Key Issues About the Construction of Business English Major in Application-oriented College

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Abstract. This article aims to explore the key issues about the construction of the Business English major according to the guideline of the National Standards for Teaching Quality of Business English Major in College. The key issues include the background of setting the national standard, the definition and content of the major, the goals of cultivating talents of the major, the knowledge and ability talents have, construction of the curriculum systems, construction of the teaching staff in the application-oriented college. By using the method of literature and theoretical analysis, the article comes to a conclusion, that is the complete curriculum system, the mode of cultivating talents and good quality of the teaching staff can assure the sustainable development of Business English Major in application-oriented college.

1. Introduction

In order to adjust to the economic and social development of china, the application-oriented colleges are attaching great importance to the construction of Business English major. With the background of setting the national standard for the English major construction, this paper discusses relevant important issues about the definition and content of the major, the goals of cultivating the professional talents, the cultivation of the ability and knowledge, the construction of the curriculum systems and the teaching staff.

2. Background of Setting the National Standard

The economy in China has developed fast in the new era. China’s direct foreign investment has exceeded 170 billion in 2016. The government put forward the strategy of continuing to reform and open up, building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. This provides new opportunities for china’s economic development and introducing Chinese culture to the whole world. However the globalization of china’s economy faces big challenges due to the shortage of talents. When the enterprises enter into foreign markets, they are in urgent need of multi-disciplinary talents who understand both foreign language and business. The number of qualified complex talents in China is only about 8000 according to the statistics of Ministry of Commerce [1]. The higher education system of English major and the mode of cultivating talents can’t meet the need of the economic and social development. To adjust to the new situation of more reform and opening up, innovating the mode of cultivating talents, the Ministry of Education has started to approve colleges to set business English major since 2006. By 2016 more than 200 universities have approved to set up this major [2].

In a word, the setting up of national standard is to adjust to the new situation and improve the quality of talents. And the national standard is the guiding principle for the construction of China’s colleges and universities.
3. Definition and Contents of Business English Major

3.1 Definition

Business English is a multi-discipline knowledge in courses. It covers three levels: common English, general business English, and specialty business English. It mixes language and business together, such as foreign linguistics and literature, applied economy, business management and international business law. This major has three characteristics, which means it’s an international, multi-disciplinary, applied major [3]. According to the national standard, the aim of cultivating talents is to enable students to have strong language foundation, international view and cultural awareness, learn the knowledge about linguistics, economics, management and law. So students should learn subjects ranging from language to business. They are the application-oriented talents who are good at conducting business and cross-cultural communication.

3.2 Contents

The Business English major has two teaching objectives. One is to teach English, the other is to teach students using English to conduct international business [4]. To be more specific, the teaching objectives can be explained from the following three points. First, it’s about how to use business discourse. It’s not about the language itself, but about the use of the language in the business context. And it focuses on the effective business communication [5]. So in the first or second year of college, we should teach students basic business English listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. This enables students to learn how to communicate and what the business English discourse is. Second, it’s about how to use English to conduct international commerce. In the third year of college, students should learn professional commercial knowledge such as economic management, business law, finance, trade and negotiation. Third, it’s about how to conduct investigation and study in international business environment, internship in enterprises. Students should learn more about foreign trade, history, geography, politics, religion and culture of a certain country.

4. Requirements for the Talents’ Knowledge and Abilities

According to the national standard, the knowledge and abilities that Business English major talents have are divided into five categories [6]:

First, the knowledge of language includes pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, discourse, and pragmatics.

Second, the knowledge of business includes economics, management, international law, international finance, international marketing, human resources, financial management etc.

Third, the knowledge of cross-culture includes foreign literature, foreign culture, commercial culture, and Chinese culture.

Fourth, humanity science includes different regions and nations, international politics, world history, world religion, and diplomatic relations.

Fifth, the knowledge of multi-discipline includes the integration of different disciplines.

Thus those five categories of knowledge lead to five kinds of abilities: ability of using English language, the ability of cross-cultural communication, the ability of conducting business, the ability of critical thinking and creating, and the ability of self-study.

5. Construction of Curriculum Systems

The Business English major should construct a whole curriculum system from four sections. They are language, business, cross-culture, and humanity. According the national standard, the curriculum system should include following parts: public courses, core courses, practice and internship, graduation thesis [6]. For modules assessed by marks, the maximum mark is 150. The author explains the first two parts in details below.
5.1 Public courses

In this section, the included courses are as follows: ideological and political theory, information technology, humanities and arts, modern Chinese, science, physical education, career planning, the second foreign language.

5.2 Core courses

In the section, there are four parts. Part one is English knowledge and skills, which account for 50% - 60%; part two is business knowledge and skills, which account for 20% - 35%; part three is cross-cultural communication, which account for 5% - 10%. Among them, the basic course of English language in most of the application-oriented colleges should account for 70% - 80%. The core courses in each part are as follows:

Part one is about English knowledge and skills. This includes pronunciation, grammar, general business English listening, speaking, reading, writing, translation etc.

Part two is about business knowledge and skills. This includes economics, management, international business law, international marketing, trade, business negotiation, e-commerce etc.

Part three is about cross-cultural communication. This includes cross-cultural business communication, English public speech etc.

Part four is about humanity science. This includes survey of Britain and American, European culture, American culture, English literature, American literature etc.

6. Construction of the Teaching Staff

Teachers of Business English major should have professional norms, excellent English language proficiency, professional knowledge about business, ability to conduct teaching activities and conducting scientific research.

The national standard gives guidelines about the structure of faculty teachers. The construction of the teaching staff in the application-oriented college should follow these three rules. First, the ratio of students to teachers should not exceed 18: 1. Second, teachers should at least have the master degree. Third, the ratio of teachers engaging in language section, business section, and practice section should be 6: 3: 1. For teachers in business section, besides mastering English language skills, they should achieve a degree in the major of economics, management or law. Teachers in practice section can be part-time teacher invited from enterprises.

7. Summary

Application-oriented colleges in China pay attention to cultivate students’ ability to apply the knowledge they have learned to the practical society. And they have just started to set up Business English major. They don’t have the clear idea about the definition, contents, characteristics, core courses, mode of cultivating talents, construction of teaching staff of the major. The National Standards for Teaching Quality of Business English Major in College can guide them to optimize the curriculum systems and improve the mode of cultivating talents. In most application-oriented colleges, teacher of the major should also teach and encourage the students the spirit of entrepreneurship and innovation, and take students to practice in enterprises and internship.

In a word, the purpose of constructing a better talent-cultivation mode in Business English major is to adjust to the regional economic development and even the social development of the whole country.

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