

# Research on the Talent Cultivation Model of Colleges and Universities under the Belt and Road Initiative

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**Abstract:** Since the Belt and Road Initiative was proposed, the exchanges and communications between China and its neighboring countries have become increasingly deepened and comprehensive, with both opportunities and challenges. The lack of high-end versatile talents who are adaptable to international exchanges and cooperation has hindered in-depth cooperation. As an important base for cultivating these talents, colleges and universities in China should be equipped with up-to-date educational concepts and flexible educational models, in an attempt to cope with the opportunities brought by the development of the Belt and Road Initiative.

**Keywords:** Belt and Road; Talent cultivation; Educational model

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## 1. Introduction

In terms of opportunities, in a fundamental sense, China's economy is still growing at a stable rate and expected to maintain such a momentum in the long run. The Belt and Road Initiative, which has been put in place for more than a decade, has created many favorable conditions for employment and will continue to inject strong impetus into the job market. Turning to challenges, despite support from government policies, the diversification and specialization of all lines of work have put forward higher requirements for job applicants to work on their capacities and competences. The issue of mismatch between talent cultivation mechanism and market demands has also been further highlighted. The dual problem of "difficult to find jobs" and "difficult to find talents" has presented a structural dilemma for employment.

## 2. Characteristics and the Status Quo of Demand for Higher Education Talents under the Belt and Road Initiative

### 2.1 Simple Curriculum System for Language Courses

Translational communications are great facilitators of modern economic activities, which is why language services have always been congregated in the economically advanced coastal areas in China. In this day and age, it is of strategic significance to cultivate foreign language talents with a solid language background and strengthened cross-cultural communication skills so that they may effectively serve regional economic development. The "five connectivities" proposed in the Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road refer to "policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration, and people-to-people connectivity" [2] "People-to-people connectivity" is the basis upon which China and other countries conduct international cooperation. The ability to flexibly use a foreign language for efficient communication has always been the most important means and foundation for ensuring people-to-people connectivity. Though there are no few foreign language majors in Chinese universities, some of those majors enjoying quite a long history, foreign language talents are still in great need for the development of the Belt and Road initiative. Generally speaking, this phenomenon is caused by an insufficient awareness of cultivating talents with applied skills. In other words, most of the attention are devoted to theoretical teaching instead of practical experience, the lack of which makes a large number of graduates majoring in foreign languages unable to perform relevant tasks in an outstanding fashion.

### 2.2 Lack of Mechanism for Cultivating Versatile Talents

The exchanges and cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative require a broad international perspective and a deep sense of national pride as it is also a mission for cultivating and publicizing a good national image. Therefore, great challenges arise in terms of cultivating talents with highly comprehensive capabilities. At present, colleges and universities focus more on cultivating talents based on major courses. This kind of individualistic, single model of cultivation has brought severe challenges. In other words, by ignoring the cultivation of comprehensive capabilities, talents would become readily replaceable as there are little differences between individuals. Faced with the complex international situation and the differences in culture and politics of various countries, talents who undertake foreign affairs often need a more comprehensive reservoir of knowledge to deal with all kinds of professional problems in their work. What's more, a neat appearance and personal image are also crucial parts of interpersonal communication. Talents with appropriate manners and etiquette as well as clear, fluent and logical expression are part of the efforts of establishing a good national image, thereby reflecting the country's comprehensive strength and influence. Increasing the number of high-quality versatile talents requires policy support, under which local colleges and universities would serve as incubation bases. The talents would be evaluated with practice-based feedback. Only in this way could the supply of talents for the Belt and Road Initiative be guaranteed.

### **2.3 Underdeveloped Philosophy for Cultivating Talents**

In 2009, the "Double Ten Thousand Program," which is to build 10,000 first-class undergraduate majors at the national and provincial levels, respectively, was proposed. This proposal has particularly emphasized the ideas of conducting distinctive and differentiated major-based education by institutions of higher education. The colleges and universities are encouraged to proactively build first-class and distinctive majors that could serve the economic development of the country and local regions. The approach of creating nascent courses based on local regional characteristics is an effective measure to enhance students' prospects in the job market. Countries and regions along the Belt and Road may be mostly less prominent in the international landscape, but they are privileged with rich and diverse cultural customs, religious beliefs and distinct regional characteristics. Although these countries and regions mostly adopt English as its official language to communicate, their foreign language talents who are responsible for those international exchanges and communications generally have a low level of awareness of their own national culture, customs and traditions. Some of them lack the proper way of thinking mode and capabilities for cross-cultural communication, which may further deteriorate into communication barriers and cultural conflicts due to "not understanding," rendering them incapable of performing the relevant work associated with the Belt and Road Initiative.

## **3. Innovative Exploration of Talent Cultivation Model in Higher Education under the Belt and Road Initiative**

In November 2020, the "Declaration on the Construction of New Liberal Arts" was released, stating that "In the new era, the country's new mission is to require that liberal arts education to embrace more innovations at an accelerated pace."<sup>[3]</sup> It is clearly pointed out in "The Declaration" that in line with the new round of strategy of opening-up and the new demands of constructing the Belt and Road Initiative, the institutions of higher education should strengthen cooperation with practical areas.

### **3.1 Explore the Innovative Integration Model of "Foreign Language + N"**

The practical work of the Belt and Road Initiative is most closely linked to language talents. Traditionally, the curricula of language majors are mainly composed of the language itself and literature studies of that language. This model of cultivation may allow students to learn and master the basic concepts and expressions of that language. However, the mastery of that language as a means of communication at work presents demands for students to have a more comprehensive and in-depth knowledge base. Language is the carrier of culture. The purpose of language majors is not limited to learning language skills but still more to spread and inherit a certain kind of culture. The development of the Belt and Road Initiative is related to applied, practical and across-the-board work, requiring the participating language talents to possess both basic linguistic skills and comprehensive language and cultural literacy. In response to the new challenges posed by the Belt and Road Initiative, the political, economic, cultural, religious, customs, and ethnic conditions of the countries along the Belt and Road should be integrated in the courses, which will certainly present higher standards and more specific requirements for foreign language majors.

### **3.2 Establish a Curriculum System with Local Characteristics**

In recent years, the "one-size-fits-all" curriculum system has gradually blurred the goal of higher education. There are more than thousands of colleges and universities in China, which can be generally divided into comprehensive and applied ones, with vastly varying educational philosophies, policies and concepts. What is worthy of reflection is how could those local colleges and universities build a curriculum system with local characteristics based on its own advantages. From what was observed, courses

related to the practical work of the Belt and Road Initiative were scattered in different majors and disciplines, thus it was difficult to set up a specific curriculum revolving around the actual situation of the countries along the Belt and Road. Local colleges and universities should fully take advantage of their own current development to establish elective courses with local characteristics in a targeted manner. This is to promote the interdisciplinary integration, which serves to stimulate students' interest, broaden their horizons, and break through professional limitations.

### **3.3 Establish an Application-oriented Complementary Mechanism**

First, it is necessary to establish laboratories that focus on using practical cases from various Belt and Road projects under which students could learn both from their professional teachers on campuses and industry leaders. By combining standardized professional teaching with the latest practical skills, a model of cultivation that could always keep up with the times would be formed. The campus-business cooperation mechanism could make sure that talents are jointly cultivated with a curriculum that puts an equal emphasis on professional and practical skills.<sup>[4]</sup> Second, following the strategy of "going out", international educational centers could be set up. Local colleges and universities could choose to establish a joint teaching program with countries along the Belt and Road to work on expanding its talent reserve by mutual learning with other countries. The teaching staff for the educational centers should be composed of business technicians and professional scholars both at home and from abroad who have a deep understanding of the current development of the Belt and Road Initiative. Its purpose is to provide overseas training opportunities, internships, practical training and job-seeking guidance for college and university talents. By establishing and improving ways and methods for students to participate in social practice and learn from multicultural contexts, the educational resources of colleges and universities can be further enriched towards the cultivation of international applied talents.

### **3.4 Strengthen the construction of a multi-dimensional internationalized teaching staff**

Establishing a high-quality internationally-oriented teaching faculty with a reasonable academic structure is a systematic project. Its development should go beyond the level of merely looking to their academic qualifications, educational background and amount of scientific research. Universities can form a joint training mechanism for their teaching staff or encourage them to take part in exchange and visiting programs with countries along the Belt and Road, so as to constantly improve on the teaching staff's international vision and teaching concepts. Furthermore, when recruiting international teachers, local colleges and universities should increase the number of high-level professionals and experts and work to solve the issue of general insufficiency in terms of the professional capabilities of international teaching staff. When it comes to improving their professional skills and capabilities, college and university teaching staff can, based on their professions and majors, work to obtain relevant qualifications and certificates through social practical training programs. This is to actively respond to the country's call for "Dual Qualification and Capabilities"- the development of both academic and practical qualifications and capabilities.

## **4. Conclusion**

Since its proposal, the Belt and Road Initiative has been ongoing for ten years and brought numerous both unprecedented opportunities and challenges to areas and regions along the route in China. As long as they are always exploring and forging ahead, colleges and universities can and will pave a new path of cultivation for talents that is characteristic of local features and innovative ideas.

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