

Study of Construction of Micro-Course in the Major of Social Work

SHEN Guanchen^{[a],[b],*}; SHEN Shijie^[c]

^[a]School of Law, Changchun University of Science and Technology, Changchun, China.

^[b]Ph.D. Candidate, Regional Economy, Jilin University, Changchun, China.

^[c]Jilin University Journal, Social Sciences Edition, Changchun, China.

*Corresponding author.

Supported by Teaching and Research Project “Research of Application of Micro-Course in Course Teaching of Social Work”.

Received 20 June 2015; accepted 17 September 2015
Published online 26 October 2015

Abstract

Teaching reform in colleges and universities in China has become a general tendency. Micro-course is a type of curriculum reform pattern which has received wide attention and favorable comments in the process of application. Through discussion on the feasibility and necessity of construction of micro-course in teaching of social work courses, this paper studies micro-course dissemination and application currently both at home and abroad. This paper makes an analysis of the curriculum characteristics of social work and refers to extant micro-course research achievements and experiences. Finally, the paper comes up with thoughts on the construction of micro-course in the major of social work with an expectation to lay a research foundation for reform and construction of micro-course in the major of social work.

Key words: Social work; Micro-Course; Reform

Shen, G. C., & Shen, S. J. (2015). Study of Construction of Micro-Course in the Major of Social Work. *Higher Education of Social Science*, 9(4), 9-12. Available from: URL: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/hess/article/view/7606>
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/7606>

INTRODUCTION

Micro-course is a process in which teachers keep record of a teaching activity in diversified forms of both in

class and out of class according to curriculum standard and teaching requirements that are different from the traditional classroom teaching. This process is based on the primary carrier of video and is centered on the axis of all knowledge points in a certain course and the key points or difficulties in each course. Since courses of social work are characterized by stronger speciality and emphasis on practicalness, complete mastery of professional content of the courses calls for a more flexible classroom teaching pattern than the traditional classroom teaching. The pattern of micro-course is more applicable to the process of teaching.

1. RELEVANT DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN LITERATURE REVIEW

It is western countries that conducted research on micro-course earlier. In 1960, an affiliated school of the University of Iowa in the United States of America came up with the concept of Minicourse. At that time, the concept was termed as short term course or course unit. This opened up the history of unitization teaching and decomposition of knowledge points in fragmentation. In the year 2004, a teaching program on the teacher TV channel in United Kingdom was set up as a Minicourse pattern. All courses were set to 15 minutes each time and received extensive popularity. Minicourse teaching video was up to 350 thousand minutes, which has gained wide influence in United Kingdom. In 2008, David Penrose, a professor in United States of American, for the first time, initiated a Microlecture with a duration of one minute. This lecture gained high reputation for him in his country and had further influences on quite a lot of colleges and universities in the country. The core content of his Microlecture keeps close to the teaching objective and focuses on the learning experience of each student. To sum up, study and application of micro-course in foreign countries has gone through a developmental history for

several decades. Whether the pattern of a micro-course is in the form of a teaching plan or a video, it strives for shortness but refinement and great enjoyment. However, setting of a micro-course is centered on self-design of teachers and it is slightly deficient in expansibility. (Zhang, 2013)

Nowadays, the concept of micro-course has been brought into China from western countries and has played an important role of enlightenment in the development of teaching reform in China. The definitions on this pattern of course in China have evolved from Minicourse and Micro-course to Micro-lesson. As earlier as in 2011, Tian Qiuhua defined micro-course in this way through her practice in micro-course. It is to divide themes to form relatively independent teaching modules on the basis of school resources, ability of teachers and interest of students. All the teaching modules can be combined for a complete course which should be short but refined and active so as to adapt to teaching of all types of courses at any stage. In 2011, Hu Tiesheng took the first step to advocate application and dissemination of micro-course in the local area. He defines micro-course as organic combination of all teaching instruments and resources used by teachers in the process of teaching with regard to a certain knowledge point of a certain course according to the new curriculum standard and classroom teaching practice. Teaching video is the primary presentation pattern of a micro-course. In addition, he also puts forward several other factors that micro-course should be characterized by a distinct theme, diversified category, convenient operation, authentic context and easiness to communicate and interact. These factors also embody the advantages of micro-course (Zhang, 2012). Liu Suqin poses that micro-course is an important content of teaching reform that is brought in continuously in the higher education system. She recommends disseminating and bringing micro-course in the entire curriculum system of colleges and universities as early as possible. Zhang (2013) mentions that micro-course, at the very beginning, is a kind of micro-teaching video course. It is a newly decomposed teaching pattern that is constituted based on the teaching plan, exercise and reflection after decomposition of knowledge points by virtue of the traditional teaching instrument together with micro-teaching video which is produced after decomposing the knowledge points of a course. In the meantime, micro-course lays more emphasis on the organic composition of teaching resources and applicability, expandability and openness of a course. Zhang (2013) proposes that micro-course has rapidly become a new pattern of classroom teaching owing to its mini, refined and strong pertinence characteristics. Currently, it is commonly recognized in China that micro-course belongs to a mini network video course developed independently by teachers with duration of ten minutes or so that is fragmented from knowledge points. It is, in itself, a facilitating process for teachers to fabricate a micro-course video based on their own

practical teaching experience according to both need of teaching and need of learners. This process requires a huge amount of information resources to form an effective micro-course video. This is also an important reason why micro-course gets extensive attention and wide application.

2. SIGNIFICANCE OF CONSTRUCTION OF MICRO-COURSE IN THE MAJOR OF SOCIAL WORK

The content of courses for the major of social work is abundant which calls for high professionalism of teachers. In different spaces and in current practice of all teaching fields, micro-course requires all the members of a professional teaching and research team to take part. In this process, the ability of teachers to design information-based instruction and to develop resources gets exercised and consolidated, such as, a flexible instructional pattern, more effective learning effect and the ability to resolve the problem of inadequate teaching resources. Therefore, application of micro-course in the courses of social work is of great significance.

2.1 Micro-Course Realizes More Effective Teaching Effects

The important significance of application of micro-course in the major of social work is that it really answers all knowledge points that students may encounter in the process of learning, resolve all kinds of perplexities students may come across in the process of learning, offers an environment for students to learn independently and better satisfies personalized learning of knowledge points in different disciplines by students. Micro-course lets stratified teaching becomes probable. Teachers are no longer a saint on the platform, but, instead, a supervisor around. Students may choose to learn in accordance with their needs, which not only allows them to make up for deficiency, but also consolidates and intensifies knowledge. After the class, students may independently choose the time of study and content of learning by means of personalized learning, which is helpful to strengthen their interest in learning and which is also extremely effective expansion of teaching in a traditional classroom. The teaching content of micro-course can be stored forever and is available for consulting and correcting. It is likely for students to inquire, at any time and in a convenient way, the courses and difficult points they intend to learn according to keywords and finish a real time learning process. The network logging platform of micro-course may keep track of the teaching progress with the help of the account used to register by students. This helps to grasp the learning progress of each student and offer, in due course, any information related to current learning content and progress. It is also likely to get immediate mastery of the learning preference and

vulnerable links of each student and offer hint of learning content related so as to enhance, at any time and in due course, the learning efficiency.

2.2 Micro-Course Realizes Reflection of Teachers on the Effects of Teaching in the Teaching Practice

Teaching of micro-course in social work enables teachers to resolve the problem existing in the traditional classroom teaching that they are unable to concentrate on the learning progress of each student. With overall consideration of the learning progress of each student, teachers are likely to know how to continuously improve the teaching content. They make take responsive measures of constantly fragmentizing the teaching content in the process of construction of a micro-course and reflecting on fragmented details and fragmented subjects. In this process, teachers make reflections on educational methods and thoughts by means of constant construction of teaching details. This helps to promote professional growth of self-teaching of teachers.

2.3 Micro-Course Realizes Construction of Professional and Excellent Modernized Curriculum System

Design and implementation of a micro-course call for participation by all the members of a professional teaching and research team. Thereby, the ability of teachers to design information-based instruction and to develop resources gets exercised and intensified. However, as a new major, social work has a large majority of young teachers. Therefore, the capacity of construction of excellent courses is relatively insufficient. Nonetheless, application of micro-course in social work helps to motivate young teachers of other courses to take active part in construction of micro-course. This process lays a solid foundation for building a series of excellent courses both at the school level and at the provincial level.

2.4 Micro-Course Resolves the Problem of Inadequate Teaching Resources

For the time being, it is a general phenomenon in colleges and universities that they are faced up with the problem of inadequate teaching resources, such as, limited distribution of classrooms, inadequate resources of teachers and difficulty in inviting foreign teachers. What's more, management of foreign teachers is also a great difficulty in management of teaching. Likewise, courses of social work are also faced up with these problems. The traditional blackboard teaching can no longer meet totally the need for teaching. However, the number of multi-media classrooms is limited, so it can't be guaranteed that application of multi-media has exerted a weakening influence upon the teaching effect. In addition, the course of social work is one that concentrates on the practical application. Thus, it requires each student to frequently partake in practical drills of working skills. However,

the duration of time in a traditional classroom is limited, it fails to satisfy this need. By contrast, micro-course is able to make up for this disadvantage. The teaching mode on the network fragmentizes the knowledge points of a course and makes full use of online video resources. In the meantime, online teaching is matched up with online practical exercises and corresponding guidance. Construction of micro-course system is likely to effectively resolve the above problem of inadequate teaching resources.

3. THE THOUGHT ON CONSTRUCTION OF MICRO-COURSE IN THE MAJOR OF SOCIAL WORK

3.1 Conception of Construction of Micro-Course in the Major of Social Work

Combination of a set of micro-course is required to express the completeness of the content of the course. Construction of micro-course of social work should realize presentation of teachers appearing on camera or add voice over. Micro-course is played as online stream media in video form or animation form. Usually, teaching time is controlled within twenty minutes. The teaching content of each course centers on one knowledge point and emphasizes a certain knowledge point in the course of social work. It is aimed to strive for rich content and diversification within an effective period of time and to adapt to mobile learning on the network. With complete preparation of content for micro-course ahead of the class, a huge amount of information related to this knowledge point is collected, sorted and processed to short but precise course content. Case studies and practical teaching are added too. The objects of the course are independent learners who may not only be students of the universities, but may also be students from other universities and even learners in the society. Therefore, the content of the course should take into consideration of audiences at all levels. It should also be popular and easy to understand, combined with one-to-one exercise content. Matched with the course is learning assessment methods, which are convenient to make an assessment on the condition of learning of each student. The occasion for learning a micro-course is more flexible. Thus, it is possible to realize learning whenever and wherever possible that is not purely confined to the classroom. The equipment used is more diversified and whether computer or a mobile phone can be used for learning by connection through mobile equipment with the network. Learning by means of micro-course enables learning of students to be more convenient and effective. It is consistent with the learning need of students to spend sporadic time on learning and to choose key points to learn according to the knowledge points students intend to learn. Of course, micro-course requires the teachers to

exert more energy and time to collect and sort data and information associated with the course and to strengthen interaction so as to enhance both the learning interest and learning effect of students (Yao, 2012). Design of a micro-course should not only correspond to the requirements of a course, but should also promote in-depth and complete learning of students as well as encourage students to make reflections independently. By virtue of micro-course, it is likely for teachers to uninterruptedly resolve all kinds of problems extracted from the knowledge points fragmentize in the process of course teaching. Therefore, when it comes to set up a micro-course, the first thing to be done is to make an overall plan and refine corresponding knowledge points as the theme of each course. A whole set of course is decomposed to multiple micro learning processes with a special theme. This is not just convenient for students to choose to learn, but also, at the same time, enables students to have a definite object in view and produce higher efficiency when learning owing to an explicit focus on the objective of learning.

3.2 Modes of Supervision on the Effects of Learning by Micro-Course in the Major of Social Work

Learning of micro-course in the social work can be supervised at two levels, namely, self-supervision and supervision by teachers. In self-supervision, students check in real time their learning of a micro-course. By contrast, supervision by teachers is such as to make whole-process supervision on learning of students and offer referential opinions in due course. It is not only the responsibility of teachers to impart knowledge to students, but also to build a learning environment that is convenient for feedback on learning of students. That is, teachers offer support and guidance in different forms for students according to the need of teaching, so as to guide students in learning and promote long-term development of students. Collaboration advocated by micro-course learning is a punchline and the core of collaborative learning in micro-course is micro-course communication. Teachers come to find out problems through their micro interaction with students on the network. This enables them to make up for content of micro-course and deepen the depth of the course. In the meantime, it is likely for teachers to make timely supervision on the learning condition of students. For example, students have an obligation to finish micro-course theoretical and practical homework within the specified period of time and teachers give an ordinary score on the course according to the completion situation of the homework.

3.3 Study on Difficult Points on Construction of Micro-Course

The difficulty of application of micro-course in the course of social work is, first of all, how to change the teaching

concept of teachers. Practice is the best supervisor, so it is necessary for teachers to drive improvement of the teaching method by means of adding practical actions and to make self-evaluation in the process of self-reflection and teaching so as to resolve the problems in due course. It is another difficulty how to realize interactive simulation between social workers and clients in the course of social work by means of micro-course. It is a known fact that interactive micro-course is likely to better achieve the effect of interactive simulation between social workers and clients. It can not only help students to get an accurate mastery of the objective of learning, but also can enable students to have an explicit idea of the framework and structure of the knowledge. In-depth development of fragmentation of micro-course makes knowledge points understood in a profound and effective way. However, to the end of change obscure theory into straightaway micro animation practice demonstration requires the teachers to conduct a study on the content of the teaching materials for several times and to construct micro-course in which students are able to simulate interaction between social workers and clients. This helps students to apprehend the quintessence of practical skills. In the current society where network is improved greatly, only animation with interaction between man and machine can excavate initiative and exploring ability of students.

Construction of micro-course is a reform direction required in the process of modernizing educational development. This process has changed the original role of teachers and has opened up diversified research approaches to courses of social work. This process not only calls for more dedication on the part of teachers, but also requires the universities to construct, step by step, a guarantee mechanism in the research on micro-course and to build a relaxed environment for research on micro-course in the social work. In one word, application of micro-course in the social work is a brand-new model that may affect the developmental direction of teaching in the future and is also a new approach to facilitate professional growth of teaching.

REFERENCES

- Yao, Z. D. (2012). Exploration of design strategy of micro-course. *Information Technology Education in Primary and Middle Schools*, (6).
- Zhang, J. R. (2012). Summary of micro-course. *China Information Technology Education*, (11).
- Zhang, J. R. (2013). *Definition of the concept of micro-course at home and abroad and the current condition of its research practice—Hu Tiesheng, Founder of Micro-Course*. March 3. Retrieved from <http://blog.sina.com>