

Exploration of the Path for Technical schools to ‘Go Global’—Taking Guangzhou Technician College as an Example

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Abstract: Taking the “Going Global” practical experience of Guangzhou Technician College in international cooperation and exchange as an example, this paper explores how technical schools can make beneficial attempts and active explorations in the fields of foreign output and international cooperation under the framework of the “Belt and Road” Initiative. The practice of Guangzhou Technician College may not only provide new ideas for broadening international cooperation in vocational education but also contribute a set of learnable and promotable experience models for accelerating the high-quality development of technical education in Guangdong and enhancing its internationalization level.

Keywords: Technical education; International cooperation; “Going Global” strategy; “Belt and Road”

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1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of deepening globalization and the solid advancement of South-South cooperation within the “Belt and Road” framework, China has further intensified international exchanges and cooperation in vocational education. The timing is opportune for “vocational education going global”^[1], presenting an excellent opportunity for technical schools to “go global”. As a vital component of vocational education, technical education has received strong policy support from the “14th Five-Year Plan” and the newly revised Vocational Education Law, which encourages technical schools to carry out various forms of international exchanges and cooperation. These policies urge domestic technical education entities to shift from merely introducing and learning from foreign advanced educational concepts and models to exporting Chinese standards and solutions^[2], thereby enhancing the internationalization level and global competitiveness of technical education through both “bringing in” and “going global.” Taking the international cooperation practices and experience in external exchange and output of Guangzhou Technician College as a case study, this paper explores the focal points and implementation paths for technical schools to deepen international exchanges and cooperation and achieve “technical education going global” in the new era, providing valuable references and guidance for the

development of the “going global” strategy of technical education in Guangdong and even across China.

2. Background and significance of technical education: “Going Global”

2.1. Internationalization of technical education under the “Belt and Road” initiative

With the advancement of the “Belt and Road” Initiative, numerous infrastructure development and industrial collaboration projects in countries and regions along the route have significantly increased the urgent demand for professional skilled talents, providing new development opportunities for China’s technical education to “Go Global.” In response to the national strategy, many domestic technical schools have actively utilized their educational resources and school-running advantages to expand vocational education exchanges and cooperation with “Belt and Road” countries^[3]. For example, Zhuhai Technician College established a “Luban Workshop” in cooperation with African countries^[4], providing professional skills training for local youth and becoming a model of China-Africa vocational education cooperation. The “Belt and Road” International Skills Competition held in Chongqing has promoted skills exchanges and cooperation among relevant countries, serving as an important platform for skills integration and exchange between domestic and foreign vocational colleges. In addition to transnational skills training and exchanges, various forms of cooperation, such as joint school-running, teacher-student exchanges, and professional co-construction, are also being vigorously carried out in technical schools, effectively enhancing the openness of China’s technical education.

2.2. Current status and policy support of technical education internationalization in Guangdong province

Guangdong is a strong province in technical education and a highland for technical education and talent training in China, always focusing on international benchmarks, catching up with world advanced levels, and vigorously promoting international exchanges and cooperation in technical education. Vocational education institutions and technical schools in Guangdong have actively dispatched school leaders, middle-level backbones, and professional leaders to carry out training exchanges abroad, invited world skills competition powerhouses to conduct technical seminars, co-established training centers with institutions or organizations in “Belt and Road” countries, and provided technical worker training for overseas enterprises^[5]. In terms of school-enterprise dual-system cooperation, Guangdong Mechanical Technician College has co-established school-enterprise dual-system industrial demonstration parks with internationally renowned enterprises in Germany, Sweden, and the UK^[6]. In terms of international cooperative school-running, Dongguan Technician College has established multiple China-Germany international cooperation classes^[7]. In terms of teaching staff construction, Guangdong has created a group of vocational education teachers with an international vision through the “Double Hundred Two-Way Teacher Exchange Plan”^[8]. In terms of World Skills Competition exchanges, Guangdong Mechanical Technician College and Guangzhou Technician College have successively established Chinese training bases for the World Skills Competition^[9], promoting the internationalization of high-skilled talent training standards for advantageous projects and driving the integration of Guangdong’s technical education with international standards.

3. Practical experience and significance of Guangzhou Technician College’s “Going Global”

As one of the earliest technical schools in South Guangdong and a construction unit of Guangdong Province’s

high-level technician colleges, Guangzhou Technician College has strengthened international exchanges and cooperation in vocational education through multiple measures based on its school-running characteristics and regional realities. It has actively exported Guangdong's technical education experience to the world in aspects such as vocational education management, teaching staff construction, training base development, and skilled talent cultivation.

3.1. Carrying out a series of cooperative training programs for vocational education management capacity building

From 2021 to 2024, Guangzhou Technician College actively collaborated with countries, regions, and institutions along the “Belt and Road,” including Bangladesh, Pakistan, South Africa, and the East African Universities Alliance, to provide a series of cooperative training programs for capacity building in vocational and technical education for government officials, middle-to-high-level managers of vocational colleges, vocational education experts, school principals, and teachers. The training content covers education management, leadership training, advanced teacher training workshops, vocational skills, enterprise research, cultural exchanges, and cooperation negotiations, creating cooperative projects such as the “East Africa-Guangdong China Vocational Education International Training” and the Excellence in Leadership Training Program. This series of trainings not only represents a beneficial attempt and innovative practice in international vocational education exchanges between China and foreign countries but also marks a milestone in Guangzhou Technician College's export of educational concepts and school-running practices. It has significantly enhanced the international influence of Guangdong's technical education and contributed China's wisdom, experience, and solutions in vocational education to Africa and the world.

3.2. Co-building an international teacher training center

As the first cooperative vocational college of the East African Universities Alliance in China, Guangzhou Technician College focuses on building a “Belt and Road” vocational education community with a shared future. In 2023, it inaugurated the first International Teacher Training Center for Guangzhou technical education at its Nansha campus. Relying on the multiple advantages of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, the center is committed to becoming an international platform for China-Africa vocational education cooperation and a window for opening up to the outside world. It aims to cultivate a teaching staff with internationalized educational awareness, teaching content, teacher exchanges, and teaching management, and build a brand project for the internationalization of vocational education in Guangdong Province, enabling China's vocational education to “set sail globally.”

3.3. Construction and experience sharing of WorldSkills training bases

Relying on the international platform of the WorldSkills Competition, Guangzhou Technician College has established the first prototype-making training base that matches the venue requirements of the WorldSkills Competition. The construction of the base has always been anchored by the international vision of the WorldSkills Competition, high skill standards, and cutting-edge industry technologies, leading international standards, and advanced concepts. The base's expert coaching team and competitors have also traveled abroad multiple times to carry out technical exchanges and share WorldSkills experience. Guangzhou Technician College also plans to build a Nansha talent cultivation base for the WorldSkills Competition, sharing successful experiences and achievements in transforming WorldSkills outcomes with “Belt and Road” countries, and

enhancing the influence of Chinese standards in the WorldSkills Competition. The college has also established a global training sub-center for prototype making, a WorldSkills gold medal project, to share the construction experience of training bases with overseas vocational education partners.

3.4. Organizing international skills competitions

In 2023, Guangzhou Technician College organized the domestic competition for the Digital Media Interactive Design event of the Belt and Road and BRICS Skills Development and Technical Innovation Competition, providing important references for the international standard-setting of this event. In 2025, the college hosted the International Invitational Competition for the Retail Project, a new event added to the 48th WorldSkills Competition, inviting experts and competitors from Austria, Ireland, Cambodia, and other countries and regions to engage in international skills competitions, exchanges, and interactions in the retail industry. This invitational competition represents a concrete practice to deepen “Belt and Road” skills cooperation, and its outcomes will also provide critical references for formulating global skill standards in the retail industry. Meanwhile, the “International Joint Training Base” for the new WorldSkills retail project was officially inaugurated at Guangzhou Technician College, establishing an important platform for international cooperation in technical training, competition exchanges, retail talent cultivation, and industry-education integration in the retail sector.

4. Feasible paths for technical schools to “Go Global”

4.1. Carrying out vocational education management training abroad to promote Chinese experience and wisdom

In the process of pursuing international development, technical schools can learn from the “going global” practical experience of Guangzhou Technician College by organizing special training programs for foreign vocational education institutions, focusing on areas such as exporting school-running concepts and management experience, co-building and exchanging teaching staff, discussing professional construction and curriculum development, sharing skilled talent cultivation experience, constructing industry-education integrated training bases, and preparing for the WorldSkills Competition. By sharing their vocational education management experience and wisdom with “Belt and Road” countries, they can promote the collaborative development of global vocational education.

4.2. Conducting international teacher co-building and exchanges to share cutting-edge teaching concepts and methods

The construction of an international teaching staff is a key component in promoting the “going global” of technical education. Technical schools can join hands with “Belt and Road” partners to jointly establish international teacher training centers. On one hand, they can invite teachers from partner institutions to visit and exchange ideas; on the other hand, they can dispatch outstanding backbone teachers from their schools to provide teaching guidance and training at vocational education institutions in “Belt and Road” countries. Through two-way visits and exchanges, they can achieve the co-construction of an international teaching staff and introduce advanced domestic vocational education concepts to the international education stage.

4.3. Hosting international skills competitions to demonstrate high-level competition management

International competitions serve as an important platform for international exchanges and cooperation, and also

offer an excellent window to showcase a school's teaching achievements and educational characteristics to the outside world. By seizing the opportunity of hosting international skills competitions, technical and vocational colleges can invite experts from international skills organizations, administrators from vocational colleges and vocational education institutions, representatives from industries and associations, as well as instructors and contestants to organize high-level skills competitions, and share their experience in areas such as contestant selection, skills training, and expert team building.

4.4. Establishing international joint training bases for skilled talents to promote talent cultivation models globally

In terms of “going global” for skilled talent cultivation, technical schools can collaborate with “Belt and Road” vocational colleges and relevant enterprises to establish international joint talent training bases focused on advantageous or emerging disciplines. By sharing successful practices and valuable experience in skills teaching and training, industry-education integrated training bases, and the organization and participation in skills competitions, these bases can help partner countries' vocational colleges establish sound skilled talent cultivation mechanisms.

5. Summary and prospects

5.1. Effectiveness and challenges of the “Going Global” strategy

By introducing China's advanced and practical vocational college management experience, co-building international training centers and WorldSkills bases, and hosting international invitational competitions for the WorldSkills retail project, Guangzhou Technician College has not only strengthened vocational education cooperation with “Belt and Road” countries but also successfully exported Chinese vocational education concepts, models, and management experience, enhancing the international influence of China's technical education.

However, during the “going global” process, domestic technical schools represented by Guangzhou Technician College also face numerous challenges. For example, the lack of a teaching staff capable of bilingual instruction, with uneven English proficiency among training faculty, affecting the efficiency and effectiveness of international exchanges; in carrying out a series of international cooperation projects for technical education “going global”, a professional quality evaluation system has not yet been established; while the concepts and models of technical education are “going global”, the skilled talents trained are still limited to the domestic job market and have not served the overseas market development of multinational enterprises or their demand for skilled talents^[10], and the school's research achievements have not been promoted to the international market^[11], among others.

5.2. Development directions and suggestions for the overseas expansion of technical and vocational education

Through continuous deepening of the “going global” strategy for technical schools, institutions like Guangzhou Technician College should continue to focus on the following areas: First, building international exchange platforms for vocational education^[12] to strengthen connections with international vocational education institutions and colleges, achieving sharing and complementarity of educational resources such as teaching staff, talent, technology, and scientific research. Second, exploring diversified international cooperation models, such

as exchanging vocational education management experience, implementing Chinese-foreign school-enterprise cooperation, and developing distance education and training, to promote both inward introduction and outward export of resources^[13]. Third, aligning with international advanced vocational education standards, where qualified technical schools actively explore and standardize cooperative school-running abroad^[14] to export vocational education standards with Chinese characteristics. Fourth, establishing and improving a tracking and evaluation mechanism for international cooperation projects, regularly assessing the effectiveness and impact of projects to adjust cooperation strategies promptly. Fifth, strengthening the international promotion of Chinese vocational education culture and concepts, such as enhancing institutional visibility and influence through hosting international vocational skills competitions^[15].

Overall, domestic technical schools should take the initiative to “go global,” sharing China’s advanced concepts, practical experience, and innovative solutions in vocational education with the world openly and inclusively, thereby enhancing China’s international voice in vocational education. Meanwhile, relying on policy support and their school-running characteristics, they should enrich and comprehensively advance the practice of technical education “going global” through multiple measures, including co-building cooperative brand projects, sharing vocational education management experience, jointly training faculty, exchanging skilled talent cultivation models, and unifying vocational skill standards. This will enable Chinese technical education concepts and talent to step out of the country and engage with the world.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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