

# **On the Practical Teaching Mode for Tourism Management Undergraduates: a Case Study of the Tourism Management Major (Sino-French Cooperation) of Ningbo University**

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**Abstract:** In recent years, China's tourism industry has become a strategic pillar industry of the national economy. The vigorously developing tourism industry requires a large number of tourism professionals, but at present, there are not enough composite talents and senior talents with outstanding practical ability in the tourism market. Taking the Tourism Management (Sino French cooperation) major of Ningbo University as an example, this paper analyzed the development process and the current situation of the practical education mode and found following problems. First, the characteristics and advantages of this major are not fully exerted. Second, the school does not pay enough attention to practical education. Third, the school does not have relevant experimental bases and practice opportunities. Fourth, teachers with rich practical experience are not enough. In view of above problems, practical teaching suggestions are put forward from four aspects: the school level, the teachers' level, the students' level and the social level, so as to optimize the practical teaching mode, and cultivate excellent talents for the tourism industry.

## **1. Introduction**

The major of Tourism Management was established in China in 1978. It has a history of more than 40 years. At present, China's tourism industry, tourism education and tourism scientific research has developed to unprecedented scales and levels. The goal for undergraduate colleges to open up the tourism management major is to cultivate compound talents, professional talents and innovative talents, and to provide senior talents for government enterprises, domestic and foreign tourism companies, hotels and other institutions. Although in the teaching process, we focus on the study of theoretical knowledge, the practical operation ability of this major pays attention to the application of theoretical knowledge in practice. Tourism management is different from other basic disciplines. As an applied discipline, it emphasizes the application of personal ability in practice. Therefore, it is an urgent problem to strengthen the cultivation of practical ability of undergraduates majoring in tourism management. This paper reviews the practical education mode for tourism management undergraduates at home and abroad, focuses on the needs of tourism talents in the new era, as well as the current practical teaching form and the development status, and analyzes the current situation of Ningbo University in the tourism management (Sino French cooperation) education. Through analyzing the practical teaching program, existing problems are found; corresponding opinions and measures are put forward.

## **2. Current Status of the Practical Teaching of Tourism Management (Sino-French Cooperation) Major in Ningbo University**

### **2.1 Development of the Tourism Management Major (Sino-French Cooperation) in Ningbo University**

The major of tourism management in Ningbo University started from the major of tourism management and service (higher vocational education) set up in the Vocational and Technical College in 1993. In 2017, based on the tourism management major (Sino French cooperation), the college jointly established by the University of Angers and Ningbo University was approved by the

Ministry of Education of China. The major of tourism management now covers two levels of undergraduate and postgraduate, including the three undergraduate majors of Tourism Management (Sino French cooperation), Tourism Management (International Hotel Management) as well as Tourism Management and Service Education; postgraduate majors include Tourism Management (Sino French cooperation) and Tourism Management Master (MTA). The major of tourism management of Ningbo University aims to cultivate senior professional and composite talents with systematic tourism knowledge, high foreign language levels, international vision and foreign tourism culture, as well as management and service concepts in line with international practices. They should be capable to take part in international tourism management and service in tourism administrative departments at all levels and tourism enterprises. After more than ten years of development, the tourism management major (Sino French cooperation) has made remarkable achievements. Since 2011, Ningbo University's tourism management (Sino French cooperation) major has established cooperative relations with many famous multinational tourism enterprises in Europe and domestic well-known groups. The graduates spread all over the world. 68 students have successively studied for master's degree or doctor's degree in famous foreign universities. The major has an annual rate of more than 85% of students go study abroad, more than 60% of students become postgraduates, and nearly 100% of initial employment rate.

## **2.2 Problems in the Practical Teaching of Tourism Management Major (Sino-French Cooperation)**

Compared with the practical education of Tourism Management Major in foreign universities, the domestic undergraduate tourism management major does not pay enough attention to the practical education module. The practical education courses are not appropriately arranged in the teaching system; students' innovation and entrepreneurship ability, as well as practical ability and employment ability are not well trained. For the Tourism Management Major in Ningbo University, the main forms of professional practice are professional practice and graduation practice. The practical teaching objectives and contents in the training program are not clear; the practical teaching does not receive enough attention.

### **2.2.1 School Running Characteristics Are Not Fully Demonstrated**

The bilingual teaching method of “Chinese + French” is adopted in the education of tourism management students of Ningbo University. Students spend a lot of time learning French. But today, more and more colleges and universities are carrying out cooperative education projects with foreign schools. The characteristics of this “3 + 1” education mode are not fully demonstrated; the talent training system does not reflect regional characteristics. The major is not well-known among undergraduate colleges and universities that set up the tourism management major in China. At present, the mode of “going out” is adopted in the school running. Students need to go abroad for study in the fourth academic year. Students' graduation internship usually takes place in foreign scenic spots, hotels or travel agencies for 3 to 4 months. At that time, they do not have internship experience in China or the overall understanding on the foreign tourism industry. So they can only engage in basic services, and do not have the opportunity to experience the practical tourism management. After graduation, some graduates stay abroad for employment, but most of them need to return to China. These students, however, do not have domestic internship experience. Meanwhile, the practice links at home and abroad are not well connected, which leads to the dilemma faced by students in employment.

### **2.2.2 Lacking Corresponding Practice Bases**

As a characteristic specialty of Zhejiang Province, the tourism management specialty of Ningbo University does not have corresponding experimental bases such as the hotel management laboratory, tourism e-commerce rooms and the eco-tourism laboratory. Students have few opportunities to practice in school. The off campus practices are usually large-scale activities with classes as units. The graduation internship usually takes place in enterprises which cooperate with the school. Students do not have plenty choices, let alone the opportunity to enter the management

level. The cooperation units mainly include hotels and tourism companies. The school does not try to collaborate with more emerging enterprises to expand cooperation. The form of cooperation is relatively simple. In the process of practice, students often pay attention to the cultivation of their practical operation skills and service reception abilities. Companies do not tell students about the overall operation and management of different posts. Some units still have disadvantages of old hardware facilities and out-dated practice bases, which not only affect the income and reputation of enterprises, but also influence the enthusiasm and innovation of students in their practice.

### 2.2.3 Insufficient Emphasis on Practical Teaching

From table 1, the school do not provide many practical courses for tourism management (Sino French cooperation) major students. Only professional practice and graduation practice are related to the major. There are few types of practical courses, and the course credits account for about 10% of the total credits. The course design fails to highlight the local characteristics. The practical teaching is only reflected in the training program; it do not have independent teaching system or expected objectives. Students in the school mainly study basic theoretical knowledge; basic vocational skills and practical ability are not well trained. In addition, the training objective of the major is to cultivate international, professional and compound talents. From the main courses offered in Table 2, courses related to international relations and international trade are missing. Professional practice links are arranged in the third and fourth academic years. But at that time, students are busy looking for jobs or reviewing for postgraduate entrance examination, the practice cannot achieve ideal effects. The curriculum arrangement of practice links fails to reflect continuity and balance.

Table 1 Curriculum Setting Of Intensive Practice Links.

Course	Credit	Period	Semester
Military skill training	1	34	1.1
Ideological and political theory course practice teaching	2	34	2.1
Professional practice	2	68	3.2
Professional practice report	2	68	3.2
Graduation practice	6	204	4.2
Graduate thesis (design)	6	204	4.2
Total	19		

Table 2 Courses of The Tourism Management Major (Sino-France Cooperation) in Ningbo University.

Type	Main courses	Credit
French	Introduction to French, French understanding and expression, Secondary French, Advanced French, French reading and writing	56
Economic management	Principles of management, Principles of accounting, Tourism economics, Principles of economics, Tourism financial management, Statistics	12
Basic professional knowledge	Introduction to tourism, Urban tourism, Rural tourism, Tourism planning and development, Tourism and globalization, Tourism psychology, General theory of accommodation, Heritage and tourism	39
Total		108

### 2.2.4 Lacking Experienced Teachers

At present, there are 13 Chinese teachers in the department of tourism; 5 teachers have senior professional titles. Young teachers do not have enough practical teaching experience or scientific research ability; most experienced teachers are transferred from other majors and lack the practical teaching experience of this major. The teaching force is not perfect. With the increasing number of students enrolled, teachers should not only take on teaching work, but also undertake scientific research tasks. They are under great pressure, while the number of teachers is obviously insufficient. Students have few opportunities of one-to-one guidance. Although there are abundant foreign teachers, most of them only sign contracts with the college for half a year or a year. The duration is

short. Foreign teachers are usually responsible for French and professional courses; they have few opportunities to provide practical guidance. The cooperation and exchange between domestic and foreign teachers are not frequent enough. There is no commonly used practice education program; the interaction between them is unsatisfactory.

Table 3 Teaching Staff Construction.

Nationality	Title	Number	Doctor degree	Master degree	Oversea Studying or Working Experiences
Domestic teachers	Professor	1	1	0	1 (100%)
	Associate professor	4	4	0	3 (75%)
	Medium-grade	8	6	2	6 (75%)
	Primary title	0	0	0	0
	Total	13	11	2	11 (77%)
Foreign Teachers	Professor	7	7		
	Associate professor	16	16		
	Medium-grade	0	0		
	Total	23	23		

### 3. Suggestions on the Practical Teaching of Tourism Management Major (Sino-French Cooperation)

The major of Tourism Management (Sino French cooperation) of Ningbo University aims to cultivate senior professional talents and compound talents who can engage in international tourism management and can serve in tourism administrative departments at all levels, as well as tourism enterprises and institutions. According to problems in the practice education, this paper puts forward a reasonable practical teaching model (as shown in Figure 1) from the two aspects of education at home and education abroad, as well as the levels of the school, teachers, students and the society.

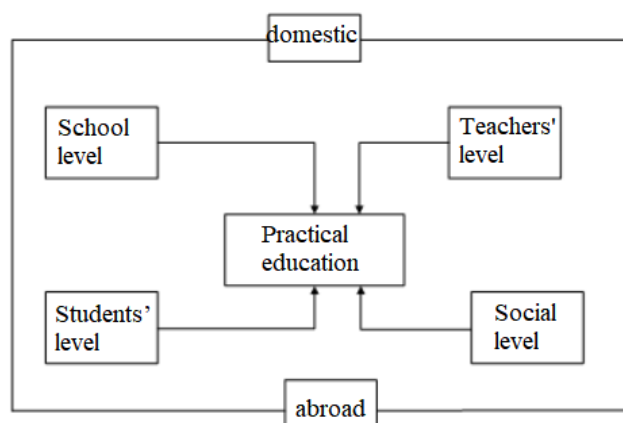


Fig.1 Interaction System of Practice Teaching At Home and Abroad.

#### 3.1 The School Level

The “3 + 1” teaching mode adopted by the Tourism Management (Sino French cooperation) major means that domestic and foreign schools should shoulder the same educational responsibility of cultivating students' ability. Chinese and foreign schools should jointly develop talent training programs and practical teaching systems, constantly expand practice bases, seek more diversified cooperation units and enterprises at home and abroad, and conduct joint personnel training. The school should increase capital investment, build practice bases and introduce virtual simulation technology, so as to realize the vivid practice training environment. In addition, the school can support students to establish travel agencies and tourism consulting companies through providing investment. Teachers with rich practical experiences can be appointed to provide guidance; the income of these agencies should be allocated to students and the school in a certain proportion. While training students' ability of independent practice and the ability of innovation and

entrepreneurship, the school can also stimulate students' thinking on tourism operation and management.

Nowadays, the traditional teaching methods are not suitable for the cultivation of modern talents. Schools should change the traditional teaching and assessment methods appropriately, and pay attention to the personalized development of students. The school needs to improve the internship program, create more social practice opportunities, strengthen the introduction of talents and hire a group of teachers with rich practical experience, and actively carry out exchanges and cooperation with universities in developed countries. Well-known foreign scholars can be employed to hold lectures or teach in the university; domestic students and teachers should be encouraged to actively participate in academic exchanges at home and abroad. Based on the OBE (Outcomes-based Education) Mode, the school should clearly know abilities that students should achieve when they graduate, and then design a reasonable curriculum system to ensure that students can achieve the expected goal. While highlighting the characteristics and advantages of bilingual (Chinese and French) education, students should also be guided to pay more attention to basic theories and application theories.

### 3.2 The Teachers' Level

Teachers should renew their educational ideas, adhere to the principle of “interacting with students, putting practice at the first place and highlighting skills”, effectively integrate into students' learning mode (as shown in Figure 2), cultivate students' cooperative ability and independent learning ability, adjust teaching methods, and turn the traditional “teacher centered” classroom into “students centered” classroom, so as to stimulate students' interest in learning and fully mobilize their enthusiasm. Teachers should also communicate with each other frequently, strengthen their relationship with enterprises and institutions, expand the communication circle, and understand the development trend of the industry. While doing a good job in scientific research, teachers should also take part in some professional skills training, try to serve enterprises and bring learned practical skills into the classroom. It is necessary to form a good cooperative relationship between domestic teachers and foreign teachers in scientific research and teaching; the foreign concept of emphasizing practical education should be introduced into the classroom; relevant teaching methods should also be constantly innovated.

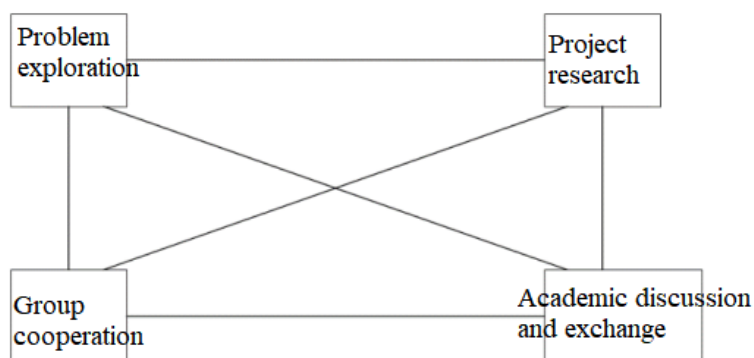


Fig.2 Integration of the Teaching Mode.

### 3.3 The Students' Level

In addition to learning theoretical courses, students should make full use of education resources in the school and grasp every practical learning opportunity, in order to cultivate their innovation and entrepreneurship ability. They need to change from “passive” learning into “active” learning, actively participate in innovation and entrepreneurship activities as well as community programs related to their major to improve their employment ability. In the process of learning, both input and output are necessary. Knowledge points that are not grasped in the classroom should be checked and understood in time after class. Students should not only rely on teachers and teaching materials to obtain knowledge; they need to obtain first-hand information through practical investigation. The place of learning should not be limited to the classroom. The Internet, television and other media

should also be used to get the latest news of the industry. Students need to attend more academic conferences and practical activities at home and abroad. During the school period, they should try their best to obtain professional qualification certificates related to the major, such as the Tour Guide Qualification Certificate and the Tourism Consultant Certificate, so as to become “double certificate” talents and enhance their employment abilities. During the period of studying and practicing abroad, they need to communicate with foreign students more often to learn their innovative ideas and practical abilities.

### **3.4 The Social Level**

The social level is mainly related to internship enterprises. When receiving interns, relevant companies in the tourism industry must combine their economic benefits with the teaching objectives of the school, which is also conducive for enterprises to find and select talents they require. Companies and schools should work out a comprehensive plan for the arrangement of interns. The enterprise can select colleges and universities that can meet their requirements and have good student sources as long-term partners, and carry out in-depth cooperation with these schools and provide training bases for their students. When students enter the enterprise for internship, they usually enter the society for the first time. They are relatively simple-minded. The company should arrange excellent trainers to teach them and arrange them reasonably after understanding their intended positions and specialties. Group activities should also be held regularly to enhance the collective responsibility of interns, help them to build correct attitude towards internship, and cultivate most basic practical skills and service awareness. The leaders of companies can communicate and interact with the school more often, and encourage middle-level staffs to go into universities to improve their academic qualifications. The school can also encourage teachers to go out of the campus and learn practical skills in enterprises, so as to integrate production with learning and meet the requirements of education and gaining interests.

## **4. Conclusion**

The importance of practical teaching in the tourism major has been widely recognized in the education field. But whether practical education really plays a role? The problem needs to be further studied. In order to cultivate senior talents who can adapt to the development of tourism industry, scholars are also exploring practical education system and talent training programs which can meet the development requirements of the new era. Although Ningbo University's Tourism Management (Sino French cooperation) Major has made some achievements since its establishment, there are still some problems. The practical teaching system is weak; the proportion of practical courses is small; the practical courses are not diversified and students' practices cannot reach the expected goal. In order to provide professional talents to the tourism market, schools, teachers, students and the society must form an interaction system. Schools and teachers at home and abroad should work together to formulate practice contents and expected objectives, so that the major can have outstanding advantages, obvious characteristics and social recognition, and help the school to become a double first-class university. It also provides reference for the undergraduate practical teaching of tourism management major in colleges and universities.

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