draws upon behaviorist teaching theory and humanistic education philosophy. Collectively, these theories have driven the transformation of university curricula from a knowledge-transmission model to one that emphasizes the cultivation of students' comprehensive competencies.

Kennedy (2011) conducted an in-depth study on universities in Hong Kong in his article *Conceptualizing Quality Improvement in Higher Education: Policy, Theory, and Practice for Outcomes-Based Learning in Hong Kong*. Taking higher education institutions in Hong Kong as the research context, Kennedy analyzed the effectiveness of teaching implementation from the three interrelated dimensions of policy, theory, and practice, under the guidance of the OBE philosophy.

In recent years, the core issues in university English curriculum reform have focused on the innovation of teaching models, the optimization of teaching content, and the diversification of assessment methods. For example, the reform refers to the Production-Oriented Approach (POA), which has been widely applied in China's English teaching reform. The POA emphasizes output-driven teaching, which resonates with the OBE concept of focusing on learning outcomes (Wen, 2018).

Case studies have shown that university English curriculum reform aligned with the OBE philosophy should take students as the central focus, clearly define learning outcomes and competency development goals, and construct corresponding curriculum designs and assessment systems. Accordingly, this study proposes a curriculum reform model for *Academic English Writing and Research Methods* based on the principles of OBE, aiming to provide theoretical reference and practical guidance for curriculum reform practices.

2.2.3 Current Teaching Practices and Existing Problems in Academic English Writing and Research Methods Courses

At present, *Academic English Writing and Research Methods* courses have been widely offered in both domestic and international universities. However, significant variation exists in the quality and effectiveness of teaching practices. Overseas universities commonly adopt seminar-based and small-class teaching models, placing emphasis on students' independent inquiry and practical ability development. In contrast, most Chinese universities still rely heavily on lecture-based teaching, which often results in insufficient student engagement, a lack of critical thinking skills, and a disconnection between course content and international academic frontiers.

Furthermore, the teaching of this course in China faces several prominent issues, such as vague learning objectives, monotonous assessment methods, and limited understanding and practice of outcome-oriented teaching philosophy among instructors. Consequently, students often struggle to fully grasp the norms and methodologies of academic writing. The root causes of these problems primarily lie in the influence of traditional educational concepts, the singularity of teaching methods, and the lack of teacher training and instructional resources.

Therefore, it is of great significance and practical urgency to implement a deep reform of *Academic English Writing and Research Methods* courses in line with the principles of OBE. Such reform is expected to address existing problems and promote the cultivation of students' academic writing skills, research ability, and critical thinking competence in the context of globalized higher education.

3 Practical Exploration of Curriculum Reform of Academic English Writing from the Perspective of OBE

3.1 Reform of Teaching Content and Methods

Guided by the OBE philosophy, the first and foremost task of the curriculum reform of *Academic English Writing and Research Methods* is to reconstruct the teaching objectives and fully implement the student-centered teaching concept. In the previous curriculum design, the objectives were often too vague and primarily knowledge-oriented, which failed to effectively outline the students' ability development pathway. As Table 3.1 shows, based on the questionnaire data collected in the preliminary stage, it was found that students' expectations for capability enhancement were mainly concentrated on the mastery of academic writing skills and norms (86.4%), critical thinking and research ability (80.2%), and data collection and analysis skills (79%). These results clearly indicated students' urgent demand for practical skills improvement.

Table 3.1 Students' Expectations for Capability Enhancement

Capability Expectation	Percentage of Students (%)
Mastery of Academic Writing Skills and Norms	86.4%
Critical Thinking and Research Ability	80.2%
Data Collection and Analysis Skills	79%

These findings reveal that the previous instructional model, which primarily emphasized theoretical knowledge transmission, was no longer adequate in meeting students' increasingly diverse and practical learning needs. In particular, the overwhelming expectation for the mastery of academic writing skills and norms demonstrates students' pressing desire to improve their academic literacy and apply these skills in authentic academic contexts. Meanwhile, students also identified data collection and analysis skills as a key area for improvement. This reflects a shifting orientation among students toward applied research and practical engagement with empirical materials — skills that are often underdeveloped in traditional English language courses. The high proportion of learners expressing such needs illustrates a collective move toward performance-based learning goals, where students expect courses not only to transmit linguistic knowledge but also to cultivate transferable academic and research-related skills.

In response to such demands, the curriculum has systematically adjusted its teaching objectives, explicitly proposing the specific learning outcomes that students are expected to achieve upon completing the course. The teaching content was optimized to include literature review writing, research design, data collection, academic paper writing, and research presentation (Cargill & O'Connor, 2013). Furthermore, reform and innovation are reflected in clear modular design. This course design includes multiple modules such as "Topic Selection and Research Design", "Literature Review and Critical Analysis", "Research Methods and Data Analysis", and "Paper Writing and Publication", each of which has clear learning objectives and outcome requirements. In order to effectively implement these contents, comprehensive reform and innovation of teaching methods have been carried out, and diversified teaching strategies have been introduced. For example, project-based learning, collaborative learning, and flipped classroom strategies were introduced to replace traditional lecture-based instruction (Boud & Falchikov, 2007; Gibbs, 2010).

A significant contrast exists between the traditional teaching model and the OBE-oriented model in terms of curriculum design and instructional organization. In the traditional model, the teacher-centered approach prevailed, with students mostly in a passive learning state. According to classroom observation data, prior to the reform, lecture time accounted for approximately 70% to 80% of the total class time, while student interaction and group discussion only accounted for 20% to 30%. Such a teaching mode not only limited students' initiative but also hindered the development of their innovation and practical abilities. In contrast, the OBE model emphasizes learning outcomes, active student participation, and autonomous learning, which fundamentally reshaped classroom dynamics through the practical application of project-based learning, collaborative learning, and flipped classroom strategies.

Project-based learning has become a highlight of this curriculum reform. Students engaged in real research projects, conducting topic selection, literature review, research design, data collection, and academic writing throughout the complete academic research process. The design of collaborative learning strengthened communication and cooperation among students, promoting knowledge sharing and experience exchange within the team. Meanwhile, the application of flipped classrooms broke the traditional time allocation pattern, significantly enhancing students' learning initiative and classroom engagement through the combination of pre-class video learning and in-depth in-class discussions.

After the reform, classroom observation data showed that the proportion of students actively participating in classroom interaction increased to approximately 55%, an increase of 25 percentage points compared to the pre-reform stage. Table 3.2 presents the statistical data on students' overall satisfaction with the course. The data show that the proportion of students who were satisfied or very satisfied reached 50%, while the proportion of students who were neutral or dissatisfied decreased to 20%.

Table 3.2 Students' Satisfaction with the Course *Academic English Writing and Research Methods*

Options	Number of Students	Percentage
Very Satisfied	52	64%
Relatively Satisfied	21	27%
Neutral	6	7%
Not Very Satisfied	2	2%
Very Dissatisfied	0	0%

The significant increase in students' satisfaction levels can be largely attributed to the reform's emphasis on diversified teaching methods, enhanced classroom interactivity, and the alignment of course content with students' practical needs. The inclusion of project-based learning, flipped classroom activities, and peer collaboration not only enriched classroom dynamics but also provided students with more opportunities for active participation and practical application of knowledge, which further enhanced their sense of involvement and learning motivation.

Moreover, classroom observation data revealed that students exhibited greater enthusiasm for knowledge exploration and were more willing to engage in group discussions and research activities. Many students shifted from passive recipients of knowledge to active constructors of meaning, demonstrating improved autonomy and initiative in their learning processes. This transformation aligns closely with the core tenets of OBE philosophy, which emphasizes student-centered learning and outcome-oriented educational practices (Kennedy, 2011; Spady, 1994).

In summary, the curriculum reform, through precise teaching objective setting, rich innovation of teaching methods, and the optimization of teaching content, not only improved students' learning interest and classroom engagement but also effectively promoted the improvement of students' practical academic writing ability, laying a solid foundation for the subsequent teaching evaluation and feedback.

3.2 Innovation of Teaching Evaluation and Feedback Mechanism

Under the guidance of the OBE philosophy, teaching evaluation has evolved from a mere assessment of knowledge to an essential component that promotes students' capability growth and supports the continuous optimization of curriculum practice. In the process of reforming the *Academic English Writing and Research Methods* course, the design of the evaluation and feedback mechanism has consistently adhered to the principle of outcome orientation, aiming to comprehensively reflect students' learning progress, competence development, and final achievements. The innovation of the evaluation mechanism not only ensures the achievement of teaching objectives but also facilitates the transformation of students' learning approaches and the enhancement of their autonomous growth ability.

Traditionally, course evaluation often relied solely on final exams or papers as the only basis for assessment, which easily led to a lack of motivation and continuity in students' learning processes. According to interview data, some teachers explicitly pointed out that the traditional curriculum's emphasis on results over process severely affected students' participation and enthusiasm for practice. Teacher A mentioned in the interview, "The classroom used to focus more on knowledge explanation, lacking assessments of students' exploration and research processes." However, the OBE philosophy requires that the curriculum evaluation system comprehensively covers all stages of learning, authentically and dynamically recording students' learning status and ability development trajectories.

In the specific design of the evaluation mechanism, the course reform insists on a balanced emphasis on formative and summative assessments, fully considering the dual value of the learning process and learning outcomes. Bell and Cowie (2001) argue that formative assessment refers to the process in which teachers or students identify and respond to students' learning during the learning process, with the primary aim of facilitating and promoting students' learning development. Formative assessment mainly runs through various stages of daily teaching, including classroom participation, assignment submission, group discussion, and staged project reports, focusing on students' learning attitudes, task completion, and project progress. Summative assessment focuses on the final project paper writing and research achievement presentation, comprehensively examining students' mastery of academic writing skills and research methods. To conclude, formative assessment covered students' daily performance, project progress, and class participation, while summative assessment focused on final project reports and research presentations (Sadler, 1989).

Moreover, the reform established a diversified evaluation system, combining formative assessment and summative assessment, teacher evaluation, peer evaluation, and self-evaluation (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Boud & Falchikov, 2007). During the implementation of the course, a mixed evaluation model combining teacher evaluation, peer evaluation, and self-evaluation was adopted, breaking the limitation of a single evaluation subject and greatly enriching the perspectives and content of the evaluation. Figure 3.1 illustrates the structural framework of the diversified evaluation system.

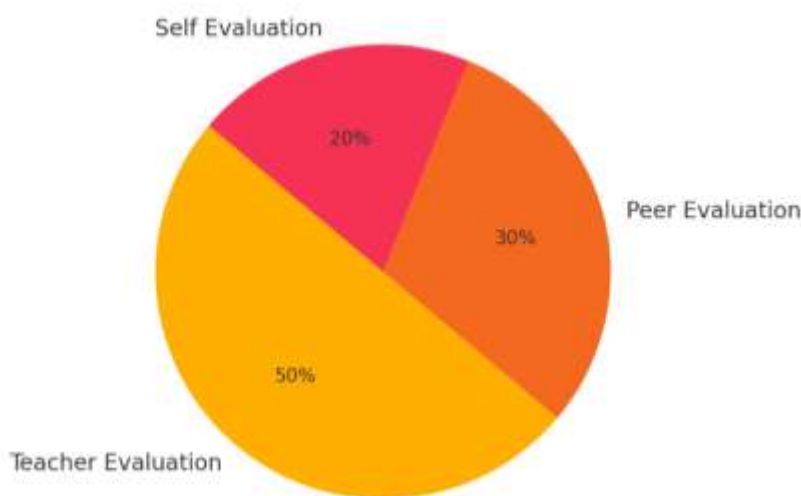


Figure 3.1 Structural Framework of the Diversified Evaluation System

Within this system, teacher evaluation remains central, mainly responsible for professional assessment of academic norms, research design rationality, and language quality, accounting for 50% of the overall evaluation weight. Peer evaluation and self-evaluation account for 30% and 20% respectively, focusing on students' performance in teamwork, self-reflection, and personal development. Interview data indicate that most students believed that peer evaluation encouraged them to better participate in team cooperation, while self-evaluation promoted their self-reflection and autonomous learning awareness.

To further verify the impact of the evaluation mechanism on students' learning experiences and outcomes, this study conducted a correlation analysis of the questionnaire data using SPSS statistical software. The analysis results showed that the correlation coefficient between teaching interactivity and student satisfaction reached 0.7 ($p < 0.01$), indicating a significant positive correlation, which reflects the positive role of diversified evaluation methods in promoting classroom interaction and enhancing students' learning experiences. Figure 3.2 presents the statistical results of the correlation analysis.

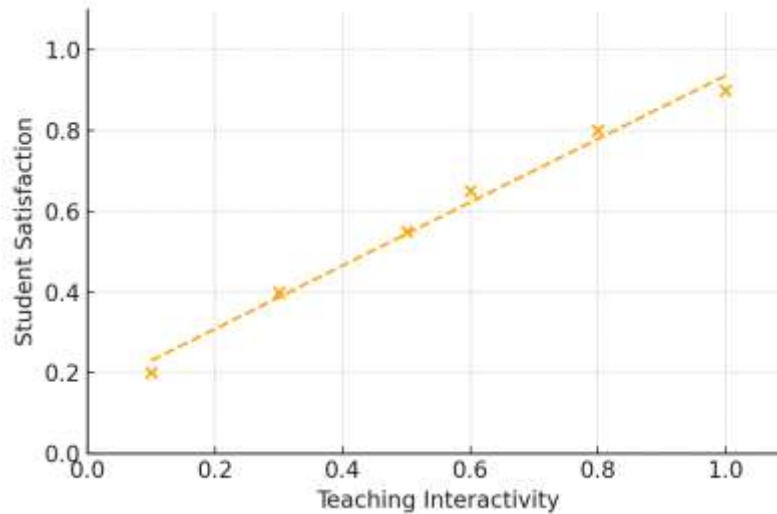


Figure 3.2 Correlation between Teaching Interactivity and Student Satisfaction

In addition, the scientific nature of the teaching evaluation system is also reflected in the results of exploratory factor analysis. The data analysis indicated that the factor structure of the evaluation system mainly included three core factors: “teaching interactivity,” “ability-oriented design,” and “outcome-oriented evaluation,” with a cumulative variance explanation rate of 63.5%, demonstrating that the evaluation system could well explain the main dimensions and content of the curriculum evaluation. Table 3.3 shows the detailed results of the factor analysis.

Table 3.3 Factor Analysis Results of Teaching Evaluation System

Extracted Factor	Variance Explained
Teaching Interactivity	26.8%
Ability-Oriented Design	20.2%
Outcome-Oriented Evaluation	16.5%
Cumulative Variance	63.5%

Regarding the dynamic feedback mechanism, the reformed course paid more attention to the real-time feedback of evaluation results and the dynamic adjustment of teaching content. Teachers regularly organized staged presentation sessions and individual guidance during project implementation to provide timely feedback on students’ problems in topic selection, research methods, and paper writing, helping students make corrections and optimizations in a timely manner. Interview data showed that students generally believed that this real-time feedback mechanism effectively improved the relevance and practicality of learning.

Furthermore, the course reform also focused on dynamically adjusting teaching content and methods based on the overall evaluation results. For example, during the early stage of project implementation, teachers found that some students had significant weaknesses in critical literature review skills, and subsequently adjusted the teaching plan by adding a special unit on critical reading and writing training. Through this dynamic regulation mechanism, the curriculum can flexibly adapt to students’ learning pace and ability differences, truly realizing outcome-oriented dynamic teaching.

In conclusion, the innovation of teaching evaluation and feedback mechanisms not only effectively enhanced students’ learning motivation and competence growth but also provided a scientific basis for the continuous optimization of the curriculum and teachers’ instructional reflection. The practical application of the diversified evaluation system and dynamic feedback mechanism under the OBE philosophy has become an integral part of the reform of *Academic English Writing and Research Methods*, greatly enriching the evaluation models and practical experience of curriculum reform in China.

3.3 Case Analysis and Evaluation of Practical Effects

Under the guidance of the OBE philosophy, the practical exploration of the *Academic English Writing and Research Methods* course reform has not only made significant progress in teaching design and evaluation systems but has also accumulated rich practical experience in the specific implementation of teaching cases. Through the in-depth analysis of typical teaching cases,

combined with statistical data and empirical evaluations, the actual effects of curriculum reform can be presented more intuitively, providing strong support for subsequent reform optimization.

This study selected the teaching practice of the spring semester of the 2024-2025 academic year as a representative case. During this semester, three classes of this course were offered, covering a total of 81 students. Both the teaching content and instructional methods changed significantly before and after the reform. It is particularly noteworthy that the post-reform course design incorporated a complete project-based learning component, requiring students to work in groups to independently complete the entire academic research process, including topic selection, literature review, research design, data collection, academic writing, and results presentation, around specific academic research themes.

For example, a group of students chose “Research on Strategies to Improve Students’ English Academic Writing Ability” as their research topic. In the early stage of the project, students, under the guidance of their instructor, established the research background and problems by consulting relevant domestic and international research. Subsequently, students independently designed questionnaires, distributed and collected data, completed data analysis, and submitted a complete academic research report and conducted a final presentation during the project conclusion stage. The entire project lasted for eight weeks, fully embodying the OBE philosophy of focusing on learning outcomes and ability cultivation.

After the reform, students showed significant improvements in various aspects such as academic writing ability, critical thinking, research method application, and teamwork. To specifically present the changes in students’ learning outcomes and ability development before and after the curriculum reform, this study conducted a systematic comparative analysis of the students’ self-assessment data. Figure 3.3 illustrates the evaluation results of students’ satisfaction with their own academic writing ability before and after the reform. The data show that the average satisfaction score before the reform was 2.9 (out of 5), while after the reform, it significantly increased to 4.6, reflecting that students generally recognized the positive role of the curriculum reform in promoting their academic ability.

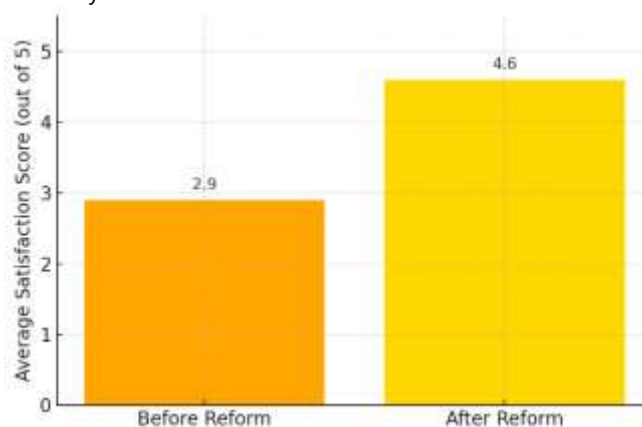


Figure 3.3 Academic Writing Ability Satisfaction Comparison Bar Chart

In addition, classroom observation data further confirmed the effectiveness of the reform. Before the reform, the proportion of students actively participating in classroom interaction and group discussions was only 25%-30%. After the reform, this proportion increased to 55%-60%, and students’ learning enthusiasm and active participation awareness significantly improved. Table 3.4 systematically lists the comparative analysis data of students’ learning outcomes before and after the curriculum reform.

Table 3.4 Comparative Analysis of Students’ Learning Outcomes Before and After the Curriculum Reform

Evaluation Indicator	Before Reform	After Reform
Average Self-assessment Score of Academic Writing Ability	2.9	4.6
Classroom Interaction Participation Rate	25%-30%	55%-60%
Excellent Rate of Project Completion Quality	10%	30%
Teacher Satisfaction Evaluation Average Score	3.4	4.3

Interview data further confirmed the effectiveness of the reform. Most students expressed in interviews that participating in real research projects not only improved their academic writing ability but also helped them master the basic process of scientific research and enhanced their practical operation and teamwork capabilities. For example, Student A pointed out: “Previously, writing papers mainly involved copying templates, but after the reform, we conducted real projects and really felt like researchers

ourselves.” Teacher B also stated: “After the reform, the changes in students are particularly obvious. In the past, their paper writing mainly involved patchwork, but now they can have their own research design and thinking, which is the greatest value of the reform.”

Although the curriculum reform has achieved positive results, some problems and difficulties were also exposed during the implementation process. Firstly, some students were not well adapted to the autonomous learning and project-based learning mode in the early stages of the reform, especially in the research design and data analysis stages, where students’ dependence on teachers was relatively strong and required more guidance. Secondly, teachers’ workload increased significantly, especially in project tutoring, assignment grading, and the implementation of diversified evaluations, which posed higher requirements for teachers’ time management and teaching abilities. In addition, the diversified evaluation methods were relatively cumbersome in the implementation process, and the feedback was not timely enough, affecting the effectiveness of the evaluation results.

In response to these problems, this study proposed several suggestions for improvement. Firstly, it is necessary to further strengthen the cultivation of students’ autonomous learning and research abilities by setting up special research skill training units at the beginning of the course to help students quickly adapt to the pace of project-based learning. Secondly, it is essential to strengthen teacher training, especially in the capacity building of OBE philosophy, project-based teaching, and diversified evaluation techniques, to provide more systematic support for teachers. Thirdly, it is necessary to optimize the allocation of teaching resources, integrate online learning platforms and auxiliary tools, reduce teachers’ workload, and improve teaching efficiency. In addition, it is crucial to further improve evaluation tools and processes, simplify operation steps, enhance the timeliness and pertinence of feedback, and ensure that evaluation results can effectively serve students’ learning and curriculum optimization.

The empirical results show that the OBE-oriented curriculum reform effectively enhanced students’ academic writing ability, research competence, and critical thinking skills (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Students demonstrated higher classroom participation, stronger research awareness, and more professional academic writing performance (Hyland, 2019; Wen, 2018). In general, the practical exploration of the curriculum reform of *Academic English Writing and Research Methods* has not only achieved remarkable results in improving students’ abilities but also accumulated valuable experience in the innovation of teaching concepts, methods, and evaluation mechanisms. Although there were some difficulties and challenges in the reform process, the overall effect of the reform fully verified the applicability and effectiveness of the OBE philosophy in the reform of core courses, providing useful references and insights for the continuous reform and innovation of English courses in Chinese universities in the future.

4. Practical Effects and Reflections

4.1 Quantitative and Qualitative Evaluation of Implementation Effects

The comprehensive evaluation of the curriculum reform effect is a crucial part of verifying the practicality and effectiveness of OBE-oriented teaching reform. This study adopts a mixed-method research design, combining quantitative data analysis with qualitative feedback to comprehensively assess the learning outcomes of students and the teaching effects of the *Academic English Writing and Research Methods* course after the reform.

From the perspective of quantitative analysis, the statistical results of students’ academic performance and ability improvement provide a direct demonstration of the reform effect. In terms of academic performance, students’ scores in academic writing projects significantly increased. As Figure 4.1 shows, the average score of academic writing assignments improved from 74.5 before the reform to 85.2 after the reform, and the proportion of excellent papers (score above 90) increased from 10% to 25%, indicating that the overall quality of students’ academic writing had been considerably enhanced. Meanwhile, the critical thinking and research method application ability tests showed that the students’ average scores increased by more than 15%, further proving the effectiveness of the reform in promoting students’ core competence development.

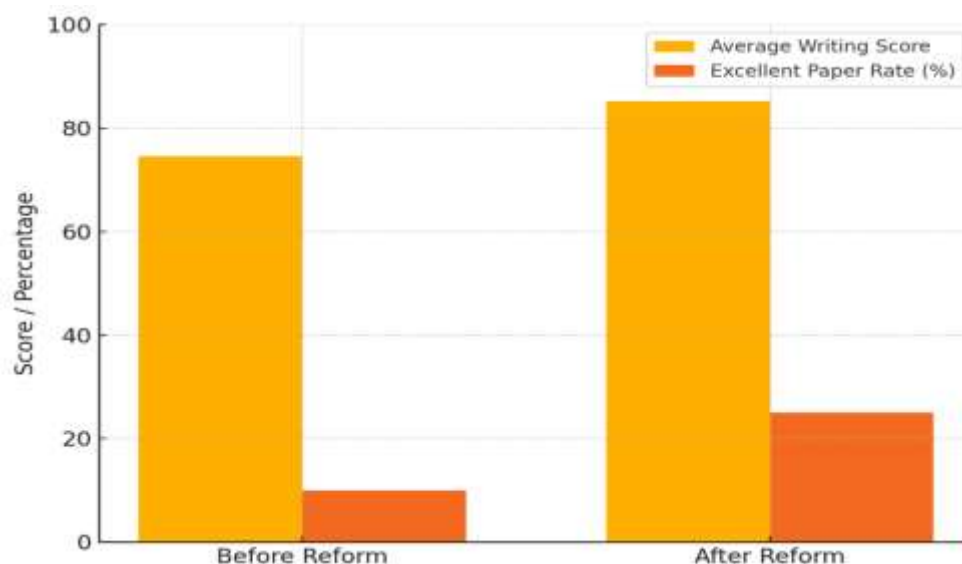


Figure 4.1 Comparison of Students' Academic Performance and Ability Improvement Before and After the Reform

In addition, the data of classroom observation and questionnaire also reflected the changes in students' participation and engagement. The classroom participation rate increased from about 80% before the reform to 90% after the reform, and the proportion of students who reported actively participating in group discussions and classroom interactions also showed significant growth, with 25% before the reform and 60% after the reform. Figure 4.2 presents a comparative analysis of students' self-evaluation of academic writing ability before and after the reform, intuitively showing the improvement of students' learning self-confidence.

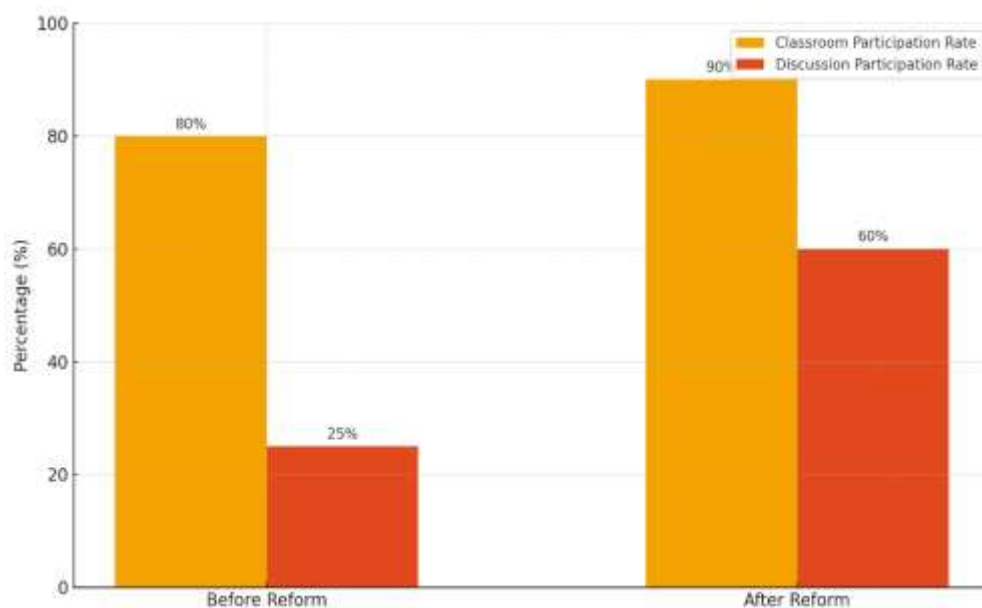


Figure 4.2 Comparison of Students' Self-evaluation of Academic Writing Ability Before and After the Reform

In terms of qualitative evaluation, this study collected rich feedback from both students and teachers through interviews and open-ended questionnaires. The majority of students positively affirmed the practical value of the reform. Many students believed that participating in real research projects not only improved their writing skills but also strengthened their ability to independently solve problems and conduct research. Student B pointed out: "Compared with the previous passive learning mode, the new teaching method allowed me to really experience the process of scientific research, which made me more confident in writing papers."

Teachers also highly recognized the reform effect. Teacher C mentioned: "The students' changes are very obvious. They have become more proactive in exploring problems and discussing academic issues, which is rarely seen in the traditional classroom." At the same time, teachers generally reported that diversified evaluation and real-time feedback mechanisms significantly enhanced students' learning awareness and improved the overall classroom atmosphere and teaching interaction.

The reform results show that OBE-oriented curriculum reform significantly improved students' academic literacy, research ability, and classroom engagement (Hyland, 2006; Deng, 2024). Students' learning motivation and research awareness were significantly enhanced, while teachers' instructional reflection and teaching design capabilities were also strengthened (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Harden, 2002).

4.2 Problems and Deficiencies in the Practice Process

Although the reform of the *Academic English Writing and Research Methods* course has achieved remarkable results, there are still some problems and deficiencies that need to be addressed during the specific implementation process. These problems are mainly reflected in the practical difficulties encountered in teaching and the contradiction between educational theory and practical application.

Firstly, from the perspective of students, the biggest difficulty lies in adapting to the autonomous learning and project-based learning modes. Despite the positive effects, the reform also encountered challenges. Some students lacked autonomous learning ability and project experience, requiring additional guidance and training (Boud & Falchikov, 2007). Especially at the beginning of the reform, many students were unfamiliar with project-based research and lacked experience in designing research methods, collecting data, and conducting literature reviews, which resulted in certain challenges in the project advancement process. Classroom observation and interview data showed that students in the early stage of the project often relied heavily on teachers, and their ability to independently plan and implement research needed to be further cultivated.

Secondly, from the perspective of teachers, the transformation of teaching roles brought about by the reform also posed great challenges. Teachers faced increased workload and the need for continuous professional development in teaching design and project guidance (Kennedy *et al.*, 2006; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Teachers need to shift from traditional knowledge transmitters to learning facilitators and research mentors, which requires more comprehensive professional knowledge reserves and teaching management abilities. In particular, the implementation of diversified evaluation systems and dynamic feedback mechanisms increases the complexity of teaching management and consumes a large amount of teachers' time and energy.

Moreover, the contradiction between educational theory and practical operation is also an important problem that needs to be solved in this reform. Although the OBE philosophy emphasizes that teaching activities should strictly correspond to learning outcomes, in the actual teaching process, students' academic foundation and learning pace vary greatly, making it difficult for every student to fully achieve the preset learning objectives within the limited class time. In addition, although the diversified evaluation system can comprehensively evaluate students' abilities, its complex operation process and the large workload of data collection and analysis easily lead to delays in feedback, affecting the immediate effect of teaching adjustment.

To address these problems, this study proposes several directions for improvement. Firstly, for students, it is necessary to strengthen the cultivation of autonomous learning and research abilities, and consider setting up special research skills training units at the beginning of the course, such as workshops on literature review writing, research method design, and data analysis, to help students quickly adapt to the project-based learning mode. Secondly, for teachers, it is essential to strengthen the professional training on OBE philosophy and project-based teaching, especially in teaching design, process management, and evaluation technology. Thirdly, in terms of teaching management, it is necessary to optimize evaluation tools and processes, simplify operation steps, and use information technology means such as online learning platforms and evaluation systems to reduce the teaching burden and improve teaching efficiency.

4.3 Implications for the Promotion of OBE Philosophy in English Course Teaching

Based on the above analysis and reflection, this study summarizes the experience and successful practices of the reform of the *Academic English Writing and Research Methods* course, providing valuable insights for the promotion and application of the OBE philosophy in English course teaching.

Firstly, the precise setting of learning outcomes and the modular design of teaching content are the keys to improving teaching effects. The OBE philosophy emphasizes the clarity, specificity, and measurability of learning objectives, which can effectively guide teaching activities and learning processes, and help students clarify their learning tasks and ability development paths.

Secondly, diversified and flexible teaching methods are important means to stimulate students' learning interest and initiative. Project-based learning, collaborative learning, flipped classrooms, and other innovative teaching methods can significantly enhance students' learning motivation and participation, and improve teaching efficiency. At the same time, the diversified evaluation mechanism and real-time feedback system can effectively help students understand their learning progress, adjust learning strategies in a timely manner, and promote students to better achieve their learning goals.

Finally, the successful practice of this reform also shows that the promotion of the OBE philosophy in course teaching needs to pay attention to the integration of theory and practice, provide continuous teacher training and resource support, encourage teachers and students to actively participate in teaching reform practice, and continuously optimize the teaching system through reflection and adjustment, so as to ultimately achieve the dual improvement of teaching quality and students' comprehensive literacy, and promote the sustainable development of higher education teaching.

To sum up, this reform practice verifies that OBE philosophy is highly applicable to the reform of core courses of tertiary education. Future reforms should strengthen students' research ability training, enhance teachers' professional development, and explore the integration of information technology to support personalized learning and intelligent evaluation (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008; Wen, 2018).

5 Conclusion

5.1 Major Findings and Implications

Based on the reform practice of the *Academic English Writing and Research Methods* course guided by the OBE philosophy, this study has reached several significant research findings. First, the application of OBE in English course reform can effectively improve students' learning motivation, participation, and practical academic skills. Through the precise setting of learning outcomes, the optimization of teaching content, the innovation of instructional methods, and the diversification of assessment mechanisms, the reform has successfully transformed the traditional teacher-centered classroom into a student-centered, output-driven, and research-oriented learning environment.

Secondly, project-based learning, collaborative learning, and flipped classroom strategies have been proven to significantly promote students' critical thinking, independent research abilities, and academic writing competence. The practical results of this reform fully demonstrate the applicability and effectiveness of OBE in enhancing students' comprehensive English abilities, especially in academic writing and research practice.

Finally, the construction of a diversified evaluation system and the implementation of a dynamic feedback mechanism can comprehensively and accurately reflect students' learning processes and outcomes, further promoting students' reflection and self-improvement. The experience of this reform provides valuable references for the future design and practice of English core courses in Chinese higher education.

5.2 Limitations and Suggestions

Despite achieving positive results, this study still has certain limitations that need to be further addressed. Firstly, the research sample is limited to a single university, and the applicability of the results may require further validation in other educational contexts. Future research should expand the sample scope to include multiple universities of different types and regions to enhance the universality and persuasiveness of the findings.

Secondly, due to the time constraints of this study, the long-term effect of the curriculum reform on students' academic writing ability and research competence has not been fully tracked. Subsequent research could consider longitudinal studies to observe the sustainability of students' abilities.

Finally, in the process of implementing OBE philosophy, teachers' professional ability and teaching design literacy still need to be further improved. It is recommended that higher education institutions provide more systematic training and resource support for teachers to help them better understand and apply OBE in classroom teaching.

In addition, future curriculum reforms should explore the integration of information technology, online platforms, and intelligent evaluation systems to improve teaching efficiency, optimize the evaluation process, and better meet the diverse learning needs of students.

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