

# *Research on the Impact of Practical Writing Courses on Students' Professional Competence*

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**Abstract:** Practical writing is an important component of professional competence, and the level of writing is a significant indicator of an individual's overall quality. Practical writing and professional competence complement each other and promote each other's development. In the process of implementing educational reforms, many schools in China have begun to adopt a macro development perspective, understanding the essential connotations of professional competence in conjunction with the relevant needs for its cultivation, and actively innovating traditional teaching methods and concepts to truly provide more opportunities for the development of students' professional competence. This paper briefly outlines the basic concepts of practical writing in higher vocational colleges, explores the significance of curriculum reform in practical writing for cultivating students' professional competence, and proposes strategies for enhancing professional competence, aiming to gradually promote the development of vocational education in China.

## **1. Introduction**

In modern society, individuals' career paths often depend on their professional competence, which influences their performance and potential for development in the workplace. Professional competence typically includes communication skills, organizational abilities, teamwork capabilities, problem-solving skills, and professional ethics. With the rapid development of information technology and the acceleration of globalization, practical writing is receiving increasing attention across various industries. As an important vocational education course, practical writing plays a significant role in helping students enhance their professional competence. In the practice of teaching practical writing in Chinese higher education institutions, it is essential not only to ensure that students understand the basic skills and relevant formats of practical writing but also to provide effective guidance so that they can improve their abstract thinking and learning abilities through continuous writing practice. This is a crucial means and foundation for cultivating students' professional competence. The long-standing exam-oriented education has led to a direct neglect of improving practical writing skills in the implementation of writing courses in China. In the current university education system, the proportion of writing courses is relatively low, and many teachers and students overlook the effective implementation of this course [1]. This not only affects the improvement of practical writing teaching standards but also hinders the genuine cultivation of students' professional competence. Practical writing instruction can enhance students' personal qualities and theoretical levels, ensuring that they can achieve comprehensive personal development

through writing practice. Writing education plays a key role in improving individual professional competence; therefore, higher education institutions need to continuously break through teaching reforms in line with the actual needs of practical writing.

## **2. Basic Concepts**

### **2.1 Basic Concepts of Practical Writing**

Practical writing refers to the various types of documents written to meet practical needs within specific social and professional contexts. It includes, but is not limited to, formal letters, reports, summaries, plans, notices, resumes, and cover letters. The main characteristics of practical writing are its purposefulness, practicality, and normativity [2].

(1) Purposefulness: The core purpose of practical writing is to convey information, express requests, record events, or exchange opinions. Whether reporting work to a superior or promoting a product to a client, a clear purpose is the starting point of the writing process. In this process, the author needs to clearly understand the audience's needs in order to adjust the language and content for optimal communication effectiveness.

(2) Practicality: Practical writing is often closely related to daily work and possesses strong practicality. For example, a work report needs to reflect the progress and results of work over a certain period for leadership decision-making; a resume is an important tool for job seekers to showcase their abilities and experiences to potential employers. These documents not only serve the function of information transmission but also, to some extent, influence work efficiency and career development.

(3) Normativity: Practical writing has relatively strict format requirements and language norms, with different types of practical writing having distinct formats and styles. For instance, a formal letter should include the sender's and recipient's addresses, salutation, body, and closing, and should use polite and formal language; while an internal report may focus more on data analysis and results presentation, requiring brevity and clarity.

### **2.2 Definition of Professional Competence**

Professional competence is a comprehensive concept that encompasses the various qualities and abilities required by individuals in the workplace. It refers not only to an individual's professional skills and knowledge but also includes personal attitudes, values, behavioral habits, social skills, and adaptability. Professional competence can be viewed as the foundation for individuals to successfully fulfill their responsibilities, communicate and collaborate effectively, handle work pressure, and engage in continuous learning and growth in their professional activities [3].

Firstly, the core of professional competence lies in professional ability, which represents the knowledge and skills required by individuals in their specific occupational fields. These abilities include not only mastery of professional knowledge, such as industry standards, theoretical foundations, and practical operations, but also the ability to apply this knowledge to solve real-world problems. Whether in technical, managerial, or service industries, possessing solid professional abilities is key to success in the workplace. However, professional competence is not limited to professional skills; it also delves into personal attitudes and values. Professional ethics, a sense of responsibility, teamwork spirit, and a positive work attitude are all indispensable components of professional competence. The professional ethics displayed by individuals in their work reflect their respect for the job and trust in their colleagues, and this sense of ethics can not only promote personal development but also enhance team cohesion and collaborative advantages. Communication and interpersonal skills also hold significant importance in professional

competence. The modern workplace increasingly emphasizes teamwork and cross-departmental collaboration, and good communication skills enable individuals to express their views more effectively, listen to others' opinions, and complement each other's strengths in collaboration. This ability not only helps establish good interpersonal relationships but also makes it easier for individuals to adapt to various changes and challenges in the workplace. In the face of complex work environments and diverse team members, professional competence requires individuals to flexibly adjust their communication styles to suit different situations and audiences. In addition, professional competence includes learning ability and adaptability. In a rapidly changing work environment, the ability to quickly learn new knowledge, acquire new skills, and adapt to new environments is a crucial guarantee for professional success. Individuals should cultivate a proactive learning mindset, continuously improve their qualities, and maintain their competitiveness in the industry. Being receptive to feedback, flexibly responding to challenges, and actively participating in professional development are qualities that should not be overlooked. Moreover, strong psychological resilience helps individuals maintain stability when facing pressure and difficulties, allowing them to calmly tackle various challenges and seek solutions.

### **3. The Significance of Practical writing Course Reform for Students' Professional Competence Cultivation**

#### **3.1 Significance from a Social Perspective**

The definition of vocational education by UNESCO clearly states that vocational education should not only prepare students for a specific occupation and employment but also for lifelong learning and becoming qualified citizens. This indicates that general cultural courses should be an important component of vocational education curricula. With the advent of economic globalization and the development of an information society, on one hand, the comprehensive professional competency requirements for skilled talents in various industries, both domestically and internationally, have been further elevated, and vocational college students are the future workforce and essential human resources for society. On the other hand, the rapid development of new media has led to an increasing frequency of practical writing styles across various fields, and there is a growing demand from government agencies, enterprises, and social organizations for smooth policy communication, standardized writing, and efficient communication. Therefore, this research is beneficial in addressing the concerns of various sectors regarding the need for high-quality talents, cultivating more qualified citizens for society, and promoting the harmonious and rapid development of society as a whole.

#### **3.2 Significance from a School Perspective**

In July 2015, the Ministry of Education issued the "Opinions on Deepening Vocational Education Teaching Reform and Improving Talent Training Quality", emphasizing the need to "leverage the unique educational advantages of the humanities, focus on cultivating students' cultural quality, scientific literacy, comprehensive professional abilities, and sustainable development capabilities, laying a foundation for students to achieve higher quality employment and better career development" [4]. In June 2019, the Ministry of Education issued the "Guiding Opinions on the Formulation and Implementation of Professional Talent Training Programs in Vocational Colleges", which clearly requires "strengthening the cultivation of students' professional qualities and technical accumulation, integrating professional spirit, vocational spirit, and craftsmanship spirit into the entire talent training process"[5]. The implementation of this research is conducive to schools fulfilling the spirit of relevant national documents, improving the teaching efficiency of "practical

writing" classes, enhancing the quality of education and teaching in vocational colleges, and perfecting the talent training mechanism, thereby further promoting the output of high-quality technical and skilled talents from higher vocational colleges to society.

### **3.3 Significance from a Student Perspective**

Educator Ye Shengtao once said, "University graduates do not necessarily need to write novels or poetry, but they must be able to write practical articles for work and life, and they must write in a way that is both fluent and solid." American futurist Alvin Toffler pointed out that the tasks of family work in the information age include programming computers, writing, and remotely monitoring production processes. Ye Shengtao's "practical articles for work and life" and Toffler's "writing" refer specifically to "practical writing," which is distinct from literary writing. The reason why "practical writing" is so emphasized is that written communication in modern society, especially in the workplace, often occurs through practical writing, where one may often "see the writing before seeing the person" or "have seen the person, but the writing defines the person" [6]. "practical writing" has evidently become a fundamental quality required of every modern professional, helping all practitioners improve the quality and efficiency of handling daily learning, work, and life affairs. Additionally, at this stage, practical writing is also a compulsory subject for many professional entrance examinations, such as "College Chinese" and civil service or public institution exams in many provinces of China, serving as a necessary pathway for many students seeking higher-level development. Therefore, this research is beneficial in helping vocational college students specifically enhance their comprehensive professional qualities, thereby improving their employment competitiveness and supporting sustainable career development.

## **4. The Impact of Practical Writing Courses on Students' Professional Competencies**

Practical writing courses play a significant role in enhancing students' professional competencies. Professional competencies typically encompass several core elements, such as communication skills, organizational and management skills, problem-solving abilities, and professional ethics awareness.

### **4.1 Enhancing Communication Skills**

The core of practical writing courses lies in learning to write various types of documents, such as reports, notices, resumes, and leave requests. These writing styles help students learn how to use appropriate language and wording in different situations, thereby achieving the goal of clear information delivery. Through repeated writing practice, students can gradually improve their language organization skills, enabling them to communicate more freely in writing in professional settings. Practical writing courses often involve not only writing itself but also the evaluation and feedback of others' materials [7]. By reviewing classmates' writing, students can cultivate a more acute sense of judgment and become more flexible in receiving and understanding information. In practical work, this ability manifests as being able to accurately understand customer needs or team goals and provide appropriate feedback. Different practical writing styles may target different audiences, and students need to learn how to adjust content and language style according to the audience. For example, cover letters need to be more formal and polite, while internal communication may be more direct. Mastering this adaptation ability enables students to effectively communicate with colleagues, superiors, and clients in the workplace, establishing good professional relationships.

## 4.2 Strengthening Organizational and Management Skills

Writing practical documents usually requires organizing and extracting a large amount of information. In the course, students will learn how to extract core content from complex information and present it in a logically clear format. For example, when writing a project report, students need to systematically organize the project's purpose, methods, results, and recommendations. This ability is extremely important in the workplace, helping students to efficiently process documents and reports.

In some practical writing courses, students need to participate in writing team projects. This collaboration not only exercises their writing skills but also enhances their project management abilities. Students in the team must coordinate their respective tasks, allocate resources, and ensure that the project is completed on time. Through this practice, students can learn basic time management and task prioritization, which is of great benefit to future workplace work. The design of group assignments enables students to learn how to coordinate and cooperate efficiently in practice. By sharing tasks and working together to achieve common goals, students can cultivate teamwork spirit and management skills. In the workplace, being able to effectively cooperate with people from different backgrounds and professions is an important factor in professional success [8].

## 4.3 Cultivating Problem-Solving Skills

Applied writing courses require students to employ logical analysis and systematically identify solutions when faced with specific problems. For example, when writing a proposal for a problem solution, students must first clearly define the problem, then collect relevant data, and propose practical and feasible recommendations. This training helps students analyze and respond to complex problems more rationally in their professional careers.

In practical work, problems and emergencies are often unavoidable. Case studies and simulations in applied writing courses help students anticipate potential problems and learn how to respond quickly under pressure. This ability is crucial for them in future workplace crisis management and emergency response.

Applied writing is not limited to standardized expression. Students are also encouraged to boldly experiment with different writing styles and ideas in the course. When writing innovative project proposals or market analysis reports, students can use creative thinking to propose novel and effective solutions. This innovative ability is particularly important in the modern workplace, as many industries are pursuing differentiation and competitive advantages.

## 4.4 Enhancing Professional Ethics Awareness

Applied writing courses emphasize adherence to integrity principles in the writing process. Students must learn to accurately record and convey information and be responsible for what they write. This emphasis on professional ethics enables students to understand their responsibilities in information exchange in their future careers, avoiding inaccurate statements and potential legal risks.

Instructors incorporate discussions on business ethics and professional norms into applied writing courses to help students understand the basic behavioral standards to be followed in the workplace. From a writing perspective, students need to know how to reflect respect for others and reverence for the profession in applied writing, which is very important in job seeking and daily work.

Learning how to demonstrate professional competence and a professional image through applied



writing enhances students' sense of self-identity in the workplace. Through repeated writing practice, students not only improve their writing skills but also contribute to their careers and shape a positive professional image through well-crafted professional documents.

## **5. Practical Pathways for Reforming the "Practical Writing" Course in Higher Vocational Education Based on Professional Competence Development**

In the practice of higher vocational education, teaching practical writing is a crucial component. It is essential to scientifically optimize students' writing abilities, continuously enhance their writing literacy, and comprehensively cultivate their professional competence. This requires the implementation of a scientific teaching system, ongoing optimization of teaching content, and an overall improvement in teaching quality.

### **5.1 Optimize the Curriculum System and Expand Teaching Content**

During the teaching process of practical writing courses in higher vocational colleges, teachers should focus on enhancing students' professional competence and employability, comprehensively optimizing the curriculum system, and scientifically expanding teaching content to improve the overall teaching quality of practical writing courses. On one hand, teachers should adopt a "learning and job integration" approach, breaking away from traditional textbook arrangements to reconstruct the curriculum system. First, it is necessary to change the previous model where all majors taught the same types of documents and focused on a single document type in each class. For instance, for commonly used workplace documents such as plans, summaries, and applications, as well as communication documents like official messages and emails, and professional documents such as cover letters, resumes, and performance reports, corresponding professional situational tasks can be set up for "big unit" teaching, where multiple document types are taught in one class. Different workplace roles can be assigned for group tasks to encourage problem-solving thinking and targeted explanations and training on key and difficult points, thereby enhancing teaching efficiency. Secondly, for more specialized documents, targeted application types can be selected based on specific majors and class realities. For example, students in tourism management should focus on tourism-related application documents such as welcome speeches and tour scripts, while marketing students should prioritize learning application documents like proposals, event planning documents, and economic contracts. For teacher training students, application documents such as lesson plans, reading notes, notices, and invitations must be emphasized.

On the other hand, leveraging information technology teaching platforms, an online open course for "practical writing" in higher vocational education should be simultaneously constructed. Resources such as micro-lectures, case studies, model essays, and question banks should be provided for commonly used document types relevant to students' future careers and the core professional document types corresponding to various majors at the institution. This approach not only facilitates resource sharing among all teachers, allowing for flexible utilization of teaching resources based on actual conditions and the assignment of pre-class, in-class, and post-class tasks, but also broadens the scope of the curriculum. Additionally, it meets the personalized learning needs of some students, enabling them to start learning from areas of interest or to engage in self-study outside of class to further enhance and expand their skills, specifically targeting the improvement of students' practical writing professional abilities.

### **5.2 Actively Create Practical Teaching Platforms to Enhance Students' Application Abilities**

In the process of teaching practical writing courses in vocational colleges, teachers should shift

from traditional teaching concepts, scientifically apply efficient teaching methods, and rely on diverse practical teaching to continuously create and optimize practical teaching platforms, effectively enhancing students' practical application abilities.

Practical writing is a highly practical and useful discipline. The characteristics of writing theories in China, such as "writing conveys principles," "unity of knowledge and action," and "practicality of writing," are particularly prominent in modern practical writing. Therefore, in addition to creating an open, democratic, and flexible classroom environment, teachers can also follow the learning and development patterns of vocational students by providing rich, broad, and targeted practical opportunities. Under the guidance of the school's Language and Literature Working Committee, a "Writing Training Camp" club can be established, collaborating with departments such as student affairs and the library to regularly conduct various practical activities related to "practical writing" on campus. This will create an immersive learning atmosphere for vocational students in practical writing, deepening their understanding of its connotations while cultivating professional behavior habits that adhere to rules, conduct in-depth research, seek truth and pragmatism, and maintain rigor and standards. For example, initiating a "Search for practical writing Around Us" competition encourages students to observe and collect practical writings displayed in public places and various news media, stimulating their initiative in learning, writing, and applying practical writing; organizing "Reading Clubs" to strengthen language fundamentals and enhance students' language expression abilities and cultural levels; holding "Resume Making Competitions" and "Mock Interview Competitions" to improve students' written and on-site job-seeking competitiveness; conducting a "Writing Selection Competition" based on common practical writings to enhance students' logical thinking and problem-solving abilities in real work situations; and organizing "Internship Practices" or on-campus observation activities related to writing positions, guiding students to master business knowledge, familiarize themselves with industry and departmental work patterns, and connect theory with practice to achieve professional writing.

On the other hand, vocational colleges can seek cooperation with enterprises to enhance students' practical abilities through project collaboration. For instance, based on a scientifically effective long-term school-enterprise cooperation model, schools can actively seek partnerships with enterprises, which can regularly provide writing-related projects or tasks. Vocational students can serve enterprises by undertaking these projects. Efficient and interactive school-enterprise cooperation can create rich practical platforms for vocational students while overall optimizing their practical abilities and qualities.

### 5.3 Actively Create Teaching Situations to Optimize Teaching Effectiveness

As the saying goes, "To forge iron, one must be strong oneself". Most teachers of "practical writing" have graduated from Chinese language and literature-related majors and directly entered vocational colleges. They are skilled in literary creation but often lack opportunities to work in government agencies or enterprises, resulting in a deficiency in practical experience in practical writing. This can lead to a disconnect between writing theory and practice in teaching. Therefore, ensuring the effective achievement of the "practical writing" course objectives hinges on the teachers' strong educational and teaching qualities as well as their practical writing skills. On one hand, schools should regularly organize collective lesson preparation sessions for teachers of "practical writing", participate in internal and external teaching research exchanges, and attend specialized training to update teaching concepts and enhance educational levels. On the other hand, efforts should be made to increase the opportunities for relevant teachers to gain experience in enterprises, systematically selecting teachers to observe, practice, or intern in writing-related

positions and other administrative roles in enterprises and institutions. This will effectively improve the practical writing skills of teaching staff in real work situations while better understanding the new requirements of industries and enterprises for talent cultivation quality, closely linking teaching content with professional talent development and social development needs.

In the process of teaching practical writing in vocational colleges, to create a positive classroom atmosphere and stimulate students' initiative in learning and writing, teachers should establish scientific teaching situations to effectively enhance classroom teaching outcomes. On one hand, in the practical teaching of practical writing, teachers can create multimedia teaching situations, guiding students to carefully watch teaching videos with professional characteristics. During this viewing process, teachers can explain and impart writing knowledge, thereby optimizing overall classroom teaching effectiveness. Of course, teachers can also utilize innovative and efficient teaching methods such as micro-lectures and MOOCs to fully highlight students' primary role, guiding them to actively engage in writing course learning and training based on their own needs. On the other hand, in the teaching process of practical writing courses in vocational colleges, to overall optimize classroom teaching effectiveness, teachers should not only teach students scientific writing techniques and methods but also guide them to fully recognize and utilize a variety of writing and editing methods, including commonly used office software like Word and Excel, and to master text and image editing techniques to enhance their own capabilities and improve their professional qualities.

## 6. Conclusion

In summary, the impact of business writing courses on students' professional competence is multifaceted, encompassing improvements in communication skills, organizational and management abilities, problem-solving skills, and professional ethics awareness. Through systematic curriculum design and abundant practical activities, students not only master the fundamental skills of business writing but also lay a solid foundation for their future careers. However, students from different backgrounds may exhibit varying performance and gains in the course. Therefore, diverse teaching approaches should be emphasized during course implementation to ensure that every student benefits. In the future, educators should continuously optimize business writing courses to adapt to the rapidly changing demands of the workplace and help students comprehensively enhance their professional competence.

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