

Motivation Differences between Different Groups of International Business Students in Guangdong Communication Polytechnic

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Abstract

This study investigated the motivations of 332 students from Guangdong Communication Polytechnic, conceptualizing the students' motivations for studying international business. The students answered a motivation questionnaire with 30 Likert-type questions. This questionnaire was built to collect information about students' motivations to study international business for international business teachers and researchers. The questionnaire was adopted from Glynn (2009). The grading of the questionnaire was reliable and related to the students' preparation before entering the polytechnic, their grade point averages in international business courses, and their faith in the relevance of international business courses for their future occupations. The conceptualization of motivation for studying international business was divided into five aspects, including internal motivation and individual relevance, self-efficiency and judgement anxiety, independence, occupation motivation, and degree motivation (Glynn, 2009). The result of this study showed that in their final year, international business students achieved the best performance in internal motivation and individual relevance, self-efficiency, and independence for international business learning. Second-year students had the best extrinsic motivation. The freshmen reported the most anxiety in assessments.

Keywords: motivation, international business, Polytechnic students

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of the Chinese economy, a growing number of new educational problems have arisen. One of the major problems for Chinese higher vocational education is the low learning motivation of students. Reviews on the motivation of Chinese students showed that most of the Chinese research on the motivation of students from different grade levels has been focused on students in universities. For instance, as college students rise through the grade levels, their learning motivation gradually transforms from external learning motivation to internal learning motivation (Zhou, 2015). The college students' learning motivation is generally affected by learning objectives, learning interests, learning adaptation, and teaching level, and it shows differences depending on their grade (Zhou, 2015). However, research on the motivation of grade differences from Chinese higher vocational students is scarce. Accordingly, this study concentrates on the motivation differences between freshmen, second-year, and final-year international business students at Guangdong Communication Polytechnic.

In foreign countries, the drive to succeed is one of the most important factors in the achievement of goals and is called motivation (Singh, 2011). Motivation can be divided into internal motivation and external motivation. Motivation is an internal drive to activate behavior and identify a target (Guruvaiah, 2021). Motivation theory is concerned with the processes that describe why and how human behavior is activated and directed. The term internal drive was first coined by R.S. Woodworth in 1918 to denote the force that motivates behavior and has been mentioned by researchers including Singh (2011), Guruvaiah (2021), and Mirhadizadeh (2016). It is an important concept in psychology, where it refers to "an internal driving force generated on the basis of the organism's needs, which was an internal stimulus. When an organism generates a need, the internal driving force causes a response to produce a stimulus, and the response leads to the satisfaction of the need. This internal drive has been divided into three parts: the cognitive drive, the enhancement drive and the affiliative drive (Adhikari, 2020). The concept of internal motivation includes taking pleasure in the chosen activity (Locke, 2019). Internal motivation is easy to confound with achievement motivation. Achievement motivation means wanting to attain

excellence. It is possible for a person to like doing something without caring about how well they do it. Conversely, a person might try their best to succeed even though they do not enjoy the activity. The other kind of motivation is external motivation. In Locke's opinion, external motivation can be defined as doing something now to get something back later (Locke, 2019).

Students are at the center of the learning process (Mirhadizadeh, 2016). During the learning process, students are impacted by both internal and external factors. Normally, the tutors, teaching methods, learning approaches, and classroom facilities constitute the outside factors and play a core role in the learning processes of students. Inside factors include the mental and physical of students. They are important for both the learning and teaching processes.

Underlying motives have a strong influence on all successful human behaviors (Moos, 2010). As a result, motivation is one of the most important mental factors in students' learning processes. Motivation not only impacts behavior but also sustainable leading the way for people (Moos, 2010).

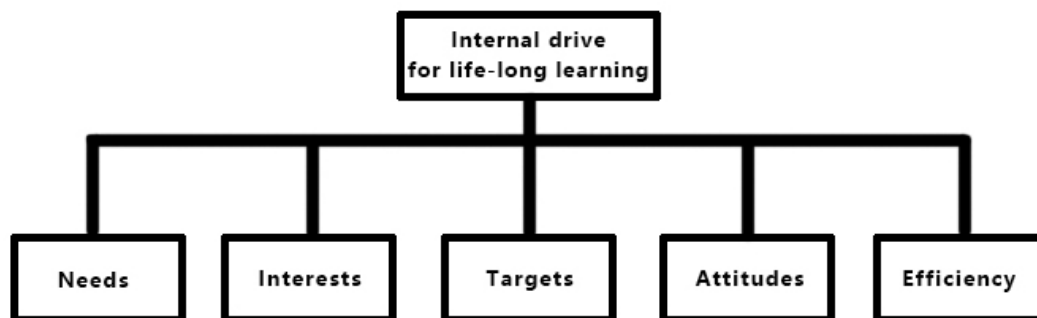


Figure 1.

In China, all human activities have been influenced by both internal and external drives (Lv, 2011). The internal drive motivates people to study throughout their lives. This internal drive includes the needs, interests, targets, attitudes, and the efficiencies of studying (Figure 1).

Scholars have researched the major factors that influence the internal drive, which can be divided into two parts: internal (desire, awareness of the importance of studying, and the sense of achievement from learning) and external (needs of self enhancement, the learning environment, work requirements, family support, the future benefits of learning, emphasis from leaders, competition from society, and the opportunity to communicate with others; Zhang, 2011). The internal drive can be influenced by both internal (willing, interesting, and the characteristic) and the external aspects (the social environment and different locations; Ren, 2015).

To improve the internal drive, it is important to fulfill the interest in learning, set suitable learning targets, ensure learning efficiency, and apply proper motivation (Lv, 2011). According to Zhu, the six major ways to improve the internal drive of learners include choosing a proper learning target, letting the student make the decision to continue or not, questioning the mode of teaching, providing learning feedback, offering positive guidance, and setting goal orientation (Zhu, 2016).

2. Problem Statement

Company by the students' learning requirements the lecturers of international business had to respond to them. During these processes, learning motivation plays a key role and has become a public concern (Zusho, 2003). As can be seen, low achievement always follows a low motivation level (Cavallo et al., 2004; Glynn, 2006). However, it is necessary to ask, who are these low motivation students and why do they have low motivation levels? These questions are important for international business teachers who want to enhance students' learning motivations. It is difficult to answer these questions, especially in schools with a large number of students, and it is also difficult to determine the students' individual characteristics. The International Business Motivation Questionnaire was made to solve this kind of problem (Glynn, 2006). Researchers have found that it is reliable and related to the measurement of standard effectiveness, like students' scores in international business tests and their beliefs about the correlation of international business and their careers (Glynn, 2009). The International Business Motivation Questionnaire is a reliable, efficacious, and convenient tool that can be used to collect

information and improve the effectiveness of the courses. It can also be used as a tool to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching strategies and materials aimed at improving students' motivation.

Low academic achievement is associated with poor psychological factors (Cai, 2016) which can be divided into four main factors: lack of learning motivation, lack of learning willpower, lack of learning confidence, and lack of learning passion. Learning motivation is a major influence on academic achievement (Xiao, 2014). High academic achievement needs to be supported by strong learning motivation, intelligence, family support, and high-quality instructors.

There have been many discussions both overseas and in China on how differences in grade levels influence college students' motivation. However, there has been no research on how grade levels affect the motivation of Chinese higher vocational students. Accordingly, this study will concentrate on the motivation differences between freshman, sophomore, and the senior international business students in Guangdong Communication Polytechnic.

3. Related Literature

This study aims to investigate the influence of grade differences on motivation in vocational school students in China. The discussion begins with the historical aspect of the motivation for polytonic students in China. Next, the main concept, motivation, is positioned and divided into integrative motivation, instrumental motivation, and internal motivation. Finally, a short summary is included.

Motivation is an internal state that directly promotes the activities of organisms to meet certain needs (Feng, 2004). Motivation mainly refers to an individual's internal state, which relies on motivation to promote and meet certain psychological needs, and is a direct driving force (Zhang, 2004). Motivation means any stimulus that will cause a situation and produce a certain reaction state; in this case, to motivate means to encourage and stimulate the individual's internal strength, intention, desire, or psychological impulse (Yan, 2021). Motivation is the psychological power or tendency to motivate individuals to engage in certain activities to achieve specific goals (Zeng, 2022; Huang, 2015). Motivation enables individuals to consciously engage in an activity.

The value placed by freshmen and sophomores on "finding the ideal job" is obviously higher than that of seniors (Zhou, 2015). However, the value placed on "serving society" by third- and fourth-year students is obviously higher than that of the first- and second-year students. The internal drive of second- and third-year college students to "improve academic qualifications" is significantly higher than that of the other two grades; third-year students have the strongest internal drive to "improve their own quality," and the fourth-grade students have the strongest desire to "seek a better life." However, they are less affected by the accessory drives such as "completing parents' expectations."

Learning motivation is an internal drive for individuals that causes and maintains learning behavior (Feng, 2004). This internal drive can promote individuals to maintain learning behavior and achieve the desired results. This is the definition of learning motivation in the biological sense. Learning motivation is the embodiment of motivation in the learning field (Zeng, 2022). It is the psychological state that urges learners to carry out learning activities and achieve certain learning goals. Learning motivation can provide positive incentives for students' academic achievement (Zhang, 2015). The lower the learner motivation, the harder it is to learn. Learning motivation consists mainly in the interest in obtaining knowledge, reputation acquisition, altruistic orientation, sense of learning efficacy, and attribution of success or failure (Wang, 2000). Influenced by self-studying needs and external factors, learning motivation is not only a tendency but also a psychological tendency to encourage and maintain study habits that lead to a goal (Zeng, 2022).

Most college students lack learning motivation, which is affected by demographic characteristics including gender, origin, and grade level (Wang, 2021). Learning motivation can be influenced by family environmental factors such as the education status of the parents, family income, and parenting style (Liu, 2019). Learning motivation can also be affected by psychosocial factors such as social support, self-efficacy, and anxiety (Guo, 2021).

Educators Gardner and Lambert distinguished between integrative motivation and instrumental motivation (Wisnuwardhani, 2022). Integrative motivation is based on learners' desire for successful communication and integration into the target culture. Instrumental motivation emphasizes the utilitarian and pragmatic reasons for learning a language. The integrative motivation theory of Falk has been influential (Khau, 2021). In Falk's opinion, in terms of integration motivation, when students learn a new language, the best learners are the students who enjoy speaking the language and becoming familiar with the culture and are eager integrate into the target society.

The terms intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation were introduced by Fishbach (2021). Intrinsic motivation refers to the motivation to engage in an activity because the activity is pleasant (Fishbach, 2021). Extrinsic motivation refers to the action taken to achieve a certain instrumental purpose to obtain a reward or prevent a punishment. Students with internal motivation participate in learning activities because of curiosity and the desire to overcome challenges, whereas students with external motivation participate in learning activities because of external incentives such as achievements and rewards. Internal motivation is a positive integration tendency, which is based on interest and curiosity and leads to satisfaction and happiness, whereas external motivation results in actions taken for reasons other than internal satisfaction (Similarly, 2020). The four subtypes of external motivation in SDT include external regulation, internal regulation, identification regulation, and integration regulation (Ryan, 2020). Internal motivation and external motivation are not dichotomous; on the contrary, extrinsic motivation may be intrinsic and autonomous, and extrinsic motivation behavior can affect intrinsic motivation by meeting the needs of autonomy, ability, and relevance (Ryan, 2020).

Motivation includes autonomous motivation and controlled motivation. Self-active motivation includes internal motivation and external motivation (identification regulation and integration regulation), in which people recognize the value of activities and integrate them into their self-consciousness. Controlled motivation includes external regulation (rewards and punishment) and internal regulation (avoidance of shame and approval motivation), in which people suffer from stress and anxiety (Ryan, 2020).

4. Methodology

In the two sections above, the conceptual framework, theories implemented, and literature for this paper were illustrated and reviewed. The research methodology follows, along with the reasons why the research methodology was chosen. At first, the quantitative method is presented, then the sampling and the data collection methods are illustrated. Finally, the data analysis procedures are described.

4.1 Research Design

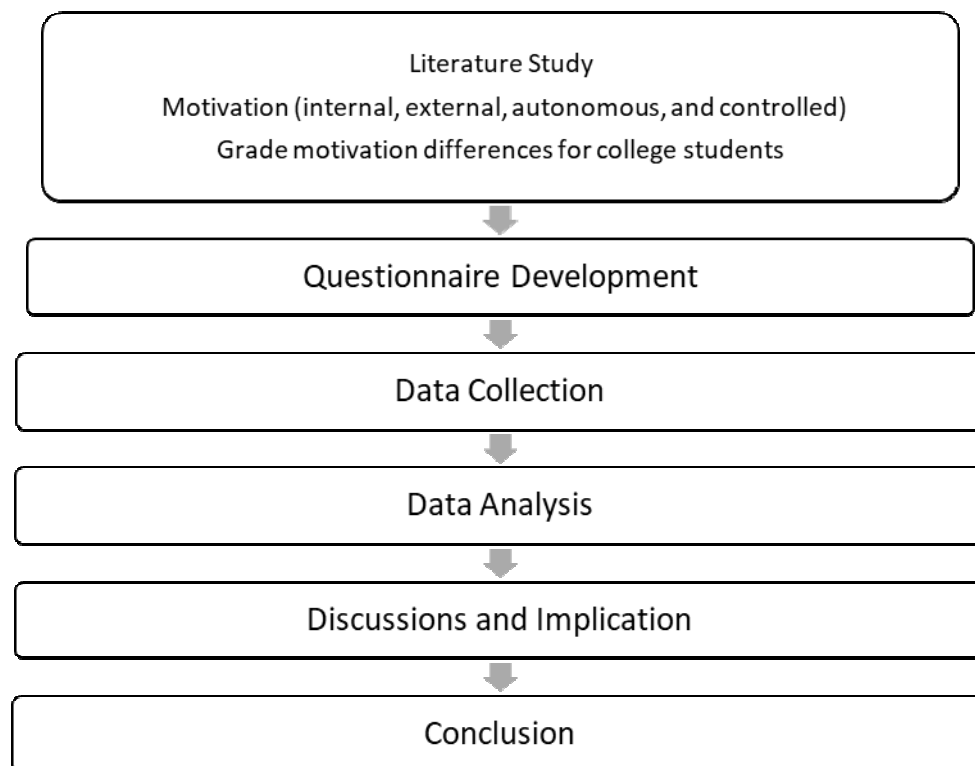


Figure 2. Overview of Overall Structure Research Methodology

Figure 2 illustrates the overall structure of the research methods embedded. The first stage of the study is based on the literature review and the development of research methods. It begins with a review of topics related to requirements analysis and methodology. The theme of the current research is the analysis of motivation. There are four main variables: internal motivation, external motivation, autonomous motivation, and controlled motivation.

In the final stage, the data are analyzed to answer each research question, and the research results are explained and discussed in detail. The last stage of this study includes conclusions and suggestions.

4.2 Population and Sampling

Sampling refers to “the process of extracting some individual cases from a larger population” (Ishak, 2014). Sampling is used to “learn more about the larger population, without studying each member of the population” (Ishak, 2014). The researchers used no probabilistic judgment sampling technology to select representative samples of subjects for this study. Neuman sampling is often used for explanatory research to select members of a specific population (Ishak, 2014). In addition, this technology has been described as representative-based sampling (Endacott, 2005). The use of judgment (purposive) sampling to select subjects is based on the researcher’s own judgment. It has been pointed out that “a person needs to select a sample from which he can learn the most.” Using purposive sampling helps researchers “discover, insight and understand specific phenomena.” More importantly, according to (Long, 2005), purposive sampling is used in many needs analysis studies.

According to the above sampling review, the study sample consists of three major groups (Table 1).

Table 1. Population and Sampling of this Study

Population	Sampling
Chinese vocational school students majoring in international business	96 final-year students
	106 second-year students
	130 first-year students

The main reasons that senior students were chosen for this study are illustrated as follows: First, final-year students in China face decisions about internships in companies. However, students in other grades normally have no chance at this kind of arrangement out of college. Second, seniors are normally older than second-year students and freshmen. Final-year students seem to be more mature than others. Lastly, seniors will soon be leaving the familiar surroundings of campus. Based on these three reasons, seniors needed to be selected for the sample.

The main reasons that second-year students were chosen by this study are as follows: At first, sophomores are more mentally and physically stable than seniors and freshmen, because they spend the whole year adapted to university life and study. The next year for them is much the same. Sophomores are also more confident than freshmen. Most of the things in life are under control. Finally, sophomores are more clam than the seniors, who must leave college and face social problems and challenges. This kind of unknown situation will cause seniors anxiety. Accordingly, second-year students needed to be selected in the sample.

A majority of freshmen were chosen by this study for the following reasons: First, the freshmen are new to college, and they are curious about everything on campus. Second, freshmen must adapt to the differences between life in high school and in college. Third, the freshmen must adapt the differences between study requirements in high school and in college. Accordingly, freshmen needed to be selected in the sample.

4.3 Data Collection

In China, all the vocational schools offer two semesters per year. Normally, the first semester starts in February and ends in July. The second semester begins in September and ends in January. Each semester is completed within 5 months, equivalent to 18 weeks. For this study, data were collected within 18 weeks of the 2021–2022 academic year. The data of this study was collected with quantitative research tools.

The questionnaire used in this study (Appendix A) is the Questionnaire of International Business Motivation, which is originally from Glynn (2009). Accordingly, the reliability and the validity of this questionnaire have been tested. A follow-up study provided additional evidence of the reliability of the questionnaire items (Glynn S. M., 2006): The Cronbach coefficient alpha was 0.93. ($r = 0.51$, $p < 0.01$), providing evidence of criterion-related validity. The statements are easy to read: the Flesch-Kincaid formula indicates readability at the sixth-grade level. Students respond to each of the 30 randomly ordered items on a five-point Likert-type scale of temporal frequency ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). The anxiety about international business assessment items was reverse scored when added to the total, so a higher score on this component means less anxiety. The motivation questionnaire maximum total score is 150 and the minimum is 30. Students who score from 30 to 59 are considered “never to rarely” motivated, 60–89 are “rarely to sometimes” motivated, 90–119 are “sometimes too often” motivated, and 120–150 are “often to always” motivated. The internal motivation for international

business learning is evaluated by items 1, 16, 22, 27, and 30. The external motivation for international business learning includes items 3, 7, 10, 15, and 17. Personal relevance includes items 2, 11, 19, 23, and 25. Self-determination (responsibility) consists of items 5, 8, 9, 20, and 26. Self-efficacy (confidence) comprises items 12, 21, 24, 28, and 29. Anxiety about international business assessment is scored by items 4, 6, 13, 14, and 18.

5. Findings

According to the data from the motivation questionnaire, the total score was 31,496 from 332 questionnaires. Thus, the average score for international business students in Guangdong Communication Polytechnic was 94.86747. The freshmen received a total score of 12,252 from 130 questionnaires. Thus, the average score for freshmen was 94.24615. Second-year students received a total score of 10,089 from 106 questionnaires. Thus, the average score for second-year students was 95.17925. Final-year students received a total score of 9155 from 96 questionnaires. Thus, the average score for final-year students was 95.36458.

Base on the average score for all the international business students in Guangdong Communication Polytechnic, they were often too motivated. The final-year international business students in Guangdong Communication Polytechnic achieved the best performance in learning motivation. Otherwise, the freshmen were the worst.

Table 2. Internal Motivation for International Business Learning

Students	Seniors	Sophomores	Freshmen
1. I like studying international business.	311	351	417
16. The result of international business is less important for me than what I earn from learning it.	329	366	436
22. It is interesting for me to study international business.	318	329	393
27. I enjoy solving problems from international business coursework.	303	325	385
30. I get a sense of accomplishment from studying international business.	321	350	411
Total score	1582	1721	2042
Average score	16.47917	16.23585	15.70769

According to Table 2, the seniors were the best at internal motivation for international business learning. With increasingly more time spent at the Polytechnic, the performance of internal motivation continually improved.

Table 3. Extrinsic Motivation for International Business Learning

Students	Seniors	Sophomores	Freshmen
3. I want to be the best on the international business examinations.	321	337	404
7. It is important for me to get a good result in international business courses.	336	406	477
10. I thought studying international business would help me find a good job.	320	366	431
15. I thought about how my GPA could be influenced by international business results.	284	332	417
17. I thought about how to get the most career benefits from studying International Business.	322	368	431
Total score	1583	1809	2160
Average score	16.48958	17.06604	16.61538

According to Table 3, sophomores were the best at extrinsic motivation for international business learning.

Table 4. Personal Relevance of International Business Learning

Students	Seniors	Sophomores	Freshmen
2. My personal goal is strongly related to international business courses.	304	327	410
11. I thought about how to get the most benefit from studying international business.	327	366	441
19. I thought about how to use knowledge from studying international business in my life.	312	347	426
23. Studying international business is related to my life.	297	309	384
25. I obtain practical value from studying international business.	316	344	402
Total score	1556	1693	2063
Average score	16.20833	15.9717	15.86923

According to Table 4, seniors scored the best on personal relevance for international business learning. With increasingly more time spent in Polytechnic, the performance of personal relevance continued to improve.

Table 5. Self-Determination (Responsibility) for International Business

Students	Seniors	Sophomores	Freshmen
5. I will try my best to solve the problems during international business learning processes.	312	341	416
8. I try my best to study international business.	312	328	407
9. I have a good way to ensure a good result from studying international business.	311	326	383
20. If I run into problems from studying international business, it should be my fault.	246	295	389
26. I am well prepared for all the examinations in international business.	318	333	392
Total score	1499	1623	1987
Average score	15.61458	15.31132	15.28462

According to Table 5, seniors scored the best for self-determination (responsibility). With increasingly more time spent at Polytechnic, performance on self-determination (responsibility) improved continually.

Table 6. Self-Efficacy (Confidence) in Learning International Business

Students	Seniors	Sophomores	Freshmen
12. I want to be the best in international business courses.	342	385	438
21. I trust that I will do a good job in studying international business.	330	335	394
22. It is interesting to study international business.			
24. I am convinced that all the knowledge and skills in international business will be under my control.	329	349	402
28. I am sure that I will be the best in international business examinations.	330	334	377
29. I trust that I will earn an "A" in the international business courses.	328	333	386
Total score	1659	1736	1997
Average score	17.28125	16.37736	15.36154

According to Table 6, final-year students were the best at self-efficacy (confidence). With increasingly more time spent in Polytechnic, the performance of self-efficacy (confidence) continually improved.

Table 7. Anxiety About International Business Assessment

Students	Seniors	Sophomores	Freshmen
4. I feel nervous during international business tests.	279	322	415
6. I feel anxious when the international business test is coming.	262	302	425
13. I worry when I fail international business examinations.	289	331	456
14. I worry when others are better than me in international business courses.	240	293	369
18. I hate taking the international business tests.	206	259	338
Total score	1276	1507	2003
Average score	13.29167	14.21698	15.40769

According to Table 7, seniors were the least anxious about international business assessment. With increasingly more time spent at Polytechnic, anxiety about international business assessment continued to decrease.

6. Discussion

According to the average score for all the international business students in Guangdong Communication Polytechnic, they were often too motivated. The final-year international business students in Guangdong Communication Polytechnic achieved the best performance in learning motivation. Otherwise, first-year students were the worst.

Although the total trend of this questionnaire was that motivation became stronger with the passage of time, there were some differences in the details of the responses to the questionnaire. For instance, second-year students were the best performers when responding to the following statements: "I like studying in international business," "The international business I learn is more important to me than the grade I receive," "Earning a good international business grade is important to me," "I thought studying international business would help me find a good job," "I think about how studying international business can help my career," "I think about how the international business I learn will be helpful to me," and "I expect to do as well as or better than other students in the international business course." The freshmen scored the best in their responses to the following statements: "It is my fault if I do not understand international business," "I think about how I will use the international business I learn," and "I think about how my international business grade will affect my overall grade point average." Teachers who want to motivate the vocational school students should care about these differences.

7. Limitations

The limitations of this study should not be ignored. The first limitation is sample size. The samples were entirely from one polytechnic. Therefore, this sample may not represent all vocational school students. Second, the major of the students was international business, so the results may differ from other majors. Finally, there are only 30 questions on the questionnaire. These 30 questions may not present all the aspects of motivation.

In further studies, when there is enough time, the sample size could be improved. Also, the questionnaire could be enhanced, and other majors could be considered.

8. Conclusion and Implications

This study found that final-year international business students in Guangdong Communication Polytechnic achieved the best performance in internal motivation, personal relevance, self-determination, and self-efficacy. Second-year students were best at extrinsic motivation, whereas freshmen expressed the most anxiety in the assessment. The more time that students spent in the polytechnic, the more motivated they became, although there were some differences in the details of the questions. This trend is almost the same as the college students examined by Zhou (2015). Accordingly, instructors in vocational schools should pay attention to their students' level of motivation and help improve their internal motivation.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Questionnaire of International Business Motivation

Questionnaire of International Business Motivation

Fill in the table with “√” following the questions.

Never = 1

Rarely = 2

Sometimes = 3

Usually = 4

Always = 5

Never Rarely Sometimes Usually Always

1. I like studying international business.
2. A personal goal of mine is strongly related to international business courses.
3. I want to be the best on the international business examinations.
4. I feel nervous during international business tests.
5. I will try my best to solve the problems during international business learning processes.
6. I feel anxious when the international business test is coming.
7. It is important for me to get a good result in international business courses.
8. I try my best to learn international business.
9. I have a good way to ensure a good result by studying international business.
10. I thought studying international business would help me find a good job.
11. I thought about how to get the most benefits by studying international business.
12. I want to be the best in international business courses.
13. I worry when I fail international business examinations.
14. I worry when others are better than me in international business courses.
15. I thought about how my GPA could be influenced by international business results.
16. The result of international business is less important for me than what I earn from learning it.
17. I thought about how to get the most career benefits by studying international business.

18. I hate taking the international business tests.
 19. I thought about how to use the knowledge from international business courses in my life.
 20. If I run into problems from studying international business, it should be my fault.
 21. I trust I will do a good job in learning international business.
 22. It is interesting for me to learn about international business.
 23. Studying international business is related to my life.
 24. I am convinced that all the knowledge and skills in international business will be under my control.
 25. I obtain practical value from studying international business.
 26. I am well prepared for all the international business examinations.
 27. I enjoy solving the problems from international business coursework.
 28. I am sure that I will be the best in international business examinations.
 29. I trust that I will earn an “A” in international business courses.
 30. I get a sense of accomplishment from studying international business.
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