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A study on the development status of teaching standards and curriculum framework for "Chinese + Vocational skills" education

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Abstract: "Chinese + Vocational Skills" education integrates international Chinese language learning with technical and vocational education and training (TVET) to prepare learners for communication and task performance in real workplaces. This study examines the recent development of teaching standards and proposes a curriculum framework that can translate broad proficiency requirements into teachable and assessable modules. A focused review of vocational Chinese standards and recent curriculum research shows an initial standards basis and diverse program practices, but four recurring gaps remain: weak linkage between occupational tasks and language outcomes, uneven localization, insufficient supply of dual-competent teachers, and language-centered assessment. The study proposes a four-layer teaching-standard model—program orientation, competency domains, performance descriptors, and evidence-based assessment—and a five-module curriculum covering workplace Chinese, occupational communication, integrated technical tasks, intercultural professionalism, and capstone projects. The framework emphasizes authentic tasks, school–enterprise co-development, localization, and iterative quality assurance.

Keywords: Chinese + vocational skills; vocational Chinese; teaching standards; TVET; curriculum framework; competency-based education

1 Introduction

"Chinese + Vocational Skills" has developed from a language-support initiative into a broader model connecting international Chinese education, vocational training, and overseas workforce development. The release of the *Chinese Proficiency Standards for Vocational Education* provides a formal reference for linking Chinese communicative ability with occupational contexts, work tasks, communication strategies, cultural awareness, and graded performance levels [1].

Recent research also shows that the scope of this topic has expanded rapidly, with major concerns shifting toward educational models, talent cultivation, country-specific implementation, teaching resources, and the integration of Chinese with vocational requirements [2]. Even so, the availability of such a general standard does not automatically produce an operational course. Institutions still need to convert occupational requirements into learning outcomes, teaching tasks, resources, and assessment evidence.

This study therefore addresses two research questions: (1) What is the current state of "Chinese + Vocational Skills" teaching-standard construction? (2) How can a curriculum framework be developed so that language learning and vocational performance are integrated rather than simply placed side by side? The aim is not to prescribe one universal syllabus, but to establish a transferable core that can be adapted to different sectors, learner profiles, and national contexts.

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2 Research design

The study adopts a focused document-analysis and comparative curriculum approach. Recent English-language literature published mainly in 2024–2025 was reviewed together with the vocational Chinese proficiency standard. The analysis was organized around five dimensions: standard orientation, competency structure, workplace-task relevance, teaching organization, and assessment. Competency-based TVET research is particularly relevant because it treats occupational performance as the organizing principle of curriculum rather than as an additional practice component [3].

For language-course development, the framework also draws on needs analysis and occupational-language research. Evidence from English for Specific Purposes shows that workplace communication often differs from textbook content and that course design should begin with actual genres, interactions, and tasks required in employment settings [4]. Accordingly, the proposed framework uses the chain "job task → communicative event → language/skill requirement → learning task → performance evidence" as its basic design logic.

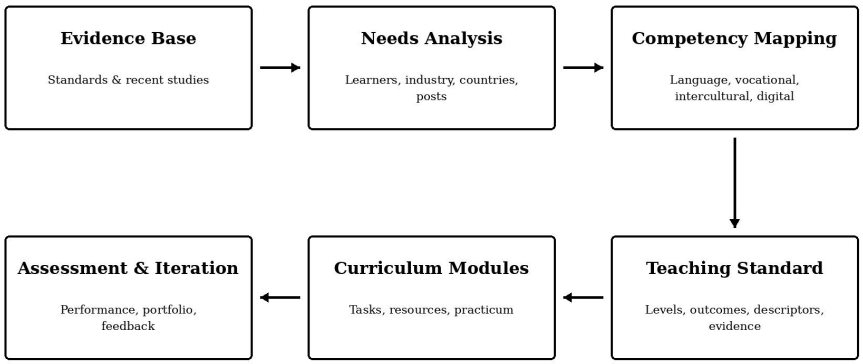


Figure 1. Technical route for teaching-standard and curriculum development

3 Current status of teaching-standard construction

Current development can be summarized as a transition from project-based exploration to standard-guided curriculum construction. First, an explicit proficiency basis now exists. Second, vocational colleges and overseas partners have accumulated practical experience in sectors such as manufacturing, transportation, logistics, tourism, commerce, agriculture, and engineering. Third, the idea of competence has become more multidimensional. Research in Chinese higher vocational education demonstrates that language-related vocational competence can be decomposed into interacting domains rather than be represented by a single test score [5].

However, four weaknesses remain. The first is insufficient task granularity: broad standards still need to be converted into observable workplace performances such as confirming specifications, explaining procedures, or reporting malfunction. The second limitation concerns insufficient localization. Identical vocabulary lists and dialogues cannot fit different industries, countries, work cultures, and learner entry levels. The third limitation concerns teachers. ESP research within Chinese vocational settings shows that teacher knowledge, beliefs, professional development, and institutional conditions directly influence the implementation of specialized language instruction [6]. The fourth limitation concerns assessment. Many courses still separate language testing from vocational task performance, making it difficult to determine whether a learner can actually use Chinese to complete workplace tasks.

Table 1 summarizes the present construction logic and the corresponding development needs.

Table 1. Current status and priorities in teaching-standard construction

Dimension	Current development	Priority for improvement
Standard basis	Graded vocational Chinese proficiency and broad occupational categories are available.	Translate broad levels into sector- and task-specific performance descriptors.
Curriculum content	Programs increasingly combine Chinese with technical or service content.	Organize content around work processes, communicative events, and authentic documents.
Localization	Projects operate across multiple countries and industries.	Build a "core + sector + local" structure for terminology, tasks, culture, and regulation.
Teaching team	Language teachers and vocational teachers participate in different forms.	Develop dual-competent teams with enterprise mentors and local bilingual support.
Resources	Textbooks, online courses, and digital materials are expanding.	Create reusable task packages, multimodal resources, and update mechanisms.
Assessment	Language tests and course-based assessment are common.	Use integrated performance tasks, portfolios, and industry-informed rubrics.

4 Proposed teaching-standard framework

The proposed teaching standard contains four layers. Layer 1 is program orientation, which specifies target learners, occupational sector, typical posts, entry Chinese level, training duration, and target exit level. Layer 2 is a competency architecture comprising four domains: occupational Chinese communication, vocational-task language integration, intercultural and professional conduct, and digital/learning competence. Digital competence should not be treated as a separate optional add-on; TVET research increasingly frames it as a whole-institution capability involving learners, teachers, and organizational support [7]. Layer 3 consists of performance descriptors. Each outcome should combine an action, a workplace condition, a quality criterion, and a language demand. For example: "Given a maintenance checklist, the learner can confirm equipment status with a colleague, identify abnormal items, and report the next action in comprehensible Chinese using sector-appropriate terms." This is more operational than a descriptor such as "can communicate in maintenance situations". Layer 4 specifies assessment evidence, including simulated or real task performance, oral interaction, written workplace products, portfolios, and teacher/industry observation.

The standard should use a "core + sector + local" architecture. The core covers transferable workplace Chinese and communication strategies; the sector layer adds terminology, procedures, safety rules, documents, and task sequences; the local layer adapts examples, cultural conventions, regulations, and enterprise practices. Digital communication can extend authentic interaction through messaging, video demonstrations, mobile tasks, and online collaboration [8].

5 Curriculum framework development

The curriculum should be organized around work processes rather than grammar progression alone. Five modules are recommended. Module 1 builds essential workplace Chinese for instructions, numbers, time, tools, locations, requests, confirmation, and clarification. Module 2 develops occupational communication for reception, coordination, reporting, customer or colleague interaction, and documentation. Module 3 integrates Chinese directly with technical tasks, using demonstrations, operating procedures, work orders, troubleshooting, and safety communication. Module 4 addresses intercultural professionalism, including workplace etiquette, teamwork, risk communication, and culturally appropriate interaction. Module 5 is a capstone project in which learners complete an integrated workplace scenario task and produce a portfolio of evidence.

The framework should remain modular and stackable. International education systems increasingly emphasize flexible pathways, employability, and progression between education and work, while OECD reporting continues to

highlight the central role of vocational pathways in education and skills systems [9]. UNESCO's recent TVET review likewise emphasizes demand-driven curricula, stronger stakeholder participation, digitalization, lifelong learning, and monitoring mechanisms [10]. These directions support a curriculum that can be updated by task cluster rather than rewritten as a whole program whenever occupational requirements change.

Enterprise participation is especially important. Comparative work on language-plus-vocational education argues for deeper involvement of enterprises, stronger management of learner motivation, and more accessible teaching resources [11]. Course development should therefore include joint task identification, review of terminology and documents, practical scenarios, and validation of assessment criteria. Needs-analysis research in Chinese vocational universities also points to persistent mismatches between language content and workplace expectations, supporting a curriculum-development process that begins with learner and industry needs rather than with a fixed textbook sequence [12].

For Chinese for Specific Purposes, recent evidence further supports standardized course structures, updated materials, specialized vocabulary support, dual-competent faculty, and collaboration with industry experts [13]. The resulting course framework is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Proposed modular curriculum framework

Module	Core content	Representative learning evidence	Suggested share
1.Workplace Chinese Foundations	Instructions, numbers, time, tools, locations, confirmation, clarification.	Short oral exchanges; comprehension of signs/checklists; micro-simulations.	20 – 25%
2.Occupational Communication	Coordination, reporting, reception/service, documentation, teamwork.	Role-play, message log, shift handover, workplace form.	20 – 25%
3.Integrated Technical Tasks	Operating procedures, demonstration, work orders, troubleshooting, safety language.	Complete a task while explaining steps and responding to problems.	30 – 35%
4.Intercultural Professionalism	Workplace etiquette, risk communication, teamwork, cultural awareness, professionalism.	Scenario judgment, reflective brief, collaborative task.	10 – 15%
5.Capstone Workplace Project	Integrated scenario combining language, vocational process, and documentation.	Performance assessment + portfolio + teacher/enterprise rubric.	10 – 15%

6 Implementation and quality assurance

Implementation requires alignment among standards, curriculum, teaching, resources, faculty, and assessment. A recommended lesson cycle is "workplace scenario → task demonstration → language noticing → guided practice → integrated performance → feedback and reflection". Language knowledge is taught when it becomes necessary for task completion, while repeated task performance provides opportunities for fluency, accuracy, and strategic communication to develop together.

Assessment should combine four evidence sources: language quality, task completion, professional/safety behavior, and communication strategy. Written tests may be retained for vocabulary and comprehension, but the decisive evidence should come from performance tasks and workplace products. Recognition of terminology alone should not be treated as equivalent to successful workplace communication.

Quality assurance should operate as an annual or cohort-based cycle. Institutions collect evidence from learner outcomes, teacher observations, enterprise feedback, assessment results, and changes in occupational practice; then they revise task lists, materials, descriptors, and scoring rubrics. Comparative TVET research emphasizes that curriculum relevance, industry collaboration, teacher capacity, and infrastructure jointly determine whether training remains aligned with labor-market needs [14]. For "Chinese + Vocational Skills", the same principle means that a teaching standard is not a static document but a mechanism for continuous alignment.

7 Discussion

The central challenge in "Chinese + Vocational Skills" education is not whether Chinese and vocational skills should be combined, but how deeply they should be integrated. A weak model teaches general Chinese first and adds vocational content later. A stronger model identifies the language embedded in occupational action and designs teaching around that action from the beginning. This shift changes the unit of curriculum design from the language point to the workplace task.

The proposed framework also clarifies the relationship between standardization and localization. Standardization is necessary for level comparability, quality assurance, resource development, and assessment, while localization secures contextual relevance. The two are compatible when a stable core defines competence domains and performance principles while sector and local layers specify tasks, terminology, documents, and cultural conditions.

Sustainable programs also require teaching teams rather than isolated "all-purpose" instructors. Language teachers, vocational teachers, enterprise mentors, and local bilingual facilitators can jointly design and validate tasks while developing cross-domain competence.

8 Conclusion

"Chinese + Vocational Skills" education has entered a stage in which program expansion must be matched by stronger teaching standards and more coherent curricula. The field already has a useful proficiency reference and a growing body of vocational-language practice, but further development should focus on task-level outcomes, localized sector standards, dual-competent teaching teams, performance-based assessment, and iterative school–enterprise quality assurance.

This study proposes a four-layer teaching-standard model and a five-module curriculum framework. Its core principle is alignment: occupational needs determine target tasks; target tasks determine communicative and technical competencies; competencies determine learning modules and assessment evidence; and outcome data feed back into curriculum revision. This logic can support the development of sector-specific standards while preserving a common structure across countries and institutions.

Conflicts of interest

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

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