Path Research of International Talents Cultivation in Vocational Education College under “The Belt and Road Initiative”

Background

--Take Wenzhou Polytechnic as an example

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Abstract

“The Belt and Road” Initiative has provided a great opportunity and platform for China’s vocational education in “going global”. The school-running of overseas vocational education nourishes international talents by corresponding to the countries along the way of “the Belt and Road” industrial development, it is the strategic choice of linking up the demands of times, also the important part of pushing forward the high-quality vocational educating development. Silk Road College, as the significant carrier of internationalization school-running of vocational education college, it is well-known in promoting the deeply merge of international industry and education, serving the overseas developing of Chinese-invested enterprise, exporting the superior-quality educational resource of Chinese higher vocational college, it becomes the model of cultivating international talents in its teaching standards. However, it still faces some practical difficulties, such as the imperfect management and operation mechanism, the inadequate internationalization of teaching staff and the lack of fund support for school running. Thus, it is necessary to establish the multi-party linkage management and operation mechanism, build high-caliber internationalized teaching staff and expand the fundraising channel of overseas school running.

Keywords

The Belt and Road Initiative; Higher Vocational College; Talents Cultivation; International Talents.

1. Introduction

Under the background of economic globalization, capital, resources and internationalized talents the internationalization of vocational education has become an inevitable trend, which was already an important strategy and universal consensus for the competitive development of higher vocational education among all countries. To accelerate the internationalization of vocational education, China has issued a series of significant documents. In May 2014, the State Council issued the Decision on Accelerating the Development of Modern Vocational Education, proposing to implement the projects of running vocational schools in partnership between China and foreign countries and explore and standardize vocational schools to operate abroad. With the promulgation of the National Vocational Education Reform Implementation Plan, the internationalized development of China’s vocational education has been highlighted again. It clearly requires to realize the internationalization of the vocational standard system, the vocational qualification certificate, as well as the cultivation and training of compound skilled and technical talents. Meanwhile, it is listed as the construction task of the Double-high Plan. China’s policies in promoting the internationalization of vocational education have shown that
the internationalization of vocational education is a strategic choice to meet the needs of the times and constitutes a considerable part to promote the high-quality development of vocational education.

“The Belt and Road” Initiative has offered a crucial opportunity and platform for China’s vocational education to go globally. With the constantly promoting of the Belt and Road Initiative, industries in the 65 countries along the routes upgraded rapidly, thus fueled a vast demand for technical and skilled talents. However, restricted by the generally vulnerable local vocational education, the gap exists between the cultivation of internationalized technical and skilled talents and the construction needs of countries along the Belt and Road, which has become a bottleneck hindering the development of the Belt and Road Initiative. Talent is a crucial support and key to the construction of the Belt and Road Initiative. Vocational education, as the talent supply side, is the principal force in jointly building the Belt and Road. Therefore, China has explicitly proposed in the Action Plan for the Innovative Development of Higher Vocational Education to keep in line with the Belt and Road Initiative and expand vocational education cooperation with countries and regions along the Belt and Road.

In the context of the Belt and Road Initiative and the internationalized development of national vocational education, how to integrate the superior resources of diversified collaborative education, effectively solve the puzzle of internationalized school running cooperation with multilateral fields and complex elements and promote the formation of internationalized talent cultivation modes and paths that follow the development needs and have local characteristics is a crucial subject of the current research._with the Yalong Silk Road College of Wenzhou Polytechnic in Cambodia as an example, this paper empirically studies the cultivation mode and path of internationalized talents, analyzes the problems encountered in the process of internationalized school running and puts forward some corresponding countermeasures in hopes of providing practical reference samples for the internationalized development of national vocational education.

2. The Current Situation of International Talents Nourishing in Higher Vocational College

1. The Defectiveness of Management-running System
Internationalized talent cultivation is a systematic project characterized by multi-party subjects, diverse participation and collaborative education. It needs a series of supporting scientific and standardized internationalized management and operation mechanisms to provide forceful guidance, standardization, support and incentive. The internationalized development of higher vocational colleges in China starts relatively late, so the internationalized management and operation mechanism is not perfect. Some problems exist both in the systematic planning and overall planning at the macro level and the optimal allocation of resources at the micro-level. The internationalized school running of colleges is based on a mechanism featured by three-party subject cooperation and negotiation, so it needs the coordination of multiple interests. The initial school running mechanism is generally broad, lacks long-term design, as well as fails to guide uniformly and guarantee the action of all parties effectively. At the same time, with the in-depth promotion of exchanges and cooperation and the continuous emergence of new things and new situations, the initial school running mechanism cannot keep up with the reality and needs of China’s internationalized talent cultivation, thereby restricting the quality improvement and sustainable development of internationalized talent cultivation.

2. The Insufficiency Exists in Teacher Resource
The cultivation and development of internationalized teaching staff are related to the lifeblood of the internationalization of vocational education. Without internationalized teaching staff,
there is no way to talk about the internationalization of vocational education. The internationalization of teaching staff bears many implications. First of all, it is the internationalization of the structure of teaching staff, and the other is the internationalization of teachers’ teaching and scientific research ability. However, there are some problems in the internationalization of teaching staff in higher vocational colleges. Firstly, teachers’ internationalized teaching ability needs to be improved. Due to the lack of internationalized teaching experience, higher vocational teachers will inevitably have some conceptual conflicts in teaching ideas, teaching models and cultural education, resulting in many teaching problems when carrying out new teaching tasks. Secondly, it is difficult for teachers to conduct internationalized technical services. The internationalized running of higher vocational colleges inevitably requires teachers to have the ability to serve regional industries. However, limited by international differences such as language and culture, the bond between Chinese teachers and local enterprises is not intimate, bringing about a disconnection with local enterprises in the specific practical process. In addition, the period for Chinese teachers to participate in internationalized projects is relatively short. Often, they have to return to China when they are just familiar with local industries. It is difficult for Chinese teachers to carry out internationalized technical services and achieve the beneficial connection between teaching content and industrial development, thus affecting the cultivation quality of talents needed to adapt to local industrial development.

3. the Lack of School-running Expenditure Supporting

The funds of school-running is a vital support for the internationalized school running ability. Fund investment is the foundation of internationalized school running. Without the aid of special funds, it is hard to continuously promote internationalized school running projects. Compared with Chinese vocational education, overseas school running needs more funds. However, in terms of financial support policies, China has yet to issue a financial support policy for the internationalization of vocational education, which brings a bottleneck for the development of the Silk Road college. Aside from the lack of the financial support policy, the instability of students’ tuition fee collection exacerbates the shortage of school running funds to a certain extent.

3. The School-running Practice and Experiencing Enlightenment of Wenzhou Polytechnic Yalong Silk Road College in Cambodian

Under the guidance of Cambodia’s Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training and the ASEAN-China Center, the Silk Road College was jointly founded by NTTI, Wenzhou Polytechnic and Yalong Intelligent Equipment Group Co., Ltd. Through government guidance and school-enterprise cooperation, positive attempts and explorations have been made in establishing overseas branches, cultivating internationalized talents and school running & management.

1. The Condition of School-running: Creating the Foundation of School-running by Standing on Three Major Advantages

(1). Create diverse co-operation foundation by based on the advantage of area. China and ASEAN connect by waters and mountains as well as integrates economically and culturally. Since the establishment of dialogue in 1991, both sides have continued to deepen economic integration, accelerated economic and trade cooperation, and made people-to-people and cultural exchanges closer. As good neighbors and partners, the bilateral vocational education cooperation has great convenience, mutual benefit and complementarity, which has become the unique regional advantage of the internationalization of vocational education in China. Given the location advantages of ASEAN, the school takes ASEAN countries as a crucial cooperation object, builds a diversified cooperation foundation in industry and education, and gradually transforms location advantages into development strengths.
(2). Create the international supporting foundation by standing on the superiority of Wenzhou merchants. We can see businessmen from Wenzhou all over the world, which makes Wenzhou enjoy unique advantages in internationalization. At present, Wenzhou is home to 688,000 overseas Chinese, among whom 380,000 live in 57 countries along the Belt and Road, and they are a considerable force for the further promotion of the Belt and Road Initiative. The school gives full play to the role of overseas Chinese leaders from Wenzhou, regards "overseas Chinese" as the bridge, and asks them for needs and plans during the preparation period of internationalized projects. The overseas Wenzhou businessmen famous for "doing business and doing good to the world" can offer some regional information or material foundation needed by the cooperative project personnel according to local conditions, thus providing solid international support for the school's internationalized project.

(3) Build the bases of industrial matching, stand on specialized strengths. Cambodia Silk Road College is located in its capital Phnom Penh. It takes the labor-intensive light industries such as electrical automation, hardware machinery, clothing, footwear, food processing and agricultural products as the industrial orientation, which matches the industrial structure of Wenzhou. Wenzhou Polytechnic runs specialties around regional industries, and its specialty setting is closely connected with the industries in Wenzhou, so it can link up with the industries in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. As a result, both sides have more in common and mutually beneficial experience in exchanges of vocational techniques.

2. School-running Mechanism: implementing operative management by co-operate multi-subjects.

Silk Road College was established under the guidance of Cambodia's Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training and ASEAN-China Center. NTTI, Wenzhou Vocational and Technical College and Yalong Intelligent Equipment Group Co., Ltd. work together and fully exert their advantages and roles in running overseas schools. Through multi-collaboration, active cooperation and interaction, they join hands to build Silk Road College. In addition, they have set up a special working group responsible for the operation and management of Silk Road College.

As the subject of school running, NTTI is responsible for handling the relevant approval or filing procedures for cooperative school running in Cambodia, the site construction of Sino-Cambodian Silk Road College cooperation projects in Cambodia, as well as the enrollment and students’ status management of Silk Road College. Besides, it organizes and coordinates students to complete the courses of Silk Road College and selects Cambodian teachers to study in Chinese schools.

As the subject of overseas school running, Wenzhou Polytechnic is responsible for developing professional teaching and curriculum standards suitable for Cambodia according to the requirements of the competent department of education in Cambodia and the actual needs of technical and skilled talents for industrial upgrading in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Besides, it selects and dispatches Chinese-language and professional teachers to teach at Silk Road College. At the same time, it is in charge of training local teachers in the cooperative schools in Cambodia in terms of Chinese and professional courses to meet the teaching needs of Silk Road College.

Yalong Intelligent Equipment Group Co., Ltd., as the enterprise side of school running subjects, is responsible for providing some advanced educational equipment, soft resources and technical training and certification services for cooperative projects. At the same time, it is required to receive some excellent teachers and students to carry out practice or internships and provide some posts for outstanding graduates.

3. School Running Features Launching Five-doubles School-running Considering Bilateral Reality

(1) Pair Form: Training Plus Academic Education
In addition to providing professional courses to improve the academic qualifications of local students and some employees, Silk Road School also provides vocational training and education for Cambodian teachers and employees of Chinese-funded enterprises, including targeted vocational guidance and skills training. In terms of vocational training, on top of the original vocational training contents, Silk Road School promptly expanded the vocational training and education for qualification certifications based on the dynamic needs of the Cambodian parties.

(2) Two Campus: Overseas and Native
With the support of the main sponsor, Silk Road School has established an extra campus in Wenzhou Polytechnic which enrolls on a yearly basis a certain number of outstanding students. Through this dual-campus model, the school realizes the combination of "invite in + walk out", that is, high-quality Chinese vocational education resources are introduced to Cambodia with the help of the cooperating enterprise, and excellent Cambodian students are sent to Wenzhou Polytechnic to learn technology and Chinese culture.

(3) Dual Standards: Cambodia + China
Due to the gap between Cambodia and China in the development of vocational education, Silk Road School’s talent training and curriculum plan integrates the respective standards of the two countries. Through comprehensive research and after consideration of each other's actual conditions, and in ways of the revision of the original curriculum, adding new courses, and the selection of international standard textbooks, the parties jointly formulate an international talent training program and curriculum standards recognized by both.

(4). Pair Teacher Resource: Expatriate Lecturers Group with Native Assistant
In order to meet the teaching needs of overseas Silk Road School, the school adopts the teacher team construction model of "expatriate lecturers + native teaching assistants", meaning that a core team of Chinese professional teachers was sent to the Silk Road School to carry out teaching and give lectures with assistance provided by Cambodian teaching assistants. The above model helps to better and more promptly solve various problems that may arise in the teaching process, including poor communication, cultural differences, etc., and it also helps the training of local teachers, so that they can quickly become professional teachers who are able to independently give lectures according to teaching standards.

(5). Double Targets: the knowledge and the Inheriting
In addition to the transfer of professional knowledge and skills, the more important goal of Wenzhou Polytechnic to establish Silk Road School in Cambodia is to cultivate Chinese-Cambodian emissaries who understand China, have international perspectives and intercultural communication skills. Through the spread of Chinese culture, Silk Road School helps Cambodian students understand and love China, becoming local talents suitable for the development of Chinese-funded enterprises, in which way it has contributed to the production of enterprises and the development of cultural and economic exchanges between China and Cambodia.

4. The Effectiveness of School Running: The Obvious Efficiency in School Running by Nourishing the International Talents
Silk Road School is the first Chinese school set up overseas jointly with a Chinese company, one of the first batches of Chinese schools to provide teacher training for the South African government, and the first overseas school established by a college in Zhejiang Province jointly with the South African government for educating foreign students. For four years from its preparation to actual operation, Silk Road School has successfully completed more than 2,000 person-days of skills training for Cambodian teachers and officials, enrolled 180 overseas
students, and introduced 3 international students to China. It has received good responses in China and local Cambodian society, including high-standard reports by China-ASEAN Center, "Zhejiang Workers' Daily", "Ou Hua Italy Times" and many other related media in Cambodia. And it has been included by Wenzhou in its top ten internationalization examples.

Obvious Driving Effect
For Wenzhou Polytechnic, the establishment of Silk Road School is a milestone in the course of its international development, which further promoted its international exchanges and the subsequent international school construction (including Ya Long International Intelligence Academy, Italian Training Center, and the second overseas Silk Road School planned to be established in South Africa). At the same time, the successful establishment and stable operation of Silk Road School will drive more domestic enterprises, vocational colleges to establish international schools overseas together with local colleges, serving as a source of credible reference and experience in the process.

Distinct Demonstration Efficiency
In terms of in-depth cooperation and exchanges between China and ASEAN countries in vocational education-related personnel training, foreign student education, teacher training, overseas industry-education integration, technical research, qualification certification, etc. the Silk Road School serves as a good example and provides a replicable and extendable school building model in ways of government-school-enterprise cooperation. Inspired by this project, Guizhou Vocational and Technical college of water resources and hydropower, Changzhou Vocational Institute of Engineering, Liaoning Mechatronics College and Chongqing Industry & Trade Polytechnic College have also expressed their interests in establishing international schools in Cambodia.

Evident Overflow Effect
Since the founding of Silk Road School, Wenzhou Polytechnic and Yalong Intelligent Equipment Group Co., Ltd. initiated the formation of the China-Cambodia Vocational Education Cooperation Alliance, organized the China-ASEAN Week events and the "B&R" talent training forum of the World Young Scientist Summit, and promoted the inauguration of 5 Silk Road Schools and the signing of Silk Road School framework cooperation agreements by 10 institutions.

5. Strategy and Suggestion of International Talents Cultivation in Higher Vocational College

1. Build Up the Management Operating Mechanism with Multiple Linkage
The survival and development of an international school depend on the support of the local government and businesses, and its sustainable development also requires the college to establish a multi-party management and operation mechanism together with the local government and enterprises. The establishment of such an operation mechanism requires clearly defined government positioning and management, promotion of internationalization concepts among managers and implementers, and finally the realization of multi-party participation in collaborative education[6].

The local government and its functional agencies having clear-defined roles and management responsibilities is a prerequisite for establishing the management mechanism with multi-party linkage. Having the right to manage and allocate resources from all parties, local government and its functional agencies constitute an important driving force in promoting the integration of production and education, collaborative education, and high-quality training of international talents. In order for Silk Road School to fulfill the mission of training international talents, the first thing to do is to clarify the specific responsibilities of the local government and its
functional agencies in the process of building and running the school, including giving estimates about the talents needed for the development of local industries, mobilizing industrial resources and integrating them into vocational and other education processes, etc. so that they can play an important role in aspects such as resource integration and funding support.

The promotion of internationalization concepts among managers and implementers is the basis for establishing the management mechanism with multi-party linkage. Ideas guide actions and different ideas will lead to different courses of action, and ultimately to different results. Whether people involved in the management and implementation of Silk Road School understand the right concepts of internationalization will directly affect the quality of the school's international talent training. For the management, it's required to have a strategic vision and overall awareness of international development, to accurately understand the development trend and practical objectives of international talent training by higher vocational colleges, and to educate the implementers on international development [7]. For implementers, it is required to actively adapt to the trend of international development of higher vocational colleges, for which they can learn more about international education by participating in international cultural exchanges, visiting studies and training activities.

Realization of multi-party participation in collaborative education is the core mission of establishing the management mechanism with multi-party linkage. Multi-party participation in collaborative education means uniting and concentrating the efforts and resources of multiple entities in building a systematic operation system that is "led by government, assisted by enterprises, and based on the school", and forming an international management and operation mechanism with coupling effects. The three parties that jointly founded Silk Road School belong to different organizational systems, so in essential they have different motives for action. Therefore, to achieve multi-party participation in collaborative education, the three parties must achieve the coordination and unity of interests and motivations through adequate communication. The government requires the mechanism to promote the transformation, upgrading and rapid development of local industries; enterprises require it to promote the supply of international talents needed for their development; while the school requires it to ensure the high-quality training of international talents.

2. Building of the High-quality Internationalization Teachers Team

High-level international teachers are one of the key elements in training high-quality international talents. Relative to the increasing demand, there are certain deficiencies in the existing international teacher workforce, which is mainly reflected in the lack of sufficient teaching and scientific research capabilities. The following are strategic suggestions on improving such capabilities of international teachers:

First of all, we must ensure the improvement of the teaching and scientific research capabilities of international teachers from the perspective of top-level design. In this regard, it is recommended to establish a scientific and reasonable medium and long-term development plan for international teachers, set phased objectives according to the specific conditions of the country where the school is located, and regularly track objective completion progress, provide real-time supervision and feedback, and promptly analyze and adjust the objectives accordingly. The formulation and adjustment of specific plans can be done in reference to relevant national plans, which is helpful for precise positioning. In addition, from the perspective of organization and implementation, the school's administrators should regard the construction of an international faculty team as a major annual task and incorporate it into the school's development strategy; at the level of secondary colleges, it is necessary to establish an implementation team for the construction of an international faculty team, which is responsible for formulating specific work plans and implementing various tasks. Secondly, it is necessary to simultaneously adopt a variety of measures to strengthen the cultivation of international teachers’ teaching and scientific research capabilities, and actively develop a comprehensive
and multi-level approach to meet the different needs of international teacher construction. In terms of improving international teaching capabilities, it is necessary to further broaden the "introduction" channels, so as to introduce more advanced school-running models, teaching innovations, professional development and other world-class teaching contents; at the same time, we must also further broaden the "going out" channels, using government platforms and foreign cooperation platforms of universities and colleges to promote the exchange of talents and to understand the modes, rules and communication methods of international teaching in ways of short-term study visits, participation in international conferences, international project cooperation, etc. Due to the relatively weak economic development of most countries along the "B&R" route, the development of scientific research capabilities for international teachers should focus more on exporting advanced technologies that meet the needs of local industrial transformation and upgrading\cite{8}. Therefore, in improving the scientific research capabilities of international teachers, we need to first understand the current status of local industry development and the actual technical problems faced by local companies, and then carry out corresponding technical research in China, so as to realize research-assisted teaching and promote more targeted international talent training.

The final suggestion is to establish and improve the evaluation system for international teachers\cite{9}. The core indicators used in this system should include elements that best represent the level of internationalization among teachers, including the number of international students trained and the quality of their training, the scientific research achievements that can be used by local enterprises, the scale and level of participation in exchanges and cooperation projects of international organizations. The evaluation results should be linked with incentives in the form of title promotion and job promotion etc.

Developing the Overseas school-running expenditure start-up channel

To solve the widespread problem of funding shortages, vocational colleges must use external forces (including local enterprises, local governments, etc.) to raise the funds needed for running schools. Taking Silk Road School as an example, the cooperating Chinese enterprise used its income from product export trade to assume part of the school-running expenses, and the establishment of the school also provides certain economic benefits for the enterprise. By learning from the above model, we can encourage more Chinese enterprises to participate in the training of international talents and therefore solve the problem of shortage of funds. At the same time, we should make good use of the cooperation framework to establish industry-education cooperation relationships in the local area, and attract more local enterprises to invest in vocational education through the effective connection between the education sector and the industrial chain. In addition, it is necessary to use the "R&D" special plan to actively promote the development of overseas school sites, so as to obtain part of the funds required while increasing the international influence of the overseas schools.

References


