

Innovation Research on Cultivating Employment Awareness in Private Higher Vocational Colleges under the Background of Industry-Education Integration

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Abstract: As the core direction of China's vocational education reform, industry-education integration has positioned private higher vocational colleges as vital components of the vocational education system, playing a pivotal role in aligning skilled talent development with industrial demands. However, current challenges, such as ambiguous career awareness and unclear professional positioning among students at private higher vocational colleges, hinder their employment competitiveness. Cultivating career awareness has thus become a crucial approach to addressing employment quality enhancement. This paper analyzes the theoretical foundations and practical challenges of career awareness cultivation based on industry-education integration policies and the characteristics of private higher vocational education. It proposes innovative pathways through three dimensions: cultivation objectives, models, and mechanisms. The study establishes a "demand-oriented, school-enterprise collaborative talent development, and multidimensional support system" framework, providing theoretical references and practical insights for optimizing career guidance and enhancing employment quality in private higher vocational colleges.

Keywords: Industry-education integration; Private higher vocational education; Employment awareness cultivation; Innovative approaches; Vocational education

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1. Introduction

The integration of industry and education serves as a crucial pathway to deepen vocational education reform and achieve efficient alignment between educational systems and industrial chains. Its essence lies in fostering collaborative progress and mutual benefits between academia and industry. Private higher vocational colleges, leveraging flexible operational mechanisms, possess unique strengths in cultivating applied technical talents and supporting regional industrial development. However, practical constraints such as students' limited

career awareness and lack of career planning hinder continuous improvement in employment quality. Career awareness cultivation forms the core of employment guidance, profoundly impacting students' professional cognition, job fit effectiveness, and career development potential. Within the context of industry-education integration, innovating career awareness cultivation paradigms based on the distinctive characteristics of private higher vocational colleges has become an urgent challenge. This paper explores innovative pathways for career awareness cultivation through theoretical analysis and logical reasoning, providing solid support for enhancing talent development quality in private higher vocational colleges.

2. Theoretical basis of industry-education integration and employment awareness cultivation in private higher vocational colleges

2.1. The core connotation and policy orientation of industry-education integration

The cultivation of professional talents can provide talent support and intellectual resources for rural development. Firstly, it offers education and training closely aligned with local industrial development, meeting the demand for skilled professionals in rural areas. Secondly, through close collaboration between rural industries and education, industry-academy institutes ensure educational content matches practical job requirements, enhancing students' employment rates and career adaptability ^[1]. The core of industry-education integration focuses on collaborative talent development between schools and enterprises, integrating educational resources with industrial needs to achieve precise alignment between talent cultivation and industrial demands. The essence highlights the principle of "education following industrial trends and majors revolving around market needs." In recent years, China has issued policy documents such as the Vocational Education Law and the Deepening Industry-Education Integration Promotion Plan, explicitly promoting in-depth industry-education integration and supporting private higher vocational colleges in jointly establishing training bases and co-developing talent cultivation programs with enterprises. Under these policies, private higher vocational institutions need to break through traditional educational barriers, integrate industrial demands throughout the talent development process, prioritize employment awareness cultivation as a key component, and achieve connotative upgrades through industry-education integration platforms.

2.2. Core dimensions and value positioning of employment consciousness cultivation

Employment awareness encompasses students' comprehensive cognitive judgments and subjective value orientations regarding career choices, job recognition, and professional development. Its core components include vocational cognition, job fit perception, career planning literacy, and responsibility-taking competence. For students in private higher vocational education, cultivating employment awareness serves as both the cornerstone for enhancing career initiative and the essential prerequisite for ensuring sustainable career development. Compared with traditional career guidance paradigms, employment awareness cultivation in the context of industry-education integration emphasizes deeper alignment with real-world industrial practices. This approach guides students to accurately grasp industry trends, skillfully meet corporate job standards, establish "industry demand-oriented" career cognition, and ultimately achieve dual improvements in career adaptability and employment competitiveness.

2.3. Theoretical logic and internal relationship of their coordinated development

The integration of industry and education with the cultivation of employment awareness inherently share a synergistic logic. The former provides practical platforms and resource support for the latter. Through school-

enterprise collaborations, training bases, corporate mentorship resources, and workplace practice scenarios enable students gain firsthand exposure to professional environments and deepen their career understanding. Conversely, the latter injects internal momentum into the former. Enhanced employment awareness among students boosts their initiative in participating in school-enterprise cooperation projects, driving the transformation of industry-education integration from “school-enterprise collaboration” to “co-education” ^[2]. Grounded in co-education theory, these two aspects establish a virtuous cycle where “industry demands guide educational development, while cultivation outcomes feed back into industry-education integration.”

3. The current situation and practical difficulties of cultivating employment awareness in private higher vocational colleges

3.1. Insufficient adaptation between cultivation objectives and industrial demands

Many private vocational colleges still focus narrowly on “guiding students to secure employment” in their career development programs, failing to align with evolving industry demands. While they emphasize resume writing and interview techniques, they lack systematic guidance for emerging industries and cutting-edge roles. This confines students’ career awareness to traditional sectors, leaving them unaware of new field requirements and career prospects. As a result, they cannot meet the diversified skill demands in knowledge structure and competency development required by enterprises in the industry-education integration era ^[3]. The root cause lies in inadequate communication between institutions and businesses, where information gaps in talent development and feedback mechanisms cause career guidance programs to lag behind industrial progress. This disconnect ultimately creates a significant mismatch between career awareness cultivation and the talent development goals promoted by industry-education integration.

3.2. Lack of innovation in the cultivation mode and teaching system

The current vocational education model for private higher vocational institutions still adheres to a traditional paradigm of “classroom lectures combined with tutorial guidance.” Teaching methods lack diversity and innovation, while practical component design shows significant shortcomings. The system fails to fully integrate abundant corporate resources within the industry-education integration framework and convert them into effective training outcomes. In terms of content cultivation, theoretical knowledge dominates, with insufficient incorporation of practical elements, such as in-depth case analysis and real-position scenario simulations that closely align with actual workplace contexts. This results in students’ difficulty bridging theoretical knowledge with practical career demands. The collaborative mechanism between educational institutions and enterprises for employment awareness cultivation remains underdeveloped, with corporate mentors generally showing low participation levels. Existing engagement often remains superficial, failing to provide in-depth practical guidance. Consequently, students cannot deepen their professional understanding through authentic workplace experiences. Under this rigid and monolithic training paradigm, students primarily passively absorb knowledge during the cultivation process, lacking opportunities and competencies to proactively explore career directions or autonomously construct career plans. This ultimately creates a significant gap between actual training effectiveness and expected goals, making it challenging to genuinely enhance students’ career adaptability and long-term development potential ^[4].

3.3. Insufficient coordination between cultivation entities and resource integration

Currently, the cultivation of employment awareness in private higher vocational education is predominantly

driven by counselors or career guidance departments, with limited involvement from key stakeholders such as professional teachers, partner enterprises, and industry associations. This has resulted in a fragmented “single-entity approach” that fails to establish a collaborative ecosystem^[5]. Professional teachers focus primarily on knowledge transmission and skill training in daily instruction, often neglecting the integration of career awareness and job competency development. Partner enterprises show superficial engagement in phased activities rather than deep participation in curriculum design and implementation, making it challenging to provide industry-specific guidance. Industry associations’ critical insights—such as sector trends and updated job standards—remain underutilized as educational resources, undermining their advisory role. Meanwhile, enterprise resources, industry updates, and job demand information within the industry-education integration system lack systematic integration into the cultivation framework. This disconnect between training content and real-world industry needs, coupled with insufficient coordination among stakeholders, hinders the development of comprehensive cultivation synergy and ultimately constrains overall effectiveness enhancement.

4. Innovative approaches to cultivating employment awareness in private higher vocational colleges under the background of industry-education integration

4.1. Building a cultivation goal system “oriented to industrial demand”

By leveraging industry-education integration, we promote the establishment of joint professional development committees between educational institutions and enterprises. These committees conduct regular surveys on regional industrial trends and analyze corporate job requirements, using systematic analysis to identify core directions and key objectives for cultivating employment awareness. The goal-setting process fully incorporates practical elements from industry practices, such as job standards and professional competency requirements, to build a three-tiered progressive training system: “career cognition–position adaptation–career development planning.” The primary goal focuses on industry enlightenment and career interest stimulation, guiding students to understand industrial dynamics and sectoral patterns through case studies and corporate visits. The intermediate goal emphasizes enhancing job-specific competencies and shaping professional ethics, aligning with corporate skill requirements and occupational norms through specialized training to help students master core job skills. The advanced goal centers on career planning and sustainable development capabilities, guiding students to adapt to evolving job demands by aligning with industrial upgrading trends and personal needs. Through this three-tiered goal system, we ensure that employment awareness cultivation keeps pace with industrial development needs, achieving synchronized resonance between the two.

4.2. Designing an innovative “school-enterprise collaborative education” training mode

Breaking the limitations of traditional classrooms, we have developed an employment awareness cultivation model that integrates “classroom teaching + enterprise practice” scenarios. This approach deeply incorporates talent development into all aspects of industry-education integration. Classroom instruction utilizes real corporate cases and operational standards, employing project-based teaching and case analysis to guide students in proactively considering career paths and competency requirements through authentic professional scenarios. The enterprise practice phase leverages industry-education integrated training bases, featuring simulated job roles, short-term career experiences, and participation in real projects. Experienced corporate mentors provide personalized career guidance based on students’ practical performance, helping them deepen professional understanding and clarify competency requirements through hands-on experience. Additionally, we establish a cultivation platform combining “online resources + offline interactive activities.” Online resources include the

latest corporate job demands, industry development reports, and vocational training courses for students' self-directed access. Offline activities such as corporate visits, industry expert forums, and career planning salons maintain close connections between students and enterprises, ultimately forming a closed-loop cultivation model: "theoretical learning solidifies foundations—practical experience validates cognition—reflection and summarization deepen understanding," thereby enhancing the effectiveness of employment awareness cultivation.

4.3. Improving the cultivation and guarantee mechanism of "multi-subject participation"

Establish a diversified collaborative mechanism featuring "school-led initiatives, enterprise participation, industry guidance, and government support" to integrate industry-education resources and cultivate employment awareness collectively. Schools should coordinate talent development programs by incorporating career awareness training into academic curricula, promoting the integration of specialized instruction with career guidance. Enterprises should actively participate in designing training programs, implementing teaching practices, and evaluating outcomes, while dispatching qualified mentors to provide hands-on training and career guidance. Industry associations should act as bridges by supplying sector standards, job market data, and guiding curriculum updates. Governments should enhance policy support and resource coordination to institutionalize school-enterprise partnerships. Through multi-stakeholder collaboration, we ensure the targeted and effective implementation of talent development initiatives.

5. Implementation strategies and optimization suggestions for cultivating employment awareness under the background of industry-education integration

5.1. Deepening the cooperation between schools and enterprises, and strengthening the industrial adaptability of the training content

By leveraging industry-education integration as a bridge, we deepen school-enterprise collaboration to precisely align career development programs with industrial demands. Jointly developed curriculum systems incorporate corporate job standards, professional competency requirements, and industry culture, complemented by textbooks based on real-world corporate case studies. Regularly, industry experts and skilled professionals deliver career seminars sharing practical workplace experiences and industry updates. Students participate in corporate project practices and on-the-job internships, gaining hands-on familiarity with job requirements and enhancing career adaptability. Through content innovation, our training programs become more closely aligned with real-world industrial needs and job-specific requirements.

5.2. Innovating teaching methods to enhance the practicability and interactivity of the cultivation process

Breaking through the limitations of traditional teaching models, we adopt diversified instructional methods to enhance the practicality and interactivity of career awareness cultivation. By implementing project-based learning using real corporate projects as vehicles, students are guided to reflect on their career positioning during project implementation. Career planning competitions and simulated job interviews are organized to provide platforms for students to showcase their skills and develop competencies. Through immersive vocational experiences at industry-education integrated training bases, students gain firsthand exposure to professional environments and specific job requirements. The flipped classroom model encourages students to proactively gather industry updates and corporate position information, fostering career planning abilities

through self-directed exploration. These innovative teaching approaches fully stimulate students' learning initiative and participation enthusiasm.

5.3. Improving the evaluation system to ensure the continuous optimization of the cultivation effect

The evaluation framework involves three key stakeholders: educational institutions, enterprises, and students. Schools focus on assessing the standardization of talent development processes, covering core dimensions such as curriculum design and teaching implementation. Enterprises emphasize practical evaluations of students' professional awareness depth and job fit effectiveness, providing targeted improvement guidance based on comprehensive internship performance. Students utilize self-assessment and peer review to identify weaknesses and gaps in their career planning and development. The evaluation content highlights qualitative dimensions, including professional awareness enhancement, job adaptability, and career planning completeness. The results rapidly inform optimization of training programs, establishing a dynamic "evaluation-feedback-optimization" mechanism that continuously refines career awareness cultivation efforts.

6. Conclusion

In the context of industry-education integration, cultivating innovative employment awareness in private higher vocational education has become essential for enhancing talent development quality and supporting industrial growth. Currently, private higher vocational institutions face challenges such as mismatched educational objectives, a lack of innovative models, and insufficient collaboration among stakeholders. To address these issues, institutions should align with industry-education integration policies and leverage their unique characteristics to explore innovative approaches across three dimensions: educational goals, operational models, and institutional mechanisms. By establishing industry-aligned objectives, implementing school-enterprise collaborative training models, and creating diversified support mechanisms, institutions can strengthen the relevance of training content to industry needs, enhance practical learning processes, and ensure scientific evaluation systems. These measures effectively boost students' career awareness and professional competitiveness. Moving forward, private higher vocational institutions must deepen industry-education integration, continuously optimize employment awareness cultivation systems, achieve deeper synergy between education and industry, and cultivate more high-quality applied technical talents to support regional economic development.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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