

# Enlightenment of German Education of Dual System on Foreign Language Education in China's Applied Universities\*

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**Abstract**—German vocational education of “dual” system has continuously trained a large number of technology-based and application-based talents for Germany. Although China has contacted with the dual-track educational thought for a long time and has all along advocated carrying such thought out, but after many years of exploration, it has not yet formed a complete new-type vocational educational system due to various reasons. However, through the advanced educational system of “dual system”, we can reflect on the current situation and shortcomings of current educational activities. Foreign language education is an educational behavior based on theory and with practice as its ultimate goal. Therefore, the education of dual system that focuses on the combination of theory and practice has great enlightening role on foreign language education.

**Keywords**—education of dual system; foreign language education

## I. INTRODUCTION

In “Made in China 2025”, it is pointed out that the country hopes to step into one of the world's manufacturing powers by 2025. The realization of this goal necessarily needs to be based on first-class technical personnel, which poses a new challenge to the educational business of our country. As a traditional manufacturing power in the world, Germany pays great attention to the educational mode of “dual system” talent cultivation that combines theory with practice. For a long time, school education in China has put too much emphasis on the imparting of theoretical knowledge, and the link of practical education is in a weak position. Foreign language is a technical subject of instrumental type. Most language education starts with such these practical scenarios as greeting and chatting and takes the fluent use of the language learned and the understanding of the relevant language and culture as goals, which means that theory and practice cannot be separated and throughout foreign language learning. The organic combination of the two is the characteristic of German “dual system” talent cultivation mode, which can provide reference for foreign

language talents cultivation in China.

## II. GERMAN EDUCATION OF DUAL SYSTEM

German rapid rise after World War II has attracted worldwide attention, which is largely attributed to Germany's vocational educational of “dual” system. Former German Chancellor Kohl once said in his article “The Dual Power in the Unity of Germany”: “Youth who go through good vocational training is the biggest capital of our country and the guarantee of our economic stability”. The so-called “dual” education (das DUALE Bildungssystem) is sometimes called as “dual-track system” education or “dual system” education, which mainly emphasizes the combination of theory and practice. “Unitary” education refers to the theoretical education of schools and the practical activities of enterprises. After signing the Vocational Education Contract with enterprises with qualifications for vocational education, the educatees keep studying in enterprises for 3-4 days a week and in vocational schools for 1-2 days. Enterprises take part in and lead the practical teaching, which ensures that the educatees can go to post immediately after graduation, and the knowledge learned can serve the future engaged career to a great extent. However, not all enterprises in Germany are qualified to engage in vocational education. Only those enterprises that have been examined and identified by industry associations according to the qualification baselines of the Federal Vocational Education Act can carry out “dual” vocational education. The quality evaluation and certification of German institutions of higher learning has a strict process of appraisal and certification. Successfully certified enterprises are transformed from profit-oriented enterprises to enterprises that bear social responsibility and cultivate professional talents. These enterprises have very high social status and reputation. To some extent, they can be understood as formal educational institutions that are parallel to vocational schools because strict evaluation and certification and supervision mechanisms ensure the quality of education.

## III. CURRENT FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN CHINA AND ITS DEFICIENCIES

As early as, our country has had the rudiment of “dual” educational thought, such as “industry-education integration,

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school-enterprise cooperation", and has always advocated such thought can implement in the vocational educational system, but after years of exploration, it has not yet formed a complete new-type vocational educational system due to various reasons. Foreign language education ultimately emphasizes the cultivation of students' practical ability. However, the scale and quality of foreign language talents are at present still difficult to meet the social needs. The author summarizes the following reasons:

#### *A. More Attention to Theory but Little to Practice*

In recent years, most domestic colleges and universities regard "running first-class universities, comprehensive universities and academic research-oriented universities" as their idea on school management, emphasize scientific research and devote themselves to the cultivation of academic elite talents. This orientation trend leads to the idea of attaching more importance to theory than to practice in curriculum design. However, the traditional cognition of our country also has a natural disrespect for vocational education, which thinks that only those who do not study well, that is, those who possess poor theoretical achievements need to "work hard" to engage in practical work.

#### *B. Imbalanced and Rigid Teaching and Examination Modes*

At present, the traditional indoctrinating teaching mode is still widely adopted in foreign language classroom teaching in colleges and universities in China that pays more attention to theoretical explanation and assessment, and does not require excessive demands on students' ability to solve practical problems. Foreign language education originally emphasizes practical ability, while teachers' classroom teaching still emphasizes the imparting of grammatical knowledge. Most of the examinations are still closed-book written examinations that emphasize on examining students' theoretical knowledge level and students' linguistic applying ability is not carefully assessed in general. This kind of rigid and unbalanced teaching and examination mode easily leads to students' shortage of practical initiative, which is not conducive to the development of students' critical thinking and problem-solving ability.

#### *C. Imbalanced Proportion of Curriculum Framework*

At present, the compulsory course module still occupies the dominant position in the curriculum system of foreign language majors in most colleges and universities, and the optional courses even occupy a relatively minor position in students' concepts in terms of credit hours, course credits, and types. Most compulsory courses offer the same courses and coerciveness dilutes students' autonomy. At the same time, the proportion of teaching hours in foreign language classes is too large, so students have less autonomous time. However, language needs continuous actual practice to improve the sense of language: otherwise it is easy to lead to the phenomenon of high marks but low abilities. The mismatch between theoretical and practical courses is expressed in the serious shortage of teaching hours in

practical courses, and has not developed into an independent and perfect system.

In addition, after the expansion of enrollment in colleges and universities, the outfit of teaching staff has not been able to synchronize with the scale of students. Under the environment of excessive theoretical teaching hours, teachers are tired of coping with theoretical teaching, and neglect the organization and check and implementation of students' probation and practice, thus resulting in the practical links being on the surface and a mere formality.

#### *D. Gappy Supply and Demand of Talents Between Schools and Enterprises*

At present, most of the foreign language majors in senior colleges and universities in China still stick to the traditional theory when they train students, neglect the connection with the market, and cannot adjust dynamically according to the specific needs of the market. As a result, the talent cultivation plan and cultivation mode in colleges and universities cannot keep up with the changing rhythm of the market, and there are some problems such as poor social adaptability of graduates, difficult employment and so on.

#### *E. Lacking Strategic Cooperation Between Schools and Enterprises*

Although the vast majority of enterprises are also looking forward to high-quality graduates, due to the employment market, national policies and other reasons, it is impossible for enterprises to provide enough training posts for students in school to carry out training, and even tend to regard students' practice and practical activities to enterprise as an additional burden; they only care about how many qualified personnel can be transported to enterprises by universities, and seldom actively engage and communicate with the school on the professional quality and key competence, and provide necessary guidance or support. At the same time, enterprises cannot understand the school-enterprise cooperation and personnel training from the strategic level of sustainable development of the enterprise. The main body of higher education in schools needs to invest a lot of financial and material resources in practical training link, and the lack of funds is almost a problem faced by every college.

## IV. ENLIGHTENMENT

In June 2014, the Ministry of Education and other six departments issued the "Planning for the Construction of Modern Vocational Educational System (2014-2020)", which proposed that "the undergraduate colleges and universities that is positioned for the development of service industry and local economy and society should be supported to carry out comprehensive reform and develop into applied technology-type colleges and universities". In 2020, it requires that "the modern vocational educational system with Chinese characteristics should be basically established". In the Decision on Accelerating the Development of Modern Vocational Educational issued by the State Council, it is clearly emphasized that "a number of undergraduate colleges and universities should be supported to transform into

applied technology-based ones". It can be seen that the educational policy of our country increasingly emphasizes the position of practice. As an educational and cultivation system that has been tested for many years, the German "dual" has obvious referential significance for many foreign language colleges that are transforming to application-based technology or specialties in China. On the premise of favorable national policy, foreign language colleges and universities can get the following enlightenment from the "dual" system:

#### *A. Making Guidance of National Policy and Incentive of Government Policy*

First of all, the state should formulate the certification system standards that have the advantages of German vocational education certification system and conform to the national conditions of our country. As the beacon of vocational educational reform, certification system standards improve the policy and legal protection system. At the same time, the government should take advantage of policy regulation to attract enterprises to participate actively in personnel cultivation. For example, German law expressly stipulates that all enterprises or companies must pay a certain amount of vocational educational funds to the federal government. The federal government or state government allocates these vocational educational funds to enterprises or companies that participate in training, while enterprises or companies that not participate in training cannot obtain education and training funds. Our government can also try to give corresponding preferential or incentive policies to relevant enterprises, especially foreign-funded enterprises with international background, encourage enterprises to take the initiative to widely connect with schools, directly provide employment guidance, consultation support and internship positions for students to attract students to actively take part in practical education and take promoting youth practice and entrepreneurship as a long-term strategy of sustainability.

#### *B. Deepening the Reform of Colleges and Universities, and Implementing International Cooperation*

Many colleges and universities should keep pace with the times, innovate personnel training goals, extensively implement credit system, guarantee flexible learning system, encourage minors, and build a perfect practical link system. Second, colleges and universities should set up and promote basic practical courses, such as basic courses of tour guides, conferences and professional verbal trick. This can not only enable students to have a clear cognition of the industry that they will engage in the future before they receive practical training offered by enterprises, but also reduce the intensity of induction training of enterprises to promote students to acquire skills and meet the requirements of enterprises. Finally, the school should build the practical teaching base from the angle of software and hardware in an all-round way, and effectively give full play to its role.

In particular, foreign language colleges and specialties should focus on the international community and build an international cooperation platform in an all-round way. Firstly, they should find suitable international colleges and

universities or enterprises to extensively establish inter-school cooperative relations. Under the framework of cooperation, both sides of colleges and universities can send students to each other for long-term and short-term learning exchanges, mutually recognize credits, and recognize double degrees. Both can mutually assign teachers for long-term and short-term visits, exchanges and cooperative teaching. Secondly, they should promote international teaching, increase the proportion of the enrollment of foreign students, and encourage the opening of international classes and courses, so as to effectively enhance the foreign language skills and intercultural communicative ability of students from both sides and the international influence of Chinese colleges and universities. Thirdly, they should carry out in-depth cooperative scientific research activities. Through foreign cooperative scientific research of Chinese and foreign universities or joint academic conferences, students from both sides can broaden their horizons and improve their scientific literacy. Fourthly, we should build a school-enterprise international practical platform. Under the framework of cooperation, foreign language majors are organized to practice in foreign company at home and abroad, which is especially beneficial for students to improve their expressive ability in foreign language environment and to exercise their intercultural communicative competence in practice.

#### *C. Enterprises Promoting the Pattern, and Actively Participating in Training*

In the education of "dual" system, although the talents trained by enterprises may not stay in the specific enterprises receiving training, for the whole industry, other enterprises have saved the time and energy of training. Relevant enterprises distribute some jobs to trainees that can reduce operating costs and get financial subsidies from the government or schools. However, trainees' labor also objectively creates corresponding production value for enterprises.

For example, foreign language students taking part in the practical activities of tour guides, except the need for experienced tour guides at the beginning, can then take the lead and create economic benefits for the company. At the same time, interns have a clear understanding of the practical operation links, familiar with the corporate culture, and can work in harmony with colleagues, enterprises or companies can directly choose the best for their own use. On the one hand, the enterprise has got the appropriate talents needed; on the other hand, it also saves the cost and time of personnel training.

It can be seen that the perfect enterprise practice system can play a very positive role for the efficiency of resource operation and allocation effect of the enterprise itself and even the whole industry. Therefore, the vast number of domestic enterprises should change their concepts, take a long-term view, improve the development pattern, change passive to active cooperation with the school, actively create conditions for internship posts, and lay the foundation for their own and even industry talent reserve.

#### *D. Teachers Making Reorientation, and Schools Breaking the Rule for Introduction of Foreign Knowledge*

When numerous domestic colleges and universities introduce talents, they unilaterally attach great importance to their education background, degree background, scientific research achievements and research potential and other factors, and do not require too much practical ability of their candidates. Most foreign language teachers in China teach directly after graduation, but few have the job background of enterprise management, tour guide secretary and so on. They only go abroad occasionally or even have not gone abroad. Because such teachers themselves lack practical experience, let alone guide students in practical aspect.

The development of national education requires a large number of "double-qualified" professors, that is, teachers who have the basic literacy of colleges and universities teachers and meet the basic requirements of enterprise engineers can achieve the organic unity of academy and practice. For vocational education, "double-qualified" teachers can not only come from school teachers who teach theory, but also from a group of tour guides, foreign company engineering technicians, senior managers, freelance interpreters and translators who have rich practical experience from corporate business and management organization.

On the other hand, foreign language teachers in schools need to re-orientate themselves, contact with enterprises and understand the frontier knowledge of the industry. Under the support of policy, they can regularly away themselves from the teaching and scientific research work of schools and engage in practical work in counterpart corporate business or management organizations. As a result, they can understand new trends and solve new problems by contacting the first-hand industrial frontiers, so as to update their concepts in a timely manner and effectively expand our knowledge.

Domestic schools should also break the rules and eclectically introduce professionals as part-time professors or specially appointed lecturers to assume a certain proportion of teaching tasks in schools after receiving relevant teaching theory training. For example, the secretarial staff of relevant languages is employed to teach the course of "Foreign Trade Correspondence" and senior guides are employed to impart the knowledge of "Introduction to Tourism". Real knowledge comes from practice and such professionals, as formal teachers, impart front-line professional knowledge, which plays a very positive role in improving the practical ability of foreign language majors.

#### *E. Students Changing Their Cognition, and Meeting Practice Objectively*

At present, the orientation of vocational education in Chinese society is to train workmen, technicians and other labor force. Most of the students choose these labor occupations that are non-creative job because of their unsatisfactory examination results. The social status of vocational education is lower than that of higher education at the same level.

Students also believe that vocational education is a compulsory study to make a living. For example, some foreign language majors believe that they will be engaged in the teaching profession in the future and do not need to take the guided courses. They do not know that they also need to teach students who want to become guides when they become teacher. Then their lack of practical knowledge of guided tours will become the bottleneck of their teaching activities.

However, today's students need to change their understanding fundamentally and realize that vocational education and practical activities are a highly meaningful educational behavior that most industries should develop. Language is essentially a practice. On this cognitive basis, students can objectively cope with practical activities, improve their language knowledge and practice while brave in practice, constantly find problems and settle problems, so that they have enough ability to face all kinds of difficulties they may encounter in the future.

## V. CONCLUSION

Germany's "dual" system of education emphasizes the organic combination of theory and practice, which has positive reference significance for foreign language majors that are based on practical application under the background of "Industrial 4.0" era and "Made in China 2025". However, due to the differences in history, culture and social customs between the two countries, how to create a new set of educational concepts in line with China's national conditions on the basis of them still needs further discussion. The government, enterprises and schools need to work together to guide the healthy development of education, which is bound to cultivate a large number of high-quality foreign language talents with an international perspective and improve China's international competitiveness.

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