

EDUCATION IN CHINA SERIES



Technical and Vocational Education in China



Xueping Wu Yiqun Ye



ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY PRESS
浙江大学出版社



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图书在版编目 (CIP) 数据

中国职业技术教育=Technical and Vocational Education in China: 英文 / 吴雪萍, 叶依群著. —杭州: 浙江大学出版社, 2009. 9
(中国教育丛书)
ISBN 978-7-308-06579-5

I. 中… II. ①吴…②叶… III. 职业教育—研究—中国—英文 IV. G719.2

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2009)第 122891 号

Not for sale outside Mainland of China

此书仅限中国大陆地区销售

丛书主编 徐小洲 Carlo Socol

中国职业技术教育

吴雪萍 叶依群 著

责任编辑 朱 玲

封面设计 俞亚彤

出版发行 浙江大学出版社

网址: <http://www.zjupress.com>

Homa & Sekey Books

网址: <http://www.homabooks.com>

排 版 杭州中大图文设计有限公司

印 刷 杭州富春印务有限公司

开 本 710mm×1000mm 1/16

印 张 16.75

字 数 415 千

版 印 次 2009 年 9 月第 1 版 2009 年 9 月第 1 次印刷

书 号 ISBN 978-7-308-06579-5 (浙江大学出版社)

ISBN 978-1-931907-60-6 (Homa & Sekey Books)

定 价 85.00 元

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浙江大学出版社发行部邮购电话 (0571)88925591

Series Editors' Preface

Of all human activities education is among the highest and noblest. As a social factor, it has been seen as “an engine of social development”, “a purifier of human harmony” and “an expression of culture”. Without education, the prospects for humanity would be bleak and world prosperity might be a mere dream. Civilization, social development and personal advancement are continuous with education: they precede and follow it. Nations, families and individuals stake their hopes on education. Because of its special role at all levels of human progress, education has been given priority in all ages in countries the world over.

As a result, humanity has accumulated a wealth of positive experience and, in the world's long history, many intractable problems have been solved, setbacks have been tackled and challenges have been turned into opportunities. But we cannot rest on our laurels or stop addressing the present and the future. New challenges and problems have come as a consequence of the faster pace of change and expansion, which characterizes the new century. To promote steady and sustainable development and foster understanding among peoples in this increasingly global world of ours, we should never give up exploring new avenues and finding new opportunities. Education, as history shows, is perhaps the single best approach we can rely on to achieve our goals. With this background, mutual exchange and cooperation become all the more important.

China's rise in the recent past has benefited from educational development spanning a period of sixty years, beginning with the birth of the People's Republic of China. China has made considerable strides and achieved enviable goals in the field of education during often very difficult times. Now, with a population of about 1.3 billion, our country, which has the largest educational system in the world, is well on track in successfully achieving the “popularization of compulsory education” and the “massification of higher education”. Some of China's achievements may surprise us: a modern educational system is basically in place; vocational and technical educational policy tries to meet the demands of social and economic development; the internationalization of education has set out along a broad avenue; educational policies and legislation are being regularly improved, etc. At the same time, however, as a developing country, China is facing many hurdles and challenges in her task of further developing the educational system. Education is part of China's overall development, and as such it requires her own efforts, wisdom and innovation in order to set up and manage a modern educational system able to



respond to the unique challenges she faces. To sustain development, however, China needs to learn from the experiences, the achievements, the research and experimentation of other countries, without underestimating in the process her own achievements and characteristics. In a word, since Chinese educational development will necessarily have a Chinese character, while at the same time being an inseparable part of the global educational system, we can expect China to play the role of a good citizen in the global village.

Mutual understanding is the precondition for international exchange and cooperation. However, up to now, foreigners have encountered many hurdles in trying to improve their knowledge of education in China. On the one hand, not many of them manage to achieve a working knowledge of the Chinese language and, on the other hand, there is an undeniable shortage of English literature taught in modern China. In order to help foreign friends and scholars know more about today's education in China, the Zhejiang University Seeco Educational Research Centre, which was established in 2007 to promote studies in the field of comparative education, has undertaken the task of producing the present *Education in China Series*. The various volumes endeavor to explain the context of education in China during the past sixty years, to introduce educational development in the present situation, to analyze the problems as they develop, and to look forward to the future of education in China in different areas, with each author offering his or her own original perspective. We hope that the series will help global society to better know the outline and features of modern education in China, that it will arouse interest in it, and will encourage readers to explore the legislation governing its development.

We are pleased to announce that the series has obtained the support of the General Administration of Press and Publication of the People's Republic of China, to whom we express our sincere gratitude. Many thanks are due to Zhejiang University Press and Homa & Sekey Books of U.S.A. for undertaking to publish the series. Finally, we would like to express sincere appreciation to the authors who compiled the books with true professionalism and selflessness, while handling busy schedules, and to all the friends and colleagues who have offered invaluable criticism, advice and encouragement.

Xiaozhou Xu & Carlo Socol
Hangzhou, China

Preface

Since the Chinese government adopted the policy of reform and opening up to the outside world in 1978, technical and vocational education in China has witnessed great changes and remarkable achievements. It has been playing a more and more important role in the economic and social development of China. To further tap the human resources and translate the heavy burden of population into a strong advantage, and to boost the social and economic development in a sustainable manner, the Chinese government has adopted the strategy of promoting the development of national education by way of stepping up efforts to promote the development of vocational education and taken a series of reform measures.

In the era of economic globalization and educational internationalization, it is necessary for the Chinese people to embrace the world and, at the same time, for the world to know more about China. Mutual understanding is the basis for facilitating exchange and cooperation. For the purpose of helping foreign readers have some idea of the general situation of technical and vocational education in China, this book presents a systematic and overall study of technical and vocational education in China. This study looks at Chinese technical and vocational education from various angles—its different levels and kinds, its history of development, its laws and policies, its social obligations, its curriculum and specialty set up, its faculty, its management, etc. Overall, the book elaborates on the development of vocational education in China and its reform trend.

The book is the fruit of the collective wisdom of all those involved in the compilation. The first two chapters are written by Xueping Wu (Zhejiang University) and Xiaoqin Xiang (Hangzhou Vocational & Technical College); the third by Guilian Zhang (Zhejiang University) and Xueping Wu; the fourth by Jingfang Jiang (Zhejiang University), Ye Gan (Zhejiang University of Science and Technology) and Xueping Wu; the fifth by Yanjing Li (Zhejiang University), Ruohui Lv (Zhejiang Gongshang University) and Xueping Wu; the sixth by Xin Wang (Zhejiang University) and Xueping Wu; the seventh by Shaojun Ma (Zhejiang Radio & TV University), Xueping Wu and Xiaoqin Xiang. The whole book is edited and revised by Xueping Wu and Yiqun Ye (Zhejiang University of Science and Technology).

The authors are aware of the limitations of this work and welcome critical comments from experts, colleagues and readers.

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1

An Introduction to Technical and Vocational Education in China

1.1 Development History of Technical and Vocational Education

Technical and vocational education in China has gone through a long, tortuous course. Counting from the commencement of industrial and commercial education in the 1860s, the earliest technical and vocational education in China has a history of more than 140 years. However, because of the traditional concept “excellent learning assures a decent career,” and the underdevelopment of modern industries in China, the development of the technical and vocational education had been deterred.

1.1.1 Technical and Vocational Education before the Founding of the People’s Republic of China

After the Opium War in 1840, advocates of the Westernization Movement initiated military enterprises, which required technicians and workers who had a grasp of advanced technology. This led to the introduction of colleges of industry and commerce in China. The earliest industrial and commercial college was the Imperial University established in Beijing in 1862, which mainly cultivated interpreters. After that, some military and industrial colleges were established, such as the Boating College established in Mawei, Fujian Province in 1866, the Machinery College, established by Shanghai Manufacture Bureau in 1867, and the Driving College, established at the Fuzhou Boating Factory in 1873. After the Westernization Movement, with the development of economy and the launch of the Reform Movement of 1898, various industrial and commercial colleges were established with the aim of producing technicians and workers, for example, the Military Preparation College established in Tianjin in 1885, the Commerce College established in Hubei in 1891, the Mining College established in Hubei in 1892, and the Silkworm Breeding and Mulberry Growing College established in Jiangxi. The Qing government formalized the status of industrial and commercial education in education system. The industrial and commercial colleges were divided



horizontally into three kinds: Formal industrial and commercial colleges, continuation industrial and commercial colleges, and normal industrial and commercial colleges; vertically they were divided into three levels: Elementary, secondary and higher level, and each level included subjects like agriculture, industry, commerce and boating which formed a system.

The first civil revolution against feudalism in China in 1911 finished the domination of the Qing Dynasty, it also created a new stage in the development of technical and vocational education. In the Command on Industry and Commerce and the Regulation on Industry and Commerce, the Government of the Republic of China stipulated that the aim of industrial and commercial colleges was to help students acquire the necessary knowledge and skills of agriculture, industry and commerce. The schooling was changed from the original three levels of elementary, secondary and higher into first and second levels. The first level was equal to the secondary industrial and commercial colleges at the end of the Qing Dynasty which were organized according to provinces. The second level was equal to the elementary industrial and commercial colleges at the end of the Qing Dynasty, which were organized nationally. The higher industrial and commercial colleges were changed into professional schools which were under the Centre and the Provinces. In the Reform of the School System, industrial and commercial colleges were changed into vocational schools which had three levels: Primary, secondary and higher, with more subjects. Up to this point, a preliminary system of technical and vocational education was formed.

In 1917, Huang Yanpei, Cai Yuanpei and Tao Xingzhi, as well as some others initiated the establishment of the China Vocational Education Agency. It was the first organization in modern society whose aim was to advocate, study and carry out technical and vocational education. In the same year, this agency issued the first publication—*Education and Vocation*—to propagate vocational education. In the first annual meeting of China Vocational Education Agency, Huang Yanpei set forth the aim of technical and vocational education, which was to “prepare young people to make a living, prepare individuals to serve the society, prepare people to improve production in China and all round the world.”

After spending many years in technical and vocational education, Huang Yanpei came to the conclusion that the school was a process of “socialization”. He thought that it appropriate to design vocational schools on the basis of social needs. Under the guidance of his thought, the China Vocational School was established in Shanghai. It operated on four key rules: First, to acquire practical knowledge; second, to get familiar with the skills; third, to imbibe good morals; fourth, to improve productivity. Huang Yanpei’s technical and vocational education thoughts not only improved the development of technical and vocational education in China, but also helped to lay the foundation

for the development of modern technical and vocational education theories.

Before the founding of the People's Republic of China, in the revolutionary bases and Liberated Areas led by the CPC, technical and vocational schools were also established under the leadership of the CPC. For example, the Central Agricultural School was established in Ruijin, Jiangxi Province, in 1933; the school carried out a work-study program. The Agricultural School, Industrial School and Medical Schools were established in the Shanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region. The Textile School was established in the Liberated Areas of Central China, while the Finance Cadres School was established in the Jiangsu-Anhui Liberated Areas. Those schools helped cultivate a lot of cadres and technicians.

1.1.2 Technical and Vocational Education after the Founding of the People's Republic of China

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, technical and vocational education has entered a new historical period. In the first national education meeting after the founding of the People's Republic of China, it was pointed out that the old situation of the disproportion between general education and vocational education should be reformed. In 1953, the State Council pointed out the guiding principles of developing secondary vocational schools: To rectify and consolidate, to develop with focus, to improve quality, and to develop steadily. According to the policy, two measures were taken: The first was to build up the secondary technical and vocational education system. In 1954, the State Council issued the Decision on Improving Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and in the same year approved the Regulation on Secondary Special Schools issued by the Ministry of Education to reform and develop secondary technical and vocational education. The second measure was to build up a system of technician education to initiate and promote technical schools, to cultivate the technicians who were needed for the construction of important projects. Thus a system of technical and vocational education had been initiated in China whose focus was the secondary vocational schools and technical schools. Up to 1957, the number of the in-school students of secondary vocational schools and technical schools was 844,833, and the number of students in the general middle schools was 904,000, the ratio was 48.3 to 51.7, which means secondary technical and vocational education basically met the needs of the economic construction.

During the 20 years from 1958 to 1976, technical and vocational education in China experienced two big obstacles: The first was the blind development during the period of "Great Leap Forward", while the second was the serious destruction suffered during the "Cultural Revolution". The development of technical and vocational education progressed steadily and reached its peak after the founding of the People's Republic



of China, when a great number of schools and students rose rapidly. The pace of growth was too much, and hence quality couldn't be assured; it was necessary to adjust the growth of technical and vocational education. In 1961, the Ministry of Education decided to narrow the scale of technical and vocational education. However, after the narrowing of vocational education, general education became the only concern in secondary education. So in 1963, the Central Government issued the Discussion on Drafts of the Work of Full-time Primary and Secondary Schools and Several Directions, stipulating that the policy of developing both general education and vocational education should be carried forward. Thus, technical and vocational education was resumed and put on the path of steady development once again. But the period didn't last long. During the "Cultural Revolution", technical and vocational education was badly affected. The system of developing both general and vocational education was attacked. Thus many vocational schools were closed and technical and vocational education plummeted. In 1976, the ratio of general senior middle schools against secondary vocational schools and technical schools was 94.2 to 5.8, which was seriously imbalanced. The domination of secondary education not only stunted the development of technical and vocational education, but also lowered the quality of general education. Education was divorced from the individual and societal needs.

Since the Third Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party, the Party and the government have encouraged technical and vocational education very much and have clarified the status and role of technical and vocational education in the educational system and the country's development. In 1978, at the national education meeting, Deng Xiaoping pointed out that education should meet the needs of national economic development and that the ratio of various schools should be kept in mind, especially with regard to agricultural schools, secondary vocational schools and technical schools. In 1979, it was pointed out in the Government Work Report that it was an urgent need to develop various secondary vocational schools within secondary education. It would help to solve the employment problem of the masses of graduates.

In 1980, the State Council approved the report of secondary education reform which was issued by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labor. This report advocated the reform of the secondary educational system, development of technical and vocational education, and improvement of senior middle school educational system to meet the needs of socialist modernization. In 1985, the CPC Central Committee promulgated the Decision on Reforming Education System, pointing out that "socialist modernization construction needs not only senior scientists and experts, but also secondary and elementary technicians, management staff and workers with technical and vocational education. Without such a workforce, advanced science, technology and equipment could not be used to increase productive. While technical and vocational

education was still very weak in the whole education of our country, effective measures should be taken to improve the situation and develop technical and education.” It also clearly pointed out that “a technical and vocational education system that combines both elementary and higher levels, supported by different industries and with reasonable structures, should be established” (MOE, 1986). The important document made clear the status and role of technical and vocational education in modern construction and it pushed forward the development of technical and vocational education.

In 1991, the State Council issued the Decision on Developing Technical and Vocational Education, according to the needs of economic and social development in the 1990s. The document made clear the aim and task of developing technology and vocational education. In 1993, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council issued the Outline on the Development and Reform of Vocational Education, pointing out that “according to the policy of overall planning and active development, governments at each level should focus on bringing every department, enterprise and institute into action, developing technical and vocational education in different forms and levels.” In 1996, the first Vocational Education Law of the People’s Republic of China was promulgated. It provided a legal guarantee to the development and consummation of technical and vocational education. In 1999, in the Decision on Deepening Education Reform and Improving Quality Education, the State Council pointed out that “it is necessary to construct an educational system that meets the needs of the inner rule of market economy and education, and the different forms and levels of education should mutually support each other.” It also asked “to develop higher technology and technical and vocational education”, “to develop senior middle school education which includes both general education and vocational education.”

In a word, since China’s reformation and the opening up to the outside world, technical and vocational education has made great progress. Vocational schools of different levels have achieved a lot, and they have provided a great number of qualified workers and technicians to the socialist modernization construction. But the reform of technical and vocational education is also faced with problems. People in some places were unaware of the importance of technical and vocational education so the input was inadequate and the basis was weak. The management and schooling systems along with the teaching quality couldn’t meet the needs of the economic construction and social development. The employment access system was not well carried out which influenced students’ initiative, and the development of different areas was unbalanced. In order to carry out the Vocational Education Law of the People’s Republic of China, and to implement the strategy of invigorating China through science and education and to improve the reform and development of technical and vocational education, in September 2002, the State Council issued the Decision on Improving the Reform and



Development of Vocational Education. The document illustrated the means of improving the reformation and development of technical and vocational education in seven aspects: (1) Recognize the important status of technical and vocational education in socialist modernization construction, and make clear the target of technical and vocational education reform and development during the period of the 11th Five-year Plan. (2) Implement the reformation of the educational and schooling systems, and promote the combination of technical and vocational education, economic construction and societal development. (3) Deepen the educational and teaching reform, to meet the needs of society and enterprises. (4) Take measures to improve technical and vocational education in rural and western areas. (5) Carry out employment access system, strengthen the linkage between technical and vocational education and employment. (6) Develop new ways to raise funds for technical and vocational education. (7) Strengthen the leadership, and to develop a healthily process for improving technical and vocational education. The document had a far-reaching impact on the reformation and development of technical and vocational education.

1.2 Technical and Vocational Education in Mainland China

It is stipulated in Article 12 of the Vocational Education Law of the People's Republic of China that "the state shall, in accordance with the economic development level and the situation of universal education of various regions, implement the educational division at different stages mainly after junior middle school, institute and improve a technical and vocational education system under which technical and vocational education and training shall be developed concurrently, and technical and vocational education shall be connected with other education with coordinated development of both." We can see that technical and vocational education in the mainland includes two indispensable parts: One is vocational school education, the other is vocational training. The two parts are equal in status and complement each other. Vocational schools can be divided into three kinds: Elementary, secondary, and higher technical and vocational education. The first two kinds are carried out by the elementary vocational schools and secondary vocational schools respectively; the higher technical and vocational education is carried out by higher vocational schools or higher schools according to the situation.

Vocational training includes training before employment, apprentice, on-the-job training, job transfer and other vocational training, according to the situation needed. Vocational training is carried out by appropriate vocational training institutes and vocational schools.