

Solutions to the Plight of the Development of Foreign Language Professionals in Chinese Enterprises

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Abstract

The professionals are always an important part of the enterprise core competitiveness and even an important index to measure the competitiveness of enterprises in the fierce global market competition. However, there are some drawbacks of the current development of foreign language professionals in Chinese enterprises. This paper deeply analyzes the plight against the development of foreign language professionals and put forward some solutions from the angle of universities and enterprises themselves.

Keywords: Chinese enterprises; foreign language professionals; plight; compound professionals

1. Introduction

With the development of economic globalization and the growth of global linkages, Chinese businesses are increasingly taking part in the fierce competition on the international market, which has promoted the importance of foreign language professionals to the survival and development of Chinese enterprises on overseas markets. The professionals' contribution to the enterprise is no longer on such professional levels as business negotiation. Those professionals with good command of modern trading knowledge and practice can assist the development of enterprises in the following ways: to save the cost by shortening the cycle of transactions; to introduce advanced management conception and experience, improve and enhance the operation and management of the enterprise. The quantity and quality of such professionals has become an important index to measure the competitiveness of enterprises (Zhao Ziran, 2006). However, due to China's imbalanced economic development and the too fast development of foreign languages major in universities, Chinese enterprises are faced with an embarrassing situation in which compound foreign language professionals are in demand, whereas English major graduates are in unemployment. Therefore, a comprehensive analysis of the plight of the development of foreign language professionals will help Chinese enterprises and local economic development, provide basis and direction for the enterprises human resources development planning and universities' foreign language majors training.

2. The plight against the development of professionals of foreign languages in Chinese enterprises

2.1 High academic degree with low ability

Since the beginning of the 1990's, almost every college in China has opened foreign language majors, which leads to an excess of foreign language graduates, especially English majors have become one of the top ten majors of difficult employment. In this context, enterprises begin to enjoy the advantage of active employment of two-way choice on the job market, recruiting graduates with key university degree and various certificates while ignoring the language ability itself as the essential feature of foreign languages. Applied competence consisting of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating is a comprehensive reflection of a foreign language professional's ability to receive, understand, produce and send the transmission of information, which is also a basic criterion for the foreign language professionals. Enterprises must get rid of academic degree and university reputation oriented employment concept, emphasizing practicality of foreign professionals. On the other hand, because of the limits of college foreign language majors' course design, many graduates are equipped with plenty of theoretical knowledge but gain very little opportunity of social practice which causes the phenomenon of high academic degree with low ability. As a result, they suffer from a disconnection between language knowledge and duty required in their jobs. In practice, they may be unable to read professional business correspondence, books and materials in foreign languages, and even find it hard to effectively communicate in the target language. Therefore, the inefficient communication and exchange of information may negatively affect the business.

2.2 The lack of compound foreign language professionals

Diversification of both the society and the industry requires professionals' transformation into compound talents. The compound professionals of foreign languages refer to personnel working in foreign enterprises who can not only understand the foreign business and management, but also can carry out trade negotiations, translations and practical operations by more than one foreign language (Meng Lingchao, 2008). Foreign language teaching in China has long regarded foreign language as an independent discipline, such as English literature, linguistics and foreign language education, causing the enterprises to employ personnel with pure language knowledge. They are more suitable for being engaged in language teaching and research rather than meet the personnel requirements of industries and enterprises. Therefore, when working in face of foreign law, foreign trade and management, foreign accounting, foreign logistics and other diversified work environment, foreign language professionals deeply feel the foreign language is more than a communicative tool. It's rather a tool involving almost all disciplines. Apart from language knowledge, knowledge about business management, foreign trade and others is not only a great challenge to the foreign language professionals, but also the inevitable requirement of "foreign language + professional" mode for compound talents. The blending level of "Foreign language + professional" mode has become the decisive factor of development of foreign language professionals in Chinese enterprises.

2.3 The lack of marketing and management ability

Foreign language professionals in Chinese enterprises serve to establish corporate image, expand the overseas market and promote the sales of products and services.

Marketing is the job functions and objectives for them. As a practical skill, it requires practitioners to design and organize marketing language and strategy according to the consumer's psychology. The current foreign

language professionals in business generally lack marketing knowledge. They pay more attention to language accuracy and fluency in foreign publicity and business negotiations, neglecting Westners' thinking habits and cultural differences, which causes a lot of bore and confusion in business communication. On the other hand, the modern enterprises require employees with abilities of adapting to various environments, exploring new areas of development, organizing and cooperating, making accurate prediction of complex things and taking immediate action. However, with single structure of knowledge, fixed thinking and lack of multidisciplinary knowledge to bring creative ideas and inspiration, traditional foreign language professionals can't live up to the responsibility of helping the enterprise to realize the internationalization and improve the international competitiveness.

2.4 Few continuing education and training opportunities.

The enterprise personnel continuing education, a very important part of Chinese current education system, mainly refers to the enterprise providing the employees with a variety of new theories, new technology, new skills and new knowledge so as to better enhance their occupation accomplishment and innovation ability. Continuing education contributes a lot to fostering innovation ability and comprehensive quality among management personnel and professionals in the enterprise (Ying Zhenji, 2012). In today's society, with information technology booming and knowledge exploding, it poses a new challenge to knowledge updating. Foreign language professionals have come to realize their out of date knowledge and ability and they generally have more desire to learn. However, due to the problem of cost and time efficiency, enterprises are keen on the pursuit of material capital and the accumulation of capital, neglecting the continuing education and training of the staff. As a result, foreign language professionals in Chinese enterprises often experience occupational fatigue, emotional loss and other problems, which have serious impact on their contribution to the enterprise.

2.5 Low sense of professional identity

Professional identity, a psychological concept, refers to the individual views on occupation target, social value and other factors, and it is consistent with social assessment and expectation of the occupation. Professional identity affects employees' loyalty, upward force, sense of achievement and dedication. It is an important psychological basis for employees to get along with their work and the internal incentive factor to help their development (Wei Shuhua & Shan Xianguang, 2005). As white-collar workers, foreign language professionals win a lot of admiration in the society. Working in the office, enjoying business trips, hotels, entertainments and high salary is people's common expectation of their work. In reality, the salary of foreign language professionals in enterprises is only slightly higher than employees of the same rank. During the foreign trade negotiation and contract signing, they often work overtime, withstanding enormous pressure from the assignment. In case of foreign trade failure, people cannot help but blame the foreign language professionals. All these factors lead to low sense of professional identity of foreign language professionals. Job hopping phenomenon is thus widespread among them.

3. Ways for foreign language professionals to be out of the plight

3.1 Universities to change training mode of foreign language majors

China's *College English Teaching Syllabus* (2000) pointed out that "China only needs a small amount of foreign language professionals majoring in foreign literature, foreign languages and the combination of them to be engaged in foreign linguistics and literature teaching and research, whereas compound professionals with multidisciplinary knowledge in diplomatics, economics, laws, business and news are in great demand. ". At present, the professional direction of foreign language learning in Chinese universities is not obvious, curriculum content single, scope of knowledge narrow. There is lack of scientific and reasonable curriculum consistent with the goal of cultivating compound professionals. The key to cultivating compound foreign language professionals lies in solid language knowledge and practicability of the knowledge. The teaching mode of "practice as the core, English as the main line, business as the background" (also known as PEB) put forward by Shenzhen Vocational and Technical College has been proved to be effective. At the same time, foreign language major in the universities should be combined with other disciplines to strengthen the interdisciplinary composite, integrating English professional, comprehensive language practice and related professional courses practice. Universities should strengthen exchanges and cooperation with the enterprises to practice the university-enterprise cooperated training mode and enterprise oriented training. In conclusion, universities in China should follow the compound profession oriented training to cultivate high-quality foreign language professional to meet the needs of society, market and economic construction. Only in this way, can the Chinese enterprises go out of the plight of lacking compound foreign language professionals from the source.

3.2 The enterprise to establish the perfect and effective on-the-job training system

At present, the majority of enterprises in China attach importance to the introduction of foreign language professionals, but ignore on-the-job training. Especially, small and medium-sized enterprises have not set up perfect employee training system in which the training investment is quite insufficient. As a result, the professionals find it hard to adapt to the business and then generate discontent, which prevents them from fulfilling their roles in the enterprise. To solve this problem, enterprises should develop phased plan and long-term training plan and invite experts and excellent professionals in the field to give lectures. The on-the-job training should stick to the principle of practicability and effectiveness, the training content to meet the market development goal. The enterprise personnel department needs to introduce training into the staff evaluation system and establish a set of effective training system by carrying on the analysis, evaluation and feedback of effective training effect. At the same time, the on-the-job training of foreign language professionals must have predictability, not only to meet the enterprise current needs, but also to meet the needs of the future development of the enterprise. The enterprise should correctly evaluate and predict the trend of international business and trade and accordingly train professionals of the prospective field. In the training, enterprise should also pay attention to the human resource reserve of foreign language professionals and potential professionals.

3.3 The enterprise to reform the salary incentive mechanism and emphasize the cultivation of foreign language professionals' spirit

In order to improve sense of professional identity, trust and loyalty, the salary system must be reformed by

the way of implementing effective incentive and improving welfare. Besides, enterprises should value foreign language professionals' spiritual need, cultivating their sense of belonging. In China, foreign languages professionals belong to the high intelligence and high degree group. A significant feature of such a group is that their pursuit of economic interests always goes along with the pursuit of spiritual satisfaction, especially the need to be respected (Zhao Ziran, 2006). The enterprise can create opportunities for foreign language professionals to participate in decision making and discussion of major problems of the enterprise so as to improve their sense of responsibility and provoke greater enthusiasm for their work. Enterprises should also care about their occupational development plan, helping them to integrate with the enterprise. Material earning plus the spiritual satisfaction, namely "the spiritual welfare", can effectively help foreign language professionals to develop sense of identity and belonging.

3.4 Foreign language professionals to strengthen their own quality improvement

The quality of foreign language professionals includes foreign language proficiency, business knowledge and cross-cultural knowledge etc.. As a changeless discipline, language develops with the development of society. The development of network and technology is continually adding a lot of new words to language. Only by keeping learning can foreign language professionals keep pace with the times and catch up with trends of foreign language development. They also need to strengthen learning of business, basic knowledge of office, trade knowledge and marketing skills. In short, all the knowledge related to the business of trade should be concerned by them. Finally, the economic globalization has shortened the distance between the peoples of the world to a certain extent, but the differences in national traditional culture will exist for a long time. The work characteristics of foreign language professionals demand them not only to strengthen learning of the professional knowledge and business skills but also to study and research the target country's cultural tradition, which helps to improve their working ability, avoid intercultural misunderstandings in international activities of and improve the efficiency of negotiations.

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