

Research on the Versatile Talent Training Mode of International Trade in Vocational University

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Abstract

Vocational universities aim to cultivate high-quality and high-level vocational technology and skill talents, who can adapt to the new economy, new industry, new format and new demand. Combined with the growth trend of China's import and export volume after COVID-19 epidemic, this paper takes the undergraduates majoring in international trade in Guangzhou Vocational University of Science and Technology as the research object and explores the training mode for versatile talents of international trade major on the basis of several aspects, such as, curriculum setting, bilingual teaching, double certificate teaching, operational training, independent practice, innovation and entrepreneurship. The teaching reform and practice intends to cultivate versatile talents with foreign trade knowledge, English ability, computer application, cross-cultural idea and innovation and entrepreneurship consciousness, which can meet the demand for talents in the construction and development of the "Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area" and contribute to promotion and realization of "Belt and Road Initiative".

Keywords

Vocational undergraduate, International trade major, Versatile talent, Talent training mode

1. Introduction

In recent years, foreign trade enterprises in China once faced a variety of problems under the influence of the COVID-19 epidemic, such as losing orders, decreasing expenses, laying off employees and reducing the scale of enterprises. With the various measures of epidemic prevention and control widely implemented, the epidemic had timely controlled in China, and normal economic and social activities were quickly resumed as well. At that time, China was one of the few exporters in the world that could provide a large number of materials, and export commodities were in short supply, including face masks, protective clothing, COVID-19 vaccines, fitness equipment, pet supplies, bread makers and other daily necessities. With an increase of 27.4% over 2019, the total value of China's trade in goods was up to ¥32.16 trillion according to the customs statistics in 2020, of which exports and imports accounted for ¥17.93 trillion and ¥14.23 trillion respectively, and the trade surplus was ¥3.7 trillion. Since then, China's imports and exports have been continuing to grow steadily, showing strong resilience and comprehensive competitiveness, especially the rapid development of cross-border e-commerce. The total value of cross-border e-commerce in China reached ¥15.7 trillion in 2022, up 10.56% from ¥14.2 trillion in 2021, according to a report released by the E-commerce Research Center of the Network, www.100EC.CN. During the course of transformation and upgrading of the international

trade industry from traditional trade to new trade, the cross-border e-commerce industry, based on international trade business, is in urgent need of versatile talents who combine foreign trade knowledge with English, computer and logistics and other related knowledge, but there is a great gap of versatile talents in international trade (Daifeng & Jiang Debo, 2018).

As an important place for training high-level technical and skilled talents, vocational universities serve the local economic construction. At present, more than 80% of cross-border e-commerce enterprises in Guangdong Province have registered capital of less than ¥10 million. In the initial stage of development, these small and medium-sized enterprises always put forward higher requirements for foreign trade staff on account of their small scale and few personnel. They have to be armed with solid professional knowledge of international trade, at the same time, they also need to have many kinds of skills, including foreign language, foreign trade accounting (Zheng Min, 2019), foreign trade finance and computer application. There is a common feature of "one post and multiple responsibilities" at small and medium-sized enterprise, which leads to the phenomenon of "employment shortage" in the process of development. However, the international trade professionals show an oversupply in the talent market; the reason is that we can not find high-level, high-quality versatile skill talents in the market to meet the needs of enterprises. Therefore, it is extremely urgent for vocational university to cultivate versatile talents majoring in international trade. It is necessary to further broaden the channels of talent training, optimize the modes of talent training, and cultivate versatile talents with "one major and multiple abilities" to meet the needs of society.

The teaching reform of international trade, being implemented in Guangzhou Vocational University of Science and Technology, is taken as the research background in this paper. In 2018, Guangzhou Vocational University of Science and Technology was upgraded to a vocational school at the undergraduate level, where has established 18 undergraduate majors, one of which is international trade. Vocational undergraduate education is a kind of higher employment education, based on occupation. The students, trained by vocational undergraduate colleges or universities, will step into those enterprises and work there in the future. Whether they can get employment position in time is the main symbol to test the quality of vocational undergraduate education. It is the teaching reform implementing in international trade that is to build a distinctive talent training mode, promote the high-quality development of vocational undergraduate education and cultivate high-level and high-quality skilled talents for the purpose of meeting the demand for versatile talents in the construction and development of the "Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area" and helping to promote and realize the "Belt and Road" initiative. Taking undergraduate students in Guangzhou Vocational University of Science and Technology as the research object, we will analyze the implementation and effect of the multi-disciplinary talent training model of international trade. It is hoped that we shall provide useful reference for the teaching reform of other higher vocational colleges or universities.

2. The problems in the training of international trade versatile talent

Guangzhou Vocational University of Science and Technology is one of the private vocational undergraduate pilot colleges in China. It is an arduous task for us to use what methods to effectively organize and implement the training of international trade versatile talent and promote the development of local economy in Guangdong Province. The versatile talent training in international trade major needs to be further reformed and innovated in many aspects, such as curriculum setting, bilingual teaching and double certificate teaching and something like that.

2.1 The flaw of the talent training program

Vocational undergraduate education mainly trains students to acquire vocational skills for specific vocational activities, which is the core goal for setting vocational education courses, and its knowledge structure requires the breadth and practicality of professional knowledge. With regard to the theoretical courses and practical courses, the curriculum of international economics and trade major has the general balance, including the basically technical courses, such as international trade theory and practice, international marketing and management, and practical teaching courses, such as foreign trade document practice, foreign trade document handling practice, international trade comprehensive practical training. The teachers and leaders at Teaching and Research Office of International Trade regularly adjusts and optimizes the talent training program according to the social needs, but we are short of auxiliary professional courses, and so, there is a certain gap between the skills students have and the demand in the talent market. The transformation and upgrading of the international trade industry and the rise of cross-border e-commerce require international trade graduates to be familiar with the consumption preferences, cultural characteristics and religious beliefs at different countries and regions, making a flexible use of photography and image processing technology, and a skillful use of various online marketing tools and skills.

2.2 The problems in implementation of bilingual teaching

The professional courses of international trade have strong externality and application, and the teaching content has high requirements for English, including transaction negotiation, contract conclusion, documentary certificate, and something like that. It was learned from the questionnaire, distributed to the grade 20 and 21 undergraduate, that the passing rate of CET-4 was 54.74%. The data given above reveals that the student's English foundation is relatively good, but the listening and speaking ability is poor. To our delight, 82.63% of the students agreed to set bilingual courses and dared to challenge themselves to achieve better results. Details are shown in the following Figure 1. The research group had visited Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan Youth Exchange Base at Foshan, where we got to know the fact that more than 70% of foreign trade enterprises is in the process of transforming from traditional trade to new trade, and they are now in urgent need of versatile talents who can combine foreign trade knowledge, English and computer skill. It can be seen that in view of the teaching content, the students' wishes and teaching goals of international trade major, bilingual teaching of international trade major is a must.

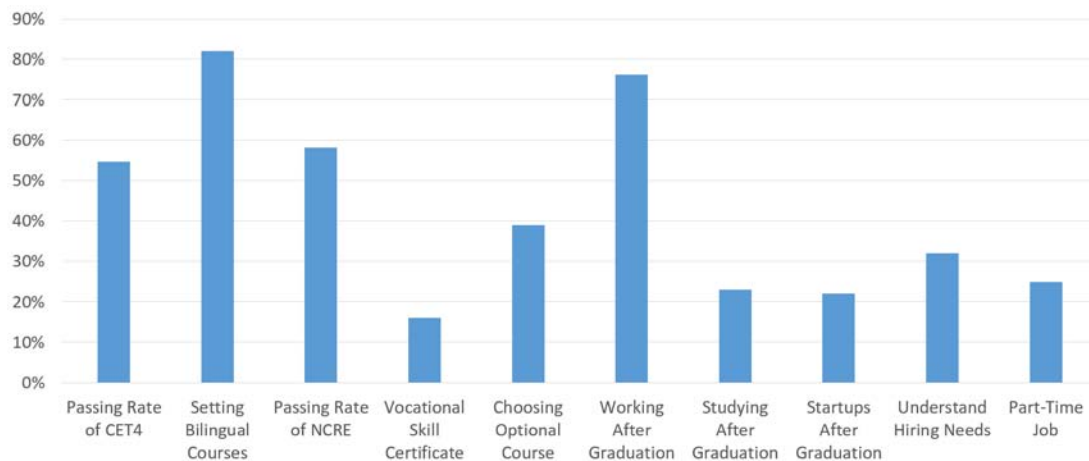


Figure 1. Investigation on Teaching Reform and Practice of International Trade Major.

Our university has a certain foundation for the study of bilingual teaching. For example, taking into account the different English proficiency of the students, we started from the simplest content in foreign trade document practice and tried to use a maintenance bilingual teaching model, with the proportion of English teaching remained at 30%. Special terms were written on the blackboard, and the students were also encouraged to answer questions in a way to mix Chinese with English. At the same time, we made a good use of the second English classroom and achieved the remarkable results. A series of activities had been held, such as "Spelling Bee" foreign trade English vocabulary contest, scenario simulation and role play. However, there are still some problems to be solved in the implementation of bilingual teaching, such as the shortage of bilingual teacher, the poor professional foundation of the students, the uneven English proficiency of the students, the unpracticed grade teaching and the lack of suitable bilingual teaching materials. In addition, professional courses are set separately from professional English courses. The result is that the students at the classroom of professional courses cannot know special terms and common sentence patterns well, and thus they do not know how to write business correspondence and speak in foreign trade English, while the students at the classroom of professional English courses can not have a deep understanding of the business knowledge, represented by relevant special terms. Therefore, further reform of bilingual teaching mode in our university is an urgent task of teaching reform.

2.3 The low holding rate of vocational skill certificate

As foreign trade enterprises have higher and higher requirements for the quality of talents, it is an important topic for vocational universities to cultivate versatile talents with broad spectrum, wide knowledge, strong practical ability and good adaptability. Students, majored in the international trade, are required to participate in the study of basic vocational skills and take the relative tests, including College English Test (CET-4 and CET-6), National Computer Rank Examination (NCRE), and the test of related vocational qualifications and skill certificates. At the same time, we ought to actively encourage the students to take part in various vocational skills competitions, putting the theory into practice, letting the students have a deep understanding of their own professional knowledge, and thus master the relevant voca-

tional skills, which will realize the "position, classroom, competition and certificate" integration education people. It is now the case that 76.32% of the students plan to find a job after graduation according to the questionnaire, but only 16.32% of the students have obtained vocational qualifications or skills certificates. And participation in vocational skills competitions is also far from standard.

2.4 Operational training and independent practice

There are 21 on-campus training rooms at International Trade Teaching and Research Office, which are used to carry out practical teaching of courses. The HuizhiSixing foreign trade training software we purchased has been installed on the training room computers according to the needs of different courses. Students can use the software to simulate the training, experience the business knowledge and work flow for the purpose of achieving the learning goal. However, part of the training software is too simple and old to be fully used. In the process of practical training, some problems appeared at the training room. For example, on account of the bad foundation of the students' antecedence courses, teachers spent more time in explaining knowledge points at training room and less time in practicing them. In addition, when facing with English order, letter of credit with capital letters and other materials, students had already awed by difficulty motion at the training room. It seemed that some students had nothing to do but play with mobile phones and use the computer at the training room to play games. Cultivating international trade talent needs not only the practice teaching courses inside the university but also the participation of enterprises outside the university. The graduation practice adopts the mode of independent practice, and the guiding teachers regularly head for the enterprise, guide and supervise the students. Students organize and arrange the graduation practice on their own, such as looking for internship opportunities, making internship plans, writing internship weekly report and summary. During the process of the graduation practice, independent practice can meet students' individual needs and enhance their ability to manage, socialize, communicate and coordinate. However, some students' practice links only stay on the surface.

2.5 Lower entrepreneurial enthusiasm

"Innovation and Entrepreneurship Education for College Students" is an important part of general education in our university. It focuses on innovation and entrepreneurship to organize the learning of relevant knowledge and skills in order to cultivate students' innovation ability and establish a scientific concept of entrepreneurship. As a matter of fact, Innovation and entrepreneurship education is a kind of practical education. Students majoring in international trade participated in Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition, such as the "Internet +" and Challenge Cup. In the past two years, only four graduate enterprise programs won the school-level prize. Innovation and Entrepreneurship College provided start-ups incubation service for these projects, including no-charge water, no-charge electricity and no-charge office. The roadshow was organized to attract angel investors and put some money into their projects. And so, these projects were used to promote vocational undergraduate education and quality education as an important carrier. According to the questionnaire mentioned above, only 22.07% of the students plan to start a business after graduation, and their entrepreneurial enthusiasm is not high.

3. The suggestions to improve the training mode of international trade versatile talent

On the basis of the training situation of international trade versatile talent, the hiring needs, the situation of the school and the situation of the students, we try to improve the talent training mode of international trade in our university from several aspects, such as optimizing the talent training program, scientifically promoting bilingual teaching, encouraging students to start up and something like that.

3.1 Optimize the talent training program

To cultivate international trade versatile talents with complete knowledge structure, we are able to set optional courses, broadening international horizon and enhancing the student's cross-cultural understanding ability. It is revealed from the questionnaire that 39.48% of the students chose public elective courses, but most of which were art courses, such as music, painting and photography. At present, the economic and management college has no cross-border e-commerce major, while the information engineering college offers it. There is the content overlapping and interweaving between international trade major and cross-border e-commerce major to some extent. And so, the economic and management college should closely combine with the relevant professional course resources of relevant colleges to provide a series of optional courses for the students majoring in international trade, such as language courses, product image processing courses and other relevant courses. Taking them as an auxiliary professional course, we further supple-

ment the relevant knowledge of international trade courses. In addition, the international trade teaching and research department can also work with relevant colleges and institutions to design talent training objectives and adjust talent training programs, including foreign languages college, logistics and e-commerce teaching and research office and foreign-trade enterprise. The purpose is to cultivate the university students with good professional knowledge, high comprehensive quality and strong application ability and thus adapt to the changes in social talent recruitment needs.

3.2 Scientifically promote bilingual teaching

Bilingual teaching is to use foreign languages to teach students professional knowledge. On the basis of mastering the mother tongue, we will let the students acquire a new language, improve the cross-language communication ability and thus master the advanced scientific and technological knowledge in the world for the purpose of serving the national economic construction. Combining with the actual situation of our university, bilingual teaching should be developed scientifically from the following aspects.

3.2.1 Bilingual teaching curriculum system

After conducting two-year studies and practice on bilingual teaching curriculum system, we have refined the economic and trade English course and will add international trade specialized English in the next semester to comprehensively cultivate students' ability to listen, speak, read, write, interpret and translate. However, professional courses and specialized English courses are still set up separately, and bilingual teaching is not really implemented. The bilingual course has higher requirements than the general course, which needs to be set up scientifically. The overall framework should be formulated, and the teaching syllabus, teaching plan and teaching time arrangement should also be adjusted accordingly. In particular, what courses are suitable for bilingual teaching, which can only be developed after repeated arguments. Those courses which are not easy to be understood and absorbed by the students cannot be used to carry out bilingual teaching, otherwise, it will bring a heavy burden to teachers and students, and it is more difficult to ensure the quality and effect of teaching. Therefore, it is necessary to choose appropriate courses for bilingual teaching, such as international trade practice, foreign trade document practice, international business negotiation, so that bilingual teaching can be developed smoothly.

3.2.2 Bilingual teaching according to the student's English proficiency

With the students having poor English foundation and uneven overall level, we can use the library as the third classroom, where the library collection of foreign books will be increased, and the students will be provided with English-version-book reading room. And it can play a role in assisting, expanding and improving their knowledge and ability. Bilingual teaching is a systematic project. At the beginning of the first semester of sophomore year, students will be tested in English, administrative classes are broken up, teaching classes are formed, and all the students are divided into class A and Class B according to their exam results. The students who have passed CET4 and CET6 will directly enter into class A, with the class A corresponding to "higher requirements". The rest will go into class B, with the class B corresponding to "general requirements". For the students at the class A are armed with good language ability, the proportion of English teaching is more than 50%, and both Chinese and English teaching materials are used simultaneously. We shall adopt the transitional bilingual teaching mode, in which English and Chinese are used alternatively to teach professional course. The students at the class B is mainly taught in Chinese, and the proportion of English teaching stays at more than 30%. We shall adopt the maintenance bilingual teaching model (Yang Minjie, 2018), in which we encourage the students to answer questions in a mixed way of Chinese and English, with special terms written on the blackboard. In a word, according to the actual situation of the teaching objects, we timely adjust the proportion of Chinese and English teaching and the bilingual teaching mode to achieve the better teaching results.

3.2.3 Bilingual teacher and textbook

Bilingual teaching puts forward higher requirements for the teachers, who have to master professional knowledge and be proficient in English. There are 30 teachers at the teaching and research office of international trade, most of whom are not the teachers with this kind of "dual ability", and so we are short of bilingual teachers. Part of teachers can be sent to participate in bilingual teacher training class in China, and excellent teachers head for sister university in America as visiting scholar (Zu Yanfeng, 2018). During summer or winter vacation, sometimes even on weekends, our teachers would go into the foreign-trade enterprise and work as an employee, improving their English through a series of business activities in a real environment. Furthermore, there are almost no bilingual textbooks suitable for our students in the market. After the research group made repeated comparison and analysis of the Chinese textbooks and the original English textbooks, and then we went to Import and Export Trading Company at Foshan and Customs Broker at Shenzhen to conduct in-depth research. Many meetings were held to discuss the bilingual textbook catalogue, chapter

layout, and the detail content of several charters. The temporary solution, discussed by the meetings, is to compile bilingual textbooks with a 50/50 ratio of Chinese and English, so as to ensure the realization of the initial goal of bilingual teaching.

3.3 Carry out double certificate teaching reasonably

Double certificate teaching means that the curriculum setting is corresponding to the vocational certificate obtaining, and the content of the teaching materials is consistent with the content of the certificate examination. Through course learning, students can directly participate in the examination of relevant vocational certificates, so that students can not only get the academic certificates, but also win relevant vocational qualifications or skills certificates. Therefore, we should reasonably set up the certificate examination items, promoting the integration of courses and certificates by adding optional courses and strengthening the training of students' vocational skills to successfully obtain vocational certificates. The bilingual textbook, compiled by our research group, is trying to be consistent with the content of the textbooks and vocational work, which not only helps students master professional knowledge and skills, but also adapts to the job in the future. We try every means to stipulate the student's enthusiasm for vocational skills competitions, increasing the proportion of students participating in the competition and achieving good results. There is the interaction among the vocational certificate examination, vocational skills competition and the practical training inside our university (Deng Jianfeng, 2019). It is our university that is responsible for purchasing the simulation software, associated with international trade major and the related software about various vocational certificate examination and skills competition. And so, obtaining certificate will promote learning and practice of professional knowledge and strengthen the training of students' post skills.

3.4 Promote dual education between school and enterprise

In the practice teaching of training room inside the university, we will be in charge of contacting instructional software manufacturers to upgrade the system, optimize the teaching resource platform and establish a simulation laboratory. Students were divided into several groups and assigned the homework about basic knowledge of the advance courses, which helped to create a learning atmosphere in which the top students assisted the middle and poor students so as to increase the proportion of operational training in classroom teaching arrangements. Rules at the training room should be made to reduce the bad phenomena, including playing mobile phones and games. In the process of business internship outside the university, our university and enterprises have jointly constructed the off-campus internship base and become an effective platform for long-term cooperation and exchange between the university and relevant parties, where students can contact their future jobs in advance and thus reduce the inadaptability of students in future employment. Due to the small scale of international trade company, it is impossible to accept a large number of interns. In addition, the leaders at international trade company are unwilling to let the interns be exposed to core business which are involved in business secret. Therefore, we have to introduce the dual-qualification teachers with front-line practical experience as a guarantee. The courses with strong practical operation need to be reformed and innovated so as to cultivate the student's hands-on skills.

3.5 Encourage innovation and entrepreneurship

With the number of cross-border e-commerce registered enterprise reaching 674, cross-border e-commerce enterprise registration in Guangdong province boomed in 2021. The Enthusiasm for innovation and entrepreneurship is spreading throughout the country, and university students have become one of the main bodies of innovation and entrepreneurship as well. The growth period of post-00 students is synchronized with the Internet era, and some students and graduates, majoring in international trade will find their ways into emerging industries to start business and realize self-value, such as e-commerce, cross-border e-commerce, Internet and self-media. Jointly working with the Innovation and Entrepreneurship College, we continue to assist and lead students to actively participate in various competitions, inspire entrepreneurial spirit, and build entrepreneurial mental models. In view of the fact that cross-border e-commerce is extremely popular, the students majoring in international trade should give full play to their professional advantages, making full use of external advantages, such as loan preferential policies, tax reduction policies, free entrepreneurship training and something like that. On the stage of university student's entrepreneurship, university students will show their style and create brilliant tomorrow. At the same time, the students, majoring in international trade, increase mutual understanding with the students, majoring in science and engineering on campus. They should get the idea to form a joint venture team. Making good use of the opportunities of the transformation of science and engineering professional achievements, and it is good for us to use the theories and methods of economics and management in order to better

promote the innovation project to the direction of commercialization.

4. Conclusion

In the cultivation of the talents, vocational undergraduate universities must meet the new requirements of the society for the talents. We further optimize the talent training program in which we ought to put emphasis on bilingual teaching and double certificate teaching. Meanwhile, we strengthen cooperation with enterprises, innovation and entrepreneurship college, foreign languages college, information engineering college and other relevant departments, and they can also participate in teaching reform and talent training for the purpose of cultivating the versatile talents in international trade.

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