Blended Teaching Design of Hotel Customer Management based on Xuexi Tong

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Abstract: This paper explores the innovative application of a blended teaching mode for the core hotel management course, "Hotel Customer Management" (HCM), utilizing the Xuexi Tong learning platform. This study analyzes the platform's advantages for student learning and propose a comprehensive teaching design that has been implemented and evaluated using qualitative research methods. The results demonstrate that the Xuexi Tong-based blended teaching mode effectively stimulates student learning interest, fosters initiative, promotes deep learning, and cultivates practical abilities. This paper details the teaching design content, implementation process, and evaluation methods, offering valuable insights for promoting and applying blended teaching approaches in hotel management education.

Keywords: Blended Learning; Xuexi Tong; Teaching Design; Hotel Customer Management.

1. Introduction

Curriculum development is a cornerstone of university education. China's Ministry of Education launched the First-Class Undergraduate Course Construction Programme in 2019 [1], aiming to inspire universities to create excellent, representative, and sustainable courses while fostering a passion for teaching reform. This initiative has encouraged faculty across disciplines to design or reform courses, striving for "first-class" status. Effective course design requires innovation and intellectual engagement, necessitating the utilization of modern information technology to enhance students' comprehensive abilities [2]. The rise of the internet has fundamentally transformed teaching and learning methodologies. Notably, in 2008, Salman Khan established Khan Academy, the world's first online education platform, offering students global access to knowledge [3]. Since 2013, Chinese universities have implemented online learning platforms like Chinese University MOOC, providing students with free, high-quality resources [4]. The emergence of internet has significantly reshaped teaching and learning paradigms, leading to the widespread adoption of blended learning in higher education, blended learning offers a comprehensive learning experience that complements traditional classroom instruction [5].

This study focuses on the "Hotel Customer Management" (HCM) course, a core undergraduate course for Hotel Management students. HCM equips students with theoretical knowledge and practical skills in hotel customer management, directly impacting the quality of talent development in the hotel industry. Despite its significance, research on HCM course design remains limited. Additionally, challenges have been identified in the course delivery. Second-year students in the program often lack work or internship experience within the hotel industry. Furthermore, some students exhibit a lack of motivation and a dependence on teacher instruction.

Effective blended learning emphasizes learner engagement and course design that positively influences student motivation [6]. This research aims to design and implement a blended learning approach using the Xuexi Tong online teaching platform to improve the teaching and learning effectiveness of the HCM course. The proposed approach can promote personalized student development while aligning with the needs of the hotel industry. Ultimately, this research contributes to the Ministry of Education's efforts to construct first-class undergraduate courses.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Definition of Blended Teaching

The concept of blended learning is not new in educational research. In current literature, the terms blended teaching, hybrid teaching, and mixed-mode teaching are often used interchangeably [7][22][23]. Broadly defined, they all encompass a pedagogical approach integrating face-to-face instruction and online learning experiences [8]. More specifically, blended teaching combines web-based technology, various pedagogical approaches, and any form of instructional technology with face-to-face instructor training to achieve desired outcomes, create an effective learning environment, and accomplish educational goals [9]. Allen and Seaman suggest that online learning should constitute 30% to 80% of the total instruction [10].

Chinese educators have also recognized the combined benefits of traditional and online learning in blended teaching. In China, the blended teaching model proposed by Kekang He is a representative concept. It combines the strengths of traditional teaching methods with those of networked teaching. This approach not only maintains the teacher's leading role in guiding, inspiring, and monitoring the teaching process but also fully engages students as active learners, fostering their initiative, enthusiasm, and creativity [11]. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of online and blended learning in higher education, these online resources can be repurposed to support blended learning [26]. In this study, a blended learning course refers to one that is designed and reformed using MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), SPOCs (Small Private Online Courses), or other online educational platforms, incorporating appropriate digital teaching tools.

2.2. Applications of Blended Teaching

Scholars have conducted extensive research on the applications of blended learning, with varying focuses. Some

researchers have studied the advantages of this approach through case studies. Morgan found that blended learning shifts the focus of education activities from teacher-centered to learner-centered [12]. Mustafa and Hasan discovered that blended learning outperforms traditional face-to-face learning in terms of average academic achievement and student engagement [13]. For teachers, this approach can optimize time allocation, simplify instruction, and allow for more personalized support for students [14].

Other researchers have focused on the technical aspects of online courses. However, it's recommended that instead of concentrating solely on the technical support, researchers should prioritize the overall learning experience. Efforts should be made to design effective blended teaching experiences for both teachers and learners [15]. For example, the online component of blended learning can provide flexibility and enhance content understanding, while the face-to-face component can facilitate emotional communication between teachers and students [16].

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employs a two-round action research design to achieve its objectives. Action research is an iterative process that allows for the exploration of problems and the development of solutions simultaneously [17][25]. It fosters continuous improvement through self-reflection and enables the researcher to adapt their teaching strategies based on student feedback [18]. This approach aligns with the goal of investigating the effectiveness of Xuexi Tong in stimulating student learning motivation within a blended learning environment.According to Kurt Lewin, action research' the process of action research should be into five steps [19].

Step 1: Analysis, Fact finding and reconceptualization

Step 2: Planning
Step 3: Acting (Execution)
Step 4: Observing (more fact finding)
Step 5: Reflecting and acting again

3.2. Participants and Learning Platform

The participants in this study are second-year Hotel Management students majoring in Hotel Customer Management (HCM) at Sichuan University of Science & Engineering (SUSE). This is an inspection course designed to develop professional interest and identity by focusing on hotel customer management strategies. It emphasizes the acquisition of soft skills such as problem-solving and teamwork. The course comprises 32 lessons, each lasting 45 minutes, with four offline sections per week.

The current SUSE teaching environment utilizes Xuexi Tong, a popular educational resource platform in China. This platform offers a wide range of functionalities: (1) Comprehensive Course Resources.Xuexi Tong provides a vast repository of learning materials, including video, audio, and text resources, catering to diverse learning styles. (figure 1 illustrates the platform's interface). (2) Flexible Assessment Tools.The platform supports various online testing and homework formats. Instructors can create and customize assessments based on teaching progress and student learning needs. (3) Interactive Learning Environment. Xuexi Tong facilitates student engagement through interactive communication and discussion features. This allows students to participate in online discussions, pose questions, and answer their peers' inquiries, fostering a more interactive learning environment. (4) Data-driven Support. The platform tracks and analyzes student learning behavior and outcomes. This data provides valuable insights into student performance and empowers instructors to personalize their teaching strategies.

Figure 1. The interface of class statistics

3.3. Research Process

Following Lewin's action research model, this study will be conducted in two rounds across two separate semesters.

Round 1: The primary aim of the first round is to investigate the viability of blended learning using Xuexi Tong and design teaching content tailored to the platform's functionalities. Round 2: The designed course will be implemented with a

new cohort of second-year students. Student feedback will be collected through surveys and interviews during this round to refine and improve the blended learning approach.

Through this iterative process, the study aims to develop a more engaging and effective blended learning experience using Xuexi Tong for Hotel Management students at SUSE. The following table shows the research process based on Lewin's action research model:

<p style="text-align:center">Table 1. Research Process</p>

	Round 1- Construction	Round 2- Implementation
Analysis and fact finding	1) Questionnaire survey: analysis and understand the current situation of students, and their interests and needs on blended learning; 2) Summarise students' ideas and design the content for both online and offline learning courses: create online learning resources (video, documents) in SuperStar, balance the percentage of learning online and offline courses, etc.	1) Before the course, ask students to watch online video and do some homework; 2) Questionnaire survey: compare students' need in round 2 with last round
Planning	1) Discuss the homework and activities, teaching methods with team members; 2) Design the action plan by previous data collection, team discussion and survey with students before class	Design the new action plan by previous data collection, team discussion and survey with students before class
Acting	1) Implement the plan and adjust the content and teaching mode according to students' feedback; 2) Collect and analyse their opinions on blended learning from survey and interview; 3) Meeting and discuss with team	
Observing	1) Observing behaviour and learning outcomes of students with team members and compare our findings; 2) Record class activities and watch them over and over again if necessary 3) Finding out the existing problems in class. For example, students have lower motivation in blended learning	
Reflecting and acting again	1) Analyse, evaluate and summarise the study observation and collected data. Put forward an hypothesis on why they have this or such problem. For example, maybe they are not interested in this course, or maybe the online content is boring 2) Invite student to do questionnaire survey or interviews and find out the reason of problems 3) Improve the course design and prepare to act again in round 2	1) Analyse study data. Compare with date in round one; 2) Writing research reports according the process and results of the research to communicate with my peers

4. Findings

4.1. Blended Teaching Design Framework

In the course implementation process, online teaching activities are carried out on the Xuexi Tong learning platform. Based on this APP, the research proposes a teaching framework for HCM, which can be divided into four modules: preview module, classroom interaction module, practice module and evaluation module. By combining face-to-face instruction with online learning activities, this framework seeks to enhance student engagement, improve learning outcomes, and provide a flexible and personalized learning experience. Table 1 shows the detailed information on this course design, and Figure 2 to Figure 4 show more specific examples.

Figure 2. Images of preview module: educational resources and study situation

Table 2. Blended teaching design framework

Module	Contents	Description and examples
Preview module	Study situation investigation	Online surveys or discussions to assess students' background knowledge and learning preferences. Examples include questions about:"Do you have any working experience in hospitality industry?""How do you understand the purpose of hotel customer management?""What is the difference between customer satisfaction and loyalty?""Who is the real customer of hotel?"
	Educational resources construction	Building a comprehensive resource database. ● Such as syllabus, textbooks, videos, articles, and other materials for each chapter. ● The materials should be reusable and adaptable across semesters. ● Upload the teaching content one week before class and send a notice to the class.
	Pre-reading activities	Enhancing student interest through pre-class tasks like documentaries or case studies, while monitoring learning progress. For example: ● Completing the learning task of the corresponding micro-lesson video on the learning platform; ● Tracking student engagement through features like learning time and frequency to ensure participation.
Classroom interaction module	Sign-in	Utilizing QR code scanning for online sign-in, saving time and offering flexibility.
	Learning activities	Implementing interactive elements like question-answer sessions, voting, quizzes, and topic discussions to encourage active participation. ● For example, "Quick Responding" features can assess knowledge retention from the preview module. ● Incorporate game-based elements (e.g., points, badges, leaderboards) to enhance student motivation and engagement.
Practice module	Group or individual task	Enhance soft skills by assigning online practical tasks: ● Online Collaboration: Students work together on group projects or assignments using Xuexi Tong's collaboration tools. ● Interactive Simulations: Students practice hotel customer management skills through interactive simulations or role-playing exercises.
Evaluation module	Online homework	Utilize online homework to improve efficiency in correcting assignments
	Learning effect evaluation	Based on background data to understand student learning outcomes such as test scores, homework completion, engagement, etc Inviting students to answer reflection questions related to teaching content and online learning For example: "what is your most impressive part in this course"
	Teaching effect evaluation	Conduct online survey or hold face-to-face interviews to gauge student satisfaction with the course and blended learning

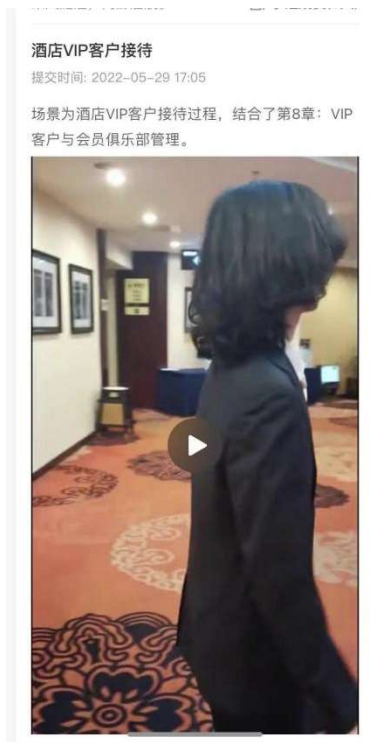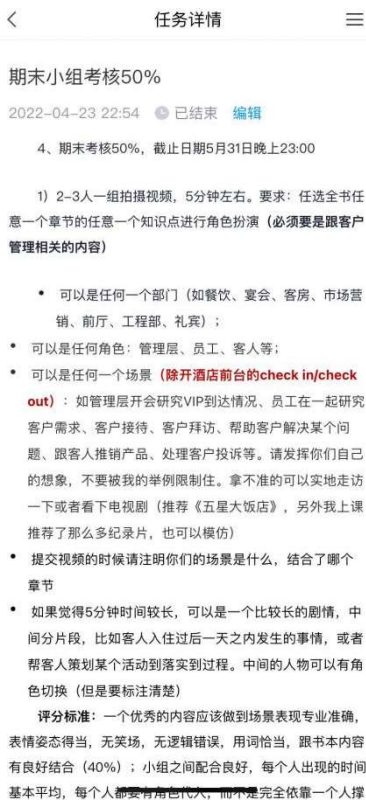**Figure 3.** Images of interaction module: sign-in and learning activities (topic discussion)

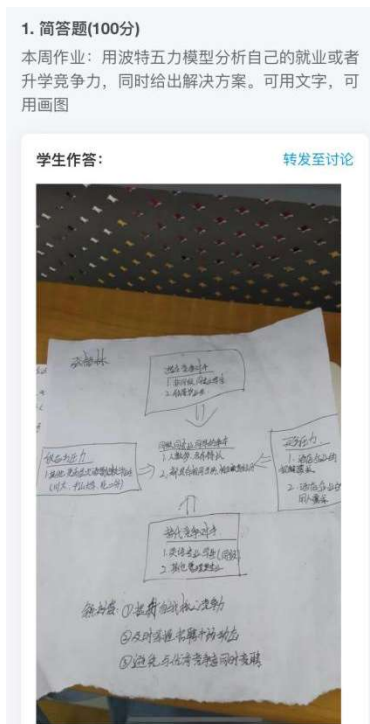**Figure 4.** Images of practice module: group and individual tasks

Figure 5. Evaluation module: homework and reflection

4.2. Key Consideration of Blended Teaching Design

Before implementing the blended learning framework, the learning objectives for the HCM course should be clearly defined, aligning them with industry standards and student needs. This includes considering the knowledge, skills, and attitudes students should develop upon course completion. Additionally, the curriculum should be comprehensive, integrating online and offline components to ensure a smooth transition between face-to-face and online activities. The online portion can offer flexibility for students, while the face-to-face component can foster emotional communication between teachers and students [16][20].

The weekly offline teaching of HCM consists of four sections, totaling 180 minutes. In offline teaching, the teacher systematically organizes the teaching content, addresses students' doubts, and divides the session into three parts: (1) Content Summary (20-30 minutes): The teacher summarizes the key content of each class. (2) Homework Review: The teacher discusses key points based on completed homework. (3) Interactive Activities: The teacher incorporates a variety of learning activities, such as lectures, discussions, case studies, simulations, group projects, presentations, online quizzes, assessments, and interactive multimedia content (e.g., videos, animations).

When utilizing the Xuexi Tong platform for the online components of the course, teachers should firstly explore the platform features. Familiarizing themselves with the platform's features and functionalities to identify suitable tools and resources for content delivery, communication, collaboration, assessment, and feedback [21]. Then, tailor the platform's interface and settings to match the course's specific requirements. Meanwhile, regularly evaluating the effectiveness of the blended learning framework and make necessary adjustments to improve student outcomes.

4.3. Effectiveness and Challenges of Blended Teaching by Xuexi Tong

Feedback from students and teaching results indicate that blended learning can enhance student engagement and motivation, especially through the interactive elements and personalized learning paths offered by Xuexi Tong. This has fostered greater student participation and interest in the course material. Students have demonstrated better understanding and application of hotel customer management concepts through the combination of face-to-face instruction and online resources. Xuexi Tong can also foster collaboration among students through features like online discussion forums and group projects.

The online component of the course has provided students with greater flexibility in accessing course materials and completing assignments at their own pace [29]. It has also facilitated communication between students and instructors, as well as among students themselves, leading to better understanding and problem-solving. The majority of students have expressed satisfaction with the blended teaching mode and have appreciated the benefits of using Xuexi Tong.

While the implementation of the blended teaching mode has shown positive outcomes, there are areas for further exploration and improvement. For example, effective integration of technology into the curriculum requires careful planning and ongoing evaluation. It is important to ensure that technology is used to enhance learning, rather than simply for the sake of using technology [13][27]. The blended teaching mode necessitates a shift in pedagogical approaches to accommodate the unique characteristics of online learning [15]. Educators may need to adapt their teaching strategies to facilitate online discussions, provide timely feedback, and support student learning in a virtual environment. In addition, ensuring that students have access to adequate technical support and resources is crucial for the success of a blended teaching mode [28]. This may involve providing training on how to use Xuexi Tong, offering technical assistance, and creating a supportive online learning environment.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

In conclusion, the implementation of a blended teaching mode for the HCM course using Xuexi Tong has demonstrated its potential to enhance student learning and engagement. By addressing the challenges and opportunities associated with blended teaching, educators can continue to refine their approach and maximize the benefits of this innovative teaching method. The successful implementation of the blended teaching mode for "Hotel Customer Management" offers valuable practical implications for educators in the hospitality industry.

This study aimed to explore the design and implementation of a blended teaching mode for the HCM course using the Xuexi Tong platform.

This research allows us to gain a rational understanding and accurate evaluation of our work process, ultimately improving our teaching practices. Teaching is a process of teacher-student interaction. In the industrial era, the primary responsibility of education was concentrated on teachers. However, the advent of the knowledge economy has blurred the boundaries of traditional professional divisions of labor [24]. Students need to construct new knowledge through experience and participation rather than passively listening to lectures. Only when students' initiative is fully mobilized can they truly achieve cognitive and ability improvement [27]. Therefore, students should be trained to take responsibility for their own learning, allocate resources such as online courses, and explore paths for personal growth.

Future research could explore the following aspects. Conducting comparative studies between blended learning and traditional teaching methods to assess their relative effectiveness. Investigating the long-term impacts of blended learning on student learning and career outcomes. Exploring strategies for scaling up blended learning initiatives in higher education institutions, and developing adaptive blended learning approaches that can personalize the learning experience even further.

This study demonstrates the potential of blended learning in enhancing the teaching and learning of HCM. By carefully designing and implementing blended learning strategies, educators can create engaging, effective, and flexible learning environments that meet the needs of today's students.

Acknowledgments

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