

Exploration and Research on the Development of Higher Vocational English Education in Guangxi

Binbin Liu*

Institute of Liberal Education, Guangxi Eco-Engineering Vocational and Technical College, Liuzhou 545000, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China

*Corresponding author: Binbin Liu, gxstxy2024@163.com

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Abstract: With the acceleration of economic development and globalization and the rapid development of China's foreign economy, the position of English education in higher vocational education has become increasingly prominent. Particularly in the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural areas of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, higher vocational education undertakes the responsibility of talent export for the construction of the China-ASEAN foreign trade exchange platform. However, the current phenomena and problems existing in higher vocational English education in Guangxi need to be deeply discussed and solved. Therefore, this paper discusses the development ideas of English education mode in Guangxi higher vocational education and studies the feasibility suggestions, in order to provide a reference for the future development of higher vocational English education in Guangxi.

Keywords: Guangxi higher vocational English; Educational development; Exploration and research

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1. Introduction

The development of higher vocational English education, as an important part of higher education, plays an increasingly essential role in the process of Guangxi's integration into the trade globalization of China-ASEAN Economic Bureau. Under the background of globalization, English, as an international communication language, has become one of the necessary skills in the field of economy and trade. Under the background of the "Belt and Road" era, we will make a greater contribution to China's economic construction by training language service talents for ASEAN ^[1]. English education is an important part of higher vocational English education, and the construction of English teachers is crucial for the construction of higher vocational colleges ^[2]. However, the current development of higher vocational English education in Guangxi still needs in-depth discussion and research. To this end, this paper explores the innovative development of the higher vocational English education model, aiming to explore the development ideas of the higher vocational English education model in Guangxi. Based on the analysis of its current situation,

problems, and challenges, this paper studies the feasible suggestions to provide useful references for the future development of higher vocational English education in Guangxi.

2. Development status of higher vocational English education in Guangxi

On November 20, 2007, the leaders of the 13th ASEAN Summit of ASEAN member states signed the ASEAN Charter, an important legal guarantee of epoch-making significance and universal legal binding force for ASEAN. The ASEAN Charter clearly defines English as the working language of ASEAN and stipulates that English is the preferred language of communication in the official and many unofficial activities in ASEAN. In order to strengthen cooperation and exchanges with ASEAN members, protect their legitimate interests in ASEAN, and ensure their voice in ASEAN, all countries attach great importance to English education^[3]. In recent years, most colleges and universities in Guangxi have set up relevant majors and courses for foreign language talents in the overall needs of China-ASEAN economic and trade development, such as hotel management, tourism English, exhibition English, and other courses, and constantly improve the talent training mechanism. To a certain extent, it alleviates the shortage of English talents in the process of the continuous development of Guangxi's open economy. With the continuous expansion of the scale of demand and the continuous improvement of the level of English talent, the momentum of ASEAN economic and trade cooperation has increased in the context of the new era and situation. The scale and quality of talent training in higher vocational English education in Guangxi cannot fully meet the needs of rapid economic development, and there is a contradiction between the supply and demand of talent. At present, there are the following phenomena in the teaching and education mode of English majors in higher vocational colleges in Guangxi from the aspects of professional textbooks, teachers, curriculum design, and practical training.

2.1. Inadequate professionalism of higher vocational English education

Excellent professional teachers are the backbone of the field of education and teaching. They not only master teaching theory and professional knowledge but also have rich practical experience in the industry. However, at present, the overall level of the combination of higher vocational English education and professionalism requires improvement, and excellent professional academic leaders are needed in higher vocational fields. Without the exemplary leading role of professional teachers, there is still a long way to go for higher vocational English education to meet the development of the times and industry and the sustainable development of students. The enrollment scale for vocational education students is steadily increasing; however, there remains a significant imbalance between the availability of qualified English teacher talent and the rationalization of teaching and curriculum. Many college students are unable to fully engage with the curriculum in a manner tailored to their individual needs. Participation in related courses is often low, with students frequently learning in isolation rather than as active participants in a collaborative learning process. Moreover, excellent English teachers are critical in shaping the educational landscape. These educators possess not only a strong foundation in teaching theory but also valuable practical industry experience. However, the current vocational education system lacks a sufficient number of skilled and experienced English teachers. The teaching workforce for professional English courses is relatively weak, and the current teaching methods often fail to meet the evolving requirements of industry development and the long-term educational needs of students. In order to adapt to the requirements of higher vocational English teaching reform and effectively infiltrate industrial English into teaching, the role of higher vocational

English teachers thus changed from traditional basic English teachers to industry English teachers, teaching one or more courses similar to accounting English, car English, logistics, computer English, tourism trade English. Its goal is also correspondingly changed to skillfully use the knowledge and skills of the major, with industry knowledge as the main content, through “teaching, learning, practicing, doing” teaching methods and means, to cultivate practical and compound talents who can use English for information exchange and communication in the workplace ^[4].

2.2. Insufficient coordination between higher vocational English education curriculum setting and language application

In the English classroom, we can fundamentally improve students’ interest in learning, enhance the overall teaching effect of the English classroom, and promote the quality of talent training in higher vocational colleges ^[5]. Many higher vocational English majors still follow the traditional English curriculum, such as comprehensive English, English extensive reading, English audio-visual, foreign trade correspondence, English writing, etc. The disadvantages of traditional English education and teaching mainly include the following aspects: first, too much attention is paid to grammar and vocabulary teaching, ignoring the cultivation of practical application skills. Ignoring students’ actual needs and language use makes them lose interest in learning, leading to difficulty in achieving the purpose of English communication. Second, the lack of a language learning atmosphere results in a lack of practical opportunities for students. Traditional English teaching often involves knowledge teaching by teachers and passive acceptance by students, lacking the environment and opportunity for language practice. As a result, students lack the confidence and courage to speak and fail to use the knowledge in practical situations. Third, the teaching evaluation method is single and lacks comprehensiveness. Traditional English teaching evaluation mainly depends on test scores and homework completion. This evaluation method cannot fully reflect students’ language skills and learning state. The simplicity of evaluation methods also leads students to pay too much attention to test results and ignore the importance of practical language application. Fourth, students lack learning autonomy and learn passively. Traditional English teaching emphasizes the dominant position of teachers, and students are often in a state of passive acceptance. This teaching mode leads to a lack of initiative and creative thinking and fails to cultivate students’ independent learning abilities. In addition, it overemphasizes English grammar and exam-focused theoretical teaching, neglecting the practical application of English in future careers. It fails to integrate professional English instruction with students’ major fields of study. The course content is disconnected from the actual needs of enterprises and the demands of the market economy, resulting in minimal impact from practical industry guidance in English. This disconnect creates a gap between the skills taught and the real-world requirements of social and economic development. As a result, higher vocational graduates often fall short in both basic skills and professional English communication and writing, leaving them below the standards expected by employers.

2.3. Lack of integration of practical training activities of English major students in higher vocational colleges with the market

The challenges facing higher vocational English education and its alignment with the market include several key aspects:

- (1) Teaching material and market demand: Many higher vocational colleges use English teaching materials that lack relevance to the business world, making it difficult for students to apply

workplace and professional English knowledge in real-life work situations. This gap between textbook content and practical application hinders students' ability to develop workplace and professional English skills and diminishes their interest in learning.

- (2) **Teacher expertise and professional integration:** English teachers in higher vocational colleges often lack the necessary integration between English language instruction and students' specialized fields. Unlike English teaching in undergraduate institutions, vocational English education should be closely tied to specific majors. While many English teachers have strong backgrounds in language teaching, they often lack systematic training in professional knowledge and workplace-specific teaching methods. As a result, they rely on traditional university-level English teaching methods that do not reflect the needs of vocational education.
- (3) **Misalignment between teaching and market needs:** Higher vocational English education is often misunderstood as a continuation of the nine-year compulsory English curriculum, with a perceived level of difficulty that is higher than high school but lower than undergraduate public English courses. This creates a disconnect between the level of difficulty in teaching materials, teaching objectives, teaching methods, and evaluation systems, and the actual demands of the job market.

Under the continuous deepening of the reform of the curriculum system of applied English majors in higher vocational colleges, the educational concept and mode are reformed accordingly. In order to improve the teaching quality, we should adhere to the skill standard, conduct in-depth enterprise research, understand the skill and responsibility requirements required by the post, actively participate in the post practice, and deepen the cognition and understanding of the connotation of the work ^[6]. Vocational education emphasizes production, practice, and hands-on training, with a strong focus on practical teaching. However, higher vocational English education often remains too theoretical, lacking partnerships with enterprises and practical training platforms. This insufficient collaboration with the job market and lack of industry participation in talent development lead to a significant gap between the skills of higher vocational English graduates and the industry standards for professional qualifications. Consequently, the overall satisfaction of employers with vocational English graduates remains low, indicating a need for closer alignment between education and regional industry demands.

2.4. Poor construction of oral practical training base

A practical training base is a crucial component of higher vocational education, as it handles the core responsibilities of practical teaching. However, many institutions face challenges in establishing oral English practical bases, and even when vocational colleges invest significantly, the utilization rate of these practical bases often remains low. Several key issues highlight the long-standing inadequacies in practice-based teaching, which impact the quality of higher vocational English education:

- (1) **Disconnect between theory and practice:** A major issue is the separation between theoretical learning and practical application. Theoretical courses emphasize knowledge acquisition, while practical teaching focuses on hands-on skills. This gap makes it difficult for students to apply their theoretical understanding to real-world situations or to derive theoretical insights from practical experiences. As a result, the overall level of higher vocational English education is compromised.
- (2) **Monotonous teaching methods:** English teaching methods often lack variety, with teachers driving student engagement but failing to foster active participation. This one-sided approach results in passive learning, where students are not fully involved in their own learning process, limiting their

development.

- (3) Lack of practical opportunities: Due to limited resources and inflexible curricula, students often miss out on effective practical training opportunities. This deficiency hampers their practical skills and reduces their competitiveness in the job market.
- (4) Insufficient teacher training in professional courses: Many English teachers lack relevant experience in professional English practice, which affects the quality and effectiveness of their teaching. Without adequate training, teachers are unable to offer practical insights into how English is used in specific industries or professional contexts.
- (5) Inadequate facilities for oral and writing practice: Some vocational colleges, constrained by funding, cannot provide sufficient conditions for oral and written English practice. As a result, they rely on traditional teaching methods to attract students and offer relevant courses. However, students do not receive specialized, high-level English education. Instead, they engage in classroom simulations, which only partially prepare them for real-world professional communication. This limits the development of oral communication skills and the formation of key professional abilities.

2.5. Outdated professional teaching materials of higher vocational English education

The teaching material is in a central position in the English teaching system of higher vocational colleges, which restricts and influences the methods and modes of classroom teaching to a certain extent. At present, there are still few teaching materials that can reflect the characteristics of vocational education, and the number of high-quality teaching materials in vocational education is far from meeting the needs of education and teaching. The targeted and professional characteristics of vocational education determine that the selection and compilation of English teaching materials must consider the actual needs of different vocational groups^[7]. The publishing update cycle of professional English textbooks in higher vocational education is excessively long, and the available versions are relatively limited, resulting in outdated teaching content. This issue manifests in several key areas:

- (1) Content is limited and lacks practicality: Many professional English textbooks in higher vocational colleges are narrow in scope, with limited relevance to specific professions. The content often lacks practical value, making it difficult to meet the actual needs of students. Textbooks tend to focus on basic language knowledge and exercises but fail to include elements that promote practical application or hands-on learning. As a result, students miss opportunities to develop practical experience and problem-solving skills that are crucial for their future careers.
- (2) Lack of specialization and poor integration with majors: English textbooks in vocational colleges are often generic, without consideration for the diverse needs of students from different majors. This weak integration between teaching materials and students' professional fields makes it challenging for students to grasp how English applies to their specific industry. Consequently, they struggle to adapt to the professional English requirements of their future work environments.
- (3) Slow knowledge updates and mismatch with market demand: The slow pace of knowledge updates in many higher vocational English textbooks means that they fail to keep up with industry developments and changes in market demand. As a result, the knowledge students acquire through these outdated textbooks is often misaligned with the practical skills and insights needed in the job market. This discrepancy hinders students' ability to meet the evolving needs of employers and reduces the overall effectiveness of vocational English education.

3. Development ideas for higher vocational English education in Guangxi

To address the practical challenges in higher vocational English education in Guangxi, it is essential to recognize the regional and cultural differences and the generally low level of English proficiency among students. Solutions should focus on a progressive approach, starting with the strengthening of basic English knowledge. This involves creating a solid foundation in language skills before moving on to more advanced topics. Additionally, exploring new modes of university-enterprise cooperation can bridge the gap between education and industry demands. This collaboration can introduce practical, industry-specific English training, enhancing the relevance and application of English in real-world settings. Expanding professional English education methods—such as incorporating industry-related case studies, hands-on projects, and workplace simulations—can provide students with more diverse learning opportunities. These efforts aim to promote the long-term development of English education, offering students better chances to improve their understanding and proficiency in the language and align their skills with the needs of local industries.

To align higher vocational English education with the economic development and industrial characteristics of Guangxi, the focus can be on integrating innovation with local industry needs. Guangxi's key industries—manufacturing, services, and agriculture/forestry—should guide the curriculum design of English programs. For example, offering courses in business English, tourism English, and forestry English can address local industry requirements and enhance students' employability. Furthermore, expanding specialized English learning spaces related to these industries can increase the enthusiasm for discipline development within schools. This approach can strengthen specialized majors, promote distinctive teaching strategies, and support the growth of strong academic programs tailored to regional industrial needs.

Ultimately, to truly embody the essence of vocational education—bridging theory and practice—higher vocational education must maintain a core focus on applying knowledge in real-world contexts. It is essential to prioritize the transition from theoretical understanding to practical application, emphasizing the implementation of professional knowledge in practical scenarios. This includes enhancing the teaching of professional English grammar and oral communication, which are vital for developing students' practical application skills in spoken English. The primary goal of higher vocational education is to cultivate practical talents. As an instrumental subject, English should prioritize the development of practical skills, particularly conversational abilities relevant to various industries and workplace environments. Schools can deepen partnerships with export-oriented and trade enterprises to systematically organize oral and written English practice activities. This exposure allows students to frequently engage in diverse and complex speaking scenarios, significantly enhancing their professional English application skills. In conjunction with course assessment requirements, it is important to design more practice-oriented teaching environments that focus on real-world communication challenges. By creating varied communication settings specific to different professional areas, educators can cultivate students' overall quality and cross-cultural communication skills. Given the rapid acceleration of globalization, the ability to navigate cross-cultural interactions is increasingly essential in the workplace. Therefore, higher vocational English education should concentrate on developing students' cross-cultural communication competencies and enhancing their overall skill sets to meet future workplace demands.

In summary, to effectively explore a development path for higher vocational English education that is tailored to Guangxi, we must consider the region's unique cultural and regional characteristics. This involves closely integrating educational efforts with the local industry's growth, strengthening practical teaching methods, and enhancing students' practical application skills. Moreover, prioritizing the cultivation of students' comprehensive quality and cross-cultural communication skills is essential. By adhering to this approach, we can offer more viable references for the advancement of higher vocational English education in Guangxi.

4. Development and exploration of higher vocational English education in Guangxi

To achieve its developmental goals, Guangxi's higher vocational English education must address existing disadvantages and promote leapfrog development. This entails identifying problems, proposing countermeasures, and formulating comprehensive and targeted development strategies along with implementation plans. The aim is to cultivate high-quality talents with an international perspective and strong cross-cultural communication skills, thereby continuously improving the quality of education and fostering the sustainable development of higher vocational education in Guangxi. Specifically, the following suggestions are proposed for enhancing the development of higher vocational English education in the region.

4.1. Formulating talent training programs in line with the market demand

In accordance with the national policy for the development of higher vocational education, Guangxi must implement a key plan that aligns with the relevant documents' spirit and requirements. This plan should focus on developing an English education curriculum that adequately meets market demand for talent while aligning with the specific characteristics of local industry development. Additionally, the talent cultivation goals should emphasize the professional competencies required for English-speaking roles. The core objectives of this initiative should be to enhance students' English application skills and cross-cultural communication skills, guiding specific actions and initiatives accordingly. The professional characteristics of higher vocational education shape the nature of vocational English education, aligning it with the specific needs of various industries. The goal of English education in higher vocational colleges is to develop students' practical English skills, enabling them to effectively use the language in their careers or industries. This objective aligns with the overall goal of China's vocational and technical education system, which is focused on preparing skilled professionals for the workforce ^[8].

4.2. Adjusting the salary level and position of higher vocational teachers through the normal competition mechanism

The English teacher rotation system can facilitate the effective flow of talent, ensuring that schools do not experience prolonged shortages of qualified teachers. To implement this system effectively, certain conditions must be met, including having the appropriate qualifications and meeting the criteria for position transfers during the service period. Schools or educational departments should review applications, conduct a competitive selection process for qualified teachers, and determine the final candidates for transfer. The competitive selection process can involve interviews, trial lectures, and comprehensive evaluations. By adjusting teachers' positions competitively, this system promotes career development, optimizes human resource allocation, and enhances the overall quality of education and teaching. Throughout the implementation, it is essential to adhere to the principles of openness, justice, and fairness to ensure transparency in the selection process and avoid any instances of unfair competition or conflicts of interest. Incorporating a fair competition mechanism will strengthen the core concept of evaluating performance, promoting the best while addressing underperformance. By institutionalizing job rotation through reasonable competitive measures, we can comprehensively enhance the construction of English teacher teams in higher vocational colleges. This continuous competitive mechanism allows for the flexible introduction and training of more outstanding teachers, improving the overall professional quality and practical teaching skills of English educators, and ultimately establishing a team of English teachers that maintains high standards of quality, professionalism, and healthy competition.

4.3. Reforming the teaching syllabus system for higher vocational English education

The goal system of higher vocational practical teaching should be constructed with vocational skill training as the main line and basic vocational quality, employment skills, and vocational development training as the modules ^[9]. In accordance with the requirements for professional competencies and the specific needs of students, English courses should be designed thoughtfully to enhance their practicality and relevance. This will help improve students' English application skills and cross-cultural communication skills. Personalized design and optimization of higher vocational English curricula should be encouraged within the framework of curricular reforms. To facilitate this, the practical teaching content of English vocational education should be integrated into the curriculum reform outline, accompanied by supportive policies that bolster the implementation of the reform plan. By promoting both policy initiatives and curriculum reform, we can elevate the practical teaching standards of English vocational education, thereby enhancing students' English application skills and cross-cultural communication skills. This approach will also provide students with more opportunities and platforms for practical experience, ultimately better preparing them for their future careers.

4.4. Enhancing professional practical skills as the core to build a strong professional system

To effectively cultivate students' practical English skills, several key strategies should be implemented:

- (1) Strengthening English skills training: It is essential to enhance training in various English skills, including listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation. A variety of engaging activities, such as English speeches, debates, and writing competitions, should be organized to improve students' writing proficiency and overall language skills.
- (2) Introducing English thinking education: To develop a deeper understanding of English, students must become accustomed to thinking in English. Teachers can facilitate this by incorporating courses on English culture, history, and etiquette, which will help students gain insight into English-speaking contexts and promote the growth of their English thinking abilities.
- (3) Implementing a mixed teaching mode: Leveraging the benefits of online teaching can provide convenient tools for creating an immersive language environment. This approach enhances the authenticity of language interactions, encouraging students to engage actively in conversation and improve their language proficiency. Additionally, combining online and offline teaching methods offers students more opportunities for independent learning and practice, shifting them from passive learners to active participants.
- (4) Innovating evaluation methods: Employing diverse evaluation techniques is crucial. Rather than focusing solely on test results, assessments should also consider students' practical English application skills, learning attitudes, and strategies. This comprehensive approach encourages holistic development and fosters individuality among students.

4.5. Establishing confidence in language and education, taking the initiative to broaden the vision, and implementing the school-enterprise cooperation mechanism

By leveraging corporate sponsorship and initiatives organized by educational departments, we can establish robust channels for students to engage with the world, particularly through volunteer activities that connect them to the China-ASEAN economic and trade cooperation. This approach not only promotes international cooperation and exchange but also enriches students' experiences. Through a multi-platform system encompassing economy, trade, and education, along with partnerships with ASEAN universities, foreign-

funded enterprises, and national industry associations, we can provide students with enhanced opportunities for international communication and learning. These collaborations will serve to improve their cross-cultural communication skills and broaden their international perspectives. By integrating these initiatives, we aim to equip students with the necessary tools and experiences to thrive in a globalized environment, thereby fostering a generation of professionals who are culturally aware and adept in international contexts.

4.6. Strictly standardizing the teaching and management of higher vocational English education

To ensure the effectiveness of higher vocational English education, it is essential to foster a free and open atmosphere for communication and discussion. By promoting contemporary educational trends and styles, we can effectively integrate educational reform with actionable plans that address current teaching practices. This approach will ensure that the teaching environment is rigorous, orderly, open, and elegant, while also prioritizing students' practical skills and pursuit of knowledge. Furthermore, we aim to establish a comprehensive research-based teaching and management system. In addition to monitoring and evaluating the quality of English instruction, we will implement measures to continuously improve teaching standards. This dual focus will ensure that the quality of English education consistently improves, benefiting both students and educators alike.

4.7. Leveraging the advantages of vocational education and providing various employment guidance for graduating students

By expanding the job market and employment opportunities and establishing connections between career planning, development courses, and employment guidance, we can help students cultivate a correct understanding of their careers and enhance their professional awareness. This approach aims to improve students' professional quality and competitiveness in the job market. The vocational education planning and employment guidance within the foreign language department, centered around English, is an important and complex process that must consider each student's interests, skills, professional values, and the market demand for related occupations. Firstly, students should align their interests, skills, and professional values to determine a suitable career direction, ensuring they maintain enthusiasm and motivation in their studies and work. Secondly, through employment guidance, students should research and understand the work content, salary expectations, working environment, and future development trends of various foreign language professions. This understanding will help them identify which occupations align best with their interests and abilities. Subsequently, students can acquire relevant vocational skills through career guidance courses, internships, or self-study. When choosing a learning pathway, it is crucial to consider factors such as time and financial investment to ensure they can acquire the necessary skills within a reasonable timeframe. Due to its unique geographical location and linguistic cultural advantages, the Guangxi region should actively take responsibility for cultivating language service talents for ASEAN in support of the Belt and Road Initiative. Guangxi's "soft power" can become a key driver of economic development in the region, allowing both the people of China and the world to experience the influence and inner charm of Guangxi's language and culture^[10].

5. Conclusion

In summary, the current development status of higher vocational English education in Guangxi necessitates reforms in education and professional training. To achieve this, it is essential to identify key areas for reform based on the characteristics of professional development and align teaching goals with market

demands in the foreign exchange sector. The primary objective should be to cultivate high-quality talents with an international perspective and strong intercultural communication skills. Continuous optimization of educational quality, enhancement of English professional discipline construction, and promotion of sustainable development are crucial for advancing higher vocational English education in Guangxi.

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