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Original Paper

Deficiencies and Improvement Strategies in Specialized-Entrepreneurship Integration Education for International Trade Majors

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Abstract

This paper examines the current state and challenges of Specialized -Entrepreneurship Integration in international trade programs, noting issues such as an imperfect course system, insufficient support platforms, a shortage of qualified teachers, and a lack of real - world business practice for students. It proposes strategies like establishing a new educational philosophy, strengthening the faculty, improving students' cognitive levels, and refining the course system to promote high - quality development in this education model. Finally, it emphasizes that integrating innovation and entrepreneurship education into universities' institutional philosophy and building a full - cycle system for fostering these abilities are crucial for deeply integrating professional education with innovation and entrepreneurship education.

Keywords

Specialized-Entrepreneurship Integration, International Trade Major, Higher Education

1. Introduction

As the knowledge-based economy continues to evolve, innovation has emerged as a pivotal driver of regional economic growth. Nations worldwide are actively promoting entrepreneurial and innovative activities, underscoring the critical role of universities in cultivating talent equipped with these skills. Despite over two decades of efforts in entrepreneurial and innovative education in Chinese universities, the outcomes have not fully met expectations. In 2015, the General Office of the State Council explicitly identified key challenges, including "outdated educational concepts," "weak integration with specialized studies," "disconnect from practical application," "uniform teaching methods," and "insufficient practical platforms." In response, universities have gradually initiated reforms to merge entrepreneurial and innovative education with specialized disciplines, giving rise to the concept of integration of specialization and innovation (Ahmed et al., 2017).

This integration represents a strategic combination of specialized education and entrepreneurial training. Given the heightened demands of a new era and evolving tasks, deepening the construction of

specialization-innovation fusion has become an inevitable trend for applied undergraduate institutions. Applied universities, which focus on training talent aligned with regional economic needs, must prioritize the cultivation of entrepreneurial and innovative talent to highlight their practical-oriented characteristics. Economics and management programs in universities typically encompass fields such as finance, trade, marketing, accounting, management, and taxation. With the rapid advancement of information technology and its widespread application in finance and economics, emerging disciplines like fintech, digital economy, and e-commerce have also gained prominence. Against the backdrop of thriving new industries, business models, and economic formats, entrepreneurial and innovative education in economics and management fields has become increasingly necessary.

This paper uses the discipline building of Anhui University of Finance and Economics as an example to explore the deficiencies and improvement strategies in specialized - entrepreneurship integration education for international trade majors.

2. Problems in the Integration of Specialized and Innovation Education

2.1 Lack of Related Curriculum

Many applied universities currently treat innovation and entrepreneurship education as a separate academic system. They set up innovation and entrepreneurship colleges to offer related courses to all students, such as required courses like "Basics of Innovation and Entrepreneurship" and elective courses tailored for different fields like business and engineering. However, these courses often lack a tiered and progressive structure, with little logical connection between them, leading to a fragmented system rather than a cohesive one (Wang, 2020).

Moreover, the integration of innovation and entrepreneurship education with specialized education is insufficient, creating a "dual-skin" phenomenon. Some universities merely add two or three innovation courses to their professional curriculum in a mechanical way. This approach fails to achieve true interdisciplinary teaching and doesn’t meet students’ deeper entrepreneurial needs. For students interested in entrepreneurship, this simple course addition is insufficient and cannot help them build a comprehensive entrepreneurial skills system.

2.2 Lack of Support Platforms for Innovation and Entrepreneurship

In promoting the deep integration of specialized and innovation and entrepreneurship education, platforms for innovation and entrepreneurship play a vital role. However, due to the late start of innovation and entrepreneurship education in China, there are significant shortcomings in the integration and development of relevant resources in universities. Local authorities also show weak awareness in building service platforms, leading to notable gaps in platform construction and supporting mechanisms (Dutta et al., 2011).

Some universities have established relevant platforms, but these suffer from "formalism" and fail to effectively meet student needs. Moreover, the development of comprehensive support agencies, business incubation platforms, and funding mechanisms lags behind, unable to meet the growing demand for

entrepreneurial education among college students. The lack of resources such as platforms, organizations, and laboratories, along with insufficient university-enterprise cooperation, further limits industry and business participation.

This situation prevents the formation of a collaborative talent - cultivation platform among universities, markets, industries, and businesses. As a result, specialized - innovation integration education remains classroom - based, emphasizing theory over practice. This educational model offers students few opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration, contextual practice, and comprehensive skills training, failing to meet the demand for innovative and entrepreneurial talent (Xin & Austria, 2023).

Thus, improving platform construction, strengthening university-enterprise cooperation and industry guidance, and optimizing the educational model are key directions for promoting the high - quality development of specialized - innovation integration education.

2.3 Shortage of Teaching Staff

A shortage of qualified teachers is a key issue limiting the integration of specialized and innovation and entrepreneurship (IEE) education. In practice-oriented universities, most finance and economics teachers focus on theory and teaching. Although some "dual - qualified" teachers have industry or business experience, few have real IEE experience, making it hard for them to meet the cross - disciplinary, cross - professional, and practical experience requirements of integrated education (Wang et al., 2024).

Moreover, teachers generally show little interest and enthusiasm for IEE, which makes them reluctant to participate in practical ability - expansion activities or entrepreneurship - skills training. This, in turn, affects their competence in entrepreneurship education. Currently, teacher - training resources for IEE in China are insufficient, and there is a lack of specialized institutions to support teachers' professional development in this field.

Additionally, IEE in practice-oriented universities often operates in isolation, with limited communication and cooperation between schools and no teacher - resource - sharing mechanism. This worsens the teacher - resource shortage in integrated education and restricts quality improvement. Therefore, strengthening inter - university cooperation, optimizing teacher - resource allocation, and improving the teacher - training system are crucial for addressing the teacher - shortage problem.

2.4 Lack of Exposure to Real World Business Operations

Drawing from the experiences of globally leading countries in innovation and entrepreneurship (IE) education, a common key link is enabling students to participate in operational practices within authentic business settings. This "learning - by - doing" approach not only significantly boosts students' enthusiasm but also cultivates robust IE skills and achieves deep integration of theory and practice (Tanveer et al., 2021). However, in China's practice - oriented universities, integrated IE education is mostly confined to traditional settings like classrooms, training labs, and bases, resulting in a rather uniform learning mode that shows little differentiation from specialized education.

This restricts students from experiencing real - world business operations and prevents them from adopting an active learning pattern where they "learn to solve problems" and "solve problems through

learning." Over - reliance on theoretical teaching and training, though providing some knowledge base, can't replace the practical experience of real business settings (Llorente-Portillo et al., 2024). This model undermines the cultivation of students' entrepreneurial skills and restricts their ability to solve problems in complex business situations. Therefore, promoting the shift of integrated IE education from traditional classrooms to real - world business practices is crucial for enhancing students' IE abilities.

3. Promotion Strategies for Specialty-innovation Integration

3.1 Establishing a New Educational Philosophy

To promote high-quality development in the integration of specialized and entrepreneurial education at undergraduate-level finance and economics institutions, it is essential to embrace a new educational philosophy and take the following approaches:

Firstly, finance and economics institutions should move beyond the traditional focus on specialized education alone and deeply integrate specialized education with entrepreneurial and innovative education throughout the entire talent cultivation process. Universities must strengthen overall coordination, leverage decision-support functions, and actively address practical challenges in integrating specialized and entrepreneurial education. In terms of content design, curricula should closely align with the needs of local economic development. In talent cultivation, there must be precise alignment with the practical demands of societal development to ensure seamless integration between education and practice.

Secondly, universities should weaken traditional boundary awareness and promote comprehensive integration across all educational processes. It is crucial to adopt a new mindset for specialized-entrepreneurship integration and avoid simply layering entrepreneurial and innovative education on top of specialized education. Instead, the two should be integrated within a unified framework, breaking the ingrained mindset dominated by specialized education. By redefining talent cultivation goals, the essence of specialized education and entrepreneurial education can be deeply merged, strengthening the understanding and practice of entrepreneurial and innovative education concepts.

Finally, universities should base their efforts on their specific circumstances, combining their unique characteristics and disciplinary strengths to develop implementation plans for specialized-entrepreneurship integration tailored to their institutional features. On one hand, universities can integrate internal resources to form guidance teams comprising entrepreneurial course instructors, specialized subject teachers, industry experts, and entrepreneurship mentors. These teams can participate in revising and optimizing talent cultivation programs and provide students with entrepreneurial guidance and consulting services. On the other hand, universities should foster an entrepreneurial atmosphere through campus activities, such as hosting entrepreneurship competitions and sharing success stories. This will closely link specialized education with entrepreneurial and innovative education, guiding faculty and students to jointly advance the high-quality development of specialized-entrepreneurship integration.

3.2 Strengthening the Faculty Capacity for Specialized-entrepreneurship Integration

To promote high-quality development in the integration of specialized and entrepreneurial education at

undergraduate-level finance and economics institutions, building a strong faculty is key. Universities should organize specialized lectures and training sessions on specialized-entrepreneurship integration to help teachers fully understand its essence and core content. By guiding teachers to follow domestic and international research trends on the topic, and encouraging them to summarize experiences and track cutting-edge developments, universities can enhance teachers' sense of identification and participation in this educational philosophy.

Based on teachers' professional backgrounds, universities can design a standardized, modular training program. By grouping specialized subject teachers and providing targeted training, they can quickly master entrepreneurship and innovation knowledge related to their fields. This process not only improves teachers' professional standards but also cultivates their innovative thinking. On this basis, teachers are encouraged to integrate the concepts and methods of entrepreneurship and innovation education into daily teaching, making teaching a continuous process of innovation ability development and improving educational quality.

Universities should also encourage specialized subject teachers to actively participate in corporate practice. Close industry and enterprise connections can help teachers gain practical experience in entrepreneurship and innovation. Combining practical innovation experience with professional knowledge further enhances teachers' ability in professional education and teaching.

In addition, universities should create applied research platforms to promote communication and collaboration between specialized subject teachers and entrepreneurship and innovation course teachers. This helps clarify research directions and promotes professional innovation and research standards. Overall, these measures can effectively enhance teachers' capabilities in entrepreneurship and innovation education at applied undergraduate institutions, providing solid talent support for the development of specialized-entrepreneurship integration.

3.3 Improve Students' Cognitive Levels

To promote high-quality development in the integration of specialized and entrepreneurial education at undergraduate-level finance and economics institutions, enhancing students' cognitive levels is one of the key pathways. On the one hand, it is essential to guide students to embrace the concept of specialized-entrepreneurship integration. Universities can organize students to participate in theme lectures, class meetings, and social practice activities related to entrepreneurship and innovation education. This helps students recognize that entrepreneurship and innovation courses offer far more than credits; they cultivate critical skills for future career development. Students should be encouraged to actively interact with teachers in relevant courses and fully engage in classroom learning. Meanwhile, universities can create platforms such as entrepreneurship colleges and entrepreneurship parks to provide a conducive environment for students. This enables students to transform theories into practical projects through practice, achieving "project incubation" and promoting the deep integration of professional theories with entrepreneurial and innovative practices.

On the other hand, enhancing students' self-efficacy is equally important. Professional course teachers

should guide students in mastering positive problem-solving strategies, developing good study habits, identifying students' potential, and encouraging them to express their views confidently. Teachers need to focus on students' grasp of professional knowledge and actively provide guidance for those with weaker foundations. By offering motivational training to boost students' confidence, teachers can guide students to express their entrepreneurial and innovative ideas and inspire their potential. Through these measures, students can not only enhance their entrepreneurial and innovative abilities but also achieve greater breakthroughs in their professional studies, thereby injecting vitality into the development of specialized-entrepreneurship integration.

3.4 Refining the Specialized-entrepreneurship Integration Course System

To promote the in-depth development of specialized-entrepreneurship integration in undergraduate-level finance and economics institutions, it is essential to optimize and upgrade the existing curriculum system. Each institution should base itself on its own positioning and resource characteristics, and in accordance with talent cultivation objectives and the needs of entrepreneurship and innovation education, systematically reconstruct the curriculum structure. This involves dynamically adjusting training programs and course configurations, and organically embedding the core elements of entrepreneurship and innovation education into the entire process of professional teaching, thereby building a tiered and progressive curriculum ecosystem for specialized-entrepreneurship integration.

In terms of curriculum design, institutions can innovatively introduce distinctive courses such as Entrepreneurial Project Operations and Management, Innovation Thinking Workshops, and Digital Entrepreneurship Practice. At the same time, traditional professional courses should be transformed with an entrepreneurial focus, incorporating project-based learning modules to form a cluster of courses that deeply integrate theory and practice. In the implementation of teaching, a practice-oriented approach should be highlighted, promoting a three-in-one teaching model of "Classroom + Laboratory + Entrepreneurship Park." Real projects can drive the internalization of knowledge.

The construction of a practice-oriented talent cultivation system needs to break through the limitations of single channels, creating an integrated practice platform of "Competitions - Internships - Incubation." For example, organizing students to participate in the "Internet +" competition, conducting on-site enterprise internships, and implementing laboratory entrepreneurship seed programs can guide students to apply interdisciplinary knowledge in real-world scenarios to solve complex problems and cultivate systematic innovative thinking.

Ultimately, the concept of entrepreneurship and innovation education should be sublimated into the institution's educational philosophy. Through institutional innovation, entrepreneurship education requirements should be rigidly embedded into training standards, building a full-cycle entrepreneurship and innovation capability development system from admission education to graduation assessment, achieving a structural integration of professional education and entrepreneurship education.

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