

Cross-Cultural Education: Challenges and Practical Paths for Vocational Undergraduate Education to Serve “Enterprises Going Global”

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Abstract

With the rapid development of China’s overseas undertakings, an increasing number of enterprises have chosen to “going global” and expand their scale overseas. However, correspondingly, these “enterprises going global” encounter numerous operational challenges during their overseas operations due to regional cultural differences. To address this, “enterprises going global” should strengthen cooperation in cross-cultural education with vocational undergraduate institutions. By leveraging the advantages of cross-cultural education offered by vocational undergraduate institutions, these enterprises can enhance their own cross-cultural competence and meet their cross-cultural needs.

Keywords

Cross-cultural Education; Vocational Undergraduate Education; Enterprises Going Global

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1. Introduction

“Enterprises going global” face multiple challenges in overseas operations, including those related to language, politics, economy, and culture. To tackle the operational crises brought by overseas cultural differences, enterprises must strengthen cooperation with vocational undergraduate institutions to improve their cross-cultural competence. Meanwhile, vocational undergraduate institutions should enhance their cross-cultural education standards, enrich cross-cultural teaching arrangements, optimize the training model for cross-cultural talents, and provide more targeted cross-cultural consulting services for enterprises.

2. Cross-Cultural Barriers Faced by “Enterprises Going Global”

2.1. Insufficient Awareness of Cross-Cultural Operation and Management Concepts

With the sustained development of China’s economy, transnational operation has become a development direction for many enterprises to maintain high-quality and sustainable development. Among various factors, cross-cultural management, as a key link for enterprises to “go global”, has a direct impact on their overseas development. Overseas conditions differ from those in China; cross-cultural management requires enterprise managers to coordinate employees with diverse cultural

backgrounds, ways of thinking, living habits, and religious beliefs, alleviate potential conflicts caused by cultural differences, and improve work efficiency.

An analysis of the “power distance” theory proposed by Dutch scholar Hofstede, when applied to countries along the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), shows that Southeast Asian countries have a similar power distance index to China through calculation, while other regions generally have lower indices than China ^[1]. Employees from countries with high power distance are usually more accepting of hierarchical corporate management, whereas those from countries with low power distance prefer direct participation in corporate decision-making and are accustomed to self-management.

In recent years, as the number of Chinese “enterprises going global” has increased, their awareness of cross-cultural management has gradually improved. However, there are still deficiencies in employee training, salary management, and communication among employees from different cultural backgrounds. “Enterprises going global” should establish a management system that aligns with overseas cultures. Particularly in countries with significant differences in power distance from China, they must avoid triggering cultural conflicts and ensure that management concepts are translated into effective corporate management practices.

2.2. Shortage of Cross-Cultural Management and Technical Talents

The reserve of talents directly affects the core competitiveness of “enterprises going global”, especially interdisciplinary technical talents with an international perspective, understanding of international rules, and strong cross-cultural adaptability. Such talents directly determine whether “enterprises going global” can achieve long-term development in overseas markets. In recent years, with the advancement of the BRI, the shortage of interdisciplinary technical talents has become increasingly prominent. Currently, enterprises generally face talent shortages in language, management, and technology during their “going global” process.

First, there are more than 70 official languages in countries along the BRI, and over 2,000 ethnic languages, leading to a severe shortage of talents proficient in minor languages. Second, in terms of corporate management,

managers not only need to determine the direction of business operations but also act as mediators of conflicts between different cultures; such interdisciplinary management talents directly affect the effectiveness of corporate management ^[2]. Third, there is an acute shortage of basic technical talents, such as those in mechatronics and intelligent operation and maintenance. Especially in underdeveloped regions, the local education system cannot cultivate technical employees who meet enterprise requirements. Field surveys show that although there is an adequate supply of front-line employees, there is a severe shortage of operational and management personnel with professional technical capabilities, which seriously hinders the long-term overseas development of enterprises.

2.3. Inadequate and Timely Grasp of Cross-Cultural Policies

Understanding and grasping the actual situation of overseas markets is a prerequisite for “enterprises going global” to conduct transnational operations. Practical investigations reveal that many current “enterprises going global” do not have a sufficient understanding of important information such as overseas industrial policies, education levels, investment environments, laws and regulations, and religious beliefs; there are even cognitive gaps in some fields.

The industrial development, basic education levels, and economic investment environments of overseas countries directly affect the investment decisions and market positions of transnational enterprises. Entering a market without sufficient understanding will cause significant losses to enterprises ^[3]. This is particularly true in terms of legal compliance and religious culture: transnational enterprises often encounter setbacks in patent applications due to a lack of understanding of local intellectual property laws; some enterprises also suffer economic losses because professional managers exploit their unfamiliarity with overseas policies.

So far, although most “enterprises going global” have established awareness of complying with local laws, regulations, and religious cultures, their access to professional overseas policy guidance and overseas information consulting remains limited. Notably, China has not yet established specialized non-profit

organizations to provide guidance and assistance to overseas enterprises. This gap in overseas information services urgently needs to be filled, and vocational undergraduate institutions may become an important channel for “enterprises going global” to obtain overseas information ^[4].

3. Deficiencies in Vocational Undergraduate Cross-Cultural Education for Serving “Enterprises Going Global”

3.1. Insufficient Concept of Cross-Cultural Education in Vocational Undergraduate Institutions

In the process of promoting cross-cultural education, vocational undergraduate institutions face limitations in their development due to insufficient awareness of cross-cultural education among educational administrators, front-line teachers, and students.

From the perspective of educational administrators, many domestic vocational undergraduate institutions still adopt the vocational education models of European and American countries, and their school-running concepts have been slow to transform and upgrade. Meanwhile, the development plans of domestic vocational undergraduate institutions are often limited to meeting the domestic needs of regional industries and have not yet aligned with the talent demands of transnational enterprises in the construction of the BRI.

From the perspective of front-line teachers, their teaching concepts are still confined to traditional cultural cognition, simplifying cross-cultural education as the learning of European and American cultures while neglecting in-depth research on the cultures of countries along the BRI, resulting in a lack of diversity in cross-cultural teaching content.

From the perspective of students, vocational undergraduate students have a weak foundation in foreign languages. Additionally, influenced by family factors and traditional concepts, they lack interest in learning minor languages and understanding the cultures of overseas countries. Consequently, a teaching atmosphere for cross-cultural education cannot be fostered in vocational undergraduate institutions.

3.2. Insufficient Supply of Cross-Cultural Education Talents in Vocational Undergraduate Institutions

The current insufficient supply of cross-cultural education resources in vocational undergraduate institutions has seriously affected the cultivation of international talents, which is mainly reflected in the following aspects.

First, there is a lag in the curriculum design of cross-cultural education in vocational undergraduate institutions. Currently, the content of cross-cultural education courses in some domestic vocational undergraduate institutions is seriously disconnected from the actual needs of overseas enterprises. Except for basic language courses, content such as overseas culture, laws and regulations, and technical standards has not been incorporated into cross-cultural education curricula. Furthermore, relevant digital teaching resources are scarce, failing to cultivate the international perspective of vocational undergraduate students.

Second, there is a shortage of cross-cultural education teachers in vocational undergraduate institutions, especially those with both professional skills and language proficiency. The shortage of teachers proficient in minor languages of countries along the BRI is even more severe.

Third, the mechanism for vocational undergraduate institutions to collaborate with overseas enterprises in talent cultivation is immature. Since overseas enterprises focus more on short-term economic benefits, they have low enthusiasm for long-term work such as cross-cultural talent cultivation. This makes it difficult to integrate overseas process technologies, product standards, and cultural customs into cross-cultural teaching, resulting in graduates from vocational undergraduate institutions being unable to meet the needs of “enterprises going global” for interdisciplinary international technical talents, thereby restricting the enterprises’ own development.

3.3. Lack of Cross-Cultural Education Consulting Services in Vocational Undergraduate Institutions

Surveys indicate that currently, Chinese “enterprises going global” often face information asymmetry during their overseas operations and have an insufficient understanding of important information such as overseas

industrial policies, laws and regulations, and cultural customs. Although vocational undergraduate institutions can serve as an important channel for “enterprises going global” to obtain overseas information and provide decision-making consulting services, there are still many problems in the actual service process, mainly reflected in the following aspects.

First, in terms of decision-making consulting, although some vocational undergraduate institutions have established institutions such as overseas cultural research centers, many cross-cultural studies on overseas countries remain superficial, lacking in-depth research on the specific technical needs of “enterprises going global”.

Second, in terms of technical services, the construction of overseas cross-cultural research platforms in Chinese vocational undergraduate institutions started late, and the supporting policies and institutional guarantees are not yet complete. As a result, their consulting service capabilities in fields such as human resource management and technical standard alignment are limited, failing to effectively help enterprises solve practical problems.

Third, overall, vocational undergraduate institutions have not fully included “enterprises going global” in the scope of cross-cultural consulting service recipients, and the cross-cultural service system is not yet perfect. Consequently, the technical advantages of vocational undergraduate institutions cannot be fully converted into a driving force for the development of “enterprises going global”.

4. Practical Paths for Vocational Undergraduate Cross-Cultural Education to Serve “Enterprises Going Global”

4.1. Improve the Concept of Cross-Cultural Education in Vocational Undergraduate Institutions for Serving “Enterprises Going Global”

Vocational undergraduate institutions need to improve their concept of cross-cultural education. First, relevant government management departments should conduct overall planning, establish the important position of cross-cultural education, formulate complete supporting policies

and management systems, and select characteristic cross-cultural courses for pilot demonstrations in institutions^[5].

Second, vocational undergraduate institutions should actively connect with “enterprises going global” to understand their actual overseas needs. Through a school-enterprise collaboration model, they can integrate human resources, material resources, and information, carry out teaching practice activities such as overseas enterprise internships, and narrow the gap between cross-cultural teaching in vocational undergraduate institutions and overseas enterprises.

Third, vocational undergraduate institutions should focus on fostering a cultural atmosphere. Through the international transformation of campus environments and multimedia promotion, they can deepen the cognition of cross-cultural education among teachers and students and enhance students’ interest in learning overseas cultures. The organic collaboration of these three aspects will jointly form a complete ecological system for cross-cultural education in vocational undergraduate institutions^[6].

4.2. Innovate the Cross-Cultural Talent Cultivation Model through Collaboration between Vocational Undergraduate Institutions and “Enterprises Going Global”

Vocational undergraduate institutions can collaborate with “enterprises going global” to innovate the cross-cultural talent cultivation model in the following ways.

First, vocational undergraduate institutions should take the cultivation of cross-cultural competence as a key goal of talent cultivation, covering knowledge, concepts, and professional capabilities. When formulating cross-cultural curricula, they should comprehensively consider the characteristics of overseas cultures, such as cultural knowledge, customs, and religious traditions. At the same time, they should cultivate an attitude of equality, openness, and mutual respect among cross-cultural talents towards other cultures^[7].

Second, vocational undergraduate institutions should design diverse types of cross-cultural courses. On the one hand, they should improve basic language courses by introducing more teachers to enrich minor language courses and integrating overseas local customs into the curriculum to make language learning more practical. On the other hand, they can arrange more overseas internship

and exchange activities, and enhance students' practical language application abilities, expand their overseas perspectives, and improve the effectiveness of cross-cultural education through short-term overseas training programs.

Third, vocational undergraduate institutions should strengthen exchanges and cooperation with "enterprises going global", and organically integrate the cultivation of cross-cultural competence on campus with the competency requirements of "enterprises going global" for employees to make cross-cultural education more targeted. For example, vocational undergraduate institutions can collaborate with "enterprises going global" to establish education centers for cultivating the cross-cultural competence of technical talents, integrate the actual talent needs of overseas enterprises into cross-cultural curricula, improve the effectiveness of cross-cultural education, and ensure a stable supply of technical and skilled talents with cross-cultural competence for "enterprises going global"^[8].

4.3. Strengthen Cross-Cultural Education Consulting Services Provided by Vocational Undergraduate Institutions for "Enterprises Going Global"

To enhance the cross-cultural consulting service capabilities of vocational undergraduate institutions and provide cross-cultural support for "enterprises going global", vocational undergraduate institutions can take the following measures.

First, vocational undergraduate institutions need to gain an in-depth understanding of the cross-cultural service needs of "enterprises going global". Currently, due to insufficient understanding of the laws and regulations, market demands, and cultural traditions of overseas countries, Chinese "enterprises going global" often face operational risks. Therefore, vocational undergraduate institutions should, based on the actual situation of different enterprises, explore the in-depth cross-cultural service needs of "enterprises going global", leverage their own cross-cultural advantages to help these enterprises formulate targeted development plans, and assist them in addressing difficulties and challenges.

Second, vocational undergraduate institutions can assist "enterprises going global" in conducting cross-cultural training for overseas employees. "Enterprises going global" naturally need to recruit a large number of overseas employees for their overseas operations, but due to cultural differences, many overseas employees cannot adapt to the management model of these enterprises. To this end, vocational undergraduate institutions can, according to the cultural characteristics of overseas employees, help "enterprises going global" carry out cross-cultural education and training for overseas employees, enabling them to understand Chinese culture and enhance cultural understanding between Chinese and overseas employees^[9].

Third, vocational undergraduate institutions can organize cross-cultural service teams proficient in overseas laws and regulations, languages, and cultures, and formulate targeted cross-cultural consulting services for enterprises based on their understanding of "cross-cultural" enterprises.

In summary, cultural confidence, as a scientific concept, is an innovative achievement of the localization of Marxist cultural theory in China. It provides guidance and promotes the international dissemination of Chinese culture and the construction of China into a cultural power^[10].

5. Conclusion

In the new era of development, to strengthen the connection between domestic and foreign markets and help "enterprises going global" gain a firm foothold overseas, vocational undergraduate institutions should establish a new concept of cross-cultural teaching, identify their own positioning, leverage their cross-cultural advantages while improving their cross-cultural service standards, cultivate a large number of technical talents with cross-cultural competence for "enterprises going global" based on their needs, deepen cultural exchanges at home and abroad, and promote the vigorous development of China's overseas undertakings.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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