

Construction of “Ecology-empowered and Practice-driven” Integrated Practice Course teaching system for Professional degree postgraduate-- A case study of the MBA Integrated Practice Course of Beijing Jiaotong University(BJTU)

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Abstract. MBA aims to cultivate high-level applied professionals with international vision and sharp business acumen. Based on the case studies of BJTU, the MBA integrates practical courses and designs a scientific and systematic curriculum, which is oriented to professional practice, combined with the actual business problems at the forefront of enterprises, and boosted students to find practical solutions through the application of theoretical knowledge, realizing the mutual promotion of business application and new academic knowledge. The integrated practice program focuses on the cultivation of student quality, cooperation between schools and enterprises, actively promoting education empowerment and business innovation, and realizing the industry-academia-research practice ecology of " university-enterprise - students - society" multi-body value co-creation.

Keywords: Industry-university research; MBA; integrated practice courses; eco-empowerment.

1. Introduction

At the National Conference on Graduate Education held in 2020, Xi Jinping emphasized that graduate education has an important role in cultivating innovative talents, improving innovation capacity, serving economic and social development, and promoting the modernization of the national governance system and governance capacity. Li Keqiang gave instructions that graduate education shoulders the important mission of training high-level talents and innovation and creation, and is an essential cornerstone of national development and social progress.

The Program for the Development of Professional Degree Graduate Education (2020-2025) proposes that professional degree graduate education mainly focuses on the needs of specific career fields in society and cultivates high-level applied professionals with strong professional ability and professionalism who can creatively engage in practical work. Professional degree graduate education is the main channel to cultivate high-level applied professionals, and the development of professional degree graduate education is an inevitable choice for the economic society to enter the stage of high-quality development and an important path to actively serve the construction of innovative country[1].

2. The Importance of Practical Teaching in Mba Education

Master of Business Administration (MBA) aims to cultivate pragmatic, complex and application-oriented high-level management talents who can meet the needs of high-level management of enterprises. Since the launch of the professional degree education of MBA in 1991, China has trained a large group of high-level management talents to meet the needs of reform and opening up and socialist modernization construction, making active contribution to economic and social development.

The MBA degree is a kind of professional degree, and its characteristics are:

Firstly, MBA cultivates pragmatic management talents, and the enrollment source is aimed at current personnel with several years of working experience in enterprises or their competent departments, and the content of the curriculum is closely integrated with actual practice, strengthening the practical aspects, and the cultivation process is closely connected with enterprises

or jointly cultivated with enterprises, and the cultivation mode of returning to enterprises after graduation.

Secondly, MBA requires both a firm and correct political direction, but a broad and overall knowledge, combining various functions of enterprise management with multiple courses to form a synthesis of broad knowledge and strong ability. This is different from theoretical research talents.

Thirdly, MBA should have a strategic vision, a sense of enterprise and responsibility of courage and hard work, the ability to organize and direct the production of strain, judgment and decision-making. Therefore, the teaching process should emphasize the cultivation training of ability.

Fourthly, MBA can recruit graduates with different professional background and practical experience, facilitating highly educated and complex personnel. Systematic and scientific education at the postgraduate level to prepare them for the work they will be required to do in senior positions in business and economic management [2].

As an important part of business schools, MBA education has to pursue breakthroughs in teaching, contribute business wisdom to industry development, and cultivate business elites with international orientation and leadership skills. For MBA students, classroom learning is an important part of thinking shaping and knowledge reserve, but to transform knowledge into solving practical issues in enterprises, especially innovation, special integration of practical ability training session is needed. Based on theoretical learning, the cultivation of MBA students especially emphasises the ability to innovate in practice and the practical application of management theory knowledge in enterprises. Therefore, it is urgent to strengthen the practical link as well as the training of integrated ability in the cultivation and teaching of MBA students.

Furthermore, curriculum thinking and politics is an effective way to realize the task of moral education, and it is an important task for MBA education to integrate "moral education" into practical teaching, how to integrate values guidance into knowledge transmission and ability cultivation, and help students shape correct world view, life view and values in practical learning.

3. The Construction of MBA Integrated Practice Course in BJTU

3.1 Integrating Practice Course Construction Background

MBA program of BJTU was established in 1994, one of the first MBA programs established nationally. As early as 1998, BJTU raised the concept of building an educational platform of "MBA people" which is "industry-oriented, coordinated and interactive, competitive and stimulating, and dynamic and innovative" in view of the situation of MBA education and development trend, aiming to realize the long-term development of MBA education through the structure of a new educational platform. The goal of MBA education program of BJTU is to become a cradle for cultivating socially responsible, pragmatic, enterprising, teamwork, and popular senior business management talents with strategic vision and leadership in the industry. Therefore for MBA education, it is very necessary to aim at innovation and entrepreneurship, enhance students' innovation ability, rethink the delivery form of knowledge and tools, and build a platform for the cultivation of practical innovation in MBA.

During the 20 years since its establishment, the MBA program of BJTU has been adhering to the combination of theory and practice, expanding and innovating the practical ability cultivation mode of MBA students through multiple means and ways, building a high standard entrepreneurial platform and activating students' innovative ability. The university actively carries out enterprise visit, case competition and entrepreneurship competition, which greatly enriches the second classroom of students, and establishes several MBA internship bases to provide students with off-campus internship and social practice opportunities to enhance the ability of comprehensive use of theoretical knowledge to solve practical problems. However, these initiatives are relatively fragmented and not systematic and comprehensive enough. Especially for full-time MBA students, although they have enough time to learn theoretical knowledge, they lack practical opportunities

and the cultivation of practical ability is more urgent, and the fragmented practical activities can hardly achieve the goal of practical teaching. Therefore, the "integration" of "practice" is especially important.

Driven by the mission, BJTU started to build a practice program for MBA education in 2016 and added a compulsory 1-credit course - Integrated Practice - for full-time students in the new training program in 2020. This compulsory course is a socially beneficial business education cooperation project, which aims to solve practical problems of enterprises and improve students' management practice ability through the cooperation platform jointly created by enterprises and universities.

3.2 Integrating practical course construction goals

The core of the integrated practice course is integration and practice, which means integrating the theoretical knowledge structure of MBA courses, integrating theoretical knowledge tools and practical operations in actual management projects, so as to integrate into a logically complete practical project course. On the one hand, it solves the problem of combining theory and practice in MBA education, and improves the ability of MBA students to operate in the practical field of management; on the other hand, it proposes valuable and operational solutions for the management of enterprises. Through the whole process of "problem identification → problem analysis → problem solving", students can really master the skills of integrating technological innovation and management change, perceive and face the dynamic changes of the global competitive environment, grasp the pulse of the development of new industries, and truly play the contribution of MBA to social and economic development.

The goal of MBA ideology and political education integrated throughout curriculum to train students to think about ideology and political from the perspective of a manager. Through the teaching of practical courses, MBA students get to know the essence and laws of enterprise management, so as to set up positive and correct values and establish a global perspective for managers to engage in thinking and government work. Therefore, in the teaching process of integrating practical projects, we should also pay attention to the education of responsibility values and strengthen MBA students' sense of corporate commitment and social responsibility.

3.3 Integrating Practical Course Construction Content

The Integrated Practice Course is based on market orientation and driven by industry-specific corporate consulting projects by integrating high-quality teaching and social resources to stimulate MBA students' self-construction and participatory learning. By inserting the development requirements of industries and enterprises, we actively create an interactive platform for MBA practical teaching to ensure the cultivation goal of MBA students becoming future business leaders with global vision, adapting to local contexts and possessing social missions. Specific initiatives are as follows:

3.3.1 Constructing practice-driven course subject activities

The integrated practice course is specifically composed of five phases of activities, which are also the five main activities of the practice course.

Phase 1: Enterprise contact. Namely, the cooperative enterprises provide the issues needing to be solved in the process of enterprise development and relevant basic data information. Based on the professional direction of the issues, professional teachers are invited to guide the project, and the teacher team communicates with the enterprise to further clarify the research issues.

Phase 2: On-campus warm-up. Based on the research issues, on-campus instructors and corporate experts jointly teach MBA students the fundamentals of corporate consulting and related theories and tools, and provide an initial introduction to the corporate situation. Then students are freely grouped together, and a joint consulting team is formed by students and faculty.

Phase 3: Formal research. Students analyze the issues raised by enterprises under the guidance of teachers, collate and collect information, and carry out on-site research work in enterprises; discuss the issues several times, propose solutions, and produce standard consulting and research reports.

Phase 4: Report presentation. Students visit enterprises or enterprise representatives visit campus, and students make the final reports and discuss reports with enterprises. The teachers summarize and comment with feedback from enterprises and students summarize their experiences to improve report.

Phase 5: Follow up. Students will follow up on the issues encountered in the enterprises' implementation for six month, dig further in the issues researched, and develop management cases.

3.3.2 Build a teaching and practice platform for industry-academia research

To realise the teaching goal of "unity of knowledge and action" and to ensure the effective conduct of the main activities of the course, a teaching platform comprising instructors, corporate supervisors, teaching management and students needs to be built to reshape the roles of the main actors and thus create the value of the integrated practical course (see Fig. 1).

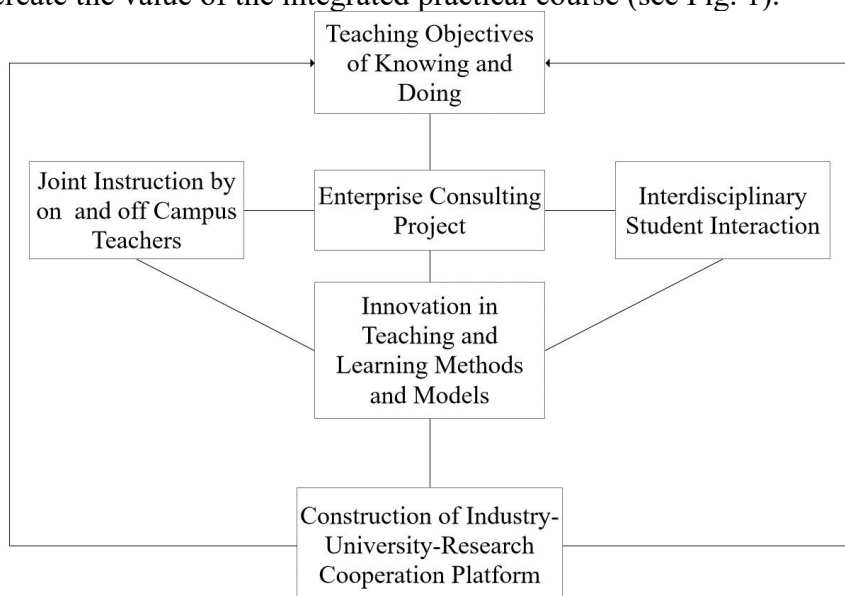


Fig. 1 MBA Integrated practice course industry-university research teaching and practice platform
(1) Platform participating subjects

1)Advisers team: The integrated practice course is taught by a professional teacher as the responsible teacher, and a joint interdisciplinary teachers team is formed according to the professional direction of the research project, including enterprise strategy, marketing, human resources, organizational behavior and other professional instructors, as well as instructors of case writing and enterprise consulting diagnosis, so as to build a task-oriented integrated practice course teacher team.

2)Course management teachers: Teaching managers are arranged by the MBA Centre as course teachers to manage the project release, summary, enterprise contacts, enterprise visits and interviews, defence arrangements, etc.

3)Curriculum support team: The Alumni Office and the Case Centre jointly build a library of enterprises and cases for the integrated practice course. The Alumni Office helps invite alumni enterprises participate in the course construction and build a library of enterprises, while the Case Centre is responsible for case analysis and writing guidance and building a library of course cases.

4)Enterprise mentor: Inviting business professionals to lecture business practice successes and confusions, assessing and guiding research projects for practicality and feasibility as business mentors.

5)Students' Teams: Student teams are formed by mainly full-time MBA students, supplemented by part-time MBA students. Several research teams are formed according to the research problems of the participating enterprises, and each research team is composed of about 8 students.

(2) Responsibilities and benefits of each party involved in the subject

1) Participating enterprises. Firstly, suggest research topics for the students' level, which can involve practical issues in enterprise management such as enterprise strategy, marketing, branding, digital transformation, etc. Secondly, provide information about the company if possible without commercial confidentiality, designate the person in charge to interface with the research team and arrange visits to company. Finally, the responsible person listens to the report and makes comments and suggestions, and gives feedback on the project.

2) Teacher Team. It includes professional teachers, teaching support teachers and teaching management teachers. The teacher team is responsible for construction and effective operation a whole course, including tasks such as contacting enterprises, defining research issues, answering questions and solving problems, and establishing a course alumni pool and case library. Meanwhile, professional teachers should also introduce their academic research results into the project research and lead students to apply theoretical research to practical management, thus establishing an innovation platform and innovative results of industry-university-research cooperation.

3) Student Team. Firstly, collect and analyze data according to the needs of the enterprise; Secondly, visit and research the enterprise, analyze the research data and complete the research report; Thirdly, follow the confidentiality rules and avoid disclosing the relevant contents of the enterprise to unrelated persons; Finally, complete the report and combine the feedback from the enterprise and teachers to make the final improvement of the report and submit it to the enterprise, and complete a management case. MBA students, especially full-time MBA students, enhance their consulting skills and research through practical subject research, and truly put their studies to use.

The "integration" of the integrated practice course also includes the integration of the participating subjects in the teaching platform, where each participating subject puts its time and energy, knowledge and skills, resources and abilities into the integrated practice project, and through continuous discussion and communication, information exchange and cooperation, the behavior and values of multiple subjects from "school-enterprise, students and society" are mutually permeable and integrated. Finally all subjects promote the integration and development of "industry- academia -research" in positive interaction and collaborative cooperation, promote sustainable development of economy and society, and realize value co-creation(See Fig. 2).

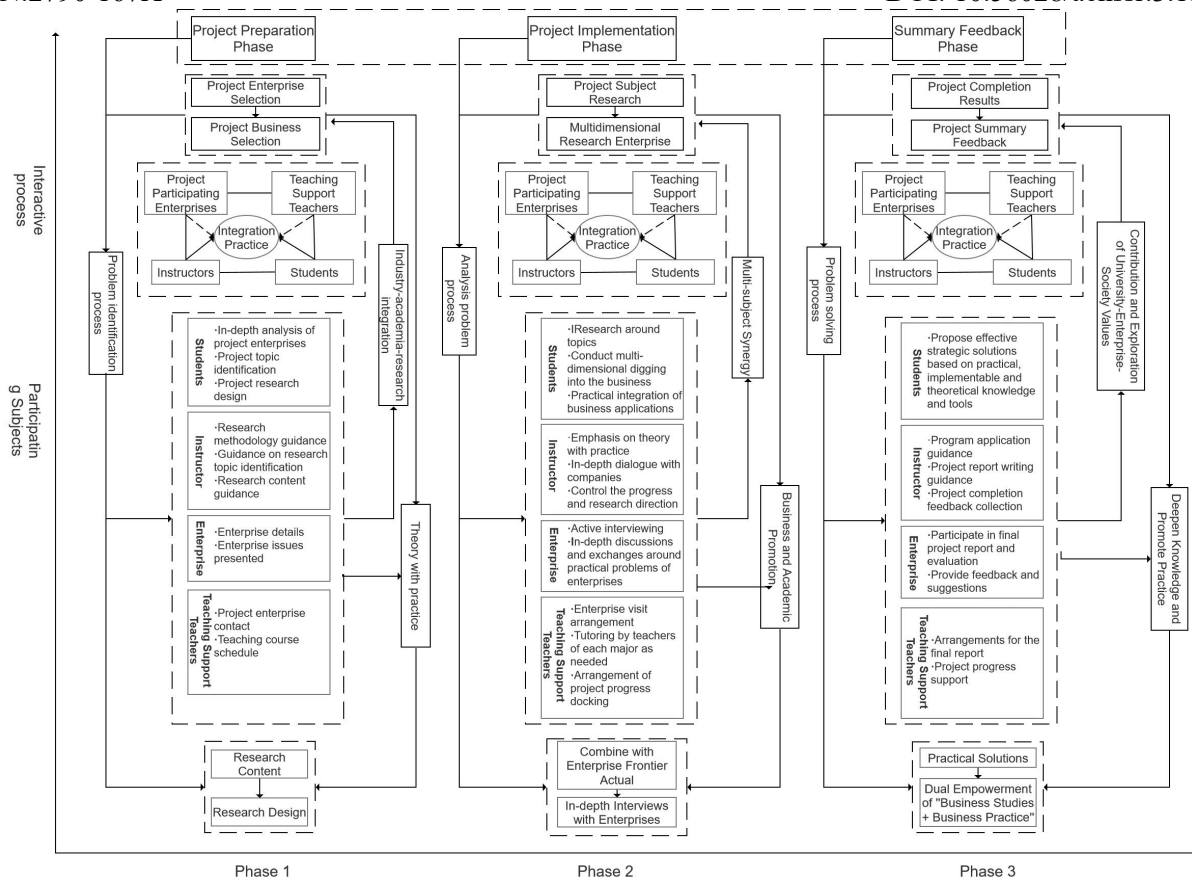


Fig. 2 Integration of practice course participant and value co-creation

(3) Strengthening the ideology and political content of the curriculum in project practice

The curriculum ideology and politics should be integrated into the selection of practice enterprises and the determination of consultation content. The "touch points" and "integration points" of socialist core values such as "patriotism, dedication, honesty and friendliness", and the spirit of hard work, innovation and professional ethics are explored. Through careful teaching design, the correct values are taught to students in a "silent" way, inspiring students' empathy and achieving the organic unity of knowledge and skills taught with education of ideals, beliefs and values, forming a synergistic education between the professional and ideology and politics courses.

3.4 Integrating the Effectiveness of Practical Course Construction

3.4.1 Course Implementation

BJTU Integrated Practice Course was officially launched in 2021 as a compulsory course for full-time students, with 52 students of the full-time MBA class of 2020 participating in this course. Four alumni companies were invited to participate in this course. After listening to the introduction of each company, students were divided into 8 groups, and conducted in-depth corporate research and interviews on each enterprise in the form of A and B groups under the guidance of professional teachers on the background, current problems or dilemmas faced by the enterprises; using theoretical knowledge and tools such as strategic management, marketing, service marketing and brand management to analyze the issues and situations of the company and propose effective solutions. The project took half a year to complete, and the final presentation was held on 27 December 2021. 8 student research teams presented their project results to 4 companies, showing the results of their integration practice over the past half year. In response to each group's report, enterprise representatives and teachers made comments on the practicality, implementation and application value of the report one by one, and made suggestions for improvement. After the evaluation meeting, students from each group submitted 8 research reports and 8 management cases (see Table 1).

Table 1. List of Project Reports of MBA Integrated Practice Course of BJTU

Number	Participating Enterprises	Project Team	Report Title
1	Beijing Baiyang Technology Co.	Group A	Fenjiu Cultural and Creative Brand Promotion Suggestions
2		Group B	Bacchus honey —— The "Drunk" Healthy Choice
3	Beijing Yijie Ecology Co.	Group A	Yijie Ecology: Start a New Model of Desert Control
4		Group B	A study on the market positioning of EJEC's sago products
5	Beijing Yun-zen Jinling Lotus Hotel	Group A	Beijing Cloud Gramercy Jinling Lotus Hotel
6		Group B	Research on the Evaluation and Improvement of Hotel Service Quality Based on Customer Experience
7	Beijing Yuntong Jingnan Auto Plaza	Group A	Value Co-creation Road of Multi-entity Collaborative Service Innovation in Yuntong Jingnan Automobile Industrial Park
8		Group B	Digital service eco-alliance for the 4S shops in Xing'ao

3.4.2 Student Feedback

Participating students agreed gain a lot from the integrated practical course: a new insight to business management practice, an overview and application of the theories learned, a foundation for their thesis writing, and a clearer future career direction. The following is the feedback from students:

A. "The integrated practice project allows us to visit enterprise, through visits and in-depth interviews with the management, to understand the whole situation of the operation of the enterprise, and hit the opportunities and challenges the enterprise faced, and meanwhile to use the theoretical knowledge we have learned to explore and investigate deeply, which is a new learning experience."

B. "Integrating practice shows us that it is not easy to be practical and combine theory with practice, and solving practical problems in enterprises requires new thinking about future workplace employment through multi-dimensional research."

4. Experience and Insights of Building an MBA Integrated Practice Course

To achieve MBA cultivation goals and fully utilize the role of integrated practice courses, the construction of integrated practice courses ought to strengthen the management as follows.

4.1 Clarify Teaching Objectives and Form a Scientific Practical Teaching Model

As a course, it is necessary to set clear teaching objectives - "market demand as the guide, student practice as the centre, research projects as the carrier, and competence enhancement as the goal" - and the operation of the project always upholds the principle of "teacher-led, company-directed, student-led", emphasising students' independent learning and flexible application of knowledge, combining theory, practice and social responsibility, consolidating what they have learned in practice, and systematically training professional skills and social adaptation and other vocational abilities.

It also requires scientific and detailed teaching planning, including teaching content, time schedule, teaching process and teaching management system such as performance indicators for teachers and performance evaluation system for students. The implementation of the course should not only emphasize the full commitment of teachers and students and the active participation of all parties in the enterprise, but also make overall planning and design, strengthen organization and management, and guarantee the goal of improving students' ability and quality.

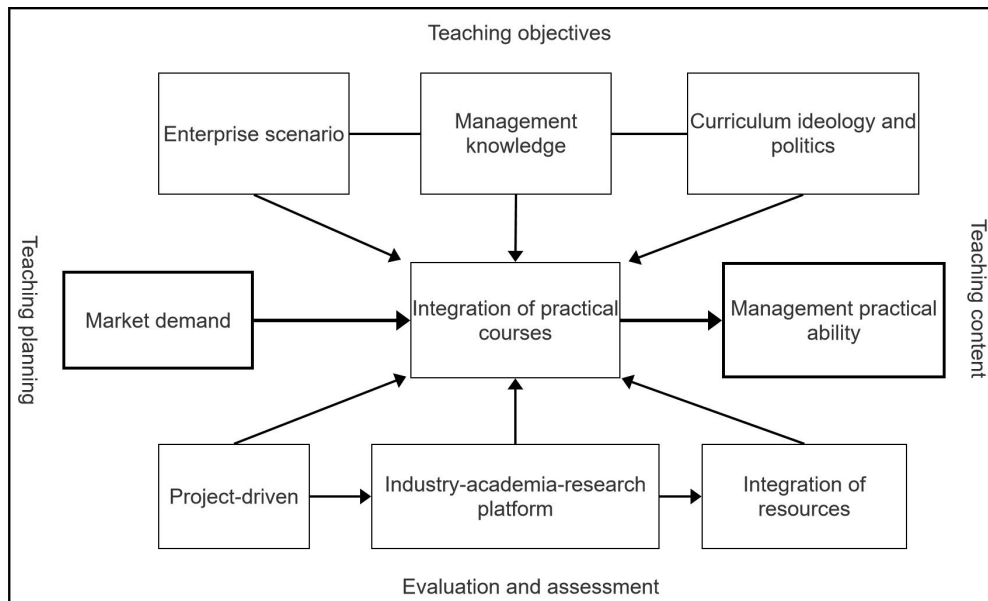


Fig. 3 MBA integrated practice project teaching model

4.2 Integrate Teaching Resources and Collaborate to Build An Industry-University-Research Cooperation Platform

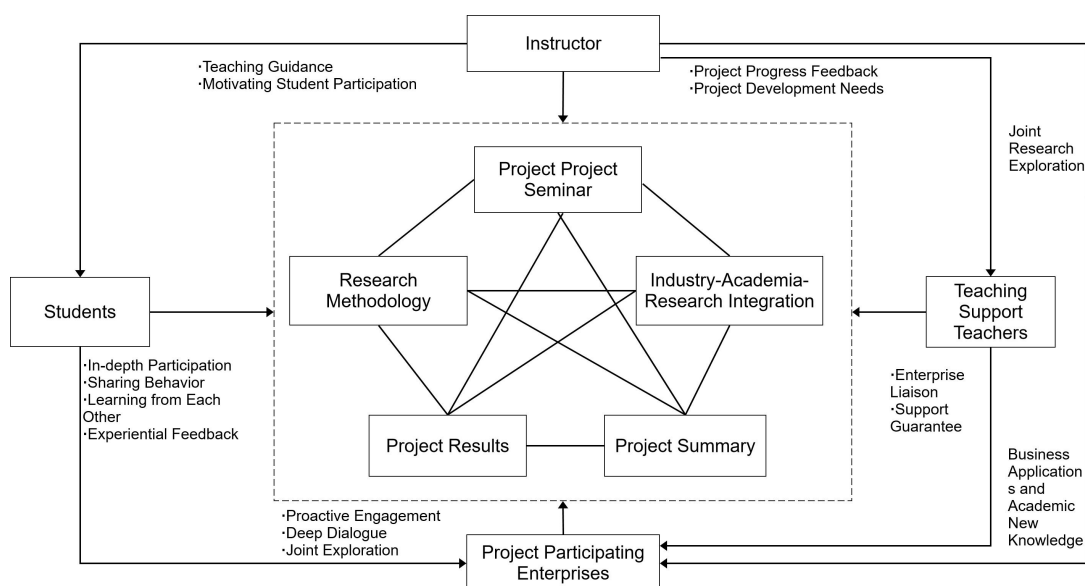


Fig. 4 Industry-university-research cooperation platform integrating practical courses

Although the integrated practice course is a compulsory course, the successful completion of the course requires the deep involvement of multiple parties, including teachers, teaching administrators, students and enterprises. It requires teachers who have both teaching and research abilities to guide students, corporate practitioners with management experience to share with students, and enterprises with management practice problems to provide practice platforms for students, and teaching management departments, alumni offices, and case centers to provide corporate contacts, case resources, and project management for students. By integrating resources of enterprises, teachers and universities, reshaping the roles of participating subjects, it can promote the efficiency of synergy and cooperation among participating subjects, and build a platform for industry-university-research cooperation, thus ensuring the successful completion of the integrated practice course.

4.3 Integrating the Ideology and Politics of the Curriculum and Taking Social Responsibility

In the era of collaborative development of social organizations, it is urgent to integrate the teaching and research process of practical courses to train students to think about ideological and political issues from the perspective of managers and actively carry out education on the values of responsibility. Firstly, guide students to understand that managers can effectively reach corporate goals only by promoting their work according to the laws of management; managers' work requires shaping a good organizational atmosphere, establish correct values and actively practising social responsibility as an important impetus to corporate culture building, values, innovation, strategic planning for development and corporate image. Secondly, help MBA students to establish the value of harmony, honesty and fraternity in practice, cultivate students' sense of family and patriotism, boost national pride and strengthen social responsibility.

Of course, the implementation of the integrated practice course itself is also the undertaking of social responsibility of MBA students, and the social value of MBA students is realized by solving management problems and completing scientific research work for enterprises under the joint guidance of teachers and enterprises.

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