

# Double Helix Structure: Teaching and Learning of Innovative Curriculum

Yu Jr Tsai

**Abstract**—In the 21st century, students have stronger expectations and demands for innovation and development, hence it is necessary for teachers to develop high-level innovative education systematically. The purpose of this descriptive research is to establish a double-helix-cycle of innovative curriculum teaching and learning curriculum structure. The method used is descriptive research, which is derived from innovative courses in practical scenarios through educational literature analysis and curriculum model structure. The research started in February 2021, and the process showed that innovative courses must be conducted through a combination of teaching and learning, which can systematically describe the double helix structure. The establishment of these results will help to lay the theoretical foundation of innovative courses, improve the curriculum, and promote effective innovative teaching. This double helix structure can even be connected with entrepreneurial education to form a system that helps effectively connect the teaching site and the workplace. It is concluded that the theoretical establishment of a double helix structure in innovative courses helps stabilize and promote teaching, and is conducive to the development of innovative education. It is expected to have an impact on the theory and practice of innovative courses.

**Index Terms**—Innovative education, curriculum structure, double helix, curriculum modules, coaching and mentoring, entrepreneurial education

## 1 INTRODUCTION

In its 2003 White Paper on creative education – establishing a Republic of Creativity (R.O.C.) for Taiwan, the Taiwan Ministry of Education made clear its objective of making Taiwan's education system into one that promotes creativity among students. In the aspect of promoting a new curriculum, educators at the school where this study was conducted have researched the experiences of numerous examples in Taiwan and abroad. Hence take the following strategies:

### 1.1 Strategically expanding the scope of the independent flexibility of a curriculum

It needs the degree of freedom to stretch out the tight space for innovation creating. As for the school level, the freedom of innovation involves the development of the independent flexibility of a curriculum. Considering the difference between new periods from traditional curriculum, it is necessary to loosen the curriculum to create innovative flexibility. Just as the analysis of innovation flexibility for the school level increased by some structural factors in Kärkkäinen (2012), innovation flexibility includes (1) Flexibility in instruction time, (2) Teacher autonomy, and (3) Poor alignment. People can see the flexibility arranged at least 10% in-class or extracurricular in recent countries belongs to OECD system (Kärkkäinen, 2012). The flexibility spaces and moments help a teacher to arrange a more specific school curriculum, elective profession- or Inquiry learning, openness experiment course or innovation teaching curriculum, etc.; As for teacher autonomy, it may be regarded as an important key for innovation flexibility. Though the teacher himself has the leadership influence in class, it will be hard to express the truly features nor innovation effectively if lacking the autonomy of curriculum contents, arrangement, designing, or

assessment; And it also appears the problem that the measurement does not match the innovation flexibility in started recent year. Taking some new interdisciplinary courses, for example, needs effective communication for different disciplinary to use different evaluation tools to achieve its common goal. The assessment cannot help students accomplish the course learning objective well. Only the assessment innovation in periods can reflect the innovation actively effectively.

### 1.2 Use PBL in designing a curriculum

As for innovation education in higher education, Hoidn and Kärkkäinen (2014) analysis the literature and reviews in the occident and get the result that student-centred PBL is better than traditional methods in higher education, especially for overall performance. It also benefits to develop the skills of thinking and innovation, and also good at the interest, self-confidence, autonomy, cooperation development. Therefore the PBL method was been widely recommended in innovation higher education. After using meta-synthesis of meta-analyses to compare PBL to conventional classrooms in Strobel and Van Barneveld (2009), the results show that PBL was superior to a traditional classroom in long-term retention, skill development, and satisfaction in the curriculum. The research not only states that the PBL method has better satisfaction than traditional courses but also explains that PBL is good for students in long-term retention and skill development that influence their entrepreneurship in the future.

The PBL method originated from medical education before 1965. It was used to train medical students to face clinical problems in thinking, reasoning, solutions, and techniques to solve actual symptoms. It was later systematically promoted by Barrows at McMaster University around 1969. The PBL method is a group-based learning strategy and teaching technique in which the team members solve the problem together and at the same time guide the learners with a well-trained

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instructor (Ahlfeldta, Mehtab, & Sellnowb, 2005). So far, it has been widely recognized as an effective teaching method in various professional fields. According to the definition of Barrows (1996), the PBL classroom will fit the following characteristics: (1) Learning is student-centered; (2) Learning occurs in small student groups; (3) Teachers are facilitators or guides; (4) Problems form the organizing focus and stimulus for learning; (5) Problems are a vehicle for the development of clinical problem-solving skills; (6) New information is acquired through self-directed learning. When faced with various changes in the contemporary environmental economy, the use of PBL for subject teaching can also help students effectively face future changes.

### 1.3 Cross-disciplinary projects in curriculum

The rise of contemporary interdisciplinarity mostly stems from the vigorous rise of the phenomenon of cross-border and cross-domain knowledge under postmodern deconstruction. In addition, facing various complex problems in the global economic environment, and the limitation of single resource technology, higher education organizations widely use the strategies of cooperating with other organizations' advantages to face their disadvantages. Therefore, researches or teachings that adopt interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary strategies are also increasing. Example: Bammer (2013) took a specific focus on interdisciplinarity as integration and implementation sciences for researching complex real-world problems, and initiated a series of integrated applied research of Integration and Implementation Sciences (I2S); Van Rijnsoever and Hessels (2011) pointed out that innovation is an influential factor that affects the cross-field activities in their study of Factors associated with disciplinary and interdisciplinary research collaboration; On the other hand, interdisciplinary was also be regarded as an opportunity for innovation of higher education. Millar (2016) reveals the significance in this respect for the interdisciplinary curriculum reform of universities in change. Especially for the aspect of knowledge and skills to face their phenomenal works for university graduates, students must have the abilities to solve problems in an economic and social environment. The report reference official documents from the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, Australia, and other countries or university curriculum discussions to strengthen the argument in this regard, reiterating that interdisciplinary education is an inevitable challenge in higher education.

## 2 LITERATURE

### 2.1 Innovative Curriculum

Innovation may be viewed as a process that is usually categorized as either evolutionary or revolutionary (Yu & Hang, 2010). Looking closer at contemporary innovation, one may see that it not only contains the seemingly linear innovation process of 'studying and monitoring', applied R&D, 'preproduction and production phase', implementation, and environmental protection but also the knowledge obtained from study and feedback during every stage of each of those recycling processes, which contain seeking opportunities, 'genera-

tion of ideas and seeking resources', 'execution and production', 'commercialization and creating value', recycling, forming a non-linear, dynamic, ever-updating model of implementation (Žižlavský, 2013). Usually, during the innovation process, most participating students not only implicitly process knowledge; there is also the explicit aspect of work. Together, the two lead to a learning activity, which begins with thinking and yields practical output. This process is called 'practice' (Ellström, 2010).

The innovation curriculum in this paper is referred to the process of inheriting the knowledge of product and service innovation to students through courses, that is, the process of teaching students how to innovate. In addition, if looked at from another commonly used aspect of innovation curriculum, there is the potential to bring innovation into curricula, and utilizing education leaders continually thinking creatively concerning curriculum creation and analyzing feedback from the process, curriculum designs that differ from the traditional mold may be produced. Changes may be made in the areas of curriculum motivation, instruction activities, instruction tools, methods and strategies in teaching and learning, and the creation of evaluation tools. As mentioned by Williamson and Payton (2009), 'innovation as a curriculum design process by education leaders'. We start our curriculum design process as the education leader of the curriculum. Since there is little clear teaching material or module for university innovation classroom curriculum in recent years, we put our minds focusing on the content development of innovation curriculum first and then diverse the instruction methods to do curriculum innovation.

### 2.2 Concept-based Curriculum Design

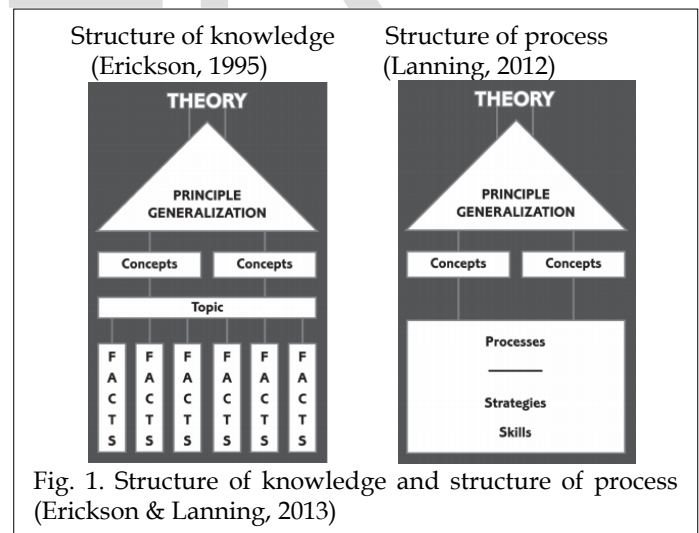


Fig. 1. Structure of knowledge and structure of process (Erickson & Lanning, 2013)

A concept-based curriculum design not only contains two important dimensions of facts and skills in traditional teaching, but it also 'includes a focus on the transfer of the important conceptual ideas of discipline and facilitates synergistic thinking' (Lanning, 2012). Therefore, the third dimension of concepts, principles, and generalizations has been extended to buttress the conceptual thinking and understanding of students. The three-dimensional framework also benefits the intellectual development of creative thinking, critical thinking,

and reflective thinking.

Erickson and Lanning (2013) roughly distinguished the curriculum structure of concept-based curriculum into the structure of knowledge and structure of process (Figure 1). Generally speaking, an effective curriculum always reflects the synthetic structure that contains both structures of knowledge and process. The structure of knowledge reveals the relations of topic and facts in the courses, and the concepts are obtained after principles and generalizations that some from topic and facts; As for the structure of the process is focused on helping students going through the process to experience 'why it will work (Strategies or skills)'. The principles and generalizations are gained from the concepts that are realized from the process.

### 3 METHODS

This research was conducted in February 2021. It is based on the structure of knowledge (Erickson, 1995) and structure of process (Lanning, 2012) proposed by Erickson & Lanning, (2013). The literature collection, analysis, and application of the inquiry mode, and the completed descriptive research. In this research, no experiments were conducted in the classroom. It is because this research focuses on developing the theoretical structure of teaching. However, the actual case data collected indicates that similar teaching is effective teaching. The related process is divided into two stages. The first stage is the exploration of educational theoretical literature and the establishment of teaching models for innovative education. The second stage is the establishment and research and development of innovative education and teaching structure. In this stage, in addition to the use of models and teaching theories,

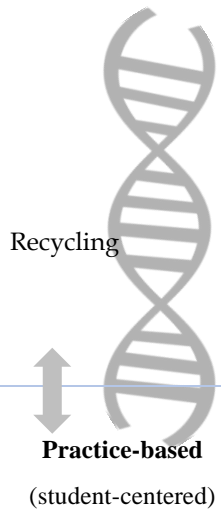
and practical materials to establish the structure, it also extends the exploration of the theory and related cohesion of innovative curriculum development in the educational environment. The teaching and learning application of these two stages is firmly established, along with the relevant teacher activities and students' use of the learning model in the classroom.

## 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 4.1 Instruction modules and Instruction structure

Based on the importance of leadership education in designing an innovation education curriculum held by Williamson and Payton (2009) and the objective of boosting students' interest in learning, the authors This author uses the innovative course conducted by C.-H Lin (2020) as the actual data for the phenomenon, combined with the method of the structure of knowledge (Erickson, 1995) to establish the facts needed for the course. The units formed by Web out are as shown in Table1. Refer to Žižlavský, O. (2013) Innovative product invention process, we initially used the structure of process method (refer to Figure 1) in Lanning (2012) to find the strategies and skills that may be needed during the innovation process to form thematic units, and then divided the learning process into five instruction modules as seeking opportunities, generation of ideas and seeking resources, execution, and production, commercialization and creating value, learning and practice. The curriculum structure, instruction modules, unit content, and primary instruction/learning methods are shown in Table 1:

Table 1. Curriculum structure and unit modules.

| Double-helix-cycle curriculum structure   | Instruction modules                       | Unit content   | Instruction/ learning methods           |
|---|---|--|---|
|   | Seeking opportunities                     | Introduce concepts of innovation and creativity                                      | Heuristic teaching                      |
|   |   | Introduce the importance and benefits of creativity                                  | Meaningful learning theory-based method |
|   |   | Creative thinking training   | Connected teaching                      |
|   | Generation of ideas and seeking resources | Creative thinking practice-mind maps and fishbone diagrams                           | Mind mapping                            |
|   |   | Guided reading of books from the Creativity Innovation, and Entrepreneurship Program | Guided reading                          |
|   |   | Concepts on innovation and product development                                       | Project approach                        |
|   | Execution and production                  | Hand-crafting skill instruction  | Active teaching                         |
|   |   | Introduction of innovative products  | Demonstration                           |
|   |   | Models of innovative products  | Model-making                            |
|   | Commercialization and creating value      | Concepts on protection of intellectual property rights                               | Lecture                                 |
|   |   | Conditions and portfolios for patent application                                     | Discussion                              |
|   |   | Presentations of innovative products   | Presentation                            |
|   | Learning and practice                     | Innovative-product competitions  | Competition                             |
| Students from different departments form groups to not only discuss the lessons but also propose ideas for innovative products and, afterward, complete the process of presenting ideas, creating products, presenting them, and entering them in competitions. |   | Group work, independent learning, and problem-solving                                |   |



In Table 1, because the actual application of the Learning and practice module was embedded into other modules, we can regard the Learning and practice module, which will help students express their implementation process well, as an embedded instruction module. Based on the characteristics of innovative products in application in real life, the students in the curriculum are expected to not just understand the concept of innovation and invention. They were guided through a process of finding everyday problems, looking for strategies, thinking creatively, and, finally, designing and developing new products by practice, thus engaging in a complete product development process. Such teaching and learning activities in innovative courses formed the double helix structure of the innovative curriculum.

#### 4.2 Coaching and Mentoring in Entrepreneurial Education

Coaching and Mentoring is an education method commonly used in higher education or corporate organizations to coach students or fresh graduates in an entrepreneurship learning environment. Coaching can be defined as supporting “clients in achieving greater self-awareness, improved self-management skills, and increased self-efficacy, so they develop their own goals and solutions appropriate to their context” (The European Mentoring and Coaching Council, 2015; Robins, 2017); and “mentoring is a formalized process whereby a more knowledgeable and experienced person actuates a supportive role of overseeing and encouraging reflection and learning within a less experienced and knowledgeable person, so facilitate that person’s career and personal development” (Roberts, 2000; Crisp and Cruz, 2009).

For helping the college students close to their workplaces, the innovation curriculum teachers take the responsibility to lead the enterprise product innovation process into the classroom. To look at the practice-based innovation from a learning perspective, Ellström (2010) distinguished work process into the explicit dimension, which concerns how the work process is formally codified, prescribed and organized. “The implicit dimension concerns how the work process is perceived by different actors, coordinated and performed in practice” (Ellström, 2010). Corresponding to the Žižlavský’s process (Figure 1) and lead the work process into the teaching and learning of the innovation classroom, the explicit dimension of the teacher’s conceptual knowledge of coaching according to the themes of the product innovation process, and the implicit dimension of the product innovation implementation by the students from the perspective of teacher’s mentoring will be raised in this place.

Coaching and mentoring services mentioned above were widely used in universities, colleges, or departments involved in career development, such as ‘The London Deanery established a Coaching and Mentoring service for doctors and dentists in London in 2008’ (Bachkirova, Arthur, and Reading, 2015). In addition, some schools or corporates will also set up Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) programs to assist students in their growth through coaching and mentoring. These measures help students easier connect learning and work to face the 21st-century society (Govender and Våland, 2021).

#### 4.3 Interpretation of Double Helix Structure

For helping the college students connect with their workplaces effectively, the innovation curriculum group takes the responsibility to lead the enterprise product innovation process into the classroom. Ellström (2010) distinguished work process into the explicit and the implicit dimension as ‘The explicit dimension concerns how the work process is formally codified, prescribed and organized’ and ‘The implicit dimension concerns how the work process is perceived by different actors, coordinated and performed in practice’ to look at the practice-based innovation from a learning perspective. Corresponding to Žižlavský’s product innovation process, two dimensions can be highlighted in this place. One is the explicit dimension of product innovation, and the other is the implicit dimension of innovators in learning and implementation. And if the above concept of the work process is lead into the teaching and learning of the innovation classroom, it will present the explicit dimension of the teacher’s conceptual knowledge of teaching according to the themes of the product innovation process, and the implicit dimension of the product innovation implementation by the students from the perspective of work and learning. The innovative curriculum also naturally presents a double helix structure due to the interlaced arrangement of teaching and learning in the unit courses. Besides, this double helix structure also corresponds to professional teachers’ coaching of curriculum leadership in the classroom and the mentoring role of supporting students in their implementation. By this connection, the coaching and mentoring double helix structure in an innovative classroom were established in the school curriculum.

Therefore, the double helix structure presented in this curriculum (Table 1) not only represents the teaching and learning double helix in the classroom arrangement, the concept and practice double helix in the teaching method, and the implicit and explicit dimension double helix in the working procedure, but also coaching and mentoring double helix representing teacher psychology. And through teaching reflection, curriculum resources, and innovative products to feedback innovative curriculum materials, innovative curriculum forms a recycle relation in addition to the original double helix structure and then is presented in a double helix recycle structure. This structure in the curriculum can effectively connect with coaching and mentoring double helix in entrepreneurial education. It enables coaching and mentoring to form a series of lifelong learning structure models that started from the innovation courses in the school education, connect to the programs in entrepreneurship education, adult vocational education, and then to never endless in lifelong education.

### 5 CONCLUSIONS

This thesis establishes a double-helix-cycle structure of innovative curriculum based on innovative practical courses, using Žižlavský, O. (2013) innovative product invention and learning process, and Erickson & Lanning, (2013) mentioned Structure of knowledge (Erickson, 1995) and structure of process (Lanning, 2012) developed the curriculum structure, and formed a double helix curriculum structure of teaching and

learning to show its characteristics. It is the first time that the double-helix-cycle structure has been written down and applied to innovative curriculum. This structure is fully connected with the coaching and mentoring double helix structure of entrepreneurial education. As for the representation of innovative courses with a double-helix-cycle structure, the results of the questionnaire survey of learning interest and learning confidence feedback from the C.-H. Lin (2020) curriculum evaluation all show students' innovative attitudes towards the curriculum and teaching satisfaction. In addition, an innovative curriculum also helps to promote the creation of innovative products (C.-H. Lin, S.-Y. Li, and Y.-J. Tsai, 2020). As can be seen, the curriculum has had numerous positive effects.

This descriptive research is also the first time that the double-helix-cycle structure of teaching and learning is proposed in the innovative curriculum. In addition to helping the implementers of innovative courses to develop innovative courses on a theoretical basis, the courses will be more organized, clear, and effective. The establishment of innovative curriculum theory is also conducive to the formation and practice of innovative education theory to promote development. In addition, the author also uses the double helix structure of teaching and learning to complete this innovative curriculum for the first time in this article, so that the innovative curriculum of higher education can use coaching and mentoring model to link vocational education, entrepreneurship education, and the lifelong learning of workers and then form a unified complete system. On this basis, the author hopes to further integrate the learning and research double helix formed by the practice-oriented start or the double helix combining the teaching and research in the classroom (Huang, 2018), to specifically establish a triple helix structure model of higher education innovation courses to promote the coexistence of teaching, learning and research in higher education classrooms and high-efficiency courses. And effectively link up the triple helix structure of university-industry-government relations (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 1995), making classroom learning, schools, and industry more consistent and developing towards co-prosperity. The author uses this article to pay tribute to the advanced generations who assisted or supported innovative education.

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