

The Necessities of University-Enterprise Genuine Cooperation: A Case Study from Cross-border E-commerce

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Abstract: University-Enterprise cooperation (UEC) is the must-do if the application-oriented university intends to achieve connotative development. To study the necessities of University-Enterprise Genuine Cooperation (UEGC) is worthy of enhancing talent cultivation. This study chooses case method to study “3+1” experimental program in school of International Business, ZISU, explores the necessities of UEGC and provides the experiences for further development.

1. Introduction

University-Enterprise cooperation (UEC for short) is the must-do if the application-oriented university intends to achieve connotative development [1]. Recently, the local universities in China are actively pushing UEC talent cultivation module, and eventually made the talent supply-side and demand-side integrated structurally. However, some issues has been emerged. Firstly, there is obvious difference between universities and enterprises [2]. Within the cooperation, the universities claim that the rate and quality of employment are equally important, but they ignore the rule of labor market. Simultaneously, the enterprises emphase the maximum of economic effectiveness through decreasing the labor cost, but the all-around development of human beings are neglected. Secondly, there is no unified management system between universities and enterprises[3]. The universities make the plan of teaching, evaluation and attendance by semesters, and prior the theoretical studies to the hands-on skills. However, the enterprises are task-oriented and require the flexible time management. Thus, the teaching plan and business operation affect each other. Finally, the cooperation modules are homogeneous and superficial [4]. The existing university-enterprise cooperation modules include order-form, apprenticeship and so on, those models are largely identical. Meanwhile, the universities lack of deep research of the labor demand, thus the gap between labor supply and demand has not been filled yet.

The mentioned phenomenon is even severer in the field of cross-border e-commerce which is at the early stage of development. The existed talent cultivation modules are mostly based on the relevant traditional major, the characters of emerging industry are not included. The subject knowledge lacks of depth and scope, students’ practical ability cannot be cultivated effectively. Therefore, there is gap between talent supply and demand. The demand of suitable talent in

emerging industry is urgent [5], which requires the universities and enterprises to reconstruct the necessities with the new era need.

This study chooses case method to study “3+1” experimental program in school of international business, ZISU (“3+1” program for short). And this study intends to explore the connotation of University-Enterprise Genuine Cooperation (UEGC for short), reveal the necessities of UEGC, and hopefully provide the successful experience.

2. The Definition of Concept and Literature Review

2.1 The Definition of Concept

The cooperation between university and enterprise is not the new research. The researchers and practitioners have been taking initiative to explore various aspects of UEC since 1980s. However, due to the diversified purposes, levels, modules of UEC, there is no consensus on the concept of UEC. According to Bryson [6], cross-organization refers to two or more than two organizations working together to achieve what they cannot achieve alone. This illustration points out three elements, they are respectively organizations, work together, and outcomes or aims. Hargreaves defines “genuine” as the sustainable partnership which is in the basis of interaction. The parties are equal in the cooperation [7]. Therefore, UEGC is a series of activities that make universities and enterprises become the equal and sustainable partnership, achieve the cooperated aim and win-win situation. And the process of those activities would produce new knowledge, innovated module and practical talents. According to the interaction, area and content of cooperation, UEGC can be classified as the types of research, cultivation and consultancy [8]. This study focuses on the cultivation in UEGC, which includes various cooperated activities and shareholders from different levels [9].

2.2 Literature Review

There are plethora of researches about successful factors in the area of UEC. Scholars mainly focus on the factors of aim, trust, culture and communication. Aim is a set of strategies, vision, targets, plans and expectation. Many studies discussed the compatibility of aim, lacking of compatibility could affect the final cooperation outcomes [10]. The development aims are different in university and enterprise [11], which requires the parties to reach the common at overall aim, periodical aim, strategic plan and so on [12]. University is the talent supply side, enterprise is the talent demand side, and to increase the employment rate of graduates is one of the important aim in university while to recruit suitable talent is the necessity to gain competition advantages for enterprise. Therefore, university and enterprise have shared aim about talent cultivation. Trust is the key factor to create UEC [13] To lack of trust among parties would negatively affect the transmission of communication, and impede the cooperative progress [14,15]. The effective of trust depends on the cooperative quality. Trust is considered as supportive factor in successful cooperation and vital factor in failure cooperation program [15]. Culture is another key factor. Culture in cooperation means the parties have shared value on perception, thinking mindset and problem-solving [16]. The parties should try their best to respect the cultural difference and balance the demands [14]. Besides, the common discourse system represent the consistent cultural in communication, thus the parties should unify the working language to decrease the communication cost [17]. Meanwhile, the details in cooperation are deeply influenced by culture, such as the meeting routines, proposal, the understanding of trust, time, and illustration of protocol.

The same factors play the different roles in different areas of cooperation. Natural science and humanities have different discipline system and characteristics, and their research methods and

tools are also different. What is more, the cooperated level is different due to the different research purposes. According to Niedergassel and Leker[18],some outcomes of natural sciences research are different within different environments, therefore those areas' cooperation cannot be duplicated. According to some researches, the factor of trust is considered more important in humanity discipline UEC than in natural science,while the natural science UBE pay more attention on research tools and infrastructure. So UEGC have to consider the specialties of discipline. The studies under the background of different disciplines focus on discussing the cooperation modules, such as the discussion of importance, path and experience of innovation on engineering talent cultivation [19,20].The study of total process in marketing major from four perspective of personality, mindset, ability and knowledge [21].The application of apprenticeship in cleaning and emission reduction technology[22].Lastly but no least, the collaborative innovation model in medical science[23].

3. Research Design and Method

3.1 Research Method

Case study is one of the empirical study, which includes single and multi-cases studies [23]. Single case study is suitable for the research area which has not been clearly defined and hardly observed. There is no unified concept defined by academic research for UEGC, so this study chose single case study method.

3.2 Case Selection

Case study starts with case screening. In general, special case is suitable for case verify and theory expansion [23]. To base on the principle of theoretical sampling, the case screening criteria is followed: firstly, the cooperation period must be over three years, which can ensure the sustainability of cooperation; secondly, the cooperation program is in process, and there have been already achievement; thirdly, the cooperation program should be recognized widely, and the parties could share the benefits. According to the above criteria, this study chose “3+1” program as research object. One of the researcher in this study is the managerial member in university, and working on the relevant teaching stuff, therefore accumulated rich materials.

“3+1” program combines cross-border e-commerce comprehensive experimental zone, the foreign language resources in Zhejiang International Studies University, well-known e-commerce platforms (Alibaba, Amazon, Wish and so on), and other venture capital institutes, and develops new innovation and entrepreneurship educational module, to build advanced cross-border e-commerce talent cultivation module. “3+1” program has had five sessions of graduates since 2016, which has already constructed the cross-border e-commerce talent cultivation ecological chain, including talent cultivation, course development and teachers' training. This program provides the effective path for increasing employment rate, solving the labor shortage and bridging the gap between talent supply and demand sides, and also provides the profound experiences for UEGC.

3.3 Findings

According to the case study, the necessities of UEGC are defined as the prerequisite (foundation necessities) that connect the university and enterprise, the basement (action necessities) that support the cooperation activities, and the motivation that achieve the cooperation goal(aim necessities).

3.3.1 Foundation Necessities

Within UEGC, the parties should firstly recognize the foundation necessities which is the endowment of resources and the prerequisite of cooperation. Secondly, to evaluate the foundation necessities for confirm the suitable partner and cooperation module. We found that the foundation necessities include tangible and intangible necessities.

Tangible necessities refers to the necessities that can be seen and touched, such as the specialists, the interviewers from both university and enterprise mentioned about the demand of specialist from different areas. In addition, interviewer from university care about whether the enterprise partner could offer the practical scenario, and the students care about whether they can learn the hands-on skills of the platform. Furthermore, geographic location affects negatively on cooperation. Tangible necessities are hard to be changed or cost long-term to be accumulated, such as geographic location, specialist, and infrastructure. Those necessities cannot be changed by subjective wishes, they can be called objective necessities.

Intangible necessities refer to the necessities that cannot be seen and touched, such as the previous experience, the similarities and complementary among the members in different parties. The previous experience would enhance the trust. The intangible necessities reflect the objective wishes from the parties' member. For example, the similarity and complementary depends on the members' insight, and sometimes is related to the personalities. The similarity on working style decrease the communication costs, which means the university interviewer concern about the complementary on the level of knowledge.

3.3.2 Action Necessities

Action necessities are the basis that support a series of activities in cooperation. The study found that action necessities include cultural identity and synergy.

Cultural identity plays very important role in UEC. The culture in cooperation refers to the shared value in awareness of problems, thinking method and problem-solving among parties[15]. Cultural identity reflects in the mutual trust among parties, whether the parties could open and honest to each other, the consistence of mindset and action. The interviewers from both university and enterprise claim the importance of trust in UEC, they think trust is the core of long-term cooperation. Whether the parties are honest and open reflects in communication style, such as the real need can be expressed and any changes can be informed immediately. The new cooperation team requires unified thinking mode and working style, otherwise the cooperation progress will be influenced negatively [24].

Teamwork emphasizes synergy, especially in UEGC. Synergy refers to the ability to coordinate various resources or different parties to achieve the goal that cannot be achieved by oneself. This study found that synergy includes flexibility, positivity and sustainability. The flexibility and positivity mainly reflects in that whether the members in different parties communicate to each other during informal time period (outside the regular meeting and working hours). The UEGC can develop smoothly if the members in different parties could think outside the box, and be flexible to deal with cooperation affairs. In addition, the positivity reflects in members' cooperating attitudes, such as whether the members could take initiative to know about partners' interests and needs. There are horizontal and vertical activities in UEGC. Whether the resources and abilities that are used in one activity can be transferred to other activities represent the synergy and the sustainability of the cooperation [25].

3.3.3 Aim Necessities

The aim of cooperation is to meet the parties' needs, so the needs are the motivation of cooperation. Cooperation will not be existed without the parties' needs, no matter how the foundation and action necessities are superior. According to this study, aim necessities include personal and organizational needs.

The personal needs include the needs of teachers in university, practitioners in enterprises and the students. The students' needs include employment information and ability. They mainly want to gain some knowledge that can be helpful for getting job offers. Generally speaking, the university teachers need more practical information, the enterprise practitioners need to improve theoretical knowledge, however, our study shows that the university interviewers concern about the importance of practical information, the enterprises interviewers do not pay the equal concern on the theoretical knowledge. What is more, the students lay more attention on whether they can get satisfied job offer, the future growth is ignored by them.

Course development is the university's needs, recruitment efficiency is the enterprise's needs, and both of the university and enterprise need benefits of the cooperation outcome and organizational reputation. The university needs to build their own features of the course; the enterprise could know more about the potential stuff; and both of them in UEGC could build well known reputation in crossing area through sharing cooperation outcome.

4. Discussion

For making the UEGC to develop sustainably, "3+1" program has been established in its own characteristics, to activate the foundation necessities through constructing symbiotic network, to improve synergy through multi-subject participating and transdisciplinary, to enhance cultural identity through digging alumni recourses, to activate new cooperation aim through cultivating employment ability and enterprise incubation. (Refer to the figure 1 below)

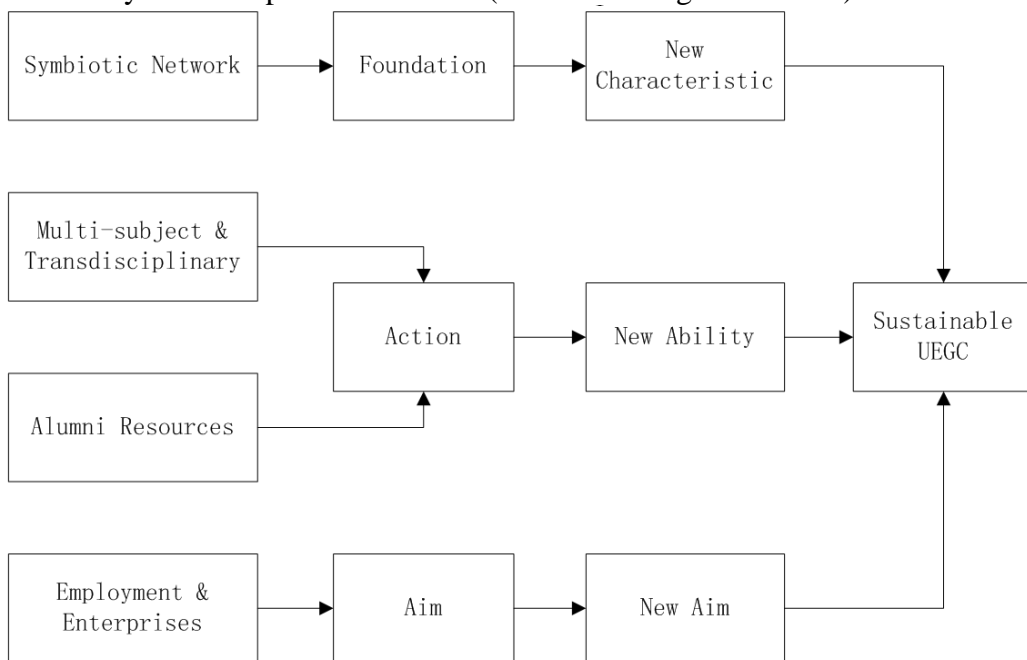


Figure 1: The Path to Sustainable UEGC

4.1 To Activate the Foundation Necessities through Constructing Symbiotic Network

“3+1” program is established in Hangzhou cross-border e-commerce comprehensive experimental zone to construct symbiotic network with other university and enterprises. The practitioners in enterprises take part in the whole process of course development and delivery. And the teachers in university to learn the real business operation in enterprise. The parties go deep into the partners’ working scenarios, and are open to each other on the basis of equity, and finally the interdependent and symbiotic network is constructed. The sharing mechanism in symbiotic network fully activate the foundation necessities to release the potential abilities. The symbiotic network provides the opportunities for the members in different parties to know each other and lay the foundation of building team spirit.

4.2 To Improve Synergy through Multi-Subject Participating and Transdisciplinary

“3+1” program cooperate with different e-commerce platforms, such as Alibaba, Amazon, Wish, and other venture capital organizations. Those enterprise partners are varied on scales, market areas, functions, so they are complementary with each other. The enterprise partners would design the teaching content with the teachers in university, to provide the improved knowledge structure to students. The theoretical knowledge and practical skills are integrated through the total process, thus the students’ learning outcome can be verified and enhanced immediately. The tailor-made cultivation is also provided, thus the students could have more options. Meanwhile, “3+1” program is run through the whole university rather than limited in one faculty, all the year 3 students have equal chance to register in this program. Multi-subject, transdisciplinary and flexible cultivation module create the characteristics of this program, and lift the synergy of organization.

4.3 To Enhance Cultural Identity through Digging Alumni Recourses

The vocational training programs are usually welcomed by the people who want to learn practical skills and improve employment ability. The professional content in university is labeled as theoretical, impractical, and disjoint with social needs. The findings of this study shows that the practitioners in enterprises are usually outcome-driven mindset, and they really care about the whether the task is specified and measurable. The cognition bias course the emotional gap among parties, which affect cultural identity negatively. “3+1” program choose to dig alumni resources to solve the problem. There are five sessions of graduate in “3+1” program, many of them have already worked in partner enterprises, and made a considerable achievement. The alumnus are familiar with both of their old school and the industrial development, which enable the alumnus to be more suitable than others to be the communication bridge between university and enterprises. In addition, alumnus could verify whether the talent from program is suitable for enterprises. Therefore, alumnus are the important bridge between university and enterprises partners. Thus, the cognition bias and cultural gap can be bridged.

4.4 To Activate new Cooperation Aim through Cultivating Employment Ability and Enterprise Incubation

Many of the current UEC focus on training the students’ employment ability, especially the position skills, which can lift the employment rate and solve the labor shortage in short term. It would cause the single way out of graduates and the UEC aim. From the perspective of long term development, the cooperation may be caught in path dependence, therefore the innovation may also be limited, and the sustainable development would be harmed. “3+1” program not only cultivate the

students' employment ability, but also encourage the entrepreneurial ability. The entrepreneurial mindset and spirit expands the students' employment ability, and breeds some start-up projects. There is mass maker space to provide the basic environment for students. And the practitioners in enterprises provide the guide of incubation. The start-up project created in cooperation can be invested and purchased by partners, or become the individual enterprises after the students' graduation, and it also possibly be the new partner of cooperation. The integrated cultivation of employment and entrepreneurial ability supply the suitable talents as well as the job opportunities to society. "3+1" program breaks the traditional cooperation module which requires the universities to seek enterprise partners, but creates partners by incubation. This module build a talent cultivation dual-circle in the symbiotic network, provides new idea of UEGC, activate the new aim of universities and enterprises.

5. Conclusion

This essay studies "3+1" experimental program in school of international business, ZISU and discusses the motivation and development necessities, and expends the theoretical research about UEC. The theoretical contributions followed: Firstly, this study found that the process of UEGC is the process of constructing symbiotic network. The parties join the network base on their development needs to gain what they cannot gain by themselves. The parties are the active participants who can conduct equal dialogue in UEGC rather than the negative adaptor. Additionally, the existed studies mainly focus on discussing the cooperation module and developing strategies from the perspective of observer. The researchers in this study experience the total process of "3+1" program, the research content of UEG is expended. The practical contribution is that the resources in different parties are activated, thus the foundation necessities are ready. What is more, the access of foundation necessities is open to partners to improve the efficiency and creativity, thus the characteristics can be built. Secondly, UEGC is not the "one-time" short-term behavior to supply the talents, but the long-term mechanism of sustainable development. Thirdly, the traditional UEC has been innovated, UEGC can create new aim and new partners by themselves. This study chooses qualitative method, the necessities of UEGC are revealed by interviews. However, all the degree of effectiveness of the necessities need to be verified in quantitative method. Simultaneously, how the effectiveness varies in different stages of UEGC merits further study.

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