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The Way to Cultivate Characteristic Talents Majoring in Marketing in Agricultural Universities and Colleges

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Abstract In face of modern enterprises' picky needs for marketing talents, the majority of graduates majoring in marketing from agricultural universities and colleges are often criticized due to old marketing concept, mediocre expertise, lack of practical ability and lack of communication skills in the process of searching job. It exposes the flaws of agricultural universities and colleges in training objectives of marketing talents, curriculum setting, features, teachers and their quality. The marketing education should serve the marketing practice needs, and the training mode and training way of marketing talents in agricultural universities and colleges need to be urgently reformed and improved. To satisfy the needs of enterprises, it is necessary to establish modern educational thought of marketing and training philosophy of application-based marketing talents; position the majors to highlight the characteristics of agricultural universities and colleges, cultivate all-around, application-based, inter-disciplinary marketing talents and explore new ways to cultivate agricultural marketing talents.

Key words Agricultural universities and colleges, Marketing, Talent training mode, Teaching philosophy

1 Agricultural enterprises' demand for marketing talents

In the Pearl River Delta area, the supporting infrastructure is developed, the manufacturing industry is at the world advanced level, and the demand for all types of marketing talent is huge. The data show that in Guangzhou City, it is easier for the liberal arts graduates to find a job than the science and engineering graduates^[1]; the graduates can easily find a good job, who major in management, marketing, service, culture, education, biotechnology, pharmacy, feed, automobile, petrochemical industry and logistics.

The demand structure of graduates is concentrated in management, marketing, services, culture and education industry and other related majors. Specifically, in Shenzhen, qualification and experience are equally important. In addition to educational background, the corporate recruitment pays more attention to whether having experience and good psychological quality of bearing great work pressure. In Dongguan, some "professional towns" have emerged, which specialize in characteristic manufacturing, such as clothing, furniture, woolen textile, shoemaking, electronics, metal stamping, mold manufacturing, and plastic products. In the next few years, it is in urgent need of a large number of marketing talents, salesmen, sales directors and sales managers; the demand for advanced management and marketing talents in Zhuhai City is ceaselessly growing.

In order to understand various types of agricultural enterprises' demand for marketing talents, I conducted a survey of the demand of 150 agricultural enterprises for marketing

talents in July – September 2011, in the form of questionnaire, in Guangzhou, Foshan, Shunde and Zhongshan. These agricultural enterprises mainly specialize in the processing of feed, agricultural means of production, and agricultural products.

By the analysis of 136 valid questionnaires, it shows that the overall demand of agricultural enterprises for marketing talents is huge, and this conclusion confirms the trend of urgent needs for sales talents in the Pearl River Delta area as a whole.

In the survey of quality of the graduates majoring in marketing that the enterprises are eagerest to hire, we see that the enterprises pay the greatest attention to the overall quality of marketing graduates from agricultural colleges, and up to 66.8% of enterprises focus on the marketing skills of the graduates; the factors of graduates' marketing ability that the enterprises need include integrated marketing quality, marketing knowledge of agricultural products, marketing ethics and responsibility, professionalism, interpersonal communication skills, resilience and coordination ability, ability of expression, computers and foreign languages, economic knowledge, ability to learn, and writing skills (Table 1).

From Table 1, we see that the employers are most concerned about the overall marketing quality of the graduates. In addition, the employers also pay great attention to capacity for taking pains, quality of professional ethics, communication skills, even higher than the attention to professional knowledge and skills.

Clearly, the assiduous and industrious all-around talents, having good moral quality and strong practical ability, familiar with the professional knowledge and industry development status, are most favored by agricultural enterprises. This requires the agricultural universities and colleges to commit themselves to cultivating knowledgeable, skilled, high-quality, all-around, application-based, and inter-disciplinary marketing talents,

based on the actual needs of enterprises.

Table 1 Agricultural enterprises' demand for the marketing capability

The ranking of importance // %	Quality and Skills	High	Higher	Average	Low	Lower
25.6	The integrated marketing quality	25.6	66.8	6.5	1.1	0
15.4	Marketing knowledge on means of agricultural production, feed and agricultural products	11.6	44.9	35.6	4.5	3.4
14.5	Moral quality, vocational ethics and responsibility	37.4	49.1	13.5	0	0
10.9	Professionalism	46.6	44.5	8.9	0	0
7.8	Interpersonal communication skills	13.1	65.9	18.0	3.0	0
6.6	Adaptability and coordination capacity	27.1	46.6	26.3	0	0
5.6	Verbal ability	17.5	66.7	15.8	0	0
5.3	Computers and foreign languages	2.4	37.6	52.3	5.7	2.0
3.8	Economic knowledge	6.8	45.4	33.8	6.4	7.6
2.5	Ability to learn	11.6	44.1	30.6	2.1	0
2.0	Writing skills	18.3	55.7	24.6	2.4	0

2 Problems in cultivation of marketing talents in agricultural universities and colleges

2.1 The training features are not prominent, never reflecting characteristics of agricultural universities and colleges

All agricultural universities and colleges have set up the marketing major, but the marketing teaching mode does not reflect the features of agricultural colleges, and there is little difference between the marketing graduates from agricultural colleges and marketing talents from regular colleges, with not prominent features.

At present, the curriculum setting of marketing major in the majority of agricultural universities and colleges has not yet highlighted the features of serving regional agricultural economy and the agriculture-countryside-farmer construction. Some graduates do not understand the agricultural common sense; do not know the production, processing and distribution operation process of agricultural products; know little about the knowledge of agricultural products test and food safety. It is difficult for them to adapt to the recruitment requirements of the agricultural enterprises within a short period of time, far from meeting the requirements of marketing jobs in other industries, therefore, they are inevitably mired in the "dilemma".

2.2 The setting of marketing courses is imperfect The curriculum setting of marketing major in many agricultural universities and colleges is out of step with the actual situation. The marketing courses only talk about theory but fail to solve the practical problems in agricultural marketing; there are few courses on the whole process of agricultural production, processing, and circulation system, a variety of agricultural service organizations, food safety and quarantine of agricultural products, etc. There is also a shortage of practical operation-based marketing courses on cultivation of students' practice skills, language skills, interpersonal skills and thinking ability. Limited by the site, only a few practicums simulate marketing scenarios in classroom, playing a limited role in developing students' marketing skills.

2.3 The teachers lack innovation capacity, with insufficiency in theoretical originality and foresight Driven by

scientific research and titles, the current university teachers universally put emphasis on scientific research but neglect teaching, and the atmosphere of whole-heartedly seeking teaching is bleak. Most marketing teachers are familiar with the theory of marketing major, but most of them adopt the method of "book teaching + deduction teaching", and the majority of students accept the spoon-feeding education^[2].

The teaching of marketing courses in the foreign universities mostly uses deduction teaching method, and draws problem conclusions and basic theories from the real and vivid case study, giving full play to the initiative of the students, conducive to the understanding and application of theories, and stimulating students' innovative ideas and innovative thought. Constrained by time, funding, contact, etc., domestic marketing teachers rarely collect the latest cases of business practices; some teachers directly go from the gate to the universities, lacking marketing practice, full understanding of enterprises, and vitality in teaching. Students' learning in the classes is not effective enough, difficult to germinate new marketing thinking.

2.4 The good and bad construction of student marketing practice bases are intermingled The marketing discipline is a strongly practical application-based discipline, which needs specific sites and specialized marketing practice bases to complement the theoretical teaching, but in reality, the teacher team in some local agricultural universities and colleges is not strong enough, having not established the daily practice teaching bases that can be relied and used. In the teaching programs, there are only some simple teaching practices and comprehensive practices arranged, with single and stale methods, providing few opportunities for students; the ability to use modern information tools and means to analyze and solve problems is yet to be strengthened.

2.5 The cultivation form of practical ability and assessment channel of practical ability are single and simple^[3]

In terms of the cultivation of practical ability, some agricultural universities and colleges only set some practice programs in the teaching plan, such as the retrieval practice, negotiation practice, and questionnaire practice, but the assessment is not strict, having not conducted appraisal in accordance with the strict assessment system, thus the students are not enthusiasm-

tic, and the phenomenon of cooperation or fraud is serious, so that the practical ability is not forged and improved effectively.

3 Ways to cultivate characteristic talents who major in marketing in agricultural universities and colleges

3.1 Making the training objectives highlight characteristics of "application + agriculture + marketing" University Undergraduate Major Catalogue and Major Introduction released by the Ministry of Education, has made it clear that the cultivation objective of marketing students is "learning the basic theory and basic knowledge of marketing and business management, receiving basic training of marketing methods and techniques, having the ability to analyze and solve marketing problems" ^[4]. This objective illuminates the basic training direction of the marketing graduates.

However, based on the current situation of China's modern agriculture and the agricultural enterprises' requirements on marketing talents' quality, it is necessary to carry out synchronized update and improvement of the training objectives of marketing talents in agricultural universities and colleges.

The training objective of marketing talents in agricultural universities and colleges should be identified as follows: cultivating the advanced application-based and all-around marketing talents with good ideological and moral quality, professional quality, cultural quality, mental and physical quality, who can adapt to the development of modern agriculture, meet the agricultural enterprises' needs for carrying out marketing activities, and answer the development requirements of the contemporary market economy ^[5].

3.2 Positioning the major to highlight characteristics of agricultural universities According to economic development, industrial restructuring and the market demand status, it is necessary to amend the training objectives marketing major. The training objectives should be oriented for urban and rural areas, serving agriculture, countryside and farmer, and highlighting the characteristics of agricultural universities and colleges.

Positioning of the marketing major in agricultural universities and colleges is as follows: "Based on the needs of agriculture and rural areas, the professional marketing talents, not only mastering marketing theory and skills, but also mastering the basic knowledge of rural markets and rural community and operational characteristics of agricultural enterprises, should be cultivated for various types of enterprises to develop the rural market, various types of rural enterprises (agricultural enterprises, township and village enterprises) to exploit domestic and international markets" ^[7]. The major is oriented for the cultivation of high-quality marketing talents for all types of enterprises to exploit the rural market.

3.3 Making the cultivation measures highlight the idea of integration of "agriculture", "marketing" and "practice"

3.3.1 Establishing characteristic, comprehensive, practical and application-based new course system. According to the characteristics and training objectives of agricultural universities and colleges, the former curriculum setting is adjusted based on the training philosophy of all-around application-based mar-

keting talents. Some courses intrinsically linked to each other are merged; for courses with highly repetitive content, it is necessary to reorganize them, and set new courses. For example, "Marketing", "Marketing Principles", "Market Survey and Forecasting", "Marketing Planning" and other core courses can be integrated into "Marketing Principles and Practices"; in order to highlight the characteristics of agricultural universities and colleges, the course of "Marketing Theory and Practice of Agricultural Products" can be added; according to some new phenomena occurring in at the new stage of agricultural development, "Overview of Food Safety and Quarantine of Agricultural Products", "Marketing Ethics and Corporate Responsibility", "Food Marketing", "Animal Marketing", and other auxiliary courses of agricultural product marketing can be added; a series of courses of marketing practice can be also added.

3.3.2 Trying to use a variety of teaching methods for marketing teaching.

(i) Case and practical operation teaching method.

Teachers should conscientiously prepare the case materials of agribusiness practice. All cases are required to be from the practical problems encountered in the marketing of agricultural products. Teachers should make students familiar with the production and operation of agricultural enterprises, and guide students' independent thinking and program design capabilities. Then the teachers should discuss and explain the cases, and train students' ability to think independently, analyze and solve problems.

(ii) Interactive teaching method.

Teachers should create and design a real learning situation based on the teaching task and teaching points. By setting the questions purposefully, the teachers should guide the students to think, act and speak, learning actively. The students can be divided into several groups for attending classes, facilitating the students' exchange of experience of teaching content and feelings. Teachers can use the role-playing method (such as the simulation of business negotiation situation), to train students to complete the task of teaching in a certain period of time, then conducting comparative analysis to train the students' ability to summarize.

(iii) Project teaching method.

In the classes of the market survey capability training, students can be divided into groups, using the survey project to linking the students. In the process of project design and implementation, the students are personally on the scene to participate in the data collection and practical operation, which can train the students' practical ability to solve problems.

(iv) Experience teaching method.

In the classes of marketing practice, teachers can lead students to go to agricultural enterprises, supermarkets, and bazaars, making the students understand and experience products, by living in the real marketing environment. Tracking the process of marketing and management can make students experience marketing theory in the reality, and master marketing skills.

3.3.3 Improving the teachers' theoretical knowledge and practical ability. Universities should set up special funds for the

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should give a series of preferential financial and fiscal policies for new rural finance, including some fiscal policy incentives and supporting measures.

4.5 Improving the supporting infrastructure construction of new rural finance At present, the supporting infrastructure building refers to opening the new rural financial settlement, credit, and financial trading system as soon as possible, in order to reduce the operating costs of the new rural finance, and promote the business development of the village bank. As to the concrete operation, we can establish a shared platform model, and can also further improve the efficient use of existing platforms. At the same time, the new rural finance can try the use of innovative sales and service channels in rural areas, expand the point of contact with customers, and abate the impact arising from the shortage of network.

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teachers' further study and exchange; invite business managers and marketing directors as the visiting professors to lecture for the students; encourage university teachers to participate in marketing practice; organize teachers to go to enterprises for the collection of cases and accumulation of practical experience; encourage teachers to participate in the establishment of marketing business when the teaching is not affected, or to do a part-time job in the business in leisure time, which can not only help arrange students' practice, but also complement fresh cases for the teaching content to make up for flaws in the traditional teaching materials, and enhance the students' practical ability.

3. 3. 4 Encouraging students to participate in all kinds of marketing practices of agricultural products. It is necessary to encourage the students to participate in various kinds of marketing competition, marketing program design, marketing planning, questionnaire contest, and marketing simulation practice. For the extra work of teachers in participating in guidance and evaluating the students' marketing practice activities, it is regarded as the same teaching load. The colleges can rely on the Agricultural Committee and other agriculture-related enterprises and institutions, to jointly build marketing practice base, and establish the operational mechanism integrating production, learning and research. Students can provide planning and consulting services for enterprises, par-

- ticipating in the operation of business market survey, market expansion and advertising planning. It is necessary to arrange students to participate in social research and survey activities, to shorten the time and psychological distance for the students to adapt to the job.

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