

# Cooperative program between Suzhou ZHIO Co., Ltd and GSU on foreign trade talents

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**Abstract:** School-enterprise cooperation is the way to realize a win-win situation for students, schools and enterprises. Currently, there are still lots of problems with college-enterprise cooperation, mainly because there is no practical school-enterprise cooperation program. Therefore, the planning of the college-enterprise cooperation program is the first issue. This article examines the actual situation of foreign trade training in Guangxi Vocational University of Science & Technology and the shortcomings of foreign trade in ZHIO Trading Co., Ltd, and analyzes problems they face and the needs of both parties, concluding the necessity of college-enterprise cooperation. Based on the analysis of successful cases of school-enterprise cooperation, the successful experience of school-enterprise cooperation in vocational colleges was summarized and applied in school-enterprise cooperation. The school and company mainly cooperate in enrollment management, curriculum provision, teaching staff construction as well as students' internship, thus deriving the college-enterprise cooperation program which has reference value.

**Key words:** higher vocational school; foreign trade talent; college-enterprise cooperation

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## 1 Introduction

College-enterprise cooperation refers to the collaboration between vocational colleges and enterprises, leveraging each other's strengths to jointly develop and implement talent training plans. It's an education pattern for talent cultivation needed by the enterprise. In this way, companies will get their much-needed technical personnel, which reduces management difficulties and training costs. In 21st century, talents have become the most valuable resource in competition among enterprises, so enterprises have to face a big issue of how to select, utilize, cultivate, and retain talents. Under the current environment of college-enterprise cooperation, Suzhou ZHIO Trading Co., Ltd and Guangxi Vocation University of Science & Technology jointly explore the new model of cooperation program to train foreign trade talents. Therefore, it's necessary to develop a college-enterprise cooperation program.

### 1.1 Guangxi Vocational University of Science & Technology

Guangxi Vocational University of Science & Technology (hereinafter referred to as GSU) was set up in 2010 which is a full-time general institution of higher education and was approved by the People's Government of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. At present, GSU has provided 12 majors for students, such as international finance, communication technology, etc.

There are high-level teachers, complete hardware, high-quality employment guidance and a colorful campus culture life, which are the advantages of the school. Foreign trade is a popular major at GSU. Many students graduate and work in

the foreign trade industry. GSU will recruit more than 500 students majoring in foreign trade over the next five years. In order to cultivate excellent talents, GSU continuously strengthens the cooperation with the enterprise. According to students' different majors and the result of career exploration, the school arranges students into different companies to practice. College-enterprise cooperation is a good way of training talent for now [1].

### 1.2 Suzhou ZHIO Trading Co., Ltd

Suzhou ZHIO Trading Co., Ltd was established in 2014 and is a professional manufacturer and exporter engaged in the design, development and production of apparel, lighting equipment, and self-management as well as the import and export of self-supporting or agent goods and technologies. The company is located in Suzhou, which is regarded as the Chinese garden city, with convenient transportation access. There are over a hundred employees in the company, with annual sales exceeding 500, 000 US dollars. Well-equipped facilities and excellent quality control throughout all stages of production enable the company to guarantee total customer satisfaction.

In order to further expand overseas business, introducing foreign trade talents has become increasingly important. ZHIO Trading Co., Ltd is experienced in college-enterprise cooperation. Until now, ZHIO Trading Co., Ltd has been cooperating with 7 higher vocational colleges in China, and together they have cultivated more than 5,000 foreign trade talents. Students in the program can obtain more advanced and more practical foreign trade vocational skills, laying a solid foundation for their future career.

## 2 Comprehensive analyses

### 2.1 Market demand and supply of foreign trade talents

As Figure 1 shows, there are 790,000 trades talents needed in 2010, but it's only 130,000 people working in the line of trade. And in the next 3 years, the demand for foreign trade talents far exceeds the quantity of foreign trade talents.

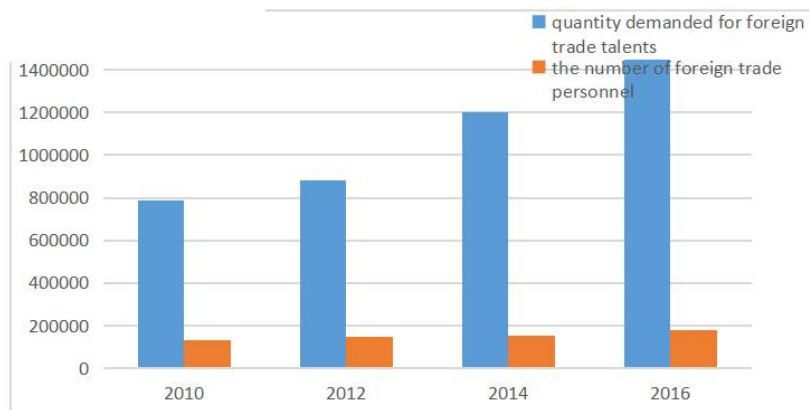


Figure 1. The demand change of foreign trade personnel

Note: Data from Zhen-Hong Wang. College-enterprise in-depth cooperation

With the rapid development of the Chinese economy, Sino-foreign joint ventures and wholly foreign-owned enterprises have appeared. It's badly in need of the foreign trade talents who are good at foreign trade skills and master the basic knowledge of business English. After China entered into the WTO, vocational and technical education is increasingly important. The number of enterprises engaged in foreign trade has been increasing, resulting in a great shortage of foreign trade talents who have a solid knowledge foundation of English and international trade, and master good English language skills as well as communication skills. After the 2008 Olympic Games, China's integration into the international community has led to more frequent exchanges in the political, economic and cultural fields. Therefore, industries such as foreign trade, diplomacy, customs, tourism and management are facing an unprecedented opportunity [2]. The quantity demand for foreign trade talents is increasing and the demand exceeds supply. It will continue to maintain a good job

prospects for a long time.

## 2.2 Supply of foreign trade talents at Guangxi Vocational University of Science & Technology

According to GSU's employment tracking data on foreign trade graduates from 2015-2017, the employment rate for 600 graduates is 97%, with an unemployment rate of 3%, as shown in Figure 2. It's worth noting that only 30% of these employed graduates are engaged in jobs related to foreign trade, while 67% of students are engaged in other jobs.

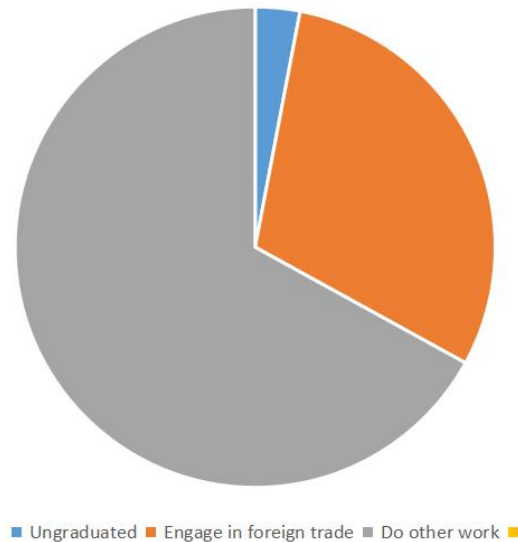


Figure 2. Students' career choice

What is clear about the data is that foreign trade talents are in short supply. There are many reasons for this situation: First of all, students lack professional knowledge and practice, and they do not have adequate ability to work in foreign trade companies. Secondly, because of low education background, they have no advantages compared with undergraduates [3]. So it's harder for them to find a satisfying foreign trade work. Last but not least, the unstable foreign trade income prevents students from seeing the vast employment prospects of foreign trade. Therefore, GSU's students are unwilling to engage in foreign trade work.

## 2.3 Current curriculum for foreign trade talents

The curriculum is very important for foreign trade talent training. Reasonable course setting is the base and core of talent cultivation. In GSU, the curriculum designed for the international trade major is not reasonable, as shown in Table 1. In GSU, students from different majors attend the same compulsory public courses, and there are no major courses in the first semester. All freshmen will spend a semester completing the general courses, and the basic English is also a public course that they need to learn every semester. So all the major courses have to be finished in the following 3 terms. The major compulsory courses mainly include "Foreign Business Correspondence", "International Trade Affairs", "International Business Law" and "International Finance". The course "Foreign Business Correspondence" has 60 teaching hours and 4 credits, which can widen students' horizon of professional knowledge and help them obtain some foreign trade skills certificates, such as international vouching clerk, international merchandiser and customs brokers. The course "International Trade Affairs" has 54 teaching hours and 4 credits, helping students master the basic theory, elementary knowledge and basic skills in foreign trade business. The "International Business Law" course has 60 teaching hours and 4 credits, allowing students to learn international trade practices and rules. "Marketing" has 30 teaching hours and 1.5 credits, which can train students' social practical ability, teach them how to conduct market research and find development clients. The "International Finance" course has 56 teaching hours and 3.5 credits, and students need to master the basic knowledge of economic, which provides force for constantly development [4].

Table 1. The professional curriculum design for foreign trade major

The first year		The second year		The third year
First term	Second term	First term	Second term	Internship
Basic English	Basic English	Basic English	Basic English	
	Marketing	International Business English	International Trade Affair	
	Business English Correspondence	International Business Law	Introduction to China's Foreign Trade	
	International Trade	International Finance	English Writing for Foreign Trade	

#### 2.4 Current research problems

In recent years, there have been many problems in school-enterprise cooperation, mainly manifested in four aspects:

(1) The policies and management mechanisms promoted by the government are not perfect. The lack of government coordination functions and the absence of laws or clear regulations on school-enterprise cooperation make it difficult to set up cooperative mechanism and guarantee the cooperative operation.

(2) Enterprise demands and school's teaching arrangement are out of sync, making students in internship difficult to meet the requirements of the enterprise. Enterprise hopes that interns have specific professional knowledge during their internship in the company. Otherwise, the enterprise needs to spend time, money, energy and manpower in retraining students.

(3) The interests of schools and businesses are not equal. Although both schools and enterprises need to cooperate, enterprises pay more attention to efficiency. Only the need of both sides are met can the cooperation be continued and developed.

(4) There is a lack of interaction between schools and businesses, and this kind of cooperation is only at a lower level at present. There is no in-depth cooperation between schools and enterprises in terms of training objectives, professional standards, training base construction, curriculum development, and talent cultivation. Therefore, the cooperation is not sustainable and ends up in failure.

#### 2.5 Summary

There are still a lot of shortcomings in the cultivation of foreign trade talents. And it's very important to train foreign trade talents who can meet social requirements. In conclusion, foreign trade talents are in huge demand but in short supply in recent years; the employment situation is very severe and fewer graduates engage in foreign trade work, which leads to low employment rate and the difficulties for students to find a satisfying job; the teaching objectives for foreign trade talents in GSU are unclear and the course setting is not reasonable. In addition, due to the weakness of teaching staff and poor learning environment, the teaching model in GSU need to be reformed. As result of these problems, it is difficult for GSU to adapt to the demand for talent in the new situation.

So far, college-enterprise cooperation has been recognized as the most effective way to cultivate vocational education talents. Therefore, it's necessary to introduce the college-enterprise cooperation model to solve the problems.

### 3 Implementation plan

#### 3.1 The project introduction

In order to cultivate more foreign trade talents for schools and companies and achieve win-win cooperation, GSU

will cooperate with ZHIO Trading Co., Ltd for 3 years. First of all, clear and definite responsibilities and obligations for both sides are necessary. Secondly, it is necessary to establish a collaborative leadership group; Thirdly, schools and enterprises need to jointly complete the organizational process, including enrollment management, curriculum design, faculty development, training base construction, and student internships. Finally, protective measures for cooperation should be developed, such as assessment and motivation, communication, etc. School-enterprise cooperation takes foreign trade profession as the core, constructs the integrated curriculum system for deep cooperation and curriculum adaptation in higher education, and looks into enterprise's demand for graduate training and college education to expand employment channels for graduates and improve the employment levels and quality of graduates [5].

### 3.2 Functional responsibility

The responsibilities and obligations for GSU are as follows:

- (1) Providing space for students to attend classes and establish training bases.
- (2) Teaching compulsory public courses and managing students in school.
- (3) Handling procedures of students' enrolling, graduating and internship.
- (4) Supervising the classroom quality of the enterprise.
- (5) Coordinating class schedules for the enterprise.
- (6) Making a teaching plan with the enterprise.

The responsibilities and obligations of ZHIO Trading Co., Ltd:

- (1) Drafting and revising cooperation agreement.
- (2) Assisting GSU in recruiting students suitable for foreign trade.
- (3) Making syllabus designs with GSU, and participating in the major course teaching.
- (4) Providing internship environment for students, and managing students during student internship.
- (5) Maintaining the right to eliminate students who break the rules.

### 3.3 Organizational process

#### 3.3.1 Enrollment management

Enrollment is one of most important things for every higher vocational school. GSU is still in the start-up stage, the facilities are not sound, and there are small number of students. Suzhou ZHIO Trading Co., Ltd eagerly needs foreign trade talents, but it's usually difficult to find satisfied talents in time. If the enterprise and GSU recruit students together, it will be easier for schools to recruit students and the enterprise will get enough supply of foreign trade talents. GSU and enterprise aim to recruit 300 foreign trade professional students. 35 students are selected based on their English proficiency, and a commissioning agreement is signed with the student and parents at the same time the student is admitted to GSU. After these students graduate, they can directly join Suzhou ZHIO Trading Co., Ltd for work and get a higher salary. Therefore, it can guarantee the supply of foreign trade talents for the company, and GSU can get more students to expand their foreign trade majors. This is beneficial for both parties and reflects the principle of fairness.

#### 3.3.2 Curriculum provision

The training goal of foreign trade talents is to improve students' English communication skills, oral English and the ability to handle business English correspondence. In other hand, students should possess the ability of customs inspections, order handing and making foreign trade documents. The curriculum provision at GSU is not reasonable in evidence. Therefore, the enterprise and GSU should make a teaching plan jointly to reach the anticipated goals. Among them, GSU is mainly responsible for students' foundation courses, and the enterprise is responsible for students' professional courses and practical courses. Therefore, it's more easy to cultivate foreign trade talents who can meet the enterprise requirement. To

coordinate the needs of the enterprise for school teaching arrangements, the course schedule is as follows:

Table 2. The professional curriculum design for foreign trade major

Teaching side	The first year		The second year		The third year
	First term	Second term	First term	Second term	
GSU	Pronunciation	International Business English	Financial English	Business Accounting	Internship
	Grammar	International Market Analysis	Foreign Trade Documents	International Trade	
Company	Corporate Culture	Business English Correspondence	Custom Practice	Practice for International Settlements	
	English Writing for Foreign Trade	Practice for Open Shop Tips Online	Practice for Foreign Trade Documents	Practice for Business Process	

Compared Table 1 with Table 2, the professional curriculum designed by GSU and Suzhou ZHIO company is more reasonable, which increases 5 training courses with every training course having 1 credit and 20 teaching hours. The problem of students' lack of practice can be solved. The course of "Corporate Culture" has been added with 1 credit and 10 teaching hours, which can cultivate foreign trade talents to meet the enterprise requirement. In order to improve students' English level, pronunciation and grammar courses are offered, totaling 3 credits and 40 class hours. In other hand, GSU and the enterprise are responsible for students' other major courses, helping students acquire basic theory knowledge. The combination of theory and practice can cultivate more foreign trade talents [6].

### 3.3.3 Teaching staff construction

Through on-the-job training, introduction of enterprise technology, and participation in job internships, a teaching staff team with rich foreign trade practical skills, high academic level, and reasonable structure has been established. Professional teachers can cooperate with enterprise technicians to realize the resource sharing between GSU and the enterprise. In order to enhance the communication between GSU and ZHIO Trading Co., Ltd, GSU can sign contracts with the company, hire faculty advisers who have rich practical experience in enterprise to hold the post of part-time teachers. Besides, we should pay more attention to the cultivation of backbone teachers and professional leaders and cultivate mature backbone teachers from existing professional teachers. The school has selected a group of teachers with associate senior professional titles for key training and made them famous among domestic similar institutions. In order to improve teachers' hands-on ability and technical research and development ability, some professional teachers have been selected to intern at cooperative enterprises. Finally, we will take professional leaders as the core to set up a specialized teaching team. Therefore, we can ensure the cultivation of foreign trade talents.

### 3.3.4 Construction of training base

In order to strengthen the cooperation between GSU and the enterprise, firstly, one long-term training base should be built up in GSU. This base can provide a place for companies to teach students specialized and practical skills and provide professional training for GSU faculty. Secondly, a long-term off-campus training base can be set up. This base can provide internship to students. The training base mainly provides positions such as export sales personnel, documentation specialists, inspectors, customs brokers and document clerks. Besides, it provides an experimental environment for

professional teachers and facilitates the development of specialized curricula and standard teaching materials. Taking the foreign trade specialty as the core, combined with the employment orientation, situational teaching is constructed to cultivate students' practical working ability. The talent cultivation mode and new ideas of talent cultivation through school-enterprise cooperation and study-production combination are being explored, so as to find a practical teaching mode suitable for the future education of higher vocational colleges and universities.

#### 3.3.5 Students' internship

GSU should arrange students to intern in Suzhou ZHIOU Trading Co., Ltd every year. The company is responsible for managing, teaching and assessing students. The requirements for students should meet the standard of formal employees of the company during the internship. Therefore, students can truly experience the actual ability requirements of the job, and become professional talents with foreign trade work experience. Based on the position and the specialties of students, their job in the enterprise should be assured. After short-term job training, students can directly join the work. In addition, students can get internship subsidies and corporate welfare. The replacement teaching practice is divided into probationary and non-probationary period. Students who have just entered the company need to go through a period of probation. Based on company standards and discussions between schools and companies, different treatment plans will be established for probationary or non-probationary students. In order to deepen the understanding of different positions and expand channels for future employment, students will also rotate positions according to company's situation. After the internship, students can continue to work independently in the company.

#### 3.4 Assessment and motivation

In order to train more high-quality and steady foreign trade talents to meet the demand of society, we need to make the corresponding measures to assess and motivate foreign trade talents:

- (1) After graduation, outstanding graduates will be given priority in important skill positions, and have the opportunity to be recommended to other departments;
- (2) Excellent interns will receive the same treatment and benefits as regular employees;
- (3) Students who fail two major courses per semester or do not comply with school and company regulations are not allowed to intern in enterprises.
- (4) The strong performers of teachers and students will have opportunities to go abroad to attend international exhibition.

#### 3.5 Safeguard mechanism

Due to the lack of a sound management mechanism for school-enterprise cooperation by the government, it has been difficult for school-enterprise cooperation to continue to operate. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a cooperation guarantee mechanism.

- (1) It is necessary to establish an evaluation system for the basic and professional courses of the GSU and ZHIOU Trading Co., Ltd. If either party neglects one's duty, the other side can terminate the cooperation in advance.
- (2) College-enterprise cooperation work meetings can be regularly organized to know intern students' situation and solve the practical problems in cooperation.
- (3) A communication mechanism can be established. GSU is responsible for daily communication with interns, while the enterprise is responsible for communicating with school at a fixed period.
- (4) Statistical magnitude for foreign trade talents who works in ZHIOU Trading Co., Ltd after graduate can be conducted to evaluate the gain and loss in cooperation, and make a better cooperation plan.

## 4 Conclusion

Through above analysis, college-enterprise cooperation can not only promote transformation of education, but also cultivate foreign trade talents who are needed by enterprises in higher vocational colleges. Enterprises need to maintain close contact with schools and assist them in recruiting students; schools need to work together with enterprises to develop a curriculum system based on the workflow and the requirements of foreign trade. Schools should create a practical environment for foreign trade and develop courses related to the foreign trade industry. In addition, guided by employment, through school-enterprise cooperation, based on comprehensive quality education, and centered on cultivating professional abilities, GSU truly becomes a talent training base for enterprises. It should deepen cooperation between teachers and enterprises, and provide more training opportunities for teachers. A mechanism for teachers to enter enterprises for training should be established. Especially for newly hired teachers, they need to receive more than six months of training at the company. By introducing teachers from enterprises, strengthening their on-the-job training and practicing in corporate positions, schools can establish a team of part-time teachers with high academic level, rich practical skills, and reasonable structure.

Schools and enterprises need to establish school-enterprise cooperation alliances. By strengthening school-enterprise cooperation in the future, they can actively implement enrolment, teaching, practical training, internship and employment services, so as to formulate a more perfect training mode of foreign trade talents and solve the problem of high market demand for foreign trade talents.

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### Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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