

# An Investigation on the Cultivation of Cross-Border e-Commerce Talents in Rural Areas---Taking Jiaxing as an Example

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**ABSTRACT.** *At present, the development of rural e-commerce is an important part of Rural Revitalization in China. In the summer vacation of 2018, the author conducted a survey on foreign trade companies and foreign trade practitioners in rural areas of Jiaxing. By issuing cross-border e-commerce e-questionnaire and interviewing experienced foreign trade practitioners, the author investigated the development prospects of cross-border e-commerce industry in rural areas and the requirements of rural enterprises for cross-border e-commerce talents. Finally, the paper concludes the development prospects of cross-border e-commerce in towns and villages in Jiaxing area and the suggestions for cross-border e-commerce talent training path, namely: characteristic industry development, government support, school enterprise cooperation.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Rural cross-border e-commerce, Personnel training and cultivation, Path and method*

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background and Meaning of This Study

It was pointed in the Report of 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China that the agricultural industry and rural areas should be developed primarily, and rural vitalization should be boosted effortlessly, pushing the rural vitalization to a strategic level. On Feb. 4th, 2018, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council released a package of policies under the “No 1 central document” of the year, charting the roadmap for rural vitalization. Currently, it was an important strategy made by the Central Committee and the government to attach keen attention to issues relating to agriculture, rural areas, and rural people, and to improve the integrated and coordinated development of urban and rural areas. President Xi delivered a speech in the Symposium on Cyber security and IT Application pointing that by devoting more resources, we need to accelerate the development of the Internet in the countryside and extend the effective coverage of fiber-optic networks and broadband in rural areas. To encourage more people to innovate and start their own business, we can carry out a major initiative to integrate IT into industry and develop smart manufacturing. Based on the fact that agriculture is fundamental in China and a large number of farmers would stay in rural areas, the e-commerce in rural area revitalization would be promising.

According to the statistics from Ministry of Commerce PRC, the sales value through e-commerce channels in rural areas was 12448.8 trillion RMB, covering more than 1/6 nation-wide, which increased 39.1% compared with the year 2016. By the end of 2017, the number of on-line stores in rural areas arises to 98,560,000, with increase of 16,930,000 compared with 2016. This number is extremely striking in the rural areas of Zhejiang province, with the sales value as 6482.4 billion from on-line shops. Therefore, there is a great and emergent need of the elites on cross-border e-commerce. The government proposed that, on one hand, e-commerce training programs should be arranged for farmers, agricultural cooperatives, and government officials in order to cultivate skilled e-commerce elites. On the other hand, the government should guide the experienced e-commerce practitioners to move their businesses to rural areas, and encourage the professional e-commerce managers to develop their business in rural areas. As for colleges and universities, we need to cultivate more talents with e-commerce skills to meet the local economic development.

In Jiaxing, in 2017, the city's total retail sales of consumer goods reached 180.662 billion yuan, an increase of 10.3% over the previous year, of which the retail sales of rural consumer goods reached 27.624 billion yuan, an increase of 10.8%. The e-commerce online retail sales of the city reached 145.42 billion yuan, with an increase of 30.6% over the previous year. Among them, a lot of township enterprises are retailing through online cross-border e-commerce platform. Take Pinghu area, a subsidiary city to Jiaxing, as an example. There are many township

enterprises around Pinghu, mainly engaged in strollers, photovoltaic products, bags and many other distinctive local industries. In 2017, Pinghu's total foreign trade import and export reached 55.01 billion yuan, with an increase of 22.7% over the previous year, in which exports value was 27.96 billion yuan, an increase of 10.5% compared with before. Most of these foreign trade enterprises choose Alibaba, Wish and other e-commerce platforms as the e-commerce platform for foreign trade transaction. Zhapu Port also makes many foreign enterprises choose to set up business in Pinghu industrial park. It is not hard to imagine that Pinghu, as a county, is rich in so many foreign business opportunities, which highlights the importance of cross-border e-commerce talent training in towns.

At present, there is a huge demand for training cross-border e-commerce talents. The provincial e-commerce Promotion Association put forward suggestions: the development of rural e-commerce needs a large number of skilled talents. It is necessary to organize special skills training for farmers, cooperatives and government personnel. On the one hand, it is necessary to enhance the ability of local farmers to actively use the Internet, further expand the e-commerce channels. On the other hand, it is necessary to guide the development of rural e-commerce practitioners with practical experience return from cities and towns to start businesses in rural areas, and encourage professional e-commerce managers to develop in rural areas. As colleges and universities, we should seize the opportunity to cultivate more cross-border e-commerce talents to meet the local development needs.

Therefore, the main purpose of this research is to coordinate the relationship between talents engaged in "cross-border e-commerce" and township enterprises, to facilitate talents to reasonably define their own employment direction, and to enable township export-oriented enterprises to train their own cross-border e-commerce talents through course training; on the other hand, for colleges and universities, it aims to explore how to cultivate "cross-border e-commerce talents" suitable for towns and villages. Based on the innovative idea of rural cross-border e-commerce, this study focuses on the development of "cross-border e-commerce" in rural areas. We can all clearly understand the present time is a good development momentum of "cross-border e-commerce" and the unbalanced distribution of cross-border e-commerce talents and large economic gap between urban and rural areas. Through this study, we hope that we can help the township areas understand more clear and accurate in self positioning of their own industrial advantages, and put the development of "cross-border e-commerce" of the township on the right track. Also, this study is of great significance to the selection of employment direction and areas for cross-border e-commerce talents in the society. Under the vigorous development of "cross-border e-commerce", we hope we can help the township cross-border e-commerce develop vigorously, and realize the steady improvement of the township economy.

## ***1.2 Methodology***

This paper mainly applies the methods of questionnaire, interview and data analysis.

### ***1.2.1 Questionnaire Survey***

Questionnaire survey: through the questionnaire, we investigate the opinions of foreign trade practitioners and township e-commerce practitioners from the township areas of Zhejiang Province on the development of "cross-border e-commerce" in the township.(see Annex 1) The questions in the questionnaire mainly include: the prospect, the deficiencies in the development of cross-border e-commerce in villages and towns, the ways to introduce cross-border e-commerce talents to villages and towns, and the necessary skills for cross-border e-commerce talents. 10 questions are present accordingly. The questions are multiple choice questions and open questions.

### ***1.2.2 Interview***

The Township foreign trade practitioners and experienced e-commerce practitioners are interviewed, inviting them to analyze advantages and disadvantages of current cross-border e-commerce, and put forward constructive suggestions for the development of "cross-border e-commerce" in the township, with the aim to help the township enterprises to identify their own positions and guide the employment direction of foreign trade personnel.

### ***1.2.3 Data Analysis***

Based on the data collected in the questionnaire for statistical analysis, the paper integrates the written and oral information collected from the township enterprises, and compares them to get several more reasonable strategies

for the prospect analysis of “cross-border e-commerce” and the training and cultivation of cross-border e-commerce talents.

## 2. Analysis on the current situation of cross-border e-commerce development

### 2.1 Current Development of Cross-Border e-Commerce

Cross border e-commerce refers to an international business activity in which different trading subjects belonging to customs areas, conducts transactions payment and settlement via e-commerce platforms, and delivers goods and completes transactions through cross-border logistic system. Since “cross border e-commerce” entered the era of 3.0 in 2013, “cross border e-commerce” has become a hot word familiar to everyone, and has gradually formed an increasingly complete cross-border e-commerce industrial chain. Featured by “big platform”, “big user”, “big order”, “mobile” and “big data”, it gradually complements the old offline transaction mode and opens a new era of mobile cross-border e-commerce.

Internationally, the development of global international e-commerce shows an unbalanced regional development, but the overall growth rate is 20% per year. The development of e-commerce in Europe and America is in the leading position in the world due to its highly developed logistics system, good legal environment and deep network penetration. However, at the same time, the development speed of e-commerce in Asia is the fastest with huge development potential. In the future, the global e-commerce market may present the situation of “tripartite confrontation”, that is, Europe, America and Asia.

Domestically, according to the director general of the General Administration of customs, Guangzhou, cross-border e-commerce is booming in China as a new business form. In 2017, the total retail value of import and export through the cross-border e-commerce customs management platform reached 90.24 billion yuan, an increase of 80.6% per year. In the past three years, the import and export volume of China’s cross-border e-commerce customs has grown by more than 50% annually. In 2017, China exported 33.65 billion yuan, an increase of 41.3%; and imported 56.59 billion yuan, with an increase of 116.4%. All this shows that the development of cross-border e-commerce in China has its strong vitality and in good development trend.

As for rural areas, the e-commerce is booming in the eastern areas of China. Take Haining, a county subsidiary to Jiaxing city e, as an example, Haining vigorously promotes the e-commerce development, firmly grasps the great opportunities for the development of the Internet plus industry, and actively explores the promotion of business innovation, mode innovation and service innovation, so as to promote the development of e-commerce. According to the report provided by Ali Research Center, Haining ranked 10th in China’s Top 25 Counties of Cross-border e-commerce in 2016. Nominated in the first group of the e-commerce model counties and cities in Zhejiang Province in 2014, Haining successfully strived for name of cross-border e-commerce zone pilot city and county in Zhejiang Province in 2015. China Haining Leather City e-commerce zone was awarded the pilot of provincial cross-border e-commerce zone. Xucun town has become the first “Taobao town” in Jiaxing City, and Yongfu village, Xucun Town, has successfully established the first batch of provincial e-commerce model villages. In 2016, Haining’s warp knitting industry successfully was nominated as the first batch of industrial cluster of cross-border e-commerce development pilot in Zhejiang Province.

In recent years, Haining has made the following achievements in the field of e-commerce:

#### a. New breakthrough in e-commerce sales

According to the data released by the Provincial Department of Commerce, in 2016, the total online retail sales of Jiaxing reached 45.695 billion yuan, ranking first in Jiaxing area and second in all the counties (cities, districts) of Zhejiang Province, accounting for 41% of the total online retail sales of Jiaxing, with a year-on-year growth of 34%. There are 1100 registered small stores in Haining, accounting for 30% of the total number of small stores in Jiaxing area. There are 33000 registered Taobao stores, including 20,000 business-active Taobao stores. By the end of 2016, there were more than 3000 registered e-commerce enterprises in Haining.

#### b. New achievements in industrial e-commerce

Haining’s leather, warp knitting, home textile and other traditional industries further accelerated the pace of e-commerce. According to the data provided by the provincial department of commerce, its online sales of clothing, shoes and bags accounted for 88.28% of the total value, while the home textile and furniture based home furnishings accounted for 3.03%. Enterprises such as Martian Kitchenware, Snow Leopard clothing and Hongyue Flower have become model enterprises of transformation and upgrading of traditional industries in Haining by opening on-line stores in small and Jingdong Mall.

## c. e-commerce becomes a new engine of entrepreneurship and innovation

Haining has a strong e-commerce atmosphere, becoming a new engine of “mass entrepreneurship and innovation”. About one third of the cities’ entrepreneurship and innovation projects are related to e-commerce related fields. The rapid development of e-commerce talents has directly filled 55,000 job vacancies and 140,000 job vacancies indirectly.

## d. New progress in cross-border e-commerce

According to the relevant data provided by Alibaba International, Global Market and Made-in-China and other cross-border e-commerce platforms, Haining has more than 500 registered members of Alibaba International, more than 50 registered members of Global Market and more than 30 registered members of Made in China, with the cross-border e-commerce driving than \$100 million of exports in the whole year. Overseas warehouse has become a new growth point of export driven by cross-border e-commerce in Haining. Overseas warehouses in Haining cover an area of more than 100000 square meters, and the export value driven by Happie Logistics, provincial public overseas warehouse, has exceeded 5 million US dollars.

## e. New achievements in rural e-commerce development

Agricultural enterprises represented by Hongyue flowers, Shengxu aquatic products, and Tianlong farm, etc. set up platforms or online stores, with sales of more than 30 million yuan in 2016. In order to improve the rural network of consumption service system, a total of 13 villages in Haining are listed as the e-commerce professional village of Zhejiang province. In the whole year, 40 new rural e-commerce convenient services were built, with 380,000 transactions and value reaching 28.2 million yuan.

## f. New improvement of e-commerce service system

Since it was put into operation in October 2014, Haining e-commerce public service center has undertaken the functions of e-commerce training, technical guidance, public service online platform construction and regional online brand development, upgraded the application of e-commerce, and helped the transformation and upgrading of traditional industries. The municipal E-Commerce Association and the import and export E-Commerce Association rely on their respective advantages to provide personalized services to e-commerce enterprises in the local area. Throughout the year, 40 e-commerce training sessions were held in “Haining e-commerce Lecture”, with the number of trainees reaching 3500.

## 2.2 Analysis of Cross-Border e-Commerce Research

In this survey, 100 electronic questionnaires were sent to the enterprises in rural areas of Jiaying. The survey mainly investigated the attitude of cross-border e-commerce in towns and villages to industrial development, the degree of demand for cross-border e-commerce talents, and the skills needed as cross-border e-commerce talents.

The following are the survey results and analysis:

## 1) The Attitude Towards the Development Prospect of Cross-Border e-Commerce.

*Table 1 Attitude Towards The Development Prospect of Cross-Border e-Commerce.*

Attitude towards the Prospects	positive	negative	Don't know
Proportion (%)	74	7	19

It can be seen from table 1 that most foreign trade practitioners have high expectations from the development of cross-border e-commerce in villages and towns. They believe that cross-border e-commerce in villages and towns has a good development prospect, and only a few people are confused and not optimistic about the development of cross-border e-commerce in villages and towns.

## 2) Advantages and Disadvantages Coexist in the Development of Cross-Border e-Commerce in Villages and Towns.

*Table 2 Advantages of Cross-Border e-Commerce Development in Villages and Towns*

Development Advantages	Rich in local characteristics	Large scale of production	Low cost and	Complete infrastructure	Local government support and	Sufficient labor force
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			rent		guidance	
Proportion (%)	89	67	71	20	17	24

*Table 3 Disadvantages of Cross-Border e-Commerce Development in Villages and Towns*

Development Disadvantage	Lack of cross-border e-commerce talents	Backward development mode	Inadequate infrastructure	Insufficient support from local government	Lack of development experience for reference
Proportion (%)	88	75	64	53	81

It can be seen from table 2 that 89% of the interviewees think that one of the great advantages of the development of cross-border e-commerce in rural areas is rich in local characteristics; 71% of them think that the price and rent in rural areas are low; 67% of them think that the production scale of enterprises in rural areas is large, which can be analyzed as the natural advantages of the development of cross-border e-commerce in rural areas.

It can be seen from Table 3 that 88% of the interviewees think that the scarcity of cross-border e-commerce talents is a major problem for the development of cross-border e-commerce in rural areas; 81% of the them think that the development of cross-border e-commerce in rural areas lacks experience to learn from; 75% of the them think that the development model of township enterprises is backward; 64% of the them think that the infrastructure of township is not perfect; 53% of them think that the support of local government is insufficient. From this, we can summarize that the problem that must be solved in the development of cross-border e-commerce in villages and towns is the scarcity of cross-border e-commerce talents needed by cross-border e-commerce.

### 3. Cultivation methods of cross border e-commerce talents

In view of the current scarcity of cross-border e-commerce talents in villages and towns, colleges and universities, governments and enterprises should make efforts to cultivate more cross-border e-commerce talents that meet the industrial development. First of all, we conducted a survey on the ability and personality characteristics equipped by cross-border e-commerce talents, and investigated what kind of talents enterprises need to engage in this industry.

#### 3.1 Cross Border e-Commerce Skills Required for Cross-Border e-Commerce Talent Training

*Table 4 Skills Cross-Border e-Commerce Talents Have (Multiple Choices)*

Skills	Foreign Language	Economic and Trade	Oral Communication	Computer Operation	Management	Teamwork
Proportion (%)	89	100	91	93	34	97

It can be seen from Table 4 that all people think that cross-border e-commerce talents must have certain economic and trade knowledge; 97% of the interviewees think it is important to have team cooperation ability; 93% of the them think that computer operation skills is very necessary; 91% of them think that oral communication skill is indispensable; only 34% of them think that foreign trade practitioners need skills of management. It is learnt that cross-border e-commerce talents are a group of high-quality talents who have foreign language skills, economic and trade knowledge, proficient in using computers and applications, and are good at communication and cooperation in their work. This undoubtedly provides a direction for us to explore the way of talents training and cultivation.

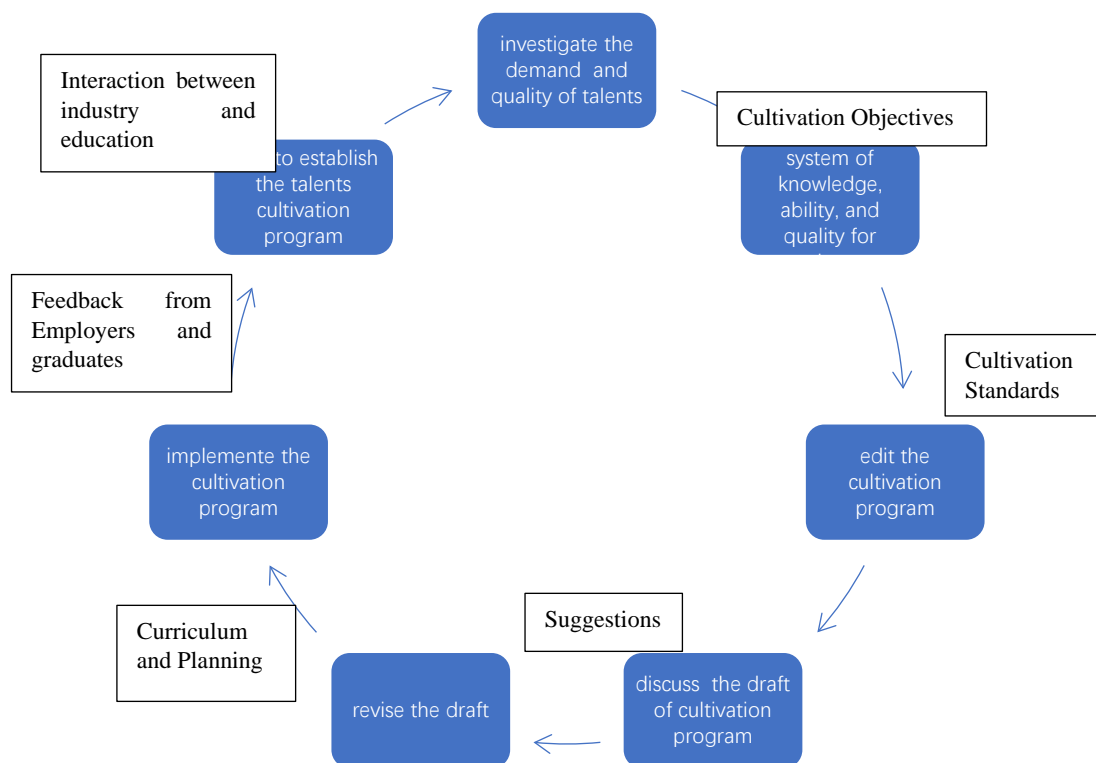
#### 3.2 Training and Cultivation Modes of Cross-Border e-Commerce Talents in Colleges and Universities in Zhejiang Province

According to our research, in colleges and universities, the cultivation and training of cross-border e-commerce talents mainly focus on foreign language ability, economic and trade knowledge and computer operation ability.

This makes students majoring in foreign languages or business English have the natural advantages of engaging in cross-border e-commerce industry. Through the investigation, we found that, in fact, most colleges and universities in Zhejiang province have arranged effective foreign trade courses for such foreign language and business majors:

For example, Zhejiang Yuexiu Foreign Language College has set up a “school-school, school-enterprise, school-local government and school- international” collaborative education platform, formulated and implemented a hierarchical and classified talents training system, and formed a “personalized” mode of cross-border e-commerce talents cultivation. Specific measures include: the university successively cooperate with universities, enterprises and government departments in Alibaba cross border e-commerce talent training university alliance, Ningbo e-commerce economic innovation park, Ningbo Free Trade Zone Management Committee to build a collaborative education platform for cross-border e-commerce talents, such as business talents incubation center, talents training bases, course collaboration system, Industry and University Alliance and practice platform. It also has initially organized a team of 59 entrepreneurial mentors, tutoring subjects like entrepreneurship theory, cross-border e-commerce entrepreneurship, micro-business entrepreneurship and other business modes, so as to achieve systematic and target-oriented training for cross-border e-commerce talents in schooling.

Hangzhou Normal University has also made its own teaching changes for the training of cross-border e-commerce talents. In 2008, Hangzhou Normal University cooperated with Alibaba group to build Alibaba business school. Ma Yun (Jack Ma) served as the dean of the school and set up four undergraduate majors, namely, e-commerce, international business, logistics management and online marketing, and three postgraduate programs. It is a model college of Application-oriented Undergraduate construction in Zhejiang Province, a key College of representing the breakthrough between university and industry integration in Hangzhou, and a test school of innovation and entrepreneurship nominated by Hangzhou Normal University. A set of talent training program is established as shown in the flow chart below:



Flow chart of the cultivation pattern of Hangzhou Normal University

This cultivation program plan truly achieves the systematic, professional training of cross-border e-commerce talents.

Applied Technology School of Jiaxing University also did much in cultivating talents of cross-border e-commerce. In order to adapt to the development of cross-border e-commerce in Pinghu area of Jiaxing and make the students of the Foreign Language Department have more practical skills, the school and Alibaba Mantianxing branch of Pinghu carried out project-based internship. They jointly invited the presidents of foreign trade companies and experienced foreign trade practitioners in Pinghu, Hangzhou and other places, to solve the practical

problems for college students, and direct employment opportunity for college students. The program is a short-term program for Industry and Education Integration, which covers a wide range of training projects including the foreign trade terms, basic foreign trade processes, necessary quality of cross-border e-commerce talents, analysis of Alibaba International, and lectures given by celebrities in e-commerce fields, which benefit college students.

From the above three examples, we can conclude that the training and cultivation of cross-border e-commerce talents is closely related to practice. Most universities will try their best to teach the knowledge of foreign trade in daily teaching, so that students can understand the rules, processes and other theoretical knowledge in international trade. Then students will be arranged to do simulated practice on the computer to improve the practicality of the course. The most important point is that the schools should take advantage of the local foreign trade enterprises and take the way of “enterprise cooperated with school” to cultivate talents jointly, which not only ensures the supply of cross-border e-commerce talents to enterprises, but also provides convenience for the school to cultivate e-commerce talents.

### ***3.3 The Institutional Guarantee from the Local Government for the Training and Cultivation of Cross-Border e-Commerce Talents***

The development of local cross-border e-commerce in villages and towns depends on local talents, township enterprises, and the support and guidance of local governments. Sometimes the policies of local governments may have a direct impact on the talent training and economic development of the region. Therefore, it is necessary for local governments to establish a reasonable talent training and cultivation guarantee system.

a. Local government could establish a special department coordinating the interaction and cooperation between local colleges and e-commerce enterprises. Local government could help to build a platform on which enterprises could express their demand for talents including the quality, skills and ability, and schools could train the talents based on the specific requirements of enterprises. Government acts as a coordinator monitoring the cooperation and operation.

b. Local governments could support and subsidize cross-border e-commerce personnel training activities. In the form of subsidies, government will support personnel training and make a supportive statement for the development of cross-border e-commerce in rural areas.

c. Local government should fund publicity and training activities. Through the publicity of local government, the benefits of developing cross-border e-commerce in township areas are publicized, so that local talents and graduates can truly recognize the project and more people can participate in the e-commerce talents training program.

d. Government could give special favor to e-commerce enterprises respecting taxation, social insurance and housing fund, etc, reducing their burden. On the other hand, enterprises could improve their salary and welfare package attracting cross-border e-commerce talents, so that more cross-border e-commerce talents are willing to work in rural areas.

## **6. Summary and Suggestions**

Through the three-month investigation and research, we carefully investigated the current situation of cross-border e-commerce in rural areas in Jiaxing, and gradually summed up some ways to cultivate rural cross-border e-commerce talents. The way of talent training and cultivation can be adapted to local conditions:

a. Cultivate talents based on characteristics of local industries. There are many local industries in colleges and towns of Jiaxing, such as bags, baby carriages, cardigans, leather garments, and sanitary wares. We can focus on training talents to get familiar with local industries in talent training, so that cross-border e-commerce talents of Jiaxing can be more quickly adapted into the development of cross-border e-commerce locally.

b. Local government' support plays active role in promoting the cultivation of cross-border e-commerce in rural areas. Local governments in Jiaxing can support and fund personnel training programs, such as assistant e-commerce personnel certificates training, etc, which help to train large number of talents for township enterprises.

c. Government helps to push the integration of enterprises and schools cultivation into practice. Government and enterprise cooperation is to vigorously promote the concept of cross-border e-commerce through the cooperation between local government and local enterprises, so as to provide a channel for the human resources in

the foreign trade industry in the township areas to understand and learn much about cross-border e-commerce, and attract them to be trained as qualified cross-border e-commerce talents; school and enterprise cooperation is to take good use of the advantages of academic education in Jiaying University, to build a system of industry and education integration, in which the practical training, simulated business running, and cooperation platform operated like enterprise are set up.

Different regions have different development models and training approaches of cross border e-commerce, but this research can certainly provide references for other regions.

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