

Improvement Research on Chinese International Education Curriculum System in Vocational Colleges under the Context of the Belt and Road Initiative

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Abstract

The research focuses on improving the curriculum system for Chinese international education in vocational colleges under the context of the Belt and Road Initiative. The study involves analyzing existing issues within the curriculum system and proposing strategies for improvement. These strategies cover various aspects of the curriculum system, including course objectives, design, implementation, and assessment. The goal is to better meet the educational needs of international students studying in China and enhance overall educational quality. To achieve this, vocational colleges should collaborate across multiple areas, strengthen their unique features, enhance cultural education, invest in faculty development, improve teaching evaluation systems, and explore personalized and differentiated teaching approaches.

Keywords

The Context of the Belt and Road Initiative, Vocational College, Chinese International Education Curriculum System.

1. Introduction to the Background

Since 2013, the concept of the "21st Century Maritime Silk Road" and the "Silk Road Economic Belt" has been proposed, known as the familiar "Belt and Road" initiative. With the advancement of this initiative, China's exchanges and cooperation with countries along the route have deepened in various fields such as politics, economy, trade, and culture, significantly enhancing China's international influence. The "Opinions on Accelerating and Expanding the Opening Up of Education in the New Era" issued by eight departments including the Ministry of Education (hereinafter referred to as "Opinions") has made an important plan for the opening up of education in the new era. It emphasizes that under new circumstances, China will create an upgraded version of the "Belt and Road" educational initiative, strengthen the "Study in China" brand, deepen exchanges and cooperation in the field of education with countries around the world, and contribute Chinese wisdom and strength to the progress of global education. The "Opinions" clarify the basic principles of opening up education to the outside world, including acting within our means, operating according to law, prioritizing quality, and steady development. It also proposes to promote the combination of applied undergraduate programs and vocational colleges with the "going out" strategy of Chinese enterprises, conduct collaborative education to achieve common development goals. At the same time, to accelerate the modernization process of China's education and cultivate talents with global competitiveness, language plays an increasingly important role as a bridge for communication and cooperation. Global demand for talents with Chinese language proficiency is growing continuously, which brings higher requirements to Chinese language teaching in China and also presents unprecedented opportunities and challenges. In response to the challenges and risks

faced by international Chinese language education, the construction of a "Global Chinese Learning Platform" is advocated, encouraging domestic vocational institutions and Chinese enterprises to participate in international Chinese language education, promoting the integration of professional skills and international Chinese language education, thereby driving economic development in various countries and enhancing mutual understanding among peoples. Expansion of Sino-foreign language exchanges and cooperation, enhancement of Chinese service capabilities, provision of language support for people traveling to China for tourism, study, work, or residence, further promoting Chinese as an official or working language in more international organizations and conferences, fostering mutual learning and appreciation among diverse civilizations. As demand for vocational skills from countries along the "Belt and Road" continues to grow, an increasing number of international students are turning their attention to vocational education in China rather than just higher education.

Unlike universities focusing on research-oriented talent training, vocational colleges aim to cultivate technical talents adapted to the needs of economic development. To better serve enterprises and industries, vocational colleges must develop talent training plans tailored to specific enterprise needs. Currently, China's economic cooperation with countries along the "Belt and Road" is becoming increasingly close, urgently requiring a batch of composite talents who not only possess solid professional knowledge but also have strong Chinese language communication skills. The demand for such talents from multinational companies highlights the importance of vocational colleges developing international Chinese language education and nurturing "Chinese + Professional Skills" type international talents. Based on the growing demand in the international job market for professionals with Chinese language abilities, vocational colleges must focus on both Chinese language ability and professional skills during the process of cultivating international talents. Only by addressing specific enterprise needs can they provide high-quality human resource support for businesses in today's global context and better serve multinational corporations. As demand for Chinese language talents increases in countries along the "Belt and Road," those with professional skills combined with mastery of the Chinese language are gaining an increasingly clear advantage in the job market.

When cultivating international talents, vocational colleges should fully utilize their professional characteristics and focus on developing students' professional Chinese language abilities to cultivate talents with dual competencies in "Chinese + Professional Skills." Currently, international students at vocational colleges have short enrollment periods lacking practical experience, leading to a lack of awareness about the characteristics and functions of international talent training at these colleges. Many vocational colleges simply mimic the model used by undergraduate programs when teaching Chinese to international students, failing to set clear objectives for teaching Chinese to international students and choosing course settings and teaching materials that are problematic. International Chinese language education is a significant endeavor related to national rejuvenation.

2. Research Objectives

This article aims to identify deficiencies in the existing Chinese language curriculum system at vocational colleges in Sichuan. Through methods such as literature review, interviews with teachers and students, and curriculum analysis, the study explores corresponding improvement strategies. It provides recommendations for various aspects of the curriculum system (including course objectives, course design, implementation, and assessment) to enhance the Chinese language proficiency of international students in vocational colleges. The ultimate goal is to promote the internationalization of talent development in these institutions.

3. Research Participants

The study investigates multiple Chinese language education-related disciplines across vocational colleges in Sichuan. Using surveys and interviews, it examines more than 30 teachers and over 300 international students from different vocational colleges in 8 cities and 7 industries within the province. The research findings indicate that most colleges' Chinese international education courses primarily target first-year students, with a duration of one year. After passing the HSK Level 4 exam at the end of the first year, students can proceed to the second stage of specialized courses, where the majority of instruction is conducted in Chinese. The participating teachers are responsible for teaching various Chinese-related courses, including comprehensive Chinese, spoken Chinese, listening comprehension, reading, writing, and Chinese culture. The international students mainly come from Southeast Asian countries.

4. Analysis of Research Results

Based on the analysis of results, the main issues in the current Chinese international education curriculum system at vocational colleges are as follows:

4.1 Low Satisfaction: Both teachers and students express low satisfaction with the vocational college Chinese international education curriculum system.

4.2 Insufficient Quality Faculty: There is a shortage of high-quality teaching staff, and teaching methods lack innovation.

4.3 High Teaching Pressure on Teachers: Teachers face significant teaching pressure.

4.4 Limited Student Achievement: Only a small number of students achieve language learning goals within the specified time.

4.5 Challenges in Adapting to Chinese-Medium Instruction: Even students who pass the HSK Level 4 exam struggle to fully adapt to Chinese-medium specialized courses.

4.6 Lack of Personalization and Differentiation: The curriculum system does not fully reflect personalized and differentiated teaching.

4.7 Inconsistent Content and Assessment: The content and assessment in the curriculum system do not align.

4.8 Incomplete Classroom Environment and Management: Inadequate classroom environment and management affect student learning outcomes and interest.

5. Causes of Issues in the Current Curriculum System

5.1 Dissatisfaction from Students and Teachers: Both students and teaching staff express dissatisfaction with the vocational college Chinese international education curriculum system, highlighting room for improvement.

5.2 Challenges Faced by Teachers: Most teachers are not specialized in teaching Chinese as a foreign language. Teaching students from diverse cultural backgrounds and countries creates significant psychological pressure. Meeting language requirements within one year is challenging.

5.3 Insufficient Teacher Preparation: Many teachers handle heavy workloads, averaging over 20 teaching hours. Given the relatively short duration of Chinese international courses, high expectations lead to substantial teaching pressure.

5.4 Student Foundation and HSK4 Exam Difficulty: The three-year study period for international students requires passing the HSK4 exam in the first year. Students with weaker foundations find passing the exam within a year extremely difficult.

5.5 Challenges in Chinese-Medium Instruction: Despite passing HSK4, students still struggle to understand specialized courses taught in Chinese.

5.6 Uniform Approach to Curriculum Design: The current design lacks differentiation based on cultural backgrounds, language proficiency, and individual characteristics, resulting in cultural mismatch and varying student learning outcomes.

5.7 Inconsistent Assessment: The importance of the HSK4 exam in evaluating language proficiency clashes with limited attention from teachers. Other course assessments do not directly align with HSK4 skills.

5.8 Incomplete Management System: Vocational colleges' Chinese international education curriculum system lacks proper management, affecting teacher motivation and precise student assessment. Integrating Chinese culture and specialized knowledge into language teaching remains insufficient.

6. Improvement Measures for Chinese International Education Curriculum System in the Context of the Belt and Road Initiative

To enhance the quality of education for international students, vocational colleges can focus on the following six aspects:

6.1 Collaborative Framework for International Student Education: Collaborate with stakeholders to create an education system that meets the needs of international students. Analyze industry characteristics in countries along the Belt and Road, set appropriate language requirements, and establish clear evaluation criteria.

6.2 Emphasize Vocational Characteristics and Quality: Optimize curriculum structures by integrating "language + skills + literacy." Differentiate teaching based on students' learning cycles and chosen majors, emphasizing practical skills over a one-size-fits-all approach.

6.3 Cultural Education: Infuse cultural elements into education to enhance cross-cultural adaptability. Offer courses with Chinese cultural features and immersive cultural experiences.

6.4 Strengthen Faculty Development: Enhance teacher qualifications, cultural understanding, and teaching strategies. Design differentiated teaching plans based on student profiles.

6.5 Enhance Assessment System: Align subject-specific evaluation standards with comprehensive language proficiency assessment. Consider whether it is suitable to adopt HSK4 as a qualification for specialized study. Effective assessment systems motivate teachers and improve teaching outcomes.

6.6 Personalization and Differentiation: Tailor curriculum design to individual student needs, avoiding a uniform approach. Provide personalized attention and guidance to enhance teaching effectiveness.

7. Conclusion

In summary, by implementing reforms and innovations in collaboration, quality enhancement, cultural education, faculty development, assessment, and personalized teaching, vocational colleges can better serve international students, fostering talents with global perspectives and cross-cultural communication skills.

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