

Problems and Strategies of Teaching Reform in Higher Education Institutions in the Context of “Going Global”

Biying Zhang

Jilin Communications Polytechnic, Changchun, China
zhangbiying@outlook.com

Abstract: *With the Belt and Road Initiative, Chinese higher vocational education is vigorously promoting globalization teaching. The globalization of higher education is not only about “inviting in”, but also about “going out”, which is very important. To actively explore the strategy of “going global” is the leading trend of globalization in the new stage of higher education institutions. In the process of promoting the globalization of Chinese higher vocational education, a number of problems have emerged, which need to be identified objectively. At present, Chinese higher vocational education is still facing the challenge that its positioning and attractiveness are not comparable to those of general higher education, and it is still regarded as “low-end higher education” by some learners and families. The development of vocational education also carries a great mission to improve the appearance of vocational schools and enhance their positioning and appeal. For example, how can Chinese vocational training schools seize the development opportunities to improve their overall capacity? How to improve the management system and operation mechanism of higher vocational schools to promote the “going global” of higher vocational education? These are the major questions that we need to think about, explore and answer. This paper will summarize the current situation of “going global” in domestic higher vocational colleges, summarize the existing mode and characteristics of “going global”, summarize the problems and analyze the reasons, and finally propose the suggestions for teaching reform in higher vocational colleges.*

Keywords: *higher vocational colleges, going global, education reform, problems and strategies*

1. Introduction

In recent years, China has paid more attention to the reform of vocational education and issued a series of important documents, which have made overall planning and comprehensive planning for the modern vocational education system and pointed out the direction for the “going global” of vocational education.

According to statistics, as of May 2022, there were 3013 higher education schools in China, including 1521 higher vocational institutions with 32 vocational schools at the undergraduate level and 1489 vocational schools at the junior college level. With the encouragement and promotion of multiple policies, higher education institutions in China are strengthening exchanges and cooperation with foreign countries. Especially under the promotion of the “double high-levels plan” of vocational colleges, all vocational colleges are actively expanding their cooperation and exchange and making friends with institutions all over the world. Despite the impact of the COVID 19, all parties are actively promoting cooperation and exchange of education projects online, making great achievements in “going global” for Chinese vocational education. As Chinese Mes and products “go out” and serve the Belt and Road Initiative, vocational education has established stable ties with more than 70 countries and international organizations, and has cooperated with 19 developed countries and regions to build 20 Luban workshops. In more than 40 developed countries and regions, the program “Chinese + Vocational Skills” has been jointly launched. It has trained a large number of local employees who know Chinese and understand traditional Chinese society and culture, and assisted enterprises in countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative in training technical skills, which has facilitated the industrialization process in the collaborating countries.

Based on that, the teaching reform of higher vocational colleges under the background of “going global” is extremely important, which is in line with the requirements of national policies and

economic development, and is also the demand of the times and the world.

2. Existing mode and characteristics of “going global” of higher vocational colleges

At present, the form of “going global” of higher vocational education is diversifying. Especially since 2017, overseas schooling has become a new trend of internationalization of higher vocational colleges, and the mode of schooling is becoming clearer and clearer. Higher vocational colleges are vigorously expanding international exchange and cooperation projects, innovating the mode of schooling, starting to cooperate with enterprises, and following them to “going global” together. These approaches involve not only vocational skills training and Chinese language training, but also long and short term business of academic education and non-academic vocational training. Among them, the more prominent “going global” generally have the following development modes. The first is the school-enterprise cooperation mode led by industry enterprises. With the advocacy of the Belt and Road Initiative, the enthusiasm of industry enterprises to actively participate in school-enterprise cooperation has increased, and they have set up “overseas vocational and technical training bases” in cooperation with countries along the Belt and Road Initiative and Chinese higher vocational colleges and universities in order to train and equip local personnel working abroad. For example, the China Metal Industry Association, as a leading industry association, participated in the pilot project of training new vocational talents in the field of non-ferrous metals in China implemented by the Ministry of Education at the end of 2015. China Nonferrous Metal Mining Group, together with a number of vocational colleges at home and abroad has gone global, training more than eight hundred Zambian local talents in the group company for technical skills respectively, with remarkable results. Under that model, the university and the enterprise company go global in a group, and the school can get the support of local governments and obtain the experience and talent resources guarantee. While some subsidiaries of the enterprise can cultivate for several years in the local area and thus have good political and business relations, and it is also conducive to the overseas education in the homeland of the enterprise by relying on the talent training of the enterprise. In addition, the company provides financial and management support for foreign schools to ensure the sustainable operation of foreign schools. The second is an educational management model in which the government coordinates and leads schools and companies to participate together. The government department is responsible for the top-level design of the school and the integrated development of vocational education and economy and society. In that way, the government has guaranteed and funded the collaboration between the provincial vocational schools and foreign famous enterprises, jointly cultivate technical and skilled talents to adapt to the local economic and social development, and jointly promote the local socioeconomic development. The third is the cross-border training mode mainly in higher education schools. Transnational higher education activities refer to various forms of human resources, funds and organizations in higher education regions of the world that transcend the legal and judicial boundaries and geographical boundaries of each country. It takes a variety of forms, the most common of which include foreign faculty and students studying abroad, academic visits, joint degrees, overseas branches of schools, and cooperation with independent institutions etc. In the press conference of the Ministry of Education held in May 2002, it was introduced that in the 13th Five-Year Plan period, more than 400 institutions of higher education in China have conducted joint education with foreign educational organizations. The scale of full-time students coming to China has reached 1.7 million. All along the Belt and Road Initiative, China is not only an important source area for higher education students, but also a key area for domestic and foreign educational organizations. This model is characterized by a high degree of autonomy and flexibility, and can be shared and developed by partner schools. Currently, the two models of cooperative education and foreign certificate education have become the most common ways of cooperation for most Chinese institutions. Here, cooperative education can also be understood as the cooperation between Chinese vocational institutions and overseas universities, enterprises and companies. The more common modes of cooperation are: 1+2 mode, 2+1 mode and 3+2 mode for upgrading from junior college student to university student, and learners can also choose the study mode. Most of these cooperation methods cannot promote the integration of curriculum resources and the optimization of teaching methods. Another one is the cooperation method of foreign general professional certification, in which domestic vocational schools and overseas colleges, enterprises and management companies cooperate to cultivate technical talents according to the requirements. Students must take overseas professional courses in China and pass the examination before they can get the foreign general skills certification.

3. Problems in promoting the internationalization of teaching reform in higher vocational institutions

In recent years, China has strengthened the cooperation with ASEAN in vocational education and mutual recognition of academic qualifications, implemented the Future Africa-China-Africa Vocational Education Cooperation Program through continuous cooperation with African countries, established the “Luban Workshop”, and started to establish the BRICS Vocational Education Alliance, through launching international professional and technical competitions, etc. Some important initiatives to modernize job education have been launched, including the establishment of five platforms for communication and collaboration between international vocational colleges and enterprises through international professional and technical competitions. China will further develop the “Future Africa-China-Africa Vocational Education Cooperation Program” and jointly build the “Luban Workshop” with African governments. It also jointly advocated the establishment of the BRICS Alliance for Career Development Education, jointly conducted international vocational skills competitions, and launched an interactive and collaborative platform between vocational institutions and enterprises in five member countries. Although some results have been achieved, some problems have inevitably emerged while progress has been made.

3.1 The difficulties of the school in financing need to be solved urgently.

First of all, the tuition cannot guarantee the normal operation of the college. Since some overseas countries are economically backward and their national students cannot afford the huge education expenses, the college mainly relies on domestic vocational training schools for financing. Generally speaking, the construction and maintenance of teaching places are borne by enterprises, while the construction and operation expenses are mainly borne by overseas education institutions. Thirdly, the proportion of financial support from social funds is low. It is still only an option for vocational colleges to operate abroad, and it does not gain the general recognition of the society. Especially, foreign small and medium-sized Chinese enterprises cannot benefit from it and are willing to pay for the financial guarantee. At present, most of the funds for running schools abroad are shared by secondary specialized colleges and universities in the province and the cooperative central government-owned enterprises.

3.2 The benefit distribution mechanism of school-enterprise cooperation needs to be improved.

Vocational education is essentially a cross-border school-enterprise cooperation, which requires a good coordination mechanism. At present, schools and businesses have both a conflict of interest and a community of interest. In particular, companies focus on economic benefits and expect short-term returns, while schools focus on educational benefits and are willing to make long-term investments. To avoid conflict of interest issues affecting the long-term cooperation between schools and businesses, schools and businesses need to better define their respective responsibilities and obligations, from education and cost sharing to development principles ^[1].

3.3 The ability to “go global” of higher vocational colleges and universities needs to be improved.

Firstly, the ability of teachers in higher education institutions to “go global” needs to be improved. Some teachers have to undertake the vocational Chinese teaching work of “Chinese language + vocational skills”, which requires them to have the teaching ability of international Chinese and obtain the international Chinese teaching qualification. For example, Beijing University of Technology has trained more than 660 vocational teachers for the International Certificate in Chinese Language Teaching. At the same time, the development of vocational education abroad has put forward new challenges and requirements for the comprehensive ability of professional skills teachers in vocational schools. Therefore, the construction of relevant systems in vocational schools needs to be improved. It is a systematic project for vocational education to go global, which involves financial system, human resource management and other systems. Some higher vocational education departments have no system to support “going global”. In particular, there is a lack of incentives and guarantees, which leads to the lack of sustainability of individual higher vocational education institutions. Some higher vocational education departments lack institutional support to “go global”, especially the lack of incentives and guarantee mechanisms, which leads to the lack of sustainability of individual higher vocational education departments.

4. Analysis of the causes of prominent problems

4.1 Academic bias.

In order to improve the standard and popularity of higher education, many vocational schools have adopted the mode of cooperation with overseas institutions, industries and companies to improve the quality of personnel training. However, students are still influenced by their first degree when they graduate and find jobs. As a result, employers reject students from vocational schools and set up “academic thresholds”. As a result, higher vocational education has not received much attention from the society and the degree of internationalization has been weakened. In addition, because of the passiveness of higher vocational schools to international cooperation, there is a lack of international cooperation partners or high-quality foreign cooperation institutions.

4.2 Poor universality.

The poor universality leads to the difficulty of going overseas to operate schools, and cooperative education is the most frequently adopted form of activity in the process of internationalization of vocational education in China. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Education, in 2013, there were 1321 higher vocational colleges and universities in China, and only 296 of them implemented cooperative schooling programs, accounting for only 22.4% of all higher vocational colleges and universities. There are still 77.6% of colleges and universities without cooperative schooling programs. By 2020, more than 400 higher vocational colleges and universities have cooperated with foreign institutions, accounting for 30.3% of the total number of higher vocational colleges and universities. (See in Fig.1.)It can be seen that there are still nearly 70% of higher vocational colleges and universities that do not participate in cooperative schooling programs. Despite the increase, it can be seen that there are still not too many higher vocational colleges and universities participating in cooperative education in China. See in fig 1.

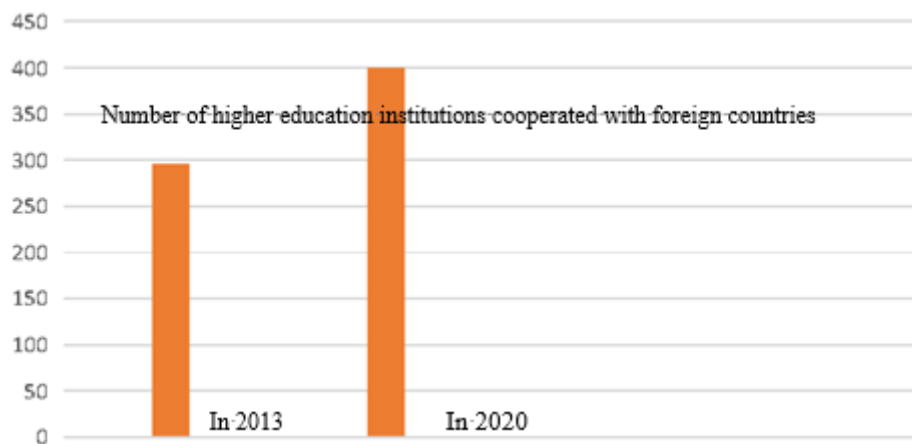


Figure 1: Number of higher education institutions cooperated with foreign countries

In 2020, due to the outbreak of the COVID 19, many higher education institutions slowed down the advance of cooperative education in the early stage. In addition, only some provinces have co-operative schooling projects in higher vocational colleges, but with a small number of projects and low quality. According to incomplete statistics, there are very few projects of co-operative education established by higher vocational colleges in some provinces, and there are even fewer schools participating in co-operative education in secondary vocational schools. Only some of these students can receive an associate degree from the Chinese side after completing the academic requirements. In fact, a considerable number of foreign schools and educational institutions have already conducted primary vocational education. But when it comes to specific cooperation, they train talents according to the general education model. Such unconnected education also makes the training quality and attractiveness of these Sino-foreign cooperative programs insufficient.

4.3 The management and operation mechanism of international cooperation in higher education institutions is not sound.

At present, the international cooperation of higher education institutions focuses on the

communication and combination of curriculum design, teaching reform, scientific research achievements and faculty training. However, due to the different administrative and cultural backgrounds of each higher vocational institution, the management and operation mechanisms of international cooperation in Chinese higher vocational institutions are not yet sound. And the unsound evaluation system of cooperation also fails to guarantee the quality of international cooperation. Moreover, the international cooperation function of a considerable part of higher education institutions is undertaken by their administrative departments, without a well-developed and mature professional management team, sufficient existing human resources, and familiarity with the industry and business. Based on such a status quo within higher education institutions, it results in unclear responsibilities of departments and personnel, unclear work objectives, poor management mechanism, unclear ideas of international construction work, scattered work frameworks, no systematic construction planning and no effective grasp, which is more detrimental to the implementation of project cooperation.

5. Strategies for improvement

It is deeply realized that internationalization is a two-way road and internationalization of education is not only “inviting in”, but also “going global”. In order to promote the outward mobility of higher education institutions, it is necessary to focus on improving the quality, status and attractiveness of higher vocational education^[1-2]. On the one hand, the opening of higher vocational education sector should promote the reform of vocational education teaching and innovation of school management methods. On the other hand, international exchange and cooperation between higher vocational education sectors should broaden the career development and success path of students in vocational education. As Mr. Huang Yanpei said in the *Declaration of the Chinese Vocational Education Association*, the purpose of vocational education is to seek the development of individuality, to prepare individuals to make a living, to prepare individuals to serve society, to prepare the country and the world to enhance productivity. International exchange and cooperation in vocational education should also have clear objectives so that students receiving vocational education can become versatile international talents. It should be pointed out objectively that the importance and attractiveness of higher vocational education in our society are still far from that of general education, and some schools and families even regard higher vocational education as “low-level education”. To promote the development of higher vocational education, it is an important mission to improve the face of higher vocational schools and raise the visibility and quality of vocational schools.

5.1 *The strength of vocational colleges to serve the “going global” of enterprises should be further strengthened*

Firstly, we should strengthen the power of teachers in vocational colleges to perform the tasks of “going global”, guide the teachers in higher vocational schools to “go global”, involve them in expatriate jobs, serve overseas technical training bases, and improve their professional level and teaching level. For example, some institutions of higher education rely on the Chinese aid projects for Africa in Belt and Road Initiative, and improve the technical level of our vocational schools by assigning teachers of higher education institutions to become experts in science and technology in Africa. They can solve technical problems, import high quality crop products, and hold science and technology training courses in local areas. We have established a modern professional teacher team that can work on the podium, go to the workshop and teach Chinese. Higher education institutions also need to improve their “going global” programs, especially the incentive programs for teachers, in order to further motivate teachers and achieve a steady increase in the number of full-time teachers dispatched overseas.

5.2 *Establish a mechanism for mutual recognition of credits*

One of the important indicators to promote higher vocational institutions to “go global” is to recruit foreign students, exchange students from domestic vocational education institutions to foreign vocational education institutions, or dock with some foreign higher vocational schools. Those are important means to improve the quality of vocational education and shape a new image of vocational education. In recent years, Chinese education administrations have co-hosted a number of vocational education policy dialogues with the UK, Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Australia, New Zealand and other countries. They have promoted the understanding of vocational education in other countries by introducing the current status of vocational education development and reform in their

respective countries and exchanging views on issues of common concern. Vocational education is the education most closely related to economic development. When a company goes overseas, it needs human resources first. Companies established abroad often have to recruit and train personnel from that country. In order to ensure smooth education and guidance, it is necessary to participate in government-to-government liaison and exchange, to communicate and exchange the vocational education systems of both countries, to deepen mutual understanding, and to obtain policy guarantees for international cooperation and exchange in vocational education.

5.3 Improve the international cooperation system of higher vocational institutions

Higher vocational schools should actively go out and learn from the top vocational institutions in the world, do well in the implementation of exchange and cooperation projects, boldly break the shackles of traditional operation mechanism under the joint coordination of government authorities, industries and enterprises, and further enhance the efficiency of enterprise management^[3]. The foreign affairs management department of higher vocational schools should establish and improve the foreign affairs management system. Furthermore, the foreign affairs management department of higher education institutions should build a sound foreign affairs management system, set up a foreign project cooperation department, set up a special management team, strictly standardize working rules and procedures, and improve internal management and supervision, so as to lay a solid foundation for better international exchange and cooperation of schools. International exchanges and cooperation need to be designed and developed by specialized agencies^[4]. But at present, China basically lacks an agency to coordinate the rights and interests of higher education institutions and cooperative parties, and lacks the ability to monitor and promote the quality of talent training implementation. It is necessary to set up a special foreign affairs office, to have a full-time foreign affairs staff in the university to deal with foreign affairs projects, and to establish a management system for dispatching teachers, trainees and international students abroad. In terms of international training of teachers, we should provide good policy guidance, improve the management mechanism, integrate international teaching resources, promote development with talent training, achieve the cooperation of foreign affairs office and teachers, enhance the enthusiasm of international teachers, clarify the focus of professional talent construction based on the brand majors of the school, establish international teaching management system, unify teaching resources, match with foreign discipline norms, and improve teachers and students. We have also established a team of foreign affairs staff with excellent diplomatic knowledge, competence and efficiency to escort the internationalization of the school and to avoid mistakes in every detail^[5].

6. Conclusion

As Mr. Huang Yanpei said in his *Proposals for Great Vocational Education ism for Comrades' Opinions*, Those who run vocational schools must at the same time communicate and liaise with all educational and vocational circles in their efforts. The advocacy of vocational education, at the same time, shall allocate part of the spirit to participate in the movement of the whole society. The “going global” of vocational education has to find ways to open up and provide new employment paths for learners and solve the employment pressure for learners, which is obviously more suitable for the needs of learners and promote the people-to-people contact between China and abroad, and also more economically beneficial for the country and enterprises. Therefore, it is very important to promote the opening up of education to the outside world, promote the reform of “going global” in higher vocational education and implement “Chinese + vocational skills” education. The reform can improve the global adaptability of Chinese vocational education, enhance the overall international influence of Chinese education brands, facilitate the economic and social development of various countries, and promote the people-to-people contact between China and foreign countries. Accelerating the “going global” of higher education institutions is the rightful way to open up China’s higher education to the outside world. And it is also a great practice to enhance the global competitiveness of Chinese higher education and form an international brand of higher education.

Acknowledgement

Fund Projects: China Transportation Education and Research Association (JT2022YB375), "Research on the Development Path of International Exchange and Cooperation of Higher Education Institutions in Jilin Province under the Background of "One Belt and One Road.

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