

Study on Teaching Reform of Front Office Service and Management Course under Perspective of Industry-education Integration

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Abstract: Guided by General Secretary Xi Jinping's Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era and the comprehensive implementation of Xi Jinping's important speech during his visit to Jiangxi, this study aims to promote the deep integration of the culture and tourism industry with education, fostering the organic connection between the culture and tourism education chain, talent chain, and industry chain to enhance the core competitiveness of the province's cultural and tourism industry. In order to deepen industry-education integration in secondary vocational tourism-related courses, this research provides a thorough analysis of the Front Office Service and Management course, explores the current issues in its teaching, and proposes solutions such as incorporating real-world business cases to improve teaching quality, establishing both on-campus and off-campus practice bases in collaboration with enterprises to increase their involvement, aligning course content closely with job requirements, innovating teaching methods, emphasizing practical teaching assessment and timely feedback, and building a "dual-teacher" faculty to boost talent development. These teaching reform strategies are aimed at further enhancing the effectiveness of the course instruction.

Keywords: Industry-education Integration, Front Office Service and Management, Secondary Vocational Education, Teaching Reform Research.

1. Introduction

Industry-education integration, as a fundamental characteristic of vocational education, is a key task in deepening the reform of the modern vocational education system. The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China emphasizes "coordinating the collaborative innovation of vocational education, higher education, and continuing education; advancing the integration of vocational education with industry, and the fusion of science and education; and optimizing the positioning of vocational education types." The Implementation Plan for the Action to Enhance Vocational Education and Industry-Education Integration (2023–2025) proposes strengthening the development foundation of vocational colleges, deepening industry-education integration, school-enterprise cooperation, improving talent cultivation quality, promoting high-quality employment, refining and improving the incentive policy system, and establishing a development pattern of coordinated integration and positive interaction between industry and education. This series of policies is consistent and reflects the major decisions and deployments of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council regarding education and talent development and reform. These policies clearly show that industry-education integration has become a major theme in vocational education, and vocational colleges must prioritize collaborative education as a key focus, with curriculum and teaching reforms urgently needed.

Front Office Service and Management course is a core course for the tourism program in secondary vocational schools, laying a solid foundation for cultivating innovative, well-rounded technical professionals. Currently, the course faces several challenges, including students' lack of initiative,

insufficient teacher-student interaction, a disconnect between theory and practice, and the need to improve teaching quality to meet the high standards and demands of the new era for skilled workers. Given the national policy's emphasis on industry-education integration, the future career development needs of secondary vocational students, and the current state of vocational education, the reform of the *Front Office Service and Management* course is imperative.

2. The Significance of Front Office Service and Management in Talent Development

2.1. Systematic Development of Specialized Knowledge and Professional Skills

Front Office Service and Management course is a crucial part of the secondary vocational tourism program. It covers many essential concepts and key theories in hotel front office operations, including reception services, room booking, guest services, guest relations management, and sales management. Through detailed analysis of these business processes, students can master every aspect of front office work, providing a solid theoretical foundation for practical operations. The main objective of this course is to help students gain a comprehensive understanding of the management structure and daily operations of hotel reception departments while also developing a range of reception service skills for front-line positions. The course is designed using a modular teaching approach, with work tasks serving as the guiding path to ensure that students can follow procedures and perform their duties effectively. By systematically learning both professional knowledge and practical skills, students are able to build on their experiences to deepen their understanding of the field, and enhance their

communication and teamwork abilities in front office operations. Through simulated real-world scenarios, students will continuously practice communication skills with guests, learning to provide personalized and attentive service tailored to the needs and personalities of different guests, which will significantly improve guest satisfaction.

2.2. Enhancing Service Awareness and Professionalism

In addition to learning the basics of reception and room reservation, the *Front Office Service and Management* course goes beyond this by focusing on developing students' professional attitude and service mindset. Students are taught to maintain a polite and sincere demeanor, work closely with colleagues, take responsibility for their tasks, and respect the diverse cultural backgrounds of guests, thereby fostering an inclusive and harmonious work environment. Service awareness is essential not only for customer satisfaction but also for shaping the hotel's brand image and enhancing its market competitiveness. As the first point of contact for guests, the quality of service at the front office greatly influences guests' first impressions of the entire hotel, which in turn affects their future purchasing decisions and word-of-mouth referrals. Therefore, cultivating a strong sense of service awareness in students is crucial for the long-term development of the hotel industry. To improve students' sensitivity to customer needs, instructors will use case studies and scenario-based teaching methods, supplemented with skill operation videos. Students will learn how to identify and meet customer needs and how to stay calm and proactive when addressing unexpected situations. They will be trained to demonstrate exceptional service and professionalism in their actual work.

2.3. Cultivating Analytical and Creative Thinking Skills

In the fast-evolving tourism and hospitality industries, innovative thinking and problem-solving skills are essential for developing high-level management and operational talents. The foundation of this is service skills, which students must master first. In addition to this, students must also be able to analyze and solve problems effectively in order to respond to challenges swiftly and appropriately. The course will teach students how to apply creative thinking to address customer complaints, optimize service processes, and improve customer satisfaction. Problem-solving skills are particularly important in the hospitality industry, and students must be capable of handling complex and dynamic situations. To achieve this, the course guides students in independently managing a variety of work scenarios. Students are encouraged to identify issues, analyze them deeply, and propose practical solutions. Furthermore, students will learn about the principles and trends in front office management, which will help them better adapt to industry changes and improve their core competitiveness. This program will enable students to stand out in the hospitality industry as dual-skilled professionals with both advanced management and practical operational expertise.

3. Current Status of Front Office Service and Management Course Teaching

3.1. Insufficient Students Dedication to Learning

Secondary vocational students typically range in age from 14 to 17. While they are capable of some independent thinking and moral judgment, they often lack psychological maturity and the ability to resist negative influences. Some secondary vocational students mistakenly believe that "learning cannot change their fate" and perceive the Front Office Service and Management course as only relevant to hotel staff duties, leading them to think the course is unnecessary. This misconception contributes to the negative attitudes and weak study habits common among these students, which stem from various factors, including their personal, family, societal, and educational environments. Non-scientific family education practices that fail to cultivate good study habits lead to a lack of interest in learning. Additionally, the education system tends to emphasize theory over practical experience, which further reduces students' motivation. Social discrimination also undermines the confidence of vocational students, leading to behaviors like disengagement and sleeping in class.

Analysis of the factors influencing students' lack of commitment to learning, as shown in Figure 1, indicates that educational issues are the primary factor, accounting for about 32% of the influence on students' learning in the Front Office Service and Management course. Student-related factors are the second most significant, representing approximately 26%. Therefore, teachers should focus on the difficulty level of the content, design engaging and enjoyable activities, and enhance students' motivation and initiative for learning.

3.2. Teacher-Student Interaction Needs to be Improved

Currently, the teaching of Front Office Service and Management course is characterized by an emphasis on teacher lectures and minimal student interaction. Teachers typically stand at the front of the class and explain theoretical concepts and related skills from the syllabus, while students passively listen with limited opportunities to participate in discussions or raise their own questions. This results in low student interest in the subject and a limited understanding of the material. The course should emphasize its practical applications and focus on a student-centered approach that facilitates interaction between teachers and students, as well as between students themselves.

Although case-based teaching could be a great opportunity to stimulate student thinking, a lack of effective guidance and motivation results in students being reluctant to share their opinions. As a result, the teacher often ends up delivering a "monologue," and the classroom atmosphere lacks energy. During group discussions, most students tend to talk about topics unrelated to the curriculum. Teacher-student interaction should not be limited to textbook discussions; it should involve an exchange of ideas and perspectives.

A positive classroom atmosphere, which is key to enhancing student learning efficiency, depends significantly on active teacher-student interaction. According to the results of the student motivation survey shown in Figure 2, nearly half of the students (about 48%) reported a lack of willingness

to engage in classroom interactions. Around 27% described their classroom motivation as average, while only a small portion felt highly motivated, with 15% indicating high

motivation and 5% indicating very high motivation. Overall, most students show low levels of engagement in the Front Office Service and Management course.

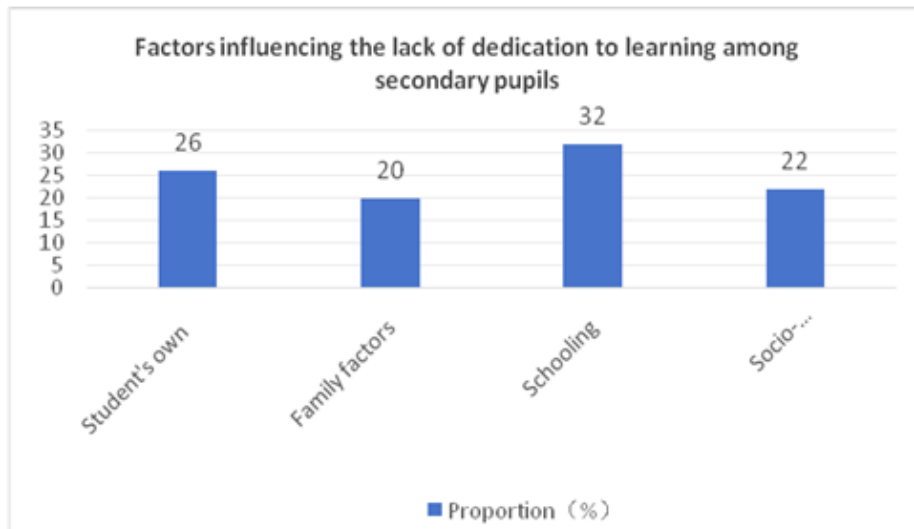


Figure 1. Factors Affecting Secondary Vocational Students' Lack of Engagement in Learning

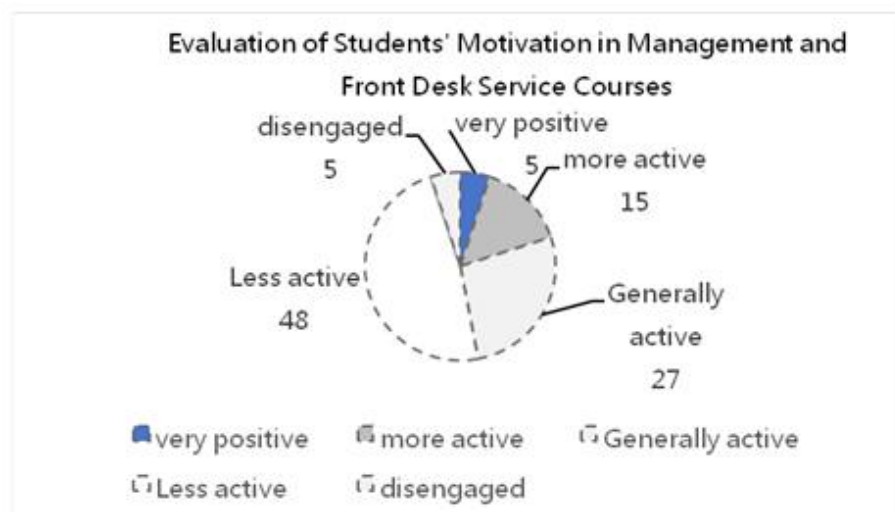


Figure 2. Student Motivation Survey in the Front Office Service and Management course Classroom

3.3. Mechanical Teaching Methods

In the current teaching mode, teachers' instructional methods often exhibit a mechanical nature, primarily characterized by relying solely on textbook content for explanations. For practical, hands-on subjects, teachers fail to adjust their teaching strategies flexibly according to specific teaching contexts and student needs, which affects the relevance and effectiveness of their instruction. In addition to teaching, instructors are also responsible for research and guiding competitions. The combination of these heavy duties places significant pressure on teachers, making it difficult for them to dedicate time and energy to deeply explore teaching reforms or to adopt more scientifically effective teaching methods to meet the evolving demands of education. Furthermore, many teachers enter the profession directly after graduation and may lack the professional skills required for core positions in the hotel industry. They also often lack an intuitive understanding of the challenges secondary vocational students may face in the future. The hotel industry is rapidly growing, and the job market and position

requirements are constantly changing. However, textbook content lags behind these developments, and some knowledge points no longer meet the evolving demands for talent in the industry.

3.4. Requirements for Innovation in Teaching Evaluation

The assessment approach, which is primarily based on written exams with supplementary practical tests, fails to fully capture the effectiveness of teaching in helping students apply theoretical knowledge in practical settings. The emphasis on final exams to assess comprehension and judgment overlooks the need for a comprehensive evaluation of students' practical skills, service awareness, organizational and communication abilities, exploration skills, adaptability, and other key aspects. While students may have mastered certain front office knowledge and skills, they may still struggle to meet the complex demands of real-world work environments. The existing evaluation system does not adequately reflect students' flexibility or practical application abilities, nor does

it assess whether students can effectively apply what they've learned to solve real-world problems in a workplace. Additionally, some secondary vocational schools lack the necessary professional training facilities and advanced digital hotel reservation systems, which restrict the development of students' practical skills and make it difficult for teachers to accurately assess student progress. As a result, the evaluation system fails to motivate students' initiative and creativity and does not effectively guide them to continue exploring and innovating in practice, which is crucial for adapting to the evolving demands and requirements of the hotel industry.

4. Causes of Current State of Front Office Service and Management Course Teaching

4.1. Disconnect between Course Content and Industry Demands

The content of the Front Office Service and Management course has not kept pace with the times and fails to reflect the latest advancements in technology and trends in the hotel industry. The knowledge and skills acquired by students are mismatched with the demands of the job market, leading to a reduction in their employability. There is a clear gap between the theoretical content taught in vocational schools and the realities of the industry, which affects the practical value of the education. Students realize that the knowledge they have learned does not apply to real-world work situations, making it difficult to transfer their learning to practice. The course material is heavily theoretical, lacking in practical application and operational skills. This disconnect results in a classroom atmosphere that feels "unengaging for teachers and uninspiring for students."

4.2. Lack of Professional Development and Real-world Experiences among Teachers

As the saying goes, a long-term educational plan hinges on its teachers. Vocational education instructors should not only teach theoretical lessons but also provide hands-on training, focusing on technology, innovation, and personal development for students. However, many teachers lack firsthand experience in the industry, especially in the front office, and are unfamiliar with the latest trends and operational methods in the hotel sector. This makes it difficult for them to incorporate real-world examples and case studies into their teaching, which impacts both the learning experience and teaching effectiveness. The emphasis on theoretical learning over practical application diminishes student interest and engagement, reduces the diversity and interactivity of the lessons, and limits students' ability to develop critical skills such as problem-solving and innovation.

4.3. Misalignment between Evaluation System and Students' Developmental Needs

The current evaluation system places more emphasis on testing theoretical knowledge and less on assessing practical skills, creativity, and overall competency. This approach fails to provide a comprehensive assessment of students' learning outcomes, particularly in areas like skill application, problem-solving, and teamwork. Relying solely on traditional evaluations does not give students an opportunity to showcase their strengths or interests, which is at odds with the increasingly individualized and diverse nature of education.

To support students' holistic development and meet industry needs, teaching assessments should be student-centered, emphasizing diversity and the evaluation process to promote overall growth.

5. Teaching Reform of Front Office Service and Management Course in Context of Industry-education Integration

5.1. Introducing Real Cases of Enterprises

The Front Office Service and Management course is highly practical, requiring students to handle guest complaints, resolve issues, allocate resources, communicate effectively, and provide prompt and courteous service. These practical skills are essential for employment and career success. However, some students lack the necessary vocational skills because the course content has not kept pace with industry developments and lacks real-world business cases. To provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the entire hotel front office process, the course should integrate actual business scenarios.

By analyzing vocational roles, the course assignments are enhanced with real business cases, immersing students in the "hotel front office" environment. This approach strengthens students' organizational and communication abilities, fosters their enthusiasm for learning, and gradually improves the effectiveness of their learning. Through teacher guidance, students gain a deeper understanding of the principles of front office service, operations, and management. The course also encourages students' professional passion, making the learning experience more standardized and career-oriented. Direct interaction with front office staff helps students identify problems early and work together to find solutions.

This approach shifts from a theoretical focus on front office service and management to real-world "practice" in hotel operations. Through role-playing, students engage in case demonstrations and group discussions, offering their own perspectives and solutions. The teacher guides students in connecting theoretical knowledge with real cases, expanding their understanding while reinforcing key concepts. After a thorough analysis and explanation of the case, students are encouraged to critically assess the case and participate in self-assessment and peer evaluations, followed by a teacher-led summary.

5.2. Collaborating with Enterprises to Establish Practice Bases Inside and Outside School

The Front Office Service and Management course in secondary tourism programs is highly practical, and it is vital to stay updated on industry trends. The tourism and hospitality sectors are evolving rapidly in the digital age, and job requirements are continuously changing. To cultivate high-quality technical and skilled professionals, teachers must maintain close communication with businesses, stay informed about the latest occupational standards for front office roles, and regularly update the curriculum. It is also essential to involve off-campus front office professionals in teaching to increase business participation in the educational process.

We should collaborate closely with businesses to establish both on-campus training classrooms and off-campus training

bases. Schools should actively forge partnerships with businesses to create off-campus practical training bases, allowing students to immerse themselves in real-world work environments. These partnerships provide opportunities for students to enhance their understanding of jobs and companies through hands-on experience. At the same time, schools can establish on-campus training classrooms where teaching and practice are integrated, with businesses contributing funding, facilities, and equipment, while schools provide qualified instructors. Following national curriculum standards, we can create modern, simulated training rooms that replicate the front office environment of five-star hotels using digital systems. This allows for the simulation of real-world front office scenarios, providing a practical, immersive learning experience for students. Simulation exercises are a core component of the Front Office Service and Management course, enabling students to practice tasks such as making reservations, greeting guests, handling complaints, and more. Establishing a new system for training skilled professionals, enhancing front office service capabilities, and fostering situational response skills is essential for adapting to the dynamic demands of the hospitality industry.

5.3. Aligning Course Content with Job Requirements

Schools and businesses should collaborate to develop the Front Office Service and Management course. Businesses can offer real-world examples and educational resources based on the latest knowledge, technologies, and job standards to optimize the course content and meet students' demands for up-to-date knowledge and advanced skills. Students in secondary vocational schools often have low levels of motivation and come from diverse and less-advantaged educational backgrounds. Relying solely on traditional teaching methods may not meet their learning needs, especially for a subject like "Front Office Service and Management," which blends theory with practice. To achieve the goals of work-study alternation and industry-education integration, a variety of teaching methods, such as project-based learning, multimedia presentations, and situational simulations, should be employed. The teaching projects should be designed based on the actual working environment and processes in the hotel front office. Project-based teaching allows students to learn by doing. For example, while explaining the guest check-in process, the teacher can divide the students into groups, where each group takes on the role of either a guest or a front desk staff member. This hands-on approach helps students gain a deep understanding of the reception workflow. Additionally, online learning tools like Study Pass and Classroom Pie can be used to complement in-person learning with blended teaching strategies. When designing lessons, teachers should consider the students as the focal point, integrating their interests and personality traits to create more engaging and innovative content.

5.4. Focusing on Practice Teaching Evaluation

Practical teaching follows theoretical instruction, where students first familiarize themselves with the job's workflow before participating in simulated practical training, such as apprenticeships or internships. Students typically learn primarily from textbooks and lack sufficient hands-on experience with front office operations. Practical teaching enhances students' communication skills, language proficiency, and customer service abilities, accelerating their

assimilation of theoretical knowledge while reinforcing practical skills.

Since Front Office Service and Management course focuses on developing students' professional skills and vocational qualities, a comprehensive practical teaching evaluation system should be established. First, the talent training program should be evaluated to ensure it aligns with an ability-based teaching philosophy, is scientifically designed, and equips students with the skills needed to succeed in the workforce after graduation. Second, the teaching methods should be assessed to ensure they are contextual, practical, and comprehensive, respecting students' individual characteristics and diverse thinking styles. Third, the evaluation should include an assessment of the practical training resources, both hardware and software, ensuring they are aligned with job requirements. Fourth, the overall effectiveness of the practical teaching should be evaluated by examining student participation throughout the entire process, using feedback from enterprise evaluations, teacher assessments, and students' practical training reports.

Practical teaching evaluates multiple dimensions, including the proficiency of front office reception skills, communication with colleagues and customers, the ability to resolve customer complaints, professionalism, work attitude, and more. The evaluation should be student-centered, providing focused guidance based on the standards of the Front Office Service and Management course. Teachers should encourage students to explore creative solutions, serve as effective facilitators and guides, and focus on the multifaceted nature of teaching evaluation. Teachers should also emphasize diversity in assessment methods, encourage process-based evaluation, and identify students' strengths to enhance their learning experience and boost their confidence. Students should engage in self-assessment and peer evaluation, helping them recognize their strengths and areas for improvement, fostering self-reflection and growth, and enabling teachers to identify issues and improve their teaching methods. Evaluations by teachers should include both internal and external assessments.

5.5. Establishing "Double-qualified Teachers" Team

"Double-qualified" teachers are critical to the high-quality development of vocational education and overcoming its challenges. These teachers possess a solid theoretical foundation, excellent practical skills, outstanding teaching abilities, and strong professional qualities, providing students with valuable hands-on learning experiences. With in-depth knowledge of industry trends and strong communication with business managers and front-line employees, they can share practical experiences while explaining theoretical concepts. This not only stimulates students' interest in learning but also instills professional qualities in them. "Double-qualified" teachers understand the skills and knowledge required in front office of modern hotels and can adapt the curriculum with market changes, incorporating the latest technologies and skills to meet the industry's talent needs. To enhance the training of "Double-qualified Teachers" team, vocational schools should improve pre-service, in-service, and post-service training programs. Schools and enterprises should collaborate closely, with vocational course teachers regularly engaging with businesses, participating in specialized training, and contributing to research and development projects. This collaboration not only boosts enterprise involvement but also

facilitates the integration of educational and enterprise resources, helping teachers to enhance both their theoretical and practical teaching skills. Strengthening the development of “double-qualified” teachers is essential for improving the teaching effectiveness and professional development in the Front Office Service and Management course. By continually enhancing their teaching and mentoring skills, teachers can expose students to the latest industry knowledge and skills, improving their employability. Establishing a “Double-qualified Teachers” team is also a response to the national policy of industry-education integration, supporting the modernization of vocational education and contributing to regional economic development.

6. Conclusion

Industry-education integration is not only a key task in building a modern vocational education system but also a vital pathway to enhance the quality of vocational education and aligning talent development with industry needs. Secondary vocational schools play a significant role in providing skilled human resources for social and economic development, as they are the training grounds for highly qualified technical and skilled professionals. Against this backdrop, the reform of Front Office Service and Management course is essential. It affects not only students' individual career development but also the overall service quality and vitality of tourism and hospitality industry.

By fully implementing the new model of industry-education integration, vocational schools can optimize their curriculum structure and flexibly adjust their teaching methods. Students will not only master theoretical knowledge systematically but also become highly adaptable, capable of applying their learning in real-world situations, achieving a seamless integration of theory and practice. Secondary vocational schools must be active to cultivate innovative technical and skilled talents and strengthen the integration of industry and education. This will provide professional talents support for hotel industry, promote the modernization of vocational education, enhance national competitiveness, and foster students' lifelong development in both theoretical and practical aspects of their education.

Acknowledgements

This paper was supported by 2022 Enterprise-University Cooperative Education Project of Ministry of Education of PRC (Project Name: On Construction and Practice of Practical Teaching System of First-Class Tourism

Management Major from a Perspective of New Liberal Arts, No.22107047090740).

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