

To cite this article: Ruohan Li, Yuling Liu and Yunbo Xu* (2025). ON THE REFORM OF BLENDED ONLINE AND OFFLINE TEACHING MODEL FOR “CULTIVATION OF ETHICS AND FUNDAMENTALS OF LAW” COURSE BASED ON TEACHING PRACTICES, International Journal of Education and Social Science Research (IJESSR) 8 (2): 01-09 Article No. 1030, Sub Id 1617

ON THE REFORM OF BLENDED ONLINE AND OFFLINE TEACHING MODEL FOR “CULTIVATION OF ETHICS AND FUNDAMENTALS OF LAW” COURSE BASED ON TEACHING PRACTICES

Ruohan Li¹, Yuling Liu² and Yunbo Xu^{3*}

¹School of Military and Political Education
National University of Defense Technology Changsha, China

²School of Law
Central South University Changsha, China

³College of International Tourism and Public Administration, Hainan University, China

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37500/IJESSR.2025.8201>

ABSTRACT

The blended teaching model is an instructional approach that combines online and offline teaching. This teaching model has been widely adopted in higher education. In 2024, the author’s teaching team explored an educational reform by incorporating modular thematic design into the blended teaching model. Practice has demonstrated that adopting the new teaching model for the course “Cultivation of Ethics and Fundamentals of Law” can achieve better teaching outcomes.

KEYWORDS: blended teaching model, online and offline teaching, Modular thematic Design, Reform

I. INTRODUCTION

“Cultivation of Ethics and Fundamentals of Law” is a compulsory public course mandated by the Central Propaganda Department and the Ministry of Education for first-year university students. It is a core course in the ideological and political theory curriculum, aimed at guiding students to establish correct worldviews, life perspectives, and values. The course is conducted in a traditional classroom setting following the sequence of the textbook structure. However, the traditional teaching mode has significant defects. Firstly, the teaching activities are overly reliant on the textbook, which limits the diversity and depth of its content. Secondly, it neglects the role of students for lacking of active participation and interaction with the teachers. Thirdly, the teaching methods are rigid, making it difficult to stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning. Fourthly, the class is dull, with insufficient emphasis on practice and application, leading to low engagement in the classroom. In teaching practice, our teaching team has conducted exploratory experiments with the blended online and offline teaching model for this course. This teaching model, which combines online and offline

instruction, adopts an approach that divides the course content into several modules based on the knowledge spectrum. Under each module, online MOOC topics and classroom teaching topics are established according to its theme. By rationally designing the content of both online and offline courses, the teaching resources of both can be fully and efficiently utilized to enhance the teaching effectiveness.

II. BLENDED TEACHING MODEL REFORM WITH MODULAR THEMATIC DESIGN

Modular instructional design is a teaching methodology distinct from traditional instructional design [1]. It deviates from the conventional approach of structuring teaching content according to textbook chapters by integrating and consolidating content from the textbook that addresses the same or similar themes into a single module. The course content is divided into several relatively independent yet interconnected thematic modules, with each module focusing on a core theme or issue. The advantage of modular course design lies in its flexibility, allowing teachers to adjust the content based on teaching objectives and student needs, thereby avoiding redundancy and homogenization of the teaching material [2].

Thematic teaching is a teaching model centered around problems or themes. It breaks away from the textbook-centric approach to instruction by consolidating relevant knowledge around specific themes and guiding students to delve deeply through case analyses, discussions, and practical exercises [3]. Compared to the traditional "textbook-recitation" model, thematic teaching transcends the knowledge-imparting mode of conventional instruction, placing greater emphasis on student initiative and practical skills. It aims to help students establish connections between different pieces of knowledge, forming a systematic knowledge network, thereby achieving deep learning and enhancing comprehensive abilities.

Blended online and offline teaching is an instructional model that combines traditional face-to-face classroom teaching with online learning [4]. In this teaching model, instructors can utilize online platforms to provide diverse teaching resources while leveraging the advantages of traditional classroom instruction [5]. Students, on the other hand, can engage in self-directed learning through internet platforms, adjusting the learning content according to their own pace and needs, while also receiving guidance from teachers in the classroom. The blended online and offline teaching model with modular thematic design helps break the constraints of traditional textbook chapters, integrating relevant theories, case studies, and practical content around specific themes, thereby enhancing the systematic and practical nature of the knowledge [6].

The main contents of the textbook of "Cultivation of Ethics and Fundamentals of Law" are as follows: Introduction: Shouldering the Great Responsibility of Rejuvenation and Achieving the New Era; Chapter 1: Understanding the True Meaning of Life and Grasping the Direction of Life; Chapter 2: Pursuing lofty ideals and firmly holding lofty beliefs; Chapter 3: Inheriting the fine traditions and promoting the Chinese spirit; Chapter 4: Clarify Value Requirements and Practice Value Standards;

Chapter 5: Adhering to Moral Norms and Refining Moral Character; Chapter 6: Learning Legal Ideology and Enhancing Legal Literacy.

According to the modular teaching theory, our teaching team has consolidated the teaching content into four modules based on their nature: Life Value Education, Patriotism Education, Moral Character Education, and Fundamental Legal Education. Module One includes four themes: “Questions of the Era”, “Questions of Youth”, “Questions of Life” and “Questions of Dreams”; Module Two comprises three themes: “Chinese Spirit”, “The Patriotism” and “Reform and Innovation”; Module Three consists of three themes: “Serving for Society”, “Advocating Dedication”, and “Virtue and Goodness”. Module Four encompasses five themes: “The Gateway to Law”, “The Rule of Law”, “Rule of law thinking”, “The Constitution”, and “Law Abidance”.

Our teaching team has designed 15 online themes and 15 offline themes to complement each other. Each online MOOC themes lasts 15 minutes, focusing on introducing and teaching basic knowledge and theories. Each offline themes lasts 90 minutes, delving deeper learning using teaching methods like thematic debates, flipped classrooms, mock trials, situational experiences, and exemplary demonstrations. This approach integrates the strengths of traditional classroom teaching with modern information-based teaching methods, shifting the class from “teaching-centered” to “learning-centered”.

Additionally, our teaching team has reformed the traditional assessment methods to align with the new blended teaching model. Previously, the course assessment was: Total score = Final exam score (70%) + classroom performance (30%). The reformed assessment is: Total score = Final exam score (60%) + Formative assessment score (40%). The formative assessment score consists of MOOC performance (20%), learning practice (10%), and classroom performance (10%), tracking dynamically MOOC platform data, Rain Classroom data, and teacher’s records.

III. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE NEW BLENDED TEACHING MODEL REFORM

The reform was officially implemented in the autumn semester of 2024. The author selected two classes that the author served as the main lecturer in 2023 and 2024 as research samples. The class of 2023 with 68 students adopted face-to-face teaching methods. The class of 2024 with 65 students adopted online MOOC and offline face-to-face teaching assisted by Rain Classroom teaching tool. The difference of the course between 2024 and 2023 lies: First, the 2024 course adopts a blended online and offline modular thematic approach, while the 2023 course was designed based on textbook chapters; Second, in the 2024 course, online MOOC were introduced; Third, the practical teaching in 2024 have added “social practice” and “on-site teaching” activities.

The new blended teaching model provides students with more interactive platforms and time. According to class records, the classroom activity of students in this course has significantly increased in 2024 compared to 2023. The interaction time between teacher and students in each class has

increased from 10 minutes in 2023 to 20 minutes in 2024 (see Table I), while the time for indoctrination teaching has decreased from 35 minutes to 25 minutes. The above comparison shows that under the new teaching mode students have more time to participate in classroom interaction and discussion.

Table I. Comparison of classroom interaction

	Number of Teacher-Student Interactions Every 45 Minutes	Time of Classroom Interaction Every 45 Minutes
Class of 2023	32	10 minutes
Class of 2024	216 (21 MOOC messages; 40 classroom interaction; 155 Rain classroom messages)	20 minutes

The participation rate of students in various classroom activities in 2023 is between 32.4% and 44.1%; while the rate has increased to between 69.2% and 84.6% in 2024. (see Table II) This significant increase indicates that the new teaching model can stimulate students' initiative to participate in various classroom activities by providing them with opportunities to fully demonstrate and exercise their abilities.

Table II. Comparison of the number of students participating in various classroom activities

	Participating in Flipped Classroom	Participating in Case Learning	Participating in Thematic Discussion	Participating in Situational Performance	Participating in Work Presentation
Class of 2023	27	25	22	23	30
Class of 2024	45	48	52	55	54

The comprehensive assessment scores of students in 2024 have significantly improved compared to 2023, with an average score increasing from 81.9 points to 89.1 points. (see Table III)

Table III. Comparison of assessment scores

	Formative Assessment Score	Final Exam Score	Comprehensive Assessment Score
Class of 2023	85	80.5	81.9
Class of 2024	92.9	86.5	89.1

From the distribution of students' grades, in 2024, there were a total of 58 people (88.2%) who scored above 80 points, while only 7 students scored below 80 points; In 2023, the number of students in these two score ranges will be 26 (38.2%) and 42 (61.7%), respectively. (see Table IV) Compared to that, the improvement in teaching performance in 2024 is very significant.

Table IV. Segmented comparison of comprehensive scores

	60-70 points	60-70 points	60-70 points	60-70 points
Class of 2023	6 (8.8%)	36 (52.9)	15 (22%)	11 (16.2%)
Class of 2024	0	7 (10.8)	35 (53.8)	23 (35.4%)

Of course, the improvement in students' Comprehensive Assessment Score alone does not fully indicate enhanced overall teaching effectiveness. Additional indicators such as student evaluations, supervisory assessments, and peer reviews should also be considered. Based on data from the Academic Affairs System of our university, the teaching quality of this course in 2024 has shown significant improvement compared to 2023. (see Table V)

Table V. Comparison of comprehensive teaching evaluation situation

	Students' evaluation	supervisory experts' evaluation	peer teachers' evaluation	Comprehensive Teaching Evaluation
Class of 2023	A	A	A	Excellent at the college level
Class of 2024	A+	A+	A+	Excellent at the university level

IV. STUDENTS' FEEDBACK AND THE SHORTCOMINGS OF THE NEW BLENDED TEACHING MODEL

The blended online and offline teaching model with modular thematic design has many advantages, but it may also face challenges. To address this, a survey was conducted during the last class of the course in 2024 aiming to gather students' opinions on the teaching model. All 65 collected questionnaires were valid. The survey revealed that among the 8 courses offered to students in the first semester of their freshman year, 2 courses (Advanced Mathematics and Ideological and Moral Education) adopted the blended teaching model; while the other 6 courses were taught offline, among them, 2 courses used Rain Classroom teaching tools.

In response to "Q1: Do you prefer blended online and offline teaching or traditional classroom teaching?", 61.5% of students (40) chose "blended online and offline teaching", 23.1% (15) chose "traditional classroom teaching", and 15.4% (10) chose "no preference".

For "Q2: Are you satisfied with the blended online and offline teaching in this course?", 92.3% (60) selected "very satisfied", 4.6% (3) chose "somewhat satisfied", and 3.1% (2) chose "dissatisfied".

Regarding "Q3: Do you find the MOOC topics in this course necessary?", 89.3% (58) selected "very necessary", 9.2% (6) chose "somewhat necessary", and 1.5% (1) chose "not necessary".

Students' feedback on Q1-Q3 indicates that the majority hold a positive attitude toward the blended online and offline teaching model. In the context of they've received both blended teaching and traditional offline teaching, their feedback shows that they prefer the blended teaching model more than traditional offline teaching model.

In response to "Q4: Did the online MOOC of this course help your learning?", 60% of students (40) chose "very helpful", 27.7% (13) selected "somewhat helpful", and 18.5% (12) chose "not helpful".

For "Q5: Did the Rain Classroom of this course help your learning?", 89.2% (58) chose "very helpful", and 10.8% (7) selected "somewhat helpful".

For “Q6: Did the online MOOC increase your learning burden?”, 60% (40) chose “no”, while 40% (25) selected “it did”.

For “Q7: Did Rain Classroom increase your learning burden?”, 96.9% (63) chose “no”, and 3.1% (2) selected “it did”.

Students’ feedback on Q4–Q7 indicates that most of them recognize the effectiveness of online teaching, but their approval of Rain Classroom is higher than that of online MOOC. This is because compared with the Rain Classroom, MOOC teaching lacks real-time interaction and its content is more fixed. In addition, it also stems from the fact that the MOOC imposes more learning pressure on students, while the Rain Classroom increases students’ participation in teaching activities. This feedback indirectly indicates that our MOOC design to some extent overlooked the issue of reducing students’ learning burden.

In response to “Q8: Do you mind that the modular thematic design of this course does not fully align with the textbook’s structure?”, 98.5% of students (64) chose “no”, while 1.5% (1) selected “I do”.

For “Q9: What is the greatest convenience brought by the blended teaching model in this course?”, 50.8% (33) chose “fully participating in class”, 26.2% (17) selected “expressing views promptly”, 21.5% (14) chose “free communicating with teachers and classmates”, and 1.5% (1) selected “no convenience”.

For “Q10: What is the greatest inconvenience brought by the blended teaching model in this course?”, 30.1% (20) chose “some students always engage in meaningless discussions casually”, 23.1% (15) selected “online MOOC are always rigid and lack timely interaction”, 18.5% (12) chose “Rain Classroom sometimes distract my attention”, 15.4% (10) selected “ multi-platform teaching brings too much useless information”, and 12.3% (8) chose “no inconvenience”.

Students’ feedback on Q8–Q10 shows that they are not concerned about whether the course strictly follows the textbook. Instead, they focus on whether the blended teaching model effectively enhances their classroom participation and meets their learning needs. The greatest convenience that the new blended teaching model brings to students is that they can fully participate in the classroom, express their own opinions promptly, and interact with teachers in a timely manner. However, students are also negatively impacted by irrelevant information during the blended learning process.

In response to “Q11: In your opinion, which aspect of our online MOOC needs to be improved most?”, 40% (26) chose “it’s lack of real-time interaction”, 26.2% (17) chose “it’s lack of personalized support”, 18.5% (12) selected “it’s lack of timely supervision”, and 15.4% (10) selected “it’s lack of depth”.

For “Q12: In your opinion, which aspect of our offline class to be improved most?”, 36.9% (24) chose “simplifying procedural assessments”, 29.2% (19) selected “reducing unrealistic discussions”, 18.5% (12) chose “increasing interaction between teachers and students”, 12.3% (8) selected “adding more student-led activities”, and 3.1% (2) chose “improve teaching quality”.

Students’ feedback on Q11–Q12 indicates they prefer engaging teaching activities but dislike overly complex assessments. They aspire to lead the classroom rather than passively receive education. The feedback further indicates that the biggest problem with MOOC teaching is that students are unable to take a leading role in class.

V. CONCLUSION

After implementing the blended online and offline teaching model with modular thematic design in “Cultivation of Ethics and Fundamentals of Law” course, the author believes this model can inject new vitality into the course. On one hand, the online modular thematic teaching design can offer flexibility and rich resources, allowing students to self-schedule learning and utilize diverse materials to meet personalized needs. On the other hand, the offline modular thematic teaching design emphasizes strong interaction, relevance, and systematicity, enabling teachers to quickly assess learning outcomes through online quizzes and data analysis, thus adjusting teaching strategies. Practice shows this new teaching model can enhance students’ learning interest and teacher’s teaching effectiveness.

Based on teaching experience and student feedback, the author suggests the following measures to enhance the blended online and offline teaching model with modular thematic design:

1. Utilize online teaching tools like AI tools to enhance online MOOC’s interactivity, thereby addressing students’ feedback on poor learning experiences and the lack of individualized education in online courses.
2. Optimize online content and shorten teaching duration to avoid overburdening students with excessive learning tasks.
3. Strengthen online course supervision through real-time interaction, attendance checks, group discussions, and progress monitoring to prevent students from "lurking" or "idling" on the platform.
4. Adjust the content of online and offline teaching appropriately to avoid redundant instruction. The focus of online teaching should be on enhancing students’ knowledge levels, while offline teaching should prioritize improving their application skills.
5. It is necessary to update teaching resources in a timely manner to maintain the timeliness, cutting-edge and practicality of teaching content.
6. Measures should be taken to increase interaction and communication between students and teachers, and the class should be handed over to students by allowing them to fully utilize the learning resources to improve their knowledge level and application ability.
7. To optimize the assessment method and to reduce tedious assessment processes, focusing more on evaluating students’ learning outcomes rather than their exam scores.



ACKNOWLEDGMENT

None.

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