

Original Paper

Research on the Training Mode of Compound Talents in "International Trade and Economics + Korean" in the Context of “The Belt and Road Initiative”

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Abstract

Since the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and South Korea 32 years ago, the economic and trade cooperation between the two countries has continued to deepen, and both the investment and trade exchanges have shown a trend of steady growth. Under the background of increasing trade volume between China and South Korea, the demand for versatile talents who understand both "international economics and trade" and Korean is increasing. Therefore, the cultivation of this kind of talents has become more and more important. This paper aims to explore how to cultivate "cross-border interdisciplinary" talents who can promote transnational communication and enhance the comprehensive strength of the country under the framework of the "Belt and Road". At the same time, China's higher education system needs to seize opportunities, face challenges, and strive to cultivate "cross-border compound talents" for the country.

Keywords

"Belt and road Initiative", Compound Talents, International perspective, Training mode

1. Introduction

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and South Korea in 1992, significant achievements have been made in the exchange and cooperation between the two countries across various fields. Economic and trade cooperation, in particular, has been continually strengthened, with both nations becoming important trading partners. Following the proposal of the “Belt and Road” Initiative, this concept has evolved from its initial stage of ideation to actual implementation, becoming one of the most extensive international cooperation platforms globally. During this period, the trade

relations between China and South Korea have experienced rapid growth, with trade volume increasing approximately 13-fold, marking a new leap in economic and trade relations (Jiang Chongshun, 2023). In 2013, President Xi Jinping first introduced the “Belt and Road” Initiative, and since then, trade volume between China and South Korea has continued to grow, with rapid development in economic and trade exchanges. The successful signing of the China-South Korea Free Trade Agreement in December 2015 further deepened the connection between the two countries in economic cooperation and investment, promoting closer exchanges. According to official data from the General Administration of Customs of China, with the alignment of South Korea’s “New Northern Policy” and China’s “Belt and Road” Initiative, China’s exports to South Korea reached \$148.507 billion in 2021, with investment scales also steadily increasing. This data indicates a continuous deepening of trade and investment cooperation between the two countries, injecting new vitality into the economic development of both sides.

Currently, China is South Korea’s largest trading partner, largest export market, largest source of international students, largest import source, and largest overseas tourism destination. The question of how to cultivate compound talents is a significant challenge facing China’s higher education. South Korea has also become China’s third-largest trading partner, fourth-largest export destination, and third-largest import source (Zhu Xinrong, 2017). In the post-pandemic era, with greater global economic uncertainty, both China and South Korea face the dual pressures of boosting domestic demand and achieving trade diversification, which will further accelerate the deepening of China-South Korea economic and trade relations, promoting more substantial bilateral economic cooperation.

In this context, China-South Korea economic and trade exchanges will be further strengthened, leading to an increased demand for “International Economics and Trade + Korean” compound talents. These internationalized compound talents need not only professional knowledge in economics and trade and proficiency in Korean but also strong innovation capabilities and a broad international perspective. Therefore, this paper combines practical experience to discuss and analyze the knowledge and abilities that “International Economics and Trade + Korean” talents should possess, the necessary faculty, curriculum, teaching materials, and training models required to cultivate such talents. This aims to provide a new perspective and approach for discussions on talent cultivation in the fields of economics and trade in the post-pandemic era.

2. Knowledge and Skills Required for “International Economics and Trade + Korean” Talents

Under the “Belt and Road” Initiative, the Chinese Ministry of Education actively promotes international educational exchanges and cooperation with countries along the route, emphasizing the importance of cultivating talents proficient in non-universal foreign languages. To meet the demands of international economics and trade in this context, higher education institutions are continuously upgrading and innovating their educational systems. This includes enhancing the level of educational openness, strengthening cooperation with countries along the “Belt and Road,” and developing

professionals with an international perspective, fluent foreign language skills, a thorough understanding of international economics and trade rules, and expertise in international negotiations. In the field of “Economics and Trade + Korean” education, to cultivate compound talents with a solid foundation in both Korean language and economic trade knowledge, it is necessary to offer relevant majors and courses, actively training talents who can adapt to national strategies and societal needs. Therefore, it is crucial to understand what international economics and trade knowledge these talents should possess and what abilities they need to participate in and resolve international issues. This article proposes standards for cultivating “Economics and Trade + Korean” talents, focusing on three dimensions: knowledge base, practical skills, and professional ethics.

First, in the process of cultivating “Economics and Trade + Korean” professionals, students need to build a comprehensive knowledge system. This includes fundamental knowledge of international economics and trade, practical operations in international trade, rules of transnational investment, as well as the basic principles of the World Trade Organization and the cultural background of Korea.

(1) Knowledge Base: Students should deeply understand the basic principles, theoretical frameworks, and professional thinking of international economics and trade. Institutions of International Economics and Trade should strive to construct a comprehensive and systematic knowledge base in international economics for students, fostering their unique economic thinking.

(2) Practical Skills: To handle transnational trade disputes, students need knowledge of specific international trade rules and regulations, including contract performance disputes, payment and financing barriers, transportation and logistics issues, compliance and sanctions issues, intellectual property infringement, tariff and tax disputes, and other related issues. Therefore, “Economics and Trade + Korean” professionals must be familiar with international trade practices and have a thorough understanding of the business environments in both China and Korea.

(3) Cultural Understanding: Students also need to learn about Korean culture. To thoroughly understand and accurately apply international trade rules, students should widely study humanities, including politics, economics, history, culture, art, and psychology, to cultivate a comprehensive humanistic quality.

Second, in terms of abilities, it is essential to master cross-cultural communication and international trade skills. Economic and trade professionals frequently need to interact with people from different social and cultural backgrounds in international trade-related affairs, which involves cross-cultural communication. Cross-cultural communication ability refers to the capacity to effectively communicate and interact in a multicultural environment. This ability goes beyond mere language skills and includes a profound understanding, respect, and adaptability to different cultural backgrounds. In today’s deeply globalized context, this ability is particularly crucial. It not only promotes mutual understanding and cooperation between nations but also enhances an individual’s social adaptability and competitiveness on a global scale. Cross-cultural communication ability enables individuals to confidently communicate on the international stage, solve problems more effectively, and play a leadership role in multicultural

teams. American scholar Lambert suggests that cross-cultural competence should include the following aspects: world cognition, foreign language ability, cultural resonance, recognition of foreigners and foreign cultures, and the ability to practice one's profession in an international environment. For "Economics and Trade + Korean" talents, their cross-cultural communication skills should include:

- (1) Proficiency in using Korean for communication in the field of international economics and trade.
- (2) An open mindset, actively understanding and respecting Korean culture, thinking from different cultural perspectives, and adapting to cultural differences.
- (3) Broad knowledge of Korean society, flexibly applied in international trade practice to facilitate more effective communication and cooperation.

Finally, in cultivating proficient "Economics and Trade + Korean" talents, it is essential for them to have an international perspective and professional Korean communication skills, and to deeply understand Chinese culture and national conditions, expressing this knowledge accurately in Korean. This ability can inspire students' patriotism and promote the effective dissemination of Chinese culture in Korea. As emphasized by President Xi Jinping on December 30, 2013, during the 12th collective study session of the Central Political Bureau, "All 1.3 billion people should become promoters of Chinese virtues and Chinese culture" (Xi Jinping, 2013). This indicates that promoting China's image and culture is not only the responsibility of media workers but also a common mission for all who engage in international work. In the post-pandemic era, facing the challenge of international discourse power, it is particularly important and urgent to disseminate China's image and culture effectively. Effective international communication not only requires language expression skills but also an understanding of objective communication laws and basic techniques. This includes understanding the cultural background, preferences, and needs of the target audience, and using appropriate communication strategies and methods to enhance the attractiveness and influence of information. Through this approach, cross-cultural communication and understanding can be more effectively promoted, enhancing the international influence of Chinese culture.

3. Courses Required for Training "International Economics and Trade + Korean" Talents

From a disciplinary perspective, "Economics and Trade + Foreign Languages" is an emerging and interdisciplinary field that combines international economics and trade with foreign language studies. In the process of cultivating such talents, course design should reflect and emphasize the characteristics of this interdisciplinary field.

Currently, university courses in international economics and trade in China typically aim to develop professionals with an international perspective, a solid foundation in international trade theory, familiarity with trade practices and professional skills, and the ability to conduct foreign trade business fluently in English. These courses form the core of education in this field. To promote interdisciplinary integration and innovation, I suggest that universities offer some non-core or elective courses based on their resources and unique characteristics. Specifically, the following three courses are recommended:

(1) “Korean for Economics and Trade”: Through in-depth study and understanding of dialogues and articles in the field of foreign economic and trade, students can master key trade terminology, thereby broadening their knowledge horizons. This course not only helps them learn and understand professional Korean terms in various industries such as mergers and acquisitions, management, environmental protection, agriculture, information technology, investment, and the automotive industry, but it also helps improve their Korean proficiency and cultural literacy, providing a deep understanding of the Korean economy and business practices.

(2) “China-Korea Cross-Cultural Communication”: As neighboring countries geographically, China and Korea have naturally influenced each other in the formation and development of their cultures and traditions. The two countries share many similarities in traditional culture and customs, which facilitates cultural resonance in cross-cultural exchanges, promoting mutual communication and understanding. As exchanges deepen, people have begun to realize that despite some common foundations, the long-term development of each culture has led to significant differences in their core values and connotations. Therefore, offering a “China-Korea Cross-Cultural Communication” course is particularly important. The course content can include a review of the history of China-Korea cultural exchanges, the current state of China-Korea relations, the characteristics and differences of Chinese and Korean cultures, the national character of Koreans, Korean etiquette in social interactions, taboos in Korean society and culture, and the basic principles of cross-cultural communication.

(3) “Hot Topics in Korean Economy and Trade”: This course focuses on new issues and characteristics in the development of the Korean economy, analyzing their causes and examining their impact on the Chinese economy. By applying theories and methods from Western economics, international economics, international finance, and world economic studies, this course helps students accurately grasp new trends and issues in the Korean economy. It aims to cultivate students’ ability to analyze the background, essence, and future development trends of hot issues in the Korean economy, providing them with a solid foundation in economic theory and methods.

(4) “Chinese Culture and National Conditions”: Taught in Korean, this course aims to deepen students’ understanding of Chinese culture and national conditions while fostering their patriotism. The course covers a wide range of topics, including Chinese history, philosophy, religion, customs, literature, and art, as well as contemporary China’s basic national conditions and policy concepts. Notably, China’s reform and opening-up experiences and national religious policies are topics of significant interest.

4. Several Operational Models for Training “International Economics and Trade + Korean” Talents

Since the 1990s, some Chinese universities have been exploring interdisciplinary talent cultivation models. Entering the 21st century, the demand for talents with interdisciplinary knowledge has continued to grow. Cultivating talents proficient in both Korean and international economics and trade is a comprehensive task involving resources from both foreign and domestic sources. Therefore, from

the perspective of human resources management, we can adopt various talent cultivation models. I believe that in determining the training model, we should not be limited to a single approach but should explore diverse strategies based on the strengths and actual conditions of the institution.

Firstly, there is the Sino-Korean joint education model. The Sino-Korean joint education programs aim to cultivate economics and trade professionals with excellent foreign language communication skills and an international economic and trade perspective. These talents need not only to be proficient in foreign languages but also to have a deep understanding of foreign cultures and environments. This cultivation process typically involves cooperation with foreign higher education institutions, where students with strong foreign language skills apply to study abroad to receive intensive language training and expand their knowledge in economics and trade and cross-cultural understanding. This cross-border joint training model not only enhances students' practical language skills but also improves their international literacy, including understanding foreign cultures, familiarizing themselves with the international economic and trade environment, and developing the ability to communicate with foreigners. Through this model, students can systematically improve their language skills and gain valuable cross-cultural experiences in a relatively short time. What kind of cooperation system should the Sino-Korean joint education adopt? In the traditional domestic Sino-Korean joint education process, the "2+2, 3+1, 4+0" teaching model is typically used, where students complete one to two years of study in China and then go to Korean universities for the remaining years of specialized study (Bao Tong, 2023). Under this model, students often face multiple pressures: they need to complete the requirements of the economics and trade program, improve their foreign language skills, and quickly adapt to living conditions in a foreign country. Therefore, this training mechanism presents certain challenges in ensuring students' academic success. I propose a "3+3" model, where students study the economics and trade undergraduate program for three years in China before completing the remaining years of specialized study and pursuing a master's degree in international economics and trade in Korea. The rationale includes: firstly, students usually complete the basic theories and knowledge of economics and trade in the first three years of their undergraduate education, laying a solid foundation for international trade studies. Secondly, the fourth year of undergraduate education mainly focuses on thesis writing and internships. Studying abroad during this period allows students to collect thesis-related materials at foreign universities, improve their foreign language proficiency, and familiarize themselves with the international economic and trade environment, thereby opening broader career development opportunities. Thirdly, this training mechanism provides a more flexible timetable, better preparing students for graduate courses and further developing their professional and language skills. This helps enhance the effectiveness of the joint training model, ensuring that students receive thorough training and improvement in both their specialty and language.

Secondly, there is the "Economics and Trade + Korean" dual-degree education model. Several domestic universities can utilize their advantages in Korean language disciplines in their foreign language colleges to strengthen the integration and sharing of Korean teaching resources while

leveraging their qualification to offer degrees in international economics and trade. This model follows a 3+2 or 2+3 schedule, where students study Korean for three years followed by two years of international economics and trade, or two years of Korean followed by three years of economics and trade. Under this model, the Korean language and international economics and trade departments collaborate to cultivate high-quality talents who are proficient in language and possess professional skills in economics and trade. Students first complete two to three years of Korean language study before transferring to the international economics and trade college for two to three years of core economics and trade courses. This arrangement provides students with ample time to understand themselves and carefully consider their future career directions. Students interested in working in foreign trade can continue to delve into economics and trade studies, achieving their career development goals. The class size for economics and trade courses under this model should be moderate, ensuring students receive bilingual education through a high-quality educational process. This gradually cultivates their fundamental thinking in international economics and trade and equips them with basic foreign trade skills. Therefore, this model should be considered a small-scale, elite training approach for international economics and trade professionals.

Lastly, regardless of whether implementing the “Economics and Trade + Korean” dual-degree program or the Sino-Korean joint education training project, training professional international economics and trade talents requires addressing issues such as optimizing faculty structure, selecting appropriate textbooks, and balancing the proportion of professional and Korean language courses. Firstly, in constructing the Sino-Korean joint education model, it is necessary to combine professional courses with Korean language courses for university students. To help students quickly adapt to the teaching methods of Korean language teachers and the structure of professional courses, Korean partner institutions should send professional teaching teams to Chinese universities for Korean language instruction. As the teaching team is continuously optimized, the initial single in-house teaching gradually increases the proportion of foreign professional teachers. This Korean language faculty structure creates a good educational environment for Korean language teaching. Secondly, selecting suitable Korean textbooks is crucial for integrating basic Korean knowledge and Korean culture. By thoroughly analyzing the content structure of textbooks, the content can be divided into vocabulary, grammar, reading, and speaking parts, aiming to primarily enhance students’ listening and speaking skills. Students must first master listening skills to effectively engage in spoken communication. By gradually guiding students to learn and master these skills, a solid foundation can be laid for their future study and life in Korea. The textbooks should be designed to systematically develop students’ Korean language application skills, ensuring they can communicate effectively in real language environments. Thirdly, balancing the proportion of professional and Korean language courses is crucial in course design. According to students’ professional schedules, Korean courses should be reasonably planned to achieve coordinated development of both areas. Although professional courses can be taught in Korean, increasing students’ exposure to Korean, these courses typically do not include language

learning elements such as vocabulary and grammar. Therefore, students need to study these language components in dedicated Korean language courses (Jiao Yan, 2020). The course proportion should be appropriately tilted towards Korean language courses, as students can usually adapt to professional courses, but learning Korean requires more effort. Only by ensuring sufficient Korean class hours can students master the necessary vocabulary and grammar, allowing them to effectively express themselves in Korean in professional courses. Thus, the arrangement of Korean courses is crucial for students' professional development and language skill improvement.

5. Conclusion

In summary, cultivating talents with the "Economics and Trade + Korean" specialization should follow the general principles of training international economics and trade professionals. The focus should be on building students' knowledge systems in international economics and trade, strengthening their understanding and application of theories, and enabling them to proficiently apply economic and trade theories to solve international trade problems. Simultaneously, emphasis should be placed on developing students' cross-cultural communication skills, teaching them to understand and respect the concepts and values from different cultural backgrounds, and enabling them to effectively communicate international trade rules and cooperate in international exchanges. Additionally, it is crucial to enhance students' practical skills, including their ability to apply economics and trade knowledge to solve real-world problems, such as case analysis, discussions, and drafting international trade contracts. Particularly, students need to have bilingual or multilingual capabilities to meet the demands of trade services involving Korea, handle international disputes, engage in international business negotiations, and understand international etiquette and communication. Therefore, continuous theoretical research and practical exploration in course development, textbook preparation, internship platform construction, and faculty training are necessary to cultivate "Economics and Trade + Korean" talents suitable for the international economics and trade field.

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