

# Study on Teaching Reform of Employment-oriented International Trade Specialty

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**Abstract.** International trade specialty is an applied subject with strong comprehensiveness in colleges, so professional ability training for students majoring in international trade should be employment-oriented and refer to actual personnel demand of enterprises to train professional applied talents and carry out targeted reform. This paper firstly investigates current employment status and employment trend of international trade specialty and takes a college in coastal region as the coastal region to discuss the problems in employment-oriented subject teaching reform process and corresponding improvement countermeasures.

## Introduction

Due to the influence of American subprime crisis in 2008, main cooperation partners of Chinese international trade experienced different degrees of economic downturn. Thus, overseas economy weakens by a large margin, and product import and export demand reduces. Such downturn of international trade development tendency also influences future employment trend of international trade majors. 2009 Employment Report of Chinese Undergraduates issued by MyCOS shows the employment situation of students majoring in international trade is worrying; among the specialties whose graduates fail to gain jobs after they graduate for a half year, international trade ranks the 6<sup>th</sup> place. Thus, employment-oriented international trade teaching reform is extremely urgent.

## Current employment status and employment trend of Chinese international trade graduates

### Employment direction investigation and analysis.

In China, employment directions of international trade graduates mainly concentrate in the following four aspects:

#### *Foreign trade*

Foreign trade is a matched vocation of international trade specialty, including international trade commissioner, foreign trade salesperson, import and export business and foreign trade sale etc. Due to vocational feature, students should own high English competence.

#### *Customs declaration, inspection and freight forwarding*

Compared with foreign trade work, customs work has loose educational requirements for students. Generally, those with education background of junior college or above own the qualification. Such vocations test students' business ability, so comprehensive quality requirement is high.

#### *International business translation and negotiation*

Foreign language ability is an essential ability of students majoring in international trade. Some graduates seek such jobs as simultaneous interpretation, translation and international business negotiation by their excellent foreign language ability. Besides, some enterprises require applicants to master the second foreign language, and know well international trade practice and international business etiquette. This is a severe test for graduates' cross-cultural knowledge reserve.

#### *Primary finance*

In international trade specialty, some courses are interlinked with financial management specialty, including international finance, international settlement and international insurance. Meanwhile, they

have same vocational knowledge structure with banks, finance, accounting and finance and accounting. To work in these enterprises, students should gain job qualification certificates such as CFA, CPA and ACCA. These certificates can increase possibility for students to enter these enterprises.

#### **Employment direction and trend analysis.**

In July 2004, Ministry of Commerce issued Foreign Trade Operator Registration Method. This indicates foreign trade operation in China has transited to current registration system from traditional examination and approval system. This seriously reduces market access threshold requirement for foreign trade operation subjects. Many small and medium-sized enterprises and even private enterprises may engage in international trade activity. The issuance of this method leads to the rise in the number of small and medium foreign trade enterprises and expands employment scope of international trade majors. Meanwhile, graduates have the opportunity to accumulate sufficient practical experience before their graduation, know well international trade process and obtain more certificates. Thus in recent years, small and medium international trade enterprises have become main employment direction of most graduates. It is the society that provides them with the opportunity of adapting working environment fast. Hence, international trade majors can achieve breakthrough of their working ability<sup>[1]</sup>.

### **Problems existing in international trade teaching reform process of a university in coastal region**

#### **Introduction to international trade teaching overview of a university.**

The university mentioned in this paper is located in coastal region of Guangdong Province, so international trade specialty of the university is one of popular specialties. The main courses include cultural course, specialized core course, general course and practice course. Cultural courses include moral education, basic computer knowledge and operation course, PE course and applied writing. Cultural courses occupy 20.5% of total class hours. General courses cover office software application, marketing, English, and international trade geography etc. and account for 15.2% of total class hours. Specialized core courses are many composed of business English, international trade practice, business English listening and speaking, business correspondence, international trade foundation and so on, and account for 32.5% of total class hours. The remaining 31.8% of class hours are mainly allocated to international trade training and substituted post internship.

#### **Reason analysis of problems in international trade teaching reform.**

Although the university is located in the coastal region, owns advantaged international trade resources and can offer more employment opportunities for graduates, some problems still exist in the university in international trade teaching reform. For example, specialty positioning is vague in course setting; course setting does not comply with school features; the talents the university cultivates are not suitable for social actual demand; training course mode is single and the proportion of practical courses and theoretical courses is seriously unbalanced. All these hinder reform course of international trade teaching. Hence, this paper analyzes the main reasons for these problems as follows.

#### *The level of specialized course setting and theoretical teaching is low*

International trade courses cover a wide range, so course setting must reflect educational thought, main idea and theoretical attainment of international trade courses. This directly influences whether course setting can be scientific and rational, and meet mutual unification of teaching and social needs. At present, this university still lacks overall planning ability and actual operation training ability regulation mechanism in terms of specialized course setting and teaching theory imparting level. Thus, many courses are seemingly rich, but overall course structure setting is irrational and lacks integrative education and assessment of theory and practice. Moreover, most teachers of the university do not participate in course setting process, so they do not understand new course setting scheme, just passively accept post-reform arrangement of university managers and fail to fuse their teaching awareness and reform awareness. Thus, teachers may be easily disconnected with classroom teaching and can neither rationally control teaching space nor improve teaching quality.

### *Teaching reform lacks feasibility market survey*

The university is significantly short of feasibility market survey. In other words, international trade specialty fails to closely connect with transnational enterprises and lacks university-enterprise cooperation mode. Therefore, relevant specialties cannot cultivate skilled talents suitable for enterprise demand. Seeing from theory and practice of the university, this university refers to many international trade teaching modes of other universities in course setting and reform process, but fails to study reform design suitable for teaching features and teaching resources of the university. Thus, when the university provides international trade talents to society, students cannot adapt role transformation from campus to social post due to differences between enterprises and actual conditions of the university as well as various condition restrictions. Even many graduates cannot find corresponding work suitable for their development in a short time.

### *Lack training courses*

Like other specialties, international trade specialty stresses theory and ignores practice. This is especially reflected in students and teachers. Many students consider as long as they master abundant theoretical knowledge of international trade, they can adapt the need of social posts. However in fact, international trade talents cultivated by such education mode are not comprehensive. Meanwhile, this is related to lack of university-enterprise cooperation mechanism. Students seldom have practice opportunity of international trade specialty during the university and cannot adapt working environment in internship period. The author considers this university lacks cooperation with enterprises. There are three reasons as follows. Firstly, enterprises doubt the university and worry talents cultivated by the university cannot meet actual demand of enterprises. Secondly, many enterprises neither negotiate with the university about teaching nor arrange rational enterprise guidance course, so both parties do not discuss and understand each other enough. Thirdly, in Guangdong Province, various universities compete fiercely in international trade specialty. Since the university is low in teaching reform, it cannot gain favor of more enterprises<sup>[2]</sup>.

## **Countermeasures on international trade teaching reform of a university in coastal region**

The Pearl River Delta Region possesses advantaged international trade resource and is the place where foreign trade enterprises gather. Universities should make the best of this resource during setting international trade specialty, absorb advanced social enterprise development idea, and fuse it in teaching environment and teaching content to accelerate subject teaching reform and development. This paper discusses the due posture in subject teaching reform and countermeasures on the basis of international trade teaching problems of the university and actual development situation of existing society.

### **Establish employment-oriented talent training objective for the specialty.**

Firstly, employment-oriented talent training objective should be established for the specialty to cultivate different types of talents with strong adaptation, such as operation type, service type and entrepreneurial type. Therefore, its specific training plan should be as follows:

Cultural foundation education should be placed in the first place. Students should own solid social culture and subject culture ability, such as English and Chinese expression ability, listening, speaking, reading and writing ability as well as translation ability between English and Chinese.

Secondly, universities should deepen students' ability to collect data about international trade specialty and improve their ability to read professional technical data and apply network to handle problems. In future work, students may often apply computer network, so universities increase some practical courses in this aspect so as to boost their business operation proficiency in future work.

Thirdly, teachers should pay attention to applying multimedia teaching and interactive teaching in course reform and course reform internship to boost students' innovation spirit, teamwork spirit and autonomous learning ability. This also contributes to them to gain various job qualification certificates faster and blend in social work as early as possible.

## **Construct “module” professional course teaching system based on industry and employment demand.**

International trade subject teaching has owns advanced improvement experience overseas. They main combine their national conditions with domestic economy to carry out teaching environment and course setting based on “wide-range foundation and flexible module” . Their teaching objective positions the subject at front-line positions. Graduates will gain the opportunity of continue learning in vocational positions. This is beneficial to cultivate interdisciplinary talents. Thus, the university should position its international trade teaching reform objective to comprehensive quality and all-round vocation ability cultivation, including training education reform for production talents, service talents and technical talents. On this basis, this paper holds that “module” teaching reform plan should be established for the university to help students cover different levels and different knowledge fields of international trade specialty and absorb knowledge flexibly and to boost teaching content operability after reform.

### *Basic vocational ability module teaching*

Basic vocational ability module teaching aims to train students’ basic learning ability, such as Chinese and foreign language application and expression ability. In addition to this, basic teaching should extend to information technology, such as computer software application and information technology teaching. This is the process of laying a favorable foundation for training students’ vocational core competence.

### *Vocational core competence module teaching*

Vocational core competence module mainly focuses on practical teaching. Universities should set diversified practical courses and set multi-grade practical training difficulties to develop their learning potential and to enhance their comprehensive application ability. On the other hand, universities should create situations to simulate real working environment so that students can really experience each working process and methods in international trade enterprises and cultivate sense of responsibility and occupation in advance.

### *Vocational extension ability module teaching*

Vocational extension ability training can reflect international trade teaching ability. In general, universities should respect students’ individuality, meet diversified knowledge structure construction of international trade subject system and set relevant courses beneficial to students’ ability expansion. Therefore, course content design about vocational extension ability can be knowledge system extension meeting core courses or specialized course teaching related to international trade. For extension course of the university, the university may combine activities of foreign trade enterprises in Pearl River Delta with local industry demand and classify course reform directions into the following types: foreign trade order handling, secretary concerning foreign affairs, inspection staff and business translation etc. After the classification of extension courses is confirmed, specific course contents can be set<sup>[3]</sup>.

## **Summary**

In essence, international trade teaching reform cannot be done once and for ever, because it needs to change with development of social economy and international economy and satisfy enterprise demand for talents. Thus, to reform employment-oriented international trade teaching, universities should survey and investigate market dynamics in real time, design the latest teaching content and help students advance with the times in terms of specialty study so as to acquire more cutting-edge specialty awareness, cope with specific employment requirements of enterprises and successfully seek jobs.

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