

## Learn by Doing, Do by Learning: A Case from the Comprehensive Reform of Practice Education and Process Education of Sociology Majors from the School of Public Administration of South China Agricultural University

BY

LIAO Yang<sup>1\*</sup>; MENG Li<sup>2</sup>; ZHANG Qinjie<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,3</sup>School of Public Administration, South China Agricultural University, Guangzhou 510642 China

<sup>2</sup>Guangdong Center for Rural Policy Studies, SCAU, Guangzhou 510642 China



### Article History

Received: 31/08/2022

Accepted: 04/09/2022

Published: 06/09/2022

### Corresponding author:

LIAO Yang

### Abstract

Taking the comprehensive reform of major categories of enrollment and training in the pilot program of the School of Public Administration of South China Agricultural University as an example, the article discusses the comprehensive reform of practice education and process education for sociology majors from 2011 to 2020, and shares the main practices and experience.

**Keywords:** Sociology major; major admissions; categorized training; professional comprehensive reform; practice education; process training

## Introduction

The School of Public Administration of South China Agricultural University is one of the comprehensive reform units of the school's pilot major-category enrollment and major-category training programs. During the ten-year reform exploration and practice process from 2011 to 2020, the comprehensive professional reform of the college has gone through three stages: mid-term adjustment in 2014, the further adjustment in 2017, and optimization and adjustment of professional structure in 2020. Among them, the comprehensive reform of practice education and process education majors in sociology is worthy of attention.

### I. Basic situation

- 1) The ten-year reform of major categories of recruitment and training

As one of the three schools piloted by SCAU, the School of Public Administration has recruited students as a major category since July 2011. The first two academic years are conducted for major categories, and the fifth semester is divided into majors for professional training, trying to get through administration management, public utility management, land resource management, social security, sociology, and social work 6

departments (referred to as "three managements and three societies"), and 6 undergraduate majors are subject to professional barriers, but they also face the curriculum system, curriculum, Challenges with structural issues such as teaching arrangements. Facing new tasks, new situations, and new problems in the early stage of the pilot reform, teachers and students generally feel the pressure of teaching and learning.

The leaders and teachers of the school sorted out and summed up the advantages and disadvantages of the reform of major enrollment and major training in a timely manner. In 2013, a mid-term evaluation was conducted, and in 2014, the major enrollment and major training of the entire college were adjusted to public management and sociology. Enrollment training is carried out in two major categories, the original one major category is divided into two major categories, and the major categories of majors are divided in advance to the fourth semester to complete, and the fifth semester enters the professional training, making the major categories more scientific reasonable.

At the same time, in 2014, the school separated the real estate development direction of the major of land resource management, and launched the undergraduate major of real estate development

and management. So far, the school has formed a school scale of 6 departments and 7 undergraduate majors.

In order to meet the undergraduate teaching review and evaluation work carried out by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, South China Agricultural University carried out on-campus professional evaluation and self-evaluation work in 2015-2016. The self-evaluation experts from outside the school and their completed self-evaluation reports suggested that the school should make further adjustments to the college's major enrollment and major training work, that is, to separate the two majors of land resource management and real estate development and management from public management. From the "land and real estate management category" (referred to as "Tufang category").

However, since the major of real estate development and management belongs to the first-level discipline of management science and engineering, and the major of land resource management belongs to the first-level discipline of public management, the undergraduate majors under the two major first-level disciplines cannot be combined into one major category (the Ministry of Education's There is no major category code of "Tufang" in the enrollment program catalog code), and the enrollment process cannot complete the enrollment of the "Tufang" professional category. Therefore, from July 2017, the School of Public Administration has implemented land resource management. The two majors, namely, real estate development and management, are recruited according to their majors, but the major categories of "earth housing" are cultivated; the remaining 5 majors are still recruited according to professional categories (the public management category includes administrative management, public utility management, and labor and social security). There are 3 majors, and the sociology category includes 2 majors of sociology and social work), and major categories of training are carried out respectively.

At the same time, the school conducts comprehensive research and judgment based on feedback from teachers, students, and graduates, and decides to divide major categories based on the academic performance points of the first academic year. The semester enters the professional training stage.

According to the spirit of SCAU 13th Party Congress and the work deployment of the school's major adjustment and optimization, in 2020, the college will optimize and adjust the professional structure according to its own development orientation and discipline, and major layout, and return to 6 departments and 6 undergraduate majors, but The undergraduate talent enrollment and training mode of 2 professional enrollment and 2 professional category enrollment and major category training is still retained.

To sum up, in the ten years from 2011 to 2020, the School of Public Administration of South China Agricultural University has gone through 1 major category (all 6 majors in the entire college) → 2 major categories (public management and sociology) → The enrollment reform process of 2 majors (land resource management, real estate development and management) + 2 major categories (public management and sociology), and the training mode of the major categories has gone through two divisions (the entire college

is divided into two categories, public administration, and sociology) and two-thirds ("Tufang", public administration and sociology) reform adjustment. Judging from the time limit of the division of major categories, there is a gradual return to the majors trend of "five into four into three" (that is, from the 5th semester to the 4th semester, and then to the 3rd semester in advance).

## 2) Exploration and practice of comprehensive reform of sociology majors

The reform of talent training mode is the general trend, and it is the inevitable requirement of social and economic development and scientific and technological progress for the training of innovative talents. At present, the fixed, single, and homogeneity of the talent training model of colleges and universities in mainland China is not conducive to the development of students' individuality, and it is difficult to meet the real needs of the society for talents. The traditional teaching mode only pays attention to teachers' "teaching", and does not pay enough attention to how students "learn". In the era of "Internet +", how to guide students to study independently and cooperate in innovation is an important issue that needs to be solved urgently in China's higher education.

We take advantage of South China Agricultural University's "Three Society" majors (that is, three undergraduate majors of sociology, social work, labor, and social security) concentrated in the School of Public Administration (the only one in Guangdong Province and even South China), started in June 2011 In September of the same year, the pilot reform and exploration of large-scale enrollment training began. In 2012, relying on the key projects of school-level education reform and provincial education reform projects, the research and design plan began. In 2020, there has been more than 6 years of inspection period.

Based on years of exploration, practice, and testing, we have sorted out and summarized the undergraduate professional talent training model compatible with the "three societies". In particular, when Liao Yang served as the deputy dean of the School of Public Administration of South China Agricultural University from April 2016 to July 2020, he was in charge of the undergraduate teaching work of the school. 2 times presided over the revision of the undergraduate professional talent training plan (2017 and 2020).

In addition, we rely on school-level and provincial-level education reform projects and quality engineering projects to carry out exploration and implementation, and conduct interdisciplinary professional cross-infiltration and integration in the two first-level disciplines of sociology and public management and sociology, social work, and social security "three clubs" majors, with "student-centered", "problem-oriented" and "innovation and entrepreneurship as the carrier", to solve the practice path and innovation ability improvement problem of students' "independence + cooperation + innovation", from the macroscopic perspective of sociology and the perspective of social security. From the micro perspective of meso and social work, construct the education and teaching concept of "independence + cooperation + innovation", optimize the talent training mode, and solve the problem of disconnection between talent training and real social needs. The reform of the talent training model of "independence +

cooperation + innovation" realizes the cultivation of innovative talents in interdisciplinary majors.

For more than ten years, we have been focusing on "learning on the road, Doing on the learning" to promote the reform and practice of sociology majors. On the one hand, we emphasize "learning on the road".

We advocate that students go out of the campus, walk in society, "measure urban and rural areas with footsteps", and carry out independent and innovative learning through social investigation or social work practice under the guidance, demonstration, and guidance of teachers. Therefore, this "learning on the road" has multiple meanings: First, on-the-spot teaching is carried out on the road. Teachers lead students to conduct on-the-spot teaching in urban and rural communities. Teaching peers, theoretical knowledge lectures, and professional skills training at the same frequency; second, academic problems are discovered "on the road", teachers inspire students' academic thinking, stimulate students' academic interest, and promote students' innovation and entrepreneurship training through on-site teaching; It is teaching or scholarship that is always "on the way", always only in progress, not in completion.

On the other hand, we emphasize "practice on the way of learning". According to the development of the Internet + information age and the development trend of higher education teaching in the world, we actively promote the construction of online courses (MOOCs) and online and offline hybrid courses while promoting the construction of excellent courses and teaching materials. For example, South China Agricultural University's first batch of MOOC construction projects (approved at the SCAU-level in 2015 and included in the construction of online open courses in Guangdong Province in 2018) - Cultural Interpretation of Modern Life, after years of construction, was launched in October 2019. The Wisdom Tree MOOC online education platform was officially launched, becoming the first MOOC of the School of Public Administration (the sixth in SCAU). The provincial-level high-quality video open courses taught by teachers Liao Yang and Wang Yuyufeng have been technically transformed and reviewed and recommended by the Guangdong Provincial Education Work Committee. They were successfully selected in the MOOC study column of the Guangdong Learning Platform in early December 2019.

In addition, teachers such as Liao Yang also actively use the Wisdom Tree and Rain Classroom online education platforms to build SPOC and implement flipped classroom teaching. Through these reform explorations and practices, student-centered personalized and autonomous learning is achieved. Due to early planning and taking precautions, the online teaching in the spring semester of 2020 under the influence of the new crown epidemic will not be affected at all. The teaching case of anthropology and modern life written by Liao Yang also won the first prize of the "Excellent Teaching Case of Online Teaching in the Epidemic Stage (First Prize)".

- 3) The effect of practical education and process education of sociology majors
- 1) Teachers and students in the school benefit from a wide range. The School of Public Administration is a college with a large enrollment scale of undergraduates in South China Agricultural University. It recruits 800-900 students every year, and more than 200 students from the three majors of sociology, social work, and labor and social security are recruited. Since the exploration and practice of this achievement, It has benefited more than 1,000 people. In addition, the completers of this achievement will also teach platform courses or guide innovation and entrepreneurship plan projects to other majors in the school, or open a series of limited-select courses for the whole school of South China Agricultural University, which will benefit more students.

In the practice test of teaching reform for more than 6 years, relevant teaching achievements have successively won the first prize of Guangdong Education and Teaching Achievement (Higher Education) (2014), and the first and second prizes of teaching achievements of South China Agricultural University (2016, 2017, 2019, 2021) and other positive evaluations. These achievements have been promoted in course teaching and practical teaching, and the teaching team building and students' innovative practice have benefited a lot.

Students have benefited a lot from our educational reform exploration and practice. In recent years, they have actively applied for and undertaken various innovation and entrepreneurship training programs and won awards in relevant competitions. From 2012 to 2016, undergraduates of the School of Public Administration of South China Agricultural University undertook 22 national-level innovation and entrepreneurship training projects, 58 provincial-level, and 121 school-level projects; won 26 national-level disciplines, innovation and entrepreneurship, skills competitions, and 25 provincial-level projects. , 142 items at SCAU level.

In the innovation and entrepreneurship training projects established by South China Agricultural University from 2017 to 2019, students majoring in sociology presided over nearly 20 projects, accounting for more than 16% of the total projects established by the School of Public Administration in the past three years, including 1 at the national level and 6 at the provincial level. Items, 11 items at school level. These projects mainly involve topics closely related to society, such as "rural areas", "Internet +", "governance", "youth group", "elderly group", etc., illustrating that undergraduate students majoring in sociology can learn through innovation and entrepreneurship education and practice of college students. The platform can organically combine theoretical research with China's national conditions and social practice, and better achieve the goal of professional talent training.

Over the past ten years, the admission rate of postgraduate students majoring in sociology has remained between 16% and 19%, and it has remained at around 19% from 2017 to 2019, which is higher than the postgraduate rate of all other majors in the School of

Public Administration. In 2017 and 2018, it was also higher than the average postgraduate rate of other liberal arts colleges in SCAU and the whole school. Judging from the majors of the undergraduate graduates of the School of Public Administration of South China Agricultural University in 2017 and 2018 at home and abroad, the majors of sociology graduates are not only sociology, but also folklore, film culture research, agricultural science, and technology organization and service, and even mathematical science, which means that the sociology major has a strong ability

to expand, is good at docking and integration with other disciplines and facilitates interdisciplinary research and professional practice, which also confirms the strong adaptability of the sociology major. Features. Through further studies in domestic and foreign universities, sociology students have accumulated considerable alumni resources and potential social capital for the School of Public Administration and South China Agricultural University. See Figure 1 for details.

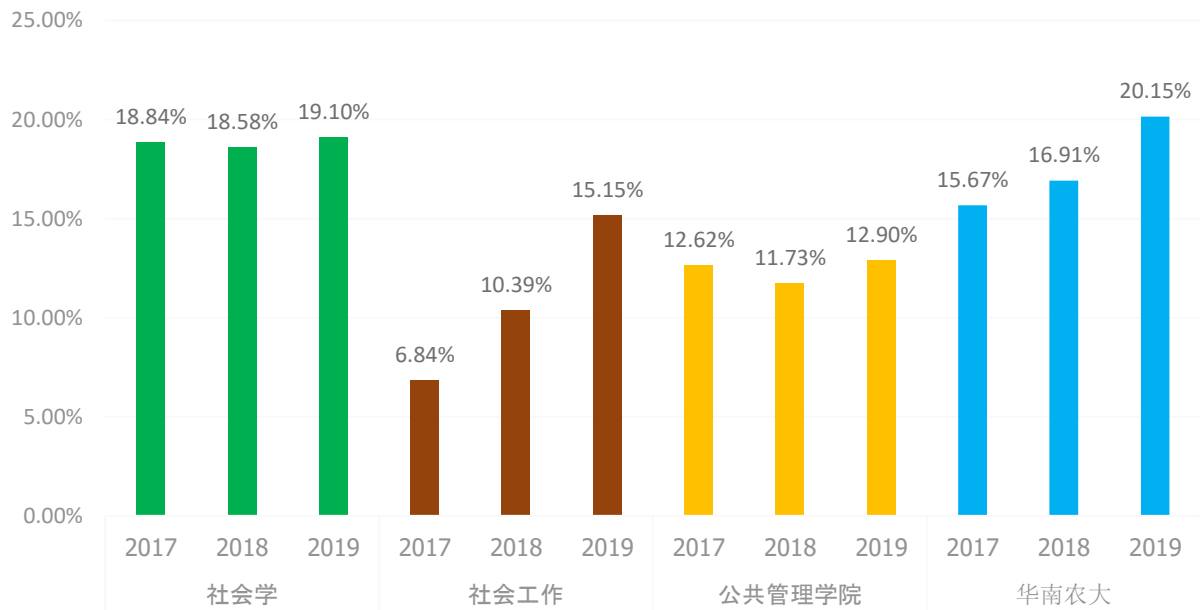


Figure 1 2017-2019 Sociology graduates and continuing education rates

Judging from the average monthly salary of graduates majoring in sociology in South China Agricultural University from 2017 to 2019, the salary level shows a gradual increase. Although it is lower than the average salary level of the School of Public Administration and South China Agricultural University, and the student's employment satisfaction is 3.6 points (see Figure 2), the students' comprehensive professional satisfaction is high, and the future career salary promotion space is large (see Figure 3).

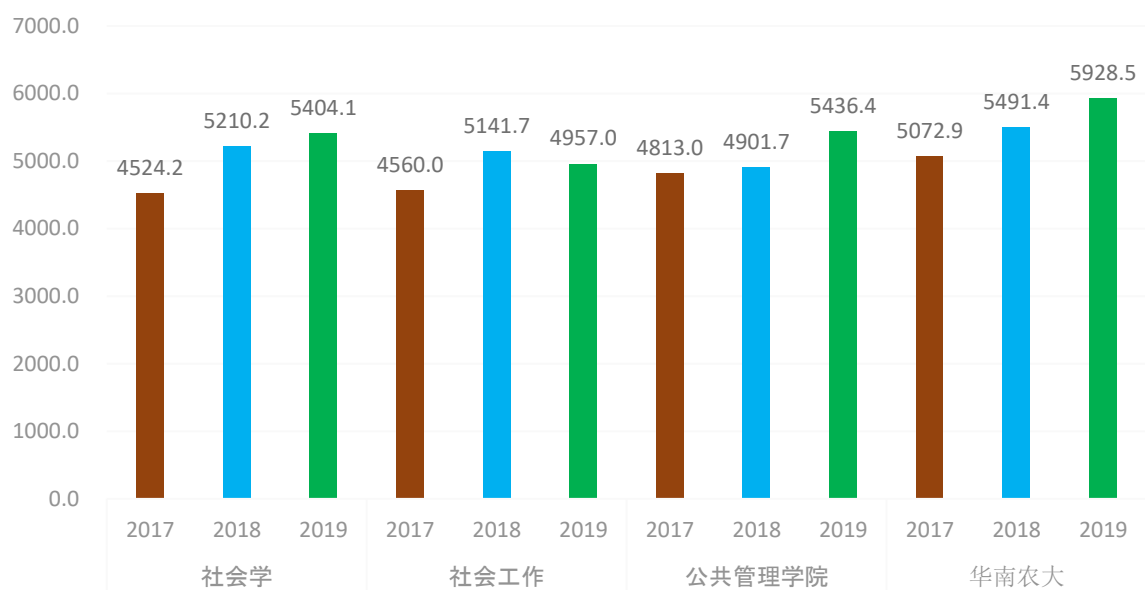


Figure 2 Average monthly salary of graduates of sociology and colleges in 2017-2019 (Yuan)

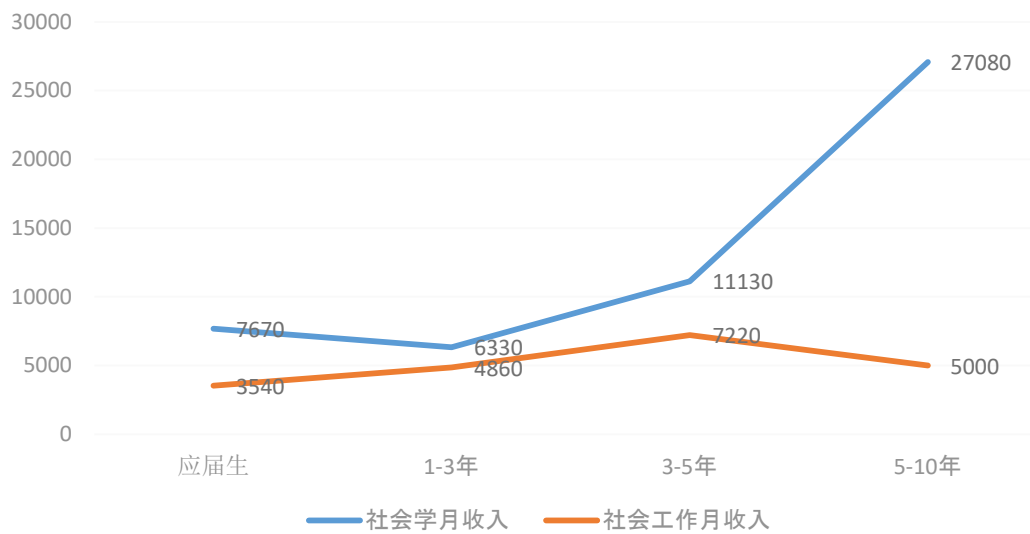


Figure 3 Career history and salary change chart of Sociology and Social Work majors on Jiyouji.com

- (2) Domestic and foreign counterparts and related units and people came to exchange and visit, which produced a good demonstration effect and social influence, and established a good academic professional brand.

In recent years, more than 10 universities in Guangdong Province have come to study for reference, including South China Normal University, Guangdong university of finance and economics, Shenzhen university, etc.; universities in other provinces include Beijing university of technology, Shenyang university, Mianyang normal university, Quanzhou normal university, china women's more than 10 schools including Hua Zhong agricultural university; other leaders from the social work department of the ministry of civil affairs and the Ningxia civil affairs department came to visit and exchange.

in addition, social service agencies in hong kong and Taiwan and foreign universities such as Canada visited and exchanged. the visitors were very interested in the exploration and practice of the reform of the cross-disciplinary cultivation of innovative talents in our major recruitment and training, and they also spoke highly of the reform of the education and teaching mode for the classification, socialization, and internationalization of social work majors.

The promotion and application of relevant media, course websites, and WeChat public account platforms have expanded the social influence and social benefits of this achievement.

"Guangming daily", "Chinese journal of social sciences" and other media carried out publicity reports on this achievement. in the 2016 and 2017 national university discipline and professional strength rankings published by Guangzhou daily, the two major disciplines of sociology and public administration of the school of public administration of south china agricultural university both ranked among the top 50 in china, with sociology ranked no. 36, and public administration ranks 49th.

## II. main practices

1. relying on scau-level and provincial-level education and teaching reform and quality engineering project construction, explore the construction of an education and teaching model of "classroom teaching + practical teaching + on-site teaching".

this model emphasizes "one course, three teaching methods, and three teaching links"; "one major, three different disciplines, and more than three different teachers cross each other"; "one college, three different departments, three different groups of disciplines infiltrate each other". through this comprehensive reform, we have consolidated the foundation for large-scale admissions and cross-disciplinary training of professional talents that adapt to the development of the times and social needs.

2. Respect students' autonomy and individualized development, and build a talent training mechanism of "four selfs", "five integrations" and "six creations".

first of all, the implementation of large-scale enrollment, and large-scale training. realize the cross-penetration of social security major and sociology and social work in the curriculum setting, exchange teachers in curriculum teaching and extracurricular innovation and entrepreneurship practice activities, and cross-team students from different majors to gradually form the "four-self" (independent learning, independent topic selection, independent design, independent innovation), "five combinations" (student cooperation, teacher-student cooperation, inter-school cooperation, teaching-research cooperation, industry-education cooperation), "six innovations" (ideological innovation, thinking innovation, method innovation, model innovation, practical innovation, and theoretical innovation) talent training mechanism and model.

second, let go of majors and allow students to change majors. students can choose their favorite majors by changing majors (classes) at the beginning of the second semester according to their interests and career plans. a minor or second degree is encouraged.

if you miss the opportunity to change majors (classes), you can also choose flexibly by applying for a minor major or a second degree, and the training mechanism is more flexible.

third, encourage the independent choice of course modules. the modules in "expanding education" have a high degree of freedom of course selection. among them, the "expansion education" of sociology major has 3 modules and 17 courses, the social work major has 4 modules and 23 courses, and the labor insurance major has 5 modules and 20 courses for students to study independently, which will help students in the discipline. reconstructing knowledge in professional cross-penetration.

3. *Strengthen practical teaching and innovation and entrepreneurship education, and improve students' practical and innovative ability.*

Firstly, build morality and cultivate people, and integrate "three rural" feelings and "one understanding and two love" spiritual education into the whole process of education and teaching. one is the integration of curriculum teaching. the 4a series of general courses and the "big country, agriculture, rural areas and farmers" courses with the characteristics of agriculture and forestry education are set up to stimulate students' interest in learning agriculture, understanding agriculture, love farmers, and love the countryside. the second is the integration of practical activities. through the "three going to the countryside" and special research activities in the summer vacation, the "three entering plan" for students to enter the countryside, the community, and the farmhouse will be implemented, and students will be guided to understand and serve the "three rural areas".the third is the integration of special lectures. invite famous entrepreneurs and experts to give special lectures to guide students to be committed to rural revitalization and urban and rural grassroots construction.

Secondly, improve the hours and credits of practical internship courses, and establish a sharing mechanism for practical teaching platforms. change the traditional teaching mode of "boring" students in the classroom to listen to lectures, and let students go out of the classroom, enter the laboratory or go to the off-campus for internships, traineeships, research, and practice. in the 2017 and 2020 editions of the undergraduate professional talent training plan, the professional practice links of sociology and social work accounted for 28.3% and 25.9% of the total credit hours, respectively, and the credits of the professional practice courses were 38.5 and 39.5 points, respectively. at the same time, the practical teaching platform was integrated and optimized, and the Guangdong provincial public administration professional skills experimental teaching demonstration center was established. all 12 functional laboratories were open to undergraduates, forming a three-level experimental platform of professional foundation, professional integration, and open innovation.

Thirdly, cooperate with the School of Innovation and Entrepreneurship to effectively and effectively carry out innovation and entrepreneurship "double entrepreneurship" practice and interdisciplinary professional competitions. Through activities such as internship summary, "mass entrepreneurship and innovation"

practice, and professional competitions, students' practical innovation ability and level have been improved.

4. Build a team of teachers with noble morality, broad vision, and rich practical experience, and build a collaborative education mechanism for the integration of science and education and international cooperation.

In the exploration and practice of our teaching reform, teachers pay more attention to the construction of teachers' morality and style, and focus on teaching and educating people. Most of them have the experience of studying abroad or exchange visits and have a broad international perspective, especially social work majors. In recent years, it has carried out teacher-student cooperation, exchange, and training (exchange students) or short-term mutual visits with famous universities in Canada, the United States, and other foreign countries as well as in Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan.

In addition, teachers also encourage and support students to participate in scientific research projects, or go to scientific research project bases to carry out the practice, collaborative education in the integration of science and education, and independent innovation in the integration of science and education in collaborative education, with remarkable results.

### III. Experience and Inspiration

1. This case has changed the traditional education and teaching mode in the comprehensive reform practice of sociology majors, and sublimated the educational thought and teaching concept of "independence + cooperation + innovation".Compared with the previous talent training with cross-penetration of interdisciplinary majors, this case not only emphasizes ideological and political leadership, but also focuses on students. The educational and teaching concept of "independent cooperation" and individualized autonomous learning.<sup>[1]</sup>
2. This case explores and practices the "three-in-one" talent training model in the interdisciplinary professional knowledge system, value system, and innovation system of large-scale enrollment and large-scale training. After years of exploration and practice, we have built a new mechanism of practical education for "agriculture, rural areas, and farmers" and the integrated development of urban and rural areas in the cross-infiltration of sociology and social work majors in sociology and social security majors in public management, enriching the The "four-self" independent model of student-centered independent learning, independent topic selection, independent design, and independent innovation has expanded the "five-in-one" collaborative model of student cooperation, teacher-student cooperation, inter-school cooperation, science and education cooperation, and industry-education cooperation. , explored the "six innovations" integration mode of idea innovation, thinking innovation, method innovation, model innovation, practical innovation, and theoretical innovation.

It further eliminates the macro, meso, and micro barriers and development obstacles in the cultivation of talents in the humanities and social sciences, and breaks through the bottleneck of the integration and development of macro sociology, meso social security and micro social work, highlighting the "three The value concept of "social" professional caring for the society, especially the disadvantaged groups, makes it penetrate deeply into the "bone marrow" or soul of students, which is different from the general and external ideological and political education, which is conducive to social harmony and benign operation and is conducive to the humanities. The training of professional talents in social sciences provides experience.<sup>[2]</sup>

3. "Learning on the road" emphasizes the practice of educating people, while "practice on the way of learning" guarantees the process of educating people. This case emphasizes "learning on the way, practice on the way of learning", realizes the organic unity of practical education and process education interprets the essential connotation of whole-process education and is also an excellent attempt to promote the informatization of higher education teaching in the information age.<sup>[3]</sup> Education and teaching, not only in "teaching", but also in "learning". Teaching complements each other and

complements each other; learning is endless and is always on the way.

This paper was supported by research funding from the education and Teaching Reform fund project of Guangdong provincial Department of education (The exploration and practice of the eight dimensions of the hybrid teaching model based on the we Chat Public account platform and rain classroom).

### References:

1. Meng Li, Liao Yang."A Probe into the Reform of Practical Education Based on 'Independence + Cooperation + Innovation' of Student Associations Research and Practice", *Education Modernization*, 2019, No.17, pp. 28-30.DOI:10.16541/j.cnki.2095-8420.2019.17.010
2. Liao Yang, Meng Li. "Exploration and Practice of the "Three Society" Professional Talent Training Model Based on "Independence + Cooperation + Innovation", *EDUCATION CIRCLE • B*, 2019, No. 47, pp.99-101.
3. Liao Yang, Meng Li. "Design of 'eight dimensions' mixed teaching mode based on WeChat public account platform and Rain Classroom", *New Education Era*,2020, NO.2, pp.7-8.