

# A SWOT Analysis of the Cultivation of Local International Talents in Higher Vocational Colleges in Hunan Province Under the “One Belt, One Road” Initiative

Yihua Zeng\*, Jianxiong Liu

Loudi Vocational and Technical College, Loudi 417000, Hunan Province, China

\*Corresponding author: Yihua Zeng, 562641456@qq.com

**Copyright:** © 2022 Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), permitting distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is cited.

**Abstract:** With the rapid development of international education, local international education has become a new trend. This study analyzes the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges of local vocational talent training in Hunan’s higher vocational colleges under the “One Belt, One Road” initiative, in hope to provide references for the internationalization of vocational education in Hunan.

**Keywords:** One Belt, One Road; Hunan Province; Higher vocational colleges; Local international education; SWOT analysis

**Online publication:** June 30, 2022

## 1. Introduction

The “One Belt, One Road” initiative was proposed by General Secretary Xi Jinping in 2013. The “Action Plan for Innovation and Development of Higher Vocational Education” (2015–2018) issued by the Ministry of Education in China, commends higher vocational colleges to strengthen educational cooperation with countries “along the route,” in order to cultivate technical and skilled talents with international vision, who are familiar with international rules, as well as local talents that are needed by Chinese enterprises for overseas production and operation. This puts forward new requirements for the localization of international talent training in higher vocational colleges. In recent years, Hunan has accelerated the internationalization of vocational education. The “14th Five-Year Plan for the Development of Education in Hunan Province” proposes the opening of education to support colleges and universities in carrying out in-depth cooperation with world-class universities, build of an open highland education in Central China, and enhance their international influence. Under the new development situations, the majority of vocational educators should reflect on how higher vocational colleges in Hunan can comply with modern time requirements, accurately analyze the advantages and disadvantages, as well as seize development opportunities and challenges.

## 2. A SWOT analysis of Hunan’s local vocational talent training under the “One Belt, One Road” initiative

### 2.1. Strengths

#### 2.1.1. Excellent educational environment and large capital investment

Educational foundation and capital investment have a great impact on the quality of talent training. From

the perspective of student population, Hunan has always been a province known for education, with excellent scores on college entrance examinations and solid basic education at the forefront of the country. The student quality of Hunan's higher vocational colleges is higher than that of similar colleges in other provinces. In terms of education quality, among the 100 key higher vocational demonstration colleges in China, Hunan occupies five seats, which places it at a leading level. In terms of school-running scale, there were 74 higher vocational colleges in Hunan in 2020, with 702,900 students, and its education scale ranked among the top ten in China. From the perspective of education investment, Hunan has built five vocational education cities, with a total investment of 32.07 billion yuan, reflecting a middle to upper level education investment <sup>[1,2]</sup>. Furthermore, Hunan has very rich educational resources. Its overall higher vocational education environment is excellent, with a large educational scale, which is a major advantage for local international talent training in higher vocational colleges.

### **2.1.2. Diversified industrial types and strong school-enterprise cooperation**

Hunan is known as a strong manufacturing province. It has great strength in the fields of rail transit, construction machinery, and so on. In recent years, in order to respond to the "One Belt, One Road" initiative, the province has put forward the development strategy of "innovation leading, opening up, and rising." Under this strategy, many high-quality enterprises have seized the "One Belt, One Road" strategy to seek development and a name in other countries. At present, Hunan has more than 1,500 foreign enterprises registered under the Ministry of Commerce. These enterprises span more than 80 countries and regions around the world and represent a wide range of industries, including machinery manufacturing and rail transit. The cumulative foreign investment has exceeded US \$9.5 billion, ranking first in the central region. With a large number of high-quality enterprises expanding abroad, foreign enterprises urgently need a large number of high-quality international talents, which encourages multinational enterprises to participate in international talent training and support higher vocational education in all areas, including but not limited to technology research and development (R&D), teaching and educational funding, and so on. This clearly plays a role in promoting local international talent training.

## **2.2. Weaknesses**

### **2.2.1. Tight education funds and outdated training equipment**

Teaching facilities and educational equipment are important indicators for the quality of talent training. It is known that for a long time, the educational investment and tuition income of higher vocational colleges are significantly lower than those of ordinary colleges and universities due to various reasons. Higher vocational colleges usually focus on cultivating talents with applied skills and technical skills. Therefore, more experimental operations and technical trainings are needed in these colleges, thus raising the bar for training facilities and teaching equipment. It can be said that the quality of talent training is directly tied to advanced experimental and training conditions and equipment. However, most of the funds for higher vocational education in Hunan are limited, which can only support basic operations. Besides, the majority of training equipment is out-of-date. As a result, the experimental training conditions of higher vocational colleges fall short of the international level, posing significant challenges to the cultivation of local international talents.

### **2.2.2. Lack of international teachers and narrow teaching vision**

Local international talent training is closely related to a team of high-quality international teachers. If teachers have international vision, understand cultural diversity, pursue advanced teaching concepts, implement diverse teaching methods, make good use of information-based teaching methods, and carry out professional teaching in bilingual languages, students will then be able to learn and understand the customs

and human conditions of different countries and nationalities, as well as the latest professional and technical standards and requirements. This ensures the adaptability of students to the needs of foreign or multinational enterprises after graduation. At present, although many higher vocational colleges in Hunan have begun to send teachers abroad for training, the system for teachers to study abroad is flawed due to insufficient funds and the delayed start. Furthermore, the number and percentage of teachers studying abroad are low. Therefore, there are very limited professional teachers equipped with international learning and training experience who can carry out bilingual education, and most teachers lack international vision. Overall, the international level of teachers still cannot meet the needs of local international education.

### **2.2.3. A small number of foreign students and weak international cultural environment on campus**

A good international cultural environment will leave a positive impact on local international education. However, Hunan has neither border advantages nor economic open areas compared to other regions due to its location in the middle part of China. Its level of education internationalization is low, and it is not attractive to foreign students. There are only a few foreign students in Hunan. In 2019, among the 71 higher vocational colleges in Hunan, only 14 higher vocational colleges were qualified to recruit foreign students, and only 339 full-time international students were enrolled, while the number of international students in the country had reached more than 17,000. Hunan's proportion of foreign students accounted for less than 0.2% of the country's total <sup>[3,4]</sup>. All things considered, higher vocational colleges either do not recruit foreign students or only recruit a limited number of international college students. These fall short of what local students require for effective communication with international students. Therefore, there is no particularly strong international cultural milieu on campus, which may bring disadvantage to the training of local international talents.

## **2.3. Opportunities**

### **2.3.1. The “One Belt, One Road” initiative**

As the “One Belt, One Road” initiative continues to deepen, a large number of enterprises in Hunan have joined hands with higher vocational colleges to venture abroad and build numerous factories “along the route” to achieve efficient operations. In order to meet the needs of international development, multinational enterprises and higher vocational colleges have jointly developed many advanced technologies and equipment, which have provided good technical conditions for local international education in higher vocational colleges. In order to meet the talent needs of foreign enterprises, higher vocational colleges and multinational enterprises have nurtured many local technical talents through school-enterprise joint collaboration. In order to improve the teaching effectiveness, many vocational education standards and curriculum standards have been developed and are now recognized by other countries, which not only provided better teaching resources for local international education, but also accumulated abundant international education experiences.

### **2.3.2. The proposal of the “Three High and Four New” strategy**

In September 2020, when General Secretary Xi Jinping visited Hunan, he appealed to Hunan to implement the “Three High and Four New” development strategy. He commended Hunan to strive to further develop the country's advanced manufacturing industry, promote scientific and technological innovation with core competitiveness, and accelerate the reform and opening-up of inland areas. Therefore, during the 12th plenary session of the 11th CPC Hunan Provincial Committee, it was clearly proposed that the “Three High and Four New” strategy is to be vigorously implemented, taking it as the general outline of striving to build a modern “new Hunan.” The proposal of this strategy puts forward new requirements for Hunan's reform and opening-up. In order to build the “Three Highlands,” the Department of Education of Hunan Province

decided to carry out the construction of Hunan Vocational Education Highland, cultivate a large number of high-quality technical and skilled talents with international vision, as well as provide stronger support in terms of investment funds and scientific research. This provides a good opportunity for the cultivation of local and international talents in Hunan's higher vocational colleges.

### **2.3.3. The rapid development of information education**

In response to the emergence of COVID-19, the education industry has accelerated the process of information education. Schools have established a relatively complete online education system, and teachers' information literacy has also seen a significant improvement. The relatively complete information education system provides a good opportunity for the development of local and international education. With stable online education, higher vocational colleges can cooperate with foreign educational institutions to purchase more high-quality online educational resources or invite foreign experts and scholars to teach online. These can easily turn the dream of enjoying international high-quality education resources at home into reality and fulfill the desire of online learning and communication between local students and foreign students, so as to improve the quality of both, local and international talent training.

## **2.4. Threats**

### **2.4.1. No geographical advantages**

In addition to its strengths, economic level, and other factors, geographical location also has a certain impact on education. Hunan Province is located in the inland of China. It is neither near the border nor belongs to the economic open zone. There is still a huge gap in its openness, cultural level, and rate of economic development compared with coastal areas. Hunan has no geographical advantages in the "One Belt, One Road" initiative and receives no preferential treatment. Moreover, Hunan was not among the 14 provinces that have ratified the agreement with the Ministry of Education to advance the development of the "One Belt, One Road" educational collaboration. Hence, Hunan is denied from enjoying the substantive support policies from the Ministry of Education in seven areas, including the two-way study and foreign related education. This has limited Hunan's capabilities in running international schools and its degree of internationalization, thus bringing greater challenges to its local higher vocational education.

### **2.4.2. Weak policy guidance**

The government is the main body of the "One Belt, One Road" initiative. Therefore, the government's policy guidance has a huge influence on international education. The internationalization of higher education in Jiangsu, Tianjin, Yunnan, Guangxi, and other regions has seen a rapid development in recent years. This is closely related to a series of international education incentives and support policies from the local government. Jiangsu, for instance, has issued an action plan – "Study in Jiangsu" – and offered special scholarships. The Tianjin "Luban Workshop" project is also led and guided by the government. From the provincial level to the municipal level, the local governments in Hunan do not have a good grasp of the internationalization of higher education, in addition to their weak policy guidance. At present, no special policies have been issued to promote the internationalization of higher education, and no special funds have been allocated to support it. Therefore, the international education in Hunan Province is still at a low level, which brings great challenges to its local international education.

## **3. Conclusion**

Through SWOT analysis, higher vocational colleges can adopt different methods and strategies to carry out local international education based on their own situation. According to the SO strategy, schools can take advantage of the "One Belt, One Road" initiative and Hunan's "Three High and Four New" strategy, join

hands with enterprises in Hunan to establish training schools or set up training centers abroad, and accumulate successful experience of international education. Meanwhile, they can also take advantage of the rapid development of information education, introduce foreign high-quality education resources, and open a new chapter of local international education. According to the WO strategy, Hunan's local higher vocational colleges should strengthen their cooperation with profitable enterprises in Hunan based on international market demand, jointly formulate and modify their talent training programs, accelerate the research and development of international vocational education standards and curriculum standards, as well as improve the level of international curriculum construction; meanwhile, they can also carry out online training and strengthen the communication between students and foreign teachers, all of which would improve the overall international literacy of both, teachers and students. According to the TS strategy, schools should make full use of its high-quality education resources, seize the opportunities through industry-education integration, learn from the international education experiences from other local schools, focus on the top-level design of schools, and create an international brand of local vocational education. According to the WT strategy, schools should pursue the idea of local internationalization, make full use of the government's policy on building a vocational education highland, strengthen the construction of experimental and training facilities, implement the quality improvement and excellence training plan, as well as strengthen their core values.

## **Funding**

“The Research on the Training Strategy of Hunan Local Vocational Talents in Vocational Colleges Under the Strategy of ‘One Belt, One Road’ in Hunan Province” (Project Number: ZJGD2021130)

## **Disclosure statement**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## **References**

- [1] Yang H, Liu Y, Hu P, et al., 2020, The Research on the Training of International Talents in Higher Vocational Colleges. *Occupation Technology*, 19(10): 13–17.
- [2] Liu Z, Zhang Y, 2020, Under the Background One Belt, One Road, Hunan Province Vocational Colleges International Talent Training Way Innovation Research. *International Public Relations*, 2020(6): 56–57.
- [3] Chen Y, Liang C, 2019, Exploration of the Training Path of International Talents in Higher Vocational Colleges Under the Background of “One Belt and One Road”. *Occupation Technology*, 18(9): 1–4.
- [4] Sun W, Liu X, 2019, One Belt, One Road, The Background of Higher Vocational Colleges International Talent Training Research. *Journal of Huaihai Institute of Technology (Humanities and Social Sciences)*, 17(04): 127–129.

### **Publisher's note**

Bio-Byword Scientific Publishing remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.