

Original Paper

Research on the Path of Empowering the Construction of Chongqing's International Cooperation Leading Zone with International Business Professionals

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Received: April 8, 2025

Accepted: April 24, 2025

Online Published: April 25, 2025

doi:10.22158/jbtp.v13n1p104

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/jbtp.v13n1p104>

Subject: This article is the 2023 Higher Education Teaching Reform Research of the Chongqing Municipal Education Commission.

Project: Phased achievements of “Research on Teaching Reform in Higher Education from the Perspective of Digital Transformation” and “Research on the Construction of a Systematic Training Model for Master of International Business from the Perspective of New Liberal Arts” (yjsjg202209).

Abstract

Chongqing, an inland hub for international trade, is experiencing an imbalance in the supply and demand of international business professionals, influenced by the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and the development of new trade routes. This study employs educational ecology and cross-cultural communication theories to examine the challenges faced by Chongqing's international business professionals, including industry alignment, language proficiency, digital competencies, and the application of international standards. It identifies the dynamic mismatch between these competencies and the niche requirements of the channel economy. A three-dimensional empowerment framework, encompassing ecological adaptation, cultural decoding, and collaborative linkage, is developed. Strategies for professionals development are proposed, focusing on curriculum reform, cross-cultural training, digital platform development, and policy coordination. The goal is to align talent capabilities with regional industrial needs and provide sustained support for Chongqing's development as a leading area for international cooperation.

Keywords

international business professionals, empowerment mechanisms, niche adaptation, cross-cultural decoding, inland open highland

1. Introduction

With the implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and the advancement of the construction of the New Western Land-Sea Corridor, international business professionals have become the core driving force for Chongqing to build an “inland opening-up highland” and an “international consumption center city”. As an important fulcrum of the country’s “dual circulation” strategy, the construction of Chongqing’s international cooperation leading zone urgently needs compound talents with the ability to apply international rules, integrate digital technologies and communicate across cultures to break through bottlenecks such as language service islands and the digital divide. However, the current talent supply system is significantly disconnected from regional strategic needs in terms of industry adaptability, capability structure and practical carriers. Based on this, this paper integrates educational ecology and cross-cultural communication theory to explore a systematic empowerment path for international business professionals in Chongqing, aiming to resolve the structural contradiction between talent supply and demand, provide a solid talent guarantee for the construction of Chongqing as a leading area for international cooperation, and promote the achievement of the goal of building an inland open highland.

2. Theoretical Basis

Niche theory and Cross-cultural communication theory provide an important framework for analyzing the contradiction between supply and demand of international business professionals in Chongqing and the empowerment path. Niche theory emphasizes that each organization or individual occupies a unique position in its specific environment and forms complex interaction relationships with other organizations or individuals (Shan Xue & Lu Liu, 2024), and its core dimensions include niche width (scope of resource utilization), overlap (competitive resource contention), and differentiation (differentiated competition strategy) (Lijun Chen & Pei Tian, 2019). As the core hub of the New Western Land-Sea Corridor, Chongqing’s ecological niche demands in emerging fields such as international logistics and digital trade have shifted from a single skill to a composite ability of “corridor + trade + industry + rules”. Intercultural communication theory focuses on the conflict and adaptation mechanisms in multicultural interaction, emphasizing the impact of cultural decoding capabilities on collaborative efficiency. In the context of globalization, communication and integration among different cultures have become an unstoppable trend (Chengjun Li, 2023). In the process, Bin Wu et al. (2021) pointed out that insufficient cultural decoding capabilities would exacerbate the increase in management entropy, and conflicts need to be reduced through cross-cultural training and localization strategies. This requires international business professionals not only to have solid professional knowledge and skills, but also to have strong cross-cultural communication skills and sensitivity. Xin Chen (2020) emphasized the importance of cultivating talents that meet the demands of globalization, which is of great significance for Chongqing to build an international business environment and promote foreign exchanges and cooperation.

Based on the above theoretical foundation, it is crucial to attach importance to the introduction and cultivation of international business professionals in order to promote Chongqing to achieve the goal of building an international cooperation leading area. On the one hand, it is necessary to formulate targeted talent policies to attract business elites with rich experience and broad vision from around the world. For example, the model of professional talent cultivation from the perspective of educational ecology proposed by Qingxiang Shao (2011) can provide a reference for Chongqing to build a high-level international business professionals team. On the other hand, cross-cultural education for local talents

should be strengthened to enhance their internationalization and cross-cultural communication skills. For instance, Mengqing Long et al. (2022) suggested that colleges and universities should focus on cultivating students' interdisciplinary knowledge and practical abilities to meet the society's demand for versatile talents. In addition, the government and all sectors of society should work together to build a favorable environment and support system for the development of international business professionals, so that talents can fully exert their abilities in Chongqing and promote the construction of Chongqing as a leading area for international cooperation.

3. The Basic Connotation and Theoretical Logic of International Business Professionals Empowering the Construction of Chongqing's International Cooperation Leading Zone

Clarifying the core connotations of international business professionals and the Chongqing's International Cooperation Leading Zone, and systematically explaining the theoretical logic of international business professionals empowering regional construction, is not only an important foundation for accurately grasping the focus of education policies, but also a core proposition for deepening theoretical research on the inland open economy.

3.1 International Business Professionals and the Basic Connotation of Chongqing's International Cooperation Leading Zone

3.1.1 The Basic Connotation of International Business Professionals

In the context of Chongqing's active expansion of international markets and deepening of international cooperation during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (Note 1), international business professionals are the core element for Chongqing to deeply integrate into the global economy and promote the vigorous development of regional international business activities, and their ability system is deeply compatible with the development pattern of "channels+trade+industry+rules". In terms of channels, they are the "value enablers" of the global logistics network, possessing core capabilities in the application of multimodal transport rules and supply chain resilience management, coordinating rule alignment and process optimization, designing distinctive supply chain solutions, and using digital tools to enhance the efficiency of cross-border logistics cost control and resource allocation. In the economic and trade dimension, as "practical innovators" in international rule alignment, they master the ability to transform international economic and trade rules and design green financial tools, promote the localization of regional agreements, develop cross-border sustainable financial products, and coordinate the integration of trade facilitation and ESG standards. In the industrial dimension, they are "ecological reconstructors" empowered by digital technology, possessing the ability to operate the entire chain of cross-border e-commerce and collaborate on cross-cultural production capacity, leading the construction of cross-border digital ecosystems for industries, integrating resources for collaborative innovation, and achieving precise global market access and cultural adaptation. In terms of rules, as the "standard setters" of institutional openness, they have the ability to govern data across borders and shape regional rule discourse power, participate in the formulation of international rules, design collaborative governance mechanisms, and promote the practice of rules in the western region to be elevated to international standards.

3.1.2 The Basic Connotations of the Chongqing's International Cooperation Leading Zone

Chongqing's international cooperation leading zone is an open and cooperative strategic highland with international influence, relying on its unique geographical advantages, abundant industrial resources and solid institutional innovation foundation. According to the requirements of documents such as the

“Several Policy Measures of Chongqing Municipality to Support the High-Quality Development of the Western Land-Sea New Corridor”, the “14th Five-Year Plan of Chongqing Municipality for Fully Integrating into the Belt and Road Initiative and Accelerating the Construction of an Inland Open High Ground (2021-2025)” and the “Outline of the Development Plan for the Chengdu-Chongqing Twin-City Economic Circle”, its connotation can be further deepened: In terms of institutional opening-up and innovation, we will comprehensively optimize rules, mechanisms, management and standards, create a favorable business environment, and form reproducible and propagable experiences through institutional innovations such as pilot railway bills of lading and cross-border data flows. In terms of multi-field international cooperation, with economic opening as the core, we will expand into multiple fields such as science and technology and culture, build an international exchange center in the central and western regions, establish an international platform for scientific and technological cooperation, and deepen cooperation with countries along the Belt and Road. In terms of regional coordinated opening up, we will deeply integrate into the development of the Chengdu-Chongqing Twin-City Economic Circle, jointly build the new Western Land-Sea Corridor, optimize the multimodal transport system, and promote the integration of regional industrial chains and logistics channels to form a virtuous cycle. In terms of the deep integration of industries and channels, we will promote the coordination of logistics, trade and industry through channel construction, focus on strategic emerging industries such as intelligent connected vehicles, build supply chain hubs based on the New Land-Sea corridor to improve the efficiency of resource allocation, and at the same time build international consumption centers, create clusters, improve public services by integrating cultural and tourism elements, and create new consumption scenarios to enhance global appeal.

3.2 The Theoretical Logic of International Business Professionals Empowering the Construction of Chongqing's International Cooperation Leading Zone

The theoretical logic of the construction of the Chongqing's international cooperation leading zone can be developed from the collaborative perspective of the educational niche theory and the cross-cultural communication theory. The niche theory provides a competitive logic for the strategic positioning of international business professionals, while the cross-cultural communication theory offers scientific guidance for the quantitative management and practical response to multicultural conflicts. The two work together to meet the core needs of building Chongqing as a leading area for international cooperation. By building a three-dimensional system of “ecological adaptation-cultural decoding-collaborative linkage”, the supply and demand contradiction is systematically resolved to empower the construction of Chongqing as a leading zone for international cooperation (see Figure 1).

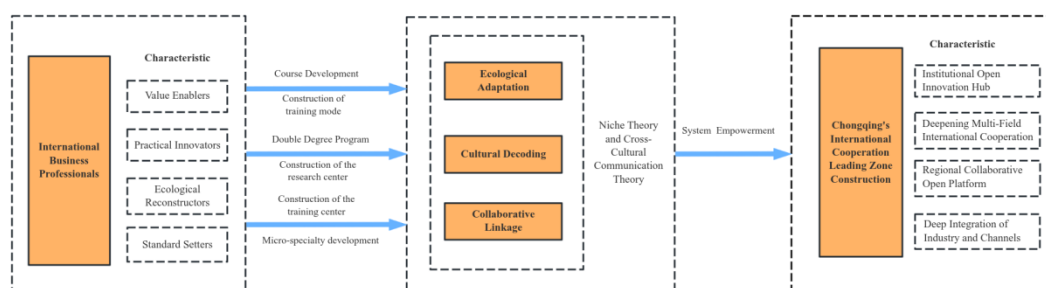


Figure 1. Analysis of the Mechanism of International Business Professionals Empowering the Construction of Chongqing's International Cooperation Leading Zone

4. Analysis of the Current Supply and Demand Situation of International Business Professionals in Chongqing

With the combined advantages of the implementation of RCEP and the construction of the New Western Land-Sea Corridor, Chongqing has provided many cross-border industrial and financial practice opportunities for international business professionals. Take the China-Singapore Connectivity project as an example (below Table 1).

Table 1. Financial Data Statistics of China-Singapore Connectivity Projects in 2024 (Note 2)

Category	Metrics Segmentation	Time range	Amount/quantity
Cross-border financing	Cumulative number of implemented projects	By the end of 2024	266
	Cumulative financing size	By the end of 2024	\$21.3 billion
	Receipts and payments with ASEAN	January to November 2024	25.39 billion yuan, up 54.1% year-on-year
Cross-border receipts and payments in RMB	The total actual receipts and payments of banks across the city	January to November 2024	364.8 billion yuan, up 40.5% year-on-year
	Of which: current account receipts and payments	January to November 2024	309.22 billion yuan (first in the central and western regions)
	Cumulative processing of intermodal rail/rail bill of lading financing	As of the end of November 2024	2.55 billion yuan
Channel financial services	Balance of financing related to the New Western Land-Sea Corridor	As of the end of November 2024	Exceed 600 billion yuan
Financial product innovation	The number of exclusive financial products launched	2024	More than 20 items (such as the Land-Sea Loan)

However, against this backdrop, the supply and demand of international business professionals in Chongqing still show structural imbalances, which are manifested in the following four dimensions:

4.1 Mismatch between Industry Demand and Education Supply

Chongqing has developed rapidly in areas such as cross-border e-commerce and international trade, and the demand for versatile talents has soared. According to statistics from Chongqing Customs, Chongqing's foreign trade import and export volume reached 815.84 billion yuan in 2022. Industries such as electronic information, automotive manufacturing, and cross-border e-commerce have made significant contributions. The demand for compound international business professionals (such as supply chain management, cross-border investment, and international legal affairs) by enterprises has grown by more than 15 percent annually. In addition, according to Chongqing's 2024 foreign trade data released by Chongqing Customs, the export of mechanical and electrical products dominates (accounting for 47.3% of the total export value), and the export of electric vehicles has increased by 94% year-on-year.

However, the existing education system has insufficient training for compound talents in high-end manufacturing, cross-border e-commerce and other fields.

4.2 The Language Service Capacity Is Disconnected From the Construction of Open Channels

According to a research report by the Social Construction Committee of the Chongqing Municipal People's Congress, only 6.7% of enterprises in the Chongqing Free Trade Zone have business professionals who are proficient in ASEAN minority languages such as Vietnamese and Thai, while there are less than 800 compound talents with both language skills and knowledge of international commercial law (Note 3). With the increasing trade between Chongqing and ASEAN countries, the import and export volume between Chongqing and ASEAN countries via the Western Land-Sea New Corridor rose 34 percent year-on-year to 126.63 billion yuan in 2022, but the shortcoming of language service capabilities has become a key factor restricting the deep synergy between the two sides. The lack of systematic education on ASEAN minority languages and international commercial law in the training of international business-related majors in colleges and universities has led to a serious mismatch between talent supply and market demand. At the same time, enterprises are facing many compliance risks in the process of "going global" due to the lack of compound talents familiar with international rules and the laws of ASEAN countries. These problems not only affect Chongqing's in-depth cooperation with the ASEAN market, but also restrict the high-quality development of the New Western Land-Sea Corridor.

4.3 The Digital Skills Gap Hinders Digital Transformation

Chongqing's foreign trade enterprises have an urgent need for digital transformation, but there is a significant gap between the digital skills reserve of talents and the requirements of industrial upgrading. According to the "Directory of Urgently Needed Talents for the Aerospace Information Industry in the Chengdu-Chongqing Twin-City Economic Circle", the aerospace information industry in the Chengdu-Chongqing region is expected to form an industrial scale of 200 billion yuan by 2027, with a talent gap of 2 million people, highlighting the extreme scarcity of high-end digital technology talents. Yan Yang (2022) also pointed out that Chongqing plans to enhance the digitalization level of trade (such as cross-border e-commerce and bonded maintenance), but enterprises generally lack talents proficient in big data analysis and cross-border e-commerce platform operation.

4.4 The Lack of Adaptability to International Rules Is Prominent

Chongqing enterprises have significant deficiencies in their understanding and application of RCEP rules of origin and opening-up of trade in services when participating in international competition. Can Zhang (2023) pointed out that in 2023, Chongqing enterprises accounted for only 4.2% of the national RCEP certificates of origin, lower than provinces such as Guangdong (28.7%) and Jiangsu (15.3%), and the utilization rate of regional cumulative rules by enterprises was less than 30%, resulting in missing out on about 12% of the tariff reduction benefits. Xin Qi et al. (2022) also pointed out that in the construction of the New Land-Sea Corridor, innovative models such as the "single document" for multimodal transport require talents to master international transportation standards and cross-border trade rules, but the existing talents have a low level of familiarity with international practices.

These imbalances reflect the deep conflict between the traditional talent supply model and Chongqing's new open system of "channel+hub+network". From the perspective of educational ecology, the talent capacity structure fails to match the demands of the regional industrial niche (such as the sub-sectors of international logistics and digital trade in the New Land-Sea Corridor); From the perspective of cross-cultural communication, insufficient cultural decoding capabilities (such as the high power

distance cultural adaptability in the ASEAN market) further exacerbate the mismatch between supply and demand. This situation urgently needs to be addressed through a systematic empowerment mechanism to achieve a dynamic fit between talent supply and the construction of the leading area.

5. Construction of Empowerment Paths

In response to the core demand of empowering the construction of the international cooperation leading zone with international business professionals in Chongqing, based on the theoretical framework of “ecological adaptation-cultural decoding-collaborative linkage”, and in combination with the current contradiction between talent supply and demand and the development trend of industries, the following in-depth implementation paths are proposed:

5.1 Ecological Adaptation: Reconstruction of Curriculum System and Integration of Industry and Education

The first is to develop characteristic course clusters of “channel economy”. In response to the requirements of the Western Land-Sea New Corridor and RCEP rules, courses such as “Practical Multimodal Transport of the New Land-Sea Corridor”, “Cross-border Data Compliance Management” and “Application of International Railway Bill of Lading Rules” will be added, and modules such as RCEP rules of origin and DEPA digital trade provisions will be embedded. In collaboration with the Chongqing International Logistics Hub Park, real cases such as the financing of China-Europe Railway Express bills of lading and the organization of rail-sea intermodal transport have been introduced to compile industry-education integration teaching materials. The second is to build a dual-cycle training model of “supply chain + digital trade”. Relying on the advantages of Chongqing’s automotive and electronic information industries, an interdisciplinary direction of “supply chain finance and digital trade” has been established, and courses such as “Cross-border E-commerce Supply Chain Management” and “Cross-border Trade of Intelligent Connected Vehicles” have been offered to cultivate compound talents who understand both the industry and international rules.

5.2 Cultural Decoding: Cross-cultural Competence Enhancement Program

The first is to implement the “ASEAN Language + Major” dual degree program. Universities will add minor language directions such as Burmese and Cambodian, and offer compound dual degree programs of “language + International Business Law” and “language + digital marketing”. Develop the “ASEAN Business Culture Case Library” and combine it with the “ASEAN Business Scenario Sand Table” simulation training to enhance students’ decision-making ability in a high power distance culture. The second is to establish the “ASEAN Business Culture Research Center”. Collaborate with ASEAN universities to develop multilingual versions of the “Guidelines for Early Warning of Cross-Cultural Conflicts”, quantify the cultural distance index, and provide students with tools for cultural risk analysis. At the same time, regular activities such as the “China-Laos Railway Cross-border Settlement Mock Court” and “ASEAN E-commerce Negotiation Training” are held to enhance the practical skills of compound talents.

5.3 Synergy and Linkage: Optimization of Digital Platforms and Policy Mechanisms

The first is to build a “Cross-border Rules Simulation Training Center”. Build a sand table simulation system for RCEP rules of origin and an international commercial arbitration simulation platform, and carry out full-scale scenario training. For example, simulate the process of enterprises applying for certificates of origin to enhance the proficiency in applying the rules. The second is to develop the “Digital Customs Micro-specialty”. Integrating modules such as blockchain smart contracts,

cross-border e-commerce platform operation, and cross-border payment systems, and collaborating with enterprises like Alibaba International Station and PricewaterhouseCoopers, we offer an integrated course of “theory + practical operation”. Introduce the “three-dimensional Ability Index” (digital skills compliance rate, proficiency in rule application, and cross-cultural decision-making ability) to dynamically assess students’ ability adaptability. To dynamically optimize and establish a quality assurance and feedback iteration system, measures can be taken from two aspects. On the one hand, in collaboration with third-party institutions such as PricewaterhouseCoopers and Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, assessment and certification are carried out. Regular reports are released to evaluate the match between courses and industrial demands, and a certification system is established to promote students to work with certificates. On the other hand, the “List of Scarce Abilities” is revised on a rolling basis. Relying on the digital monitoring platform, the data on talent shortages is tracked, and the course content is dynamically adjusted, with new frontier courses added.

6. Conclusions and Prospects

Based on the theories of educational ecology and cross-cultural communication, this paper systematically dissects the core contradictions and key paths for Chongqing to empower the construction of the international cooperation leading zone with international business professionals. The study found that Chongqing, as a core hub of the New Western Land-Sea Corridor, has an increasingly strong demand for compound talents in emerging fields such as international logistics and digital trade. However, there are obvious deficiencies in the current supply of talent in terms of industry fit, cross-cultural ability, digital skills and the application of international rules. This paper further clarifies that through a series of measures such as reconstructing the curriculum system, strengthening the cultivation of cross-cultural skills, building digital practice platforms and improving policy coordination mechanisms, as well as establishing a dynamic optimization system, the overall quality of international business professionals can be effectively enhanced, achieving a precise match between talent capabilities and regional industrial demands, and laying a solid talent foundation for the construction of Chongqing as a leading area for international cooperation.

In addition, this paper provides four inspirations for formulating a multi-dimensional collaborative policy framework: First, in terms of education policy, the government needs to increase investment in international business programs in colleges and universities, develop characteristic courses and training models, set up special funds to encourage industry-education integration, and guide colleges and universities to adjust teaching based on the list of scarce abilities; Second, in terms of talent cultivation incentives, provide subsidies to students participating in related dual degree programs, offer tax incentives to enterprises involved in talent cultivation, and establish contribution awards to recognize outstanding entities; Third, in terms of platform building, the government will take the lead in establishing public service platforms, improving monitoring platforms and increasing investment in practice platforms to promote collaborative innovation; Fourth, in promoting international cooperation, we will promote educational and talent exchanges between Chongqing and the international region, support interaction among universities, encourage enterprises to introduce international talents and provide policy support, thereby enhancing the level and internationalization of Chongqing’s international business professionals.

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Notes

Note 1. Data source: Notice of the General Office of the Chongqing Municipal People's Government on Issuing the “14th Five-Year Plan” for Accelerating the Construction of an Inland Open High Ground in Chongqing Municipality.

Note 2. Data source: Website of the Chongqing Municipal People's Government, https://www.cq.gov.cn/zt/yhyshj/zxdt/202502/t20250219_14321697.html

Note 3. Data source: Website of Chongqing People's Congress, https://www.cqrd.gov.cn/site/article/1211439298505101312/web/content_1211439298505101312.html