

Vocational Education: A New Engine for Pilot Free Trade Zones and Free Trade Ports to Soar in the Wave of Comprehensive Deepening Reform

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of comprehensively deepening reforms, the construction of pilot free trade zones and free trade ports has become an important engine for promoting high-quality economic development in China. Vocational education, as an important way to cultivate high-quality technical and skilled talents, plays an irreplaceable role in the construction of pilot free trade zones and free trade ports. This article analyzes the demand for vocational education in pilot free trade zones and free trade ports under the background of comprehensive deepening reform, explores the path for vocational education to help pilot free trade zones and free trade ports take off, and proposes corresponding countermeasures and suggestions, in order to provide reference for vocational education to better serve the construction of pilot free trade zones and free trade ports.

Keywords: vocational education, deepening reform, free trade port, economic development

1. Introduction

With the deepening development of economic globalization and the continuous promotion of China's reform and opening up, the construction of pilot free trade zones and free trade ports has become an important measure for China to build a new system of open economy. Pilot free trade zones and free trade ports are characterized by trade liberalization, investment facilitation, and financial internationalization, aiming to create special economic functional zones with international competitiveness[1]. Against the backdrop of comprehensively deepening reforms, the construction of pilot free trade zones and free trade ports is facing new opportunities and challenges, requiring a large number of high-quality technical and skilled talents as support. Vocational education, as the most closely related type of education to economic and social development, has the advantages of clear training objectives, flexible professional settings, and practical teaching content. It can provide strong talent guarantee and technical support for the construction of free trade zones and free trade ports[2]. Therefore, it is of great practical significance to conduct in-depth research on the path of vocational education assisting the takeoff of free trade zones and free trade ports under the background of comprehensive deepening reform[3].

2. Current Defects

2.1 *The Vocational Education is not Closely Aligned with the Demand of Free Trade Zones and Free Trade Ports*

Professional Settings Lag Behind

1) At present, the professional settings of vocational education have not fully considered the industrial development needs of free trade zones and free trade ports. Insufficient professional settings in emerging industries such as cross-border e-commerce, digital trade, and fintech have resulted in a mismatch between talent supply and demand.

2) Outdated course content

The updating speed of vocational education curriculum content is slow, which cannot timely reflect the latest development trends of free trade zones and free trade ports. Some courses still focus on traditional theoretical knowledge, lacking practical teaching and case analysis, making it difficult to cultivate students' practical operation ability and innovative thinking[4].

2.2 Insufficient Depth of Integration between Industry and Education

1) The form of school enterprise cooperation is single

At present, the school enterprise cooperation in vocational education mainly focuses on the construction of internship bases and order based training, with limited depth and breadth of cooperation. The enthusiasm of enterprises to participate in vocational education is not high, often only treating students as cheap labor, lacking systematic training and career development planning for students.

2) Lack of effective cooperation mechanism

There is a lack of effective cooperation mechanisms between vocational education and enterprises, and there is a lack of institutional guarantees for cooperation in talent cultivation, technology research and development, resource sharing, and other aspects.

2.3 The Construction of the Teaching Staff Needs to be Strengthened

1) Insufficient practical experience of teachers

Most vocational education teachers come from college graduates and lack work experience and practical skills in enterprises. In the teaching process, teachers often focus on imparting theoretical knowledge, making it difficult to pass on practical work experience and skills to students.

2) The teacher training mechanism is not perfect

The teacher training mechanism for vocational education is not perfect, and teachers lack opportunities to participate in enterprise practice and professional training. This makes it difficult for teachers' knowledge and skills to keep up with the development needs of free trade zones and free trade ports, which affects the improvement of teaching quality.

2.4 Low Level of Internationalization

1) Low degree of internationalization of courses

The internationalization level of vocational education courses is not high, lacking a curriculum system and teaching content that is in line with international standards. Students have difficulty accessing international advanced vocational education concepts and technologies, which affects their international competitiveness.

2) Limited international exchanges and cooperation

The exchange and cooperation between vocational education and international vocational education institutions and enterprises are limited, and students lack opportunities to study and exchange abroad. This makes it difficult for students to effectively enhance their international perspective and cross-cultural communication skills.

3. New Requirements for the Construction of Pilot Free Trade Zones and Free Trade Ports under the Background of Comprehensively Deepening Reform

1) The Requirements of Trade Liberalization for Vocational Education

One of the core tasks of free trade zones and free trade ports is to promote trade liberalization, which requires vocational education to cultivate high-quality technical and skilled personnel with international perspectives, familiarity with international trade rules and practices, and mastery of new trade modes such as cross-border e-commerce. Specifically, vocational colleges should strengthen the construction of majors such as international trade, international business, and e-commerce, optimize curriculum settings, improve students' foreign language proficiency and cross-cultural communication abilities, and cultivate students' innovative consciousness and entrepreneurial spirit.

2) The Requirements of Investment Facilitation for Vocational Education

Investment facilitation is an important guarantee for free trade zones and free trade ports to attract foreign investment and promote economic development. To meet the requirements of investment facilitation, vocational education should cultivate technical and skilled personnel with good professional ethics, solid professional skills, strong teamwork ability, and innovation ability. Vocational colleges should strengthen cooperation with enterprises, carry out reforms in talent training models such as order based training and modern apprenticeship, and improve the pertinence and effectiveness of talent training.

3) The Requirements of Financial Internationalization for Vocational Education

Financial internationalization is an important aspect of the construction of pilot free trade zones and free trade ports. Financial internationalization requires a large number of high-quality financial talents who are familiar with

the international financial market, master financial innovation tools, and have risk prevention awareness. Vocational colleges should strengthen the construction of finance majors, offer courses such as international finance, financial engineering, and risk management, and cultivate students' financial analysis and innovation abilities.

4) The Requirements of Innovation Driven Development for Vocational Education

Innovation is the core driving force behind the development of pilot free trade zones and free trade ports. To meet the requirements of innovation driven development, vocational education should cultivate technical and skilled talents with innovative thinking, innovation ability, and entrepreneurial spirit. Vocational colleges should strengthen innovation and entrepreneurship education, establish innovation and entrepreneurship practice bases, and provide students with platforms and opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship[5].

4. The Path of Vocational Education Supporting the Development of Pilot Free Trade Zones and Free Trade Ports

4.1 Aligning with Industry Demands and Optimizing Professional Settings

The development of pilot free trade zones and free trade ports cannot be separated from the support of key industries such as international trade, logistics and transportation, financial services, and tourism management. Vocational education should closely align with the needs of these industries and optimize professional settings. By conducting in-depth research on market demand and job requirements of enterprises, timely adjusting and updating professional directions, and establishing characteristic majors related to free trade zones and free trade ports, such as cross-border e-commerce, international logistics management, financial technology, tourism services and management, etc. At the same time, strengthen the construction of professional groups, integrate relevant professional resources, form advantages for collaborative development, and improve the adaptability and contribution of vocational education to regional economic development.

4.2 Deepen the Integration of Industry and Education, Strengthen School Enterprise Cooperation

The integration of industry and education, as well as school enterprise cooperation, are important ways for the development of vocational education. Vocational colleges should establish close cooperative relationships with enterprises in pilot free trade zones and free trade ports to jointly carry out talent cultivation, technology research and development, and social services. On the one hand, by jointly building training bases, order based training, modern apprenticeship system and other methods, we provide students with a real practical environment and employment opportunities, and improve their practical abilities and professional qualities. On the other hand, enterprises can leverage the research capabilities and talent advantages of vocational colleges to solve technical problems, enhance innovation capabilities, and achieve mutual benefit and win-win outcomes. In addition, an industrial college can be established to organically combine the production and operation of enterprises with the teaching and research of schools, creating an integrated platform for industry university research cooperation.

4.3 Enhance the Level of Teaching Staff and Build a Dual Teacher Team

A high-quality teaching staff is an important guarantee for the quality of vocational education. In order to promote the development of pilot free trade zones and free trade ports, vocational colleges should strengthen the construction of their teaching staff and enhance their professional level and teaching ability. On the one hand, by introducing professional and high-level talents with work experience in enterprises, the teaching staff can be enriched; On the other hand, teachers are encouraged to intern in enterprises and participate in enterprise project research and development to enhance their practical abilities. At the same time, strengthen teacher training, regularly organize teachers to participate in professional training and academic exchange activities, update educational and teaching concepts and knowledge structures. By building a dual teacher team with solid theoretical knowledge and rich practical experience, we can provide strong talent support for the development of vocational education.

4.4 Promote International Education and Cultivate International Talents

Pilot free trade zones and free trade ports are important windows for opening up to the outside world, requiring a large number of international talents with international perspectives and cross-cultural communication abilities. Vocational education should actively promote international education and strengthen cooperation and exchanges with foreign vocational colleges and enterprises. By introducing high-quality educational resources from abroad, carrying out Sino foreign cooperative education projects, and organizing students to participate in international exchange activities, we aim to cultivate students' international perspectives and cross-cultural communication abilities. At the same time, we will strengthen international vocational qualification certification, encourage students to obtain internationally recognized vocational qualification certificates, and enhance their employment

competitiveness. In addition, foreign experts and scholars can be invited to give lectures and conduct academic exchange activities at the school to enhance the internationalization level of vocational colleges.

4.5 Strengthen Innovation and Entrepreneurship Education, Cultivate Innovative Talents

Innovation and entrepreneurship are important driving forces for the development of pilot free trade zones and free trade ports. Vocational education should strengthen innovation and entrepreneurship education, cultivate students' innovative spirit and entrepreneurial ability. On the one hand, incorporating innovation and entrepreneurship education into talent training programs, offering innovation and entrepreneurship courses, organizing innovation and entrepreneurship competitions, entrepreneurship training camps, and other activities to stimulate students' enthusiasm for innovation and entrepreneurship. On the other hand, establishing innovation and entrepreneurship incubation bases to provide students with entrepreneurial guidance, financial support, and venue guarantees to help them achieve their entrepreneurial dreams. By cultivating innovative talents, injecting new vitality into the development of pilot free trade zones and free trade ports.

5. Countermeasures and Suggestions for Vocational Education to Support the Development of Pilot Free Trade Zones and Free Trade Ports

5.1 Strengthen Professional Development and Align with Industry Demands

1) Conduct in-depth research on the industrial development trends and talent demands of free trade zones and free trade ports, and optimize the professional settings of vocational education based on regional characteristics and advantageous industries. We will focus on developing majors closely related to the construction of pilot free trade zones and free trade ports, such as international trade, logistics management, financial services, tourism services, and cross-border e-commerce.

2) Establish a professional dynamic adjustment mechanism, adjust professional directions and course content in a timely manner according to changes in industrial development, and ensure that professional construction is synchronized with industry demand. Strengthen the construction of professional groups, integrate relevant professional resources, and improve the synergistic effect of professional construction.

3) Strengthen cooperation with enterprises to jointly develop talent development plans and curriculum standards. Invite enterprise experts to participate in the teaching process, provide practical guidance and internship opportunities for students, and improve their practical abilities and professional qualities.

5.2 Promote the Integration of Industry and Education, Deepen School Enterprise Cooperation

1) Establish a long-term mechanism for industry education integration and school enterprise cooperation. The government, enterprises, and schools jointly participate in formulating relevant policies and measures, encouraging enterprises to actively participate in vocational education, and providing funding, technology, equipment, and other support for vocational education.

2) Explore various forms of school enterprise cooperation models. Such as order based training, modern apprenticeship system, joint construction of training bases, and joint development of scientific research projects, to achieve deep integration between schools and enterprises and improve the quality of talent cultivation.

3) Strengthen the construction of vocational education groups. Integrate vocational colleges, enterprises, industry associations and other resources to form a vocational education group with complementary advantages and resource sharing, and jointly promote the industrial development of free trade zones and free trade ports.

5.3 Strengthening the Construction of the Teaching Staff and Improving the Quality of Teachers

1) Increase teacher training efforts. Organize teachers to participate in various professional training and academic exchange activities to improve their professional level and teaching ability. Encourage teachers to intern in enterprises, understand the actual needs of enterprises and industry development trends, and improve their practical abilities.

2) Introduce enterprise technical backbone and industry experts as part-time teachers. They have rich practical experience and professional skills, and can provide students with practical cases and guidance to improve teaching quality.

3) Establish a teacher incentive mechanism. Commend and reward teachers who have demonstrated outstanding performance in teaching, research, and practice, and stimulate their work enthusiasm and creativity.

5.4 Promote International Education and Cultivate International Talents

1) Strengthen international exchanges and cooperation. Establish cooperative relationships with foreign vocational colleges and enterprises, carry out activities such as teacher-student exchanges, cooperative education, and joint scientific research, and introduce advanced vocational education concepts and teaching models from abroad.

2) Offering international courses. Introduce high-quality course resources from abroad, adopt bilingual or all English teaching, and cultivate students' international perspective and cross-cultural communication skills.

Encourage students to participate in international vocational skills competitions and exchange activities. Improve students' professional skills and comprehensive qualities, and enhance their international competitiveness.

5.5 Strengthen Innovation and Entrepreneurship Education, Cultivate Innovative Talents

1) Incorporate innovation and entrepreneurship education into the vocational education curriculum system. Offering innovation and entrepreneurship courses to cultivate students' innovation awareness and entrepreneurial abilities.

2) Establish an innovation and entrepreneurship practice platform. Provide students with opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship practice, such as entrepreneurship incubation bases, maker spaces, etc., and encourage students to engage in innovation and entrepreneurship activities.

3) Strengthen cooperation with enterprises and jointly carry out innovation and entrepreneurship projects. Enterprises provide financial, technological, and market support to students to improve their success rate in innovation and entrepreneurship.

5.6 Strengthening the Informatization Construction of Vocational Education and Improving the Quality of Education and Teaching

1) Increase investment in vocational education informatization. Build a digital campus, improve teaching facilities and information platforms, and provide a good information-based teaching environment for teachers and students.

2) Promote the deep integration of information technology and education teaching. Adopting information technology teaching methods such as online teaching and virtual simulation teaching to improve teaching effectiveness and quality.

3) Strengthen the construction of vocational education resource library. Integrate various high-quality educational resources to provide teachers and students with abundant teaching and learning resources. Through the implementation of the above countermeasures and suggestions, vocational education will better support the takeoff of free trade zones and free trade ports, and cultivate more high-quality technical and skilled talents for regional economic development.

6. Conclusion

Against the backdrop of comprehensively deepening reforms, vocational education is closely linked to the development of pilot free trade zones and free trade ports, providing solid support for their takeoff. Vocational education meets the urgent demand for various professional talents in regional economic development by cultivating a large number of high-quality skilled talents who can adapt to the needs of free trade zones and free trade ports. The deep cooperation between vocational education and enterprises has promoted the integrated development of industry university research. By jointly building training bases and conducting order based training, vocational colleges and enterprises have achieved resource sharing and complementary advantages. At the same time, the development of vocational education has also promoted social employment and improved people's livelihoods. Vocational colleges should continuously optimize their professional settings, strengthen the construction of their teaching staff, improve the quality of education and teaching, and cultivate more high-quality skilled talents with innovative spirit and practical ability.

In the era of comprehensive deepening reform, vocational education will continue to contribute to the takeoff of free trade zones and free trade ports, and jointly create a better future.

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