Study on the Phenomenon of "Upgrading from Junior College to University" in Vocational Education

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Abstract. This paper first analyzes the historical origin of the phenomenon of "upgrading from junior college to university" in vocational education. Then discusses the positive effect of this phenomenon in vocational education. It is beneficial to the integration of vocational education and general education, to publicize the educational concept of lifelong learning, to promote educational equity and to improve the study atmosphere and social living space of higher vocational colleges. It also reveals the negative effect of this phenomenon in vocational education, including affecting the national policy of developing vocational education, the normal teaching order of higher vocational colleges and the interests of the majority of higher vocational students. Finally, the paper puts forward some suggestions and countermeasures to solve the negative effect of "upgrading from junior college to university". First of all, we should build a perfect vocational education system and develop vocational undergraduate education. Secondly, the courses of higher vocational colleges and undergraduate courses should be connected to form an integrated curriculum system. Finally, we should reform the system of "upgrading examination" and increase the content of vocational skills test.

Keywords: Vocational education; Upgrade from junior college to university; Vocational undergraduate education.

1. Introduction

With the progress of society and the renewal of ideas, vocational education has been significantly developed in depth and breadth. However, in recent years, many higher vocational colleges have seen the phenomenon of students "upgrading to undergraduate education". The phenomenon of higher vocational students upgrade from junior college to university through participation in general upgrading examination, adult college entrance examination, self-study examination has become a "common trend". Among them, the general upgrading examination (that is, junior college students through the unified entrance examination to undergraduate universities, continue to study, to obtain a bachelor's degree) is the most popular way. This is also the main research problem of this paper. China issued An Introduction to Key Work of Vocational Education in 2022, which pointed out that "At present, the proportion of junior college student upgrading to university student in China has reached 20%" . Nowadays, "upgrading to undergraduate education" has become a hot spot of concern for many higher vocational students, and it has a spreading trend in many higher vocational colleges.

2. The Historical Root of the Phenomenon of "Upgrading from Junior College to University" in Vocational Education

In essence, the phenomenon of "upgrading from junior college to university" represents the public's recognition of the general undergraduate degree and the denial of the junior college degree at the higher level of vocational education. It is caused by the public's discrimination and prejudice against vocational education, and this discrimination and prejudice has its historical roots. In ancient China, under the influence of traditional concepts such as "a gentleman is not good at a certain skill" and "the brain worker rules, the manual worker is ruled", vocational education was limited to the lower social classes such as "farmers, workers and businessmen" and had long been despised by the upper social classes. In ancient Greece, vocational education based on making a living was completely separated from general education based on academic education, and the social class of ancient Greece was divided into the lower class who laboured for making a living and the privileged

class who were exempt from labouring. The lower class received practical training to develop the ability to labour and vocational skills; The upper class trained the ability to use intelligence and acquired theoretical knowledge that had little to do with production and practical things. The liberal education of the privileged class is essentially superior to the vocational servitude training of the lower class. The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle insisted on the distinction between inferior vocational education and intellectual liberal education. For example, when discussing the question of "what level should children reach in playing musical instruments" in music education, Aristotle argued that "children should practice instruments to a level of proficiency that allows them to appreciate the music.It means being able to understand and enjoy music played by slave or professional personnel. If the goal is professional ability, music is reduced from the level of freedom to the level of earning a living." It can be seen that people prefer to pursue the general education focusing on theoretical knowledge through the "upgrading examination", rather than accept that the vocational education for making a living is influenced by traditional concepts and "preserves the ideal of the past aristocracy".

Under the specific historical and cultural conditions of Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries, vocational education was combined with the development of modern school system, from child labor training, worker's remedial and technical training, school education for workers' children gradually transitioned to Realschule and vocational schools.The dual-track school system, which made general education and vocational education opposite to each other, also gradually developed, which was vertically divided into two tracks: the academic modern school, which retained the privilege color of the Middle Ages, and the newly emerged mass modern school, which provided skills training for the children of the working class.There were two tracks of the dual-track school system, the first was from university to middle school (before middle school, students attend preparatory school or receive home education). The university was the apex of the school system, and the middle school was established for the need of the aristocracy children to go to university, which was actually the preparatory school for the university, such as the grammar school in Britain and Friedrichsgymnasium in Germany . In fact, it served the function of an ordinary high school today. The top-down school system served the minority of the upper class of society, targeting the children of privileged classes such as nobles and monks. The purpose of education was to cultivate academic talents needed by the government officials and the ruling class. The academic school system on this track was beyond the reach of the ordinary working class at the bottom of society.The other track was from primary schools to vocational schools, consisting mainly of primary schools and secondary schools carrying out vocational education. The origin of primary schools can be traced back to the late Middle Ages in Western Europe, when the emerging civic class set up urban schools for their children. And secondary schools can be traced back to the emerging bourgeoisie, in order to adapt to the changes of the first industrial revolution, set up schools for their children to teach their native language, modern foreign languages and scientific and technological knowledge. For example, British secondary modern school and German Realschule were mainly vocational education institutions, and their graduates were not eligible to enter universities. This track was a bottom-up school system serving the general working class and labourer, whose fundamental purpose was to teach basic cultural knowledge, to train vocational skills and to cultivate the general workers of society.

These two tracks are parallel and unconnected. They not only have a strong hierarchical color, depriving the children of the working class of the right to go to university, but also influence the formation of the trend of emphasizing academic education and neglecting vocational education in modern times. Due to the profound historical influence of the double-track school system in Europe, the modern higher education presents the dual structure of general higher education and higher vocational education. There is an obvious difference between the higher vocational education and general higher education in people's cognition level. People generally have prejudice and contempt for vocational education, and one-sided respect for ordinary higher education, resulting in the phenomenon of "upgrading from junior college to university".

3. The Positive Effect of "Upgrading from Junior College to University" in Vocational Education

As a formal educational system in our country, the upgrading examination has its rationality and positive guidance effects. The phenomenon of "upgrading from junior college to university" reflects the needs of vocational education students eager to improve their own education and knowledge level. As the education ladder, upgrading examination provides a platform for Chinese vocational education students to further study.

3.1 It Is Beneficial to the Integration of Vocational Education and General Education

In 2022, The State Council issued Opinions on Deepening the Construction and Reform of the Modern Vocational Education System, which proposed: "Broaden the channels for students to grow and become talents..... In light of the characteristics of vocational school students, we will improve the examination methods and training methods for 'upgrading from junior college to university', support high-level undergraduate schools to participate in the reform of vocational education, and promote the integrated and coordinated development of vocational education and general education." As the center connecting higher vocational education and general undergraduate education, the upgrading examination is a bridge from vocational education to general education, which is conducive to promoting the mutual integration and coordinated development of higher vocational education and general undergraduate education.The state has improved the examination methods for "upgrading from junior college to university"and promoted the connection between higher vocational education and general undergraduate education by designing scientific and reasonable channels and methods. This reflects the needs of the structural adjustment of higher education and the requirements of the open characteristics of the education system. It is also an important measure to realize the coexistence of higher vocational education and general undergraduate education and improve the education system.The upgrading examination is the main path for higher vocational students to study in the undergraduate university. Excellent higher vocational students with good quality and professional knowledge pass the examination and enter the undergraduate university for further study, establishing the "bridge" for the growth of vocational education students.

3.2 It Helps to Publicize the Educational Concept of Lifelong Learning

The progress of human society and the arrival of the knowledge economy era objectively require people to accept education to a higher level. The idea of lifelong education proposed by Paul Lengrand has been established as the main modern educational concept: education should be a continuous process from birth to death, and is the unity of all educational opportunities in a person's life .This concept also permeates the vocational education system. China has long developed a series of policies to encourage graduates of higher vocational schools to pass the examination to continue their studies at undergraduate universities. The Ministry of Education has pointed out in the Education Promotion Plan of Action for the 21st Century that it is necessary to gradually establish an overpass between general higher education and vocational and technical education, allowing graduates of vocational and technical colleges to receive higher-level education through examination .The upgrading examination is beneficial for higher vocational graduates to further study at undergraduate universities, which meets the needs of personal development, economic construction and social progress. It is beneficial to relieve the pressure of social employment, in line with the higher education popularization and lifelong learning education concept, and is conducive to improving the national education system.

3.3 It Is Conducive to Promoting Educational Equity

Notice on Enrollment of Secondary Vocational Schools in 2021 issued by the Ministry of Education clearly states: "The proportion of general high school students and secondary vocational students should be roughly equal. We must take the development of secondary vocational education

as an important basis for the popularization of high school education and the construction of a modern vocational education system with Chinese characteristics. We will keep the ratio of general high school students to secondary vocational students roughly equal." The announcement is widely discussed. Based on the theory of class reinvention and social exclusion, many scholars believe that vocational education actually acts as a tool to legitimize the unequal distribution of social resources . From the social level, the development of vocational education may indeed increase the existing gap between social classes, and the separation of vocational education and general education may become a tool to replicate social classes.The students of vocational education mostly come from the families of disadvantaged groups with low social status, such as rural families, families living on subsistence allowances and families in remote areas. The graduates of higher vocational colleges are excluded from the competition field by the dominant social class due to the influence of the degree signal in the job market, and are in the shadow of class reproduction.The "upgrading from junior college to university" reflects the flow and integration between the ordinary academic road and the vocational education road, which is a kind of flow that breaks the hierarchy. The upgrading examination allows them to return to the general academic competition field, provides them with the possibility of upward mobility and development, is conducive to meeting the needs of higher vocational students to improve their academic qualifications, and promotes educational equity.

3.4 It Is Helpful to Improve the Study Atmosphere and Social Living Space of Higher Vocational Colleges

In the past, high school teachers and students generally regarded university as an "ivory tower". Once they had overcome the difficulties of the college entrance examination and entered the university, their academic goals were basically accomplished. Therefore, students lacked motivation to study in the university stage. Vocational college students are even more so, they do not pay attention to study, lack of self-discipline behind the existence of a kind of self-abandonment of psychological reasons, think that their life stops here. The upgrading examination meets the urgent desire and requirement of higher vocational students, and sets up another goal for them after the college entrance examination, so that they have the motivation to continue studying. The upgrading examination is an important method to form a good learning atmosphere and school spirit, enrich the connotation construction of higher vocational education and enhance the social identity of higher vocational education. "Upgrading from junior college to university" makes some higher vocational colleges form a positive learning atmosphere, which does play an objective role in improving the study style of higher vocational colleges.

It is also beneficial to expand the social living space of higher vocational colleges. In fact, the social status of vocational colleges is not high. Due to the influence of the traditional thinking of attaching importance to academics and neglecting skills, some parents and students prefer to re-take the college entrance examination or give up their studies directly rather than choose vocational colleges. Even if general undergraduate schools expand enrollment, but the admission situation is still not optimistic. In this case, "upgrading examination" has become a wise choice for many students who fail in the college entrance examination. It selects excellent students from higher vocational students to study directly at the undergraduate level with a new mode, and trains them according to the professional direction of higher vocational education. To some extent, it solves the dilemma of "unable to recruit students" in higher vocational colleges, alleviates people's contempt for vocational colleges, broadens the development space of higher education, and brings new opportunities for higher vocational education.

4. The Negative Effect of "Upgrading from Junior College to University" in Vocational Education

The original intention of the upgrading examination system is to construct the "bridge" of general education and vocational education, and promote the integrated and coordinated development of

general education and vocational education. However, in recent years, more and more vocational students pursue the entrance examination unilaterally, so that it becomes the second college entrance examination. The negative effect of "upgrading from junior college to university" is constantly appearing, which not only affects the training orientation of vocational skilled talents, but also changes the original intention of vocational education, and even is not conducive to the improvement of social talent structure and the stable development of economic society.

4.1 It Influences the National Policy of Developing Vocational Education

The orientation and development space of higher vocational education are different from that of general education. The difference in the intelligent structure and type of the cultivation objects of the two kinds of education also determines the difference in the cultivation methods and objectives . In Opinions on Deepening the Construction and Reform of the Modern Vocational Education System issued by General Office of the State Council in 2022, it is proposed that "the quality, adaptability and attractiveness of vocational education should be effectively improved, and more high-quality technical and skilled talents and great country craftsman should be cultivated, so as to lay a solid foundation for accelerating the building of a strong educational system, greater scientific and technological strength, and a quality workforce." The goal of vocational education is accurately positioned as cultivating "high-quality technical and skilled talents" and "great country craftsman". Higher vocational students are the main source of future technical personnel and the important support of economic and social development.Vocational education especially emphasizes the pertinence of occupation, and its major is usually set according to the occupational needs of the present society. The curriculum mainly focuses on the basic theoretical knowledge and skill training required by occupation. The teaching method is usually field operation and practice training, requiring students to work in the corresponding position in advance. The national government has invested a large amount of financial and material resources to establish training bases in vocational colleges with the goal of improving students' professional skills, realizing the effective connection between social needs and vocational education in schools, and cultivating skilled talents who can take up jobs immediately after graduation.

From the macro level, "upgrading from junior college to university" affects the national policy of developing vocational education to a certain extent and wastes the national resources. First, the "upgrading from junior college to university" is not to go to a higher level of vocational education system, but to the general academic education system, which means that the vocational education at the junior college stage is basically useless after the admission to the undergraduate university. It wastes the vocational education resources invested by the national government. Second, "upgrading from junior college to university" actually makes many vocational students out of the scope of vocational education, shrinks the scale of vocational education, aggravates the imbalance between academic and technical talents, and goes against the policy of developing higher vocational education and the original intention of cultivating technical talents.Third,"upgrading from junior college to university" is not the fundamental way to solve higher vocational students to continue their study. If we allow the excessive development of "upgrading from junior college to university", higher vocational education will become a step and bridge connecting general education, and higher vocational education will lose its own significance of existence and become a way to realize general undergraduate education.

4.2 It Affects the Normal Teaching Order of Higher Vocational Colleges

"Upgrading from junior college to university" has influenced the orientation of many higher vocational colleges and caused a certain impact on the normal teaching order. In order to attract students, some higher vocational colleges pay too much attention to the publicity of "upgrading from junior college to university", and regard the ratio of upgrading to undergraduate universities as an important sign of school-running quality and an important factor of enrollment. These schools have not put their energy into the characteristic construction of higher vocational education, which makes

it impossible to carry out the reform of higher vocational education advocated by the Ministry of Education, such as "combination of industry and teaching" and "dual certificate" system. Even the normal teaching mode of higher vocational schools is not paid attention to by teachers and students, but the content of the upgrading examination has become the core of the daily teaching of higher vocational schools, which deviates from the original intention of vocational education and the orientation of talent training, disrupts the normal teaching mode and curriculum system construction of vocational colleges, and completely runs counter to the goal of vocational education. For example, some higher vocational colleges actively try to cooperate with domestic and foreign undergraduate universities in running schools, immersed in the pursuit of school promotion activities; Some higher vocational colleges regard upgrading examination as a shortcut to divert students' employment pressure and hold "college entrance examination class" and "pre-examination tutorial class" in an attempt to achieve high "employment rate" through high "enrollment rate".This will not only affect the normal teaching order of higher vocational colleges, but also erase the characteristics and quality of vocational education. Nowadays, when the country develops vocational education and the society is in urgent need of highly skilled talents, vocational colleges should always focus on cultivating "high-quality technical and skilled talents" and "great country craftsmen", and focus on cultivating students' innovative ability and vocational skills, rather than taking theoretical knowledge as the core of classroom teaching. "Upgrading from junior college to university" makes higher vocational schools deviate from their own school positioning and dissociate from vocational education, which is not conducive to the characteristic development of vocational education.

4.3 It Affects the Interests of the Majority of Higher Vocational Students

From the micro level, "upgrading from junior college to university" has affected the interests of the majority of higher vocational students in different degrees. First, many higher vocational students do not understand that the current system of ordinary higher education and resources cannot fundamentally accommodate a large number of junior college students to pursue further study. Some students attach great importance to the "upgrading examination" and devote themselves to the upgrading study, but ignore their professional courses and vocational skills training, and even do not participate in the practical training and internship arranged by the school. Once the upgrading examination fails, the market competitiveness of these higher vocational students will be greatly reduced, and they will not know where to go after graduation, and they will bear more employment pressure.Second, some higher vocational students and their parents regard upgrading undergraduate universities as a smooth road due to cognitive limitations and outdated ideas. But if most higher vocational students do so, they are bound to face the "diploma devaluation" and "employment difficulties" after upgrading. The phenomenon of "upgrading from junior college to university" actually reflects that higher vocational education is not perfect, and the concept of vocational education needs to be updated. The one-sided pursuit of "upgrading from junior college to university" will not only affect the normal higher vocational education system, but also ultimately affect the vital interests of the majority of higher vocational students.

5. Suggestions and Countermeasures

The negative effect of the phenomenon of "upgrading from junior college to university" should be deeply considered, and the contradiction between the increasing demand of higher vocational students for further study and the nature of employment education in higher vocational education should be solved. If the relationship between the development of higher vocational education and the needs of vocational students can not be handled properly, if the students trained by higher vocational education can not be fully employed and can not further study, it will certainly affect the development of vocational education in China. The national education department should take some measures against the negative effect caused by the phenomenon of "upgrading from junior college to university".

5.1 Building a Perfect Vocational Education System and Develop Vocational Undergraduate Education

To some extent,"upgrading from junior college to university" reflects the will of the public. With the development of science and technology and the arrival of the knowledge economy era , the social demand for labor force is diversified and high level. It is no longer in line with the needs of students' growth and social development to only locate the highest level of vocational education in the junior college.Therefore, it is an inevitable trend of vocational education reform and requirement of economic and social development to construct a perfect vocational education system, including secondary vocational education, junior college education, vocational undergraduate education and postgraduate vocational education, as well as a matching degree system and higher education model, and develop higher vocational education into the center of vocational education system.When vocational education builds a complete system and forms a coherent path from top to bottom, it is no longer necessary to rely on general higher education to improve the academic qualifications, and the negative effects brought by the phenomenon of "upgrading from junior college to university" will gradually disappear.

Vocational undergraduate education is the embodiment of the extension of vocational education to undergraduate level, and its talent training orientation reflects both vocational and advanced. In addition, higher quality should become the most important attribute of vocational undergraduate education, and the talents cultivated by vocational undergraduate education are professional talents oriented to production and technology in nature .Therefore, the development of high-level vocational undergraduate education can not only increase the opportunities for higher vocational students to further study, improve their academic level and employment competitiveness, but also make the development prospect of vocational education broader, distinguish the difference between vocational education and general education, highlight the characteristics of vocational education, and enhance the attractiveness of vocational education.

5.2 Connecting Higher Vocational Courses and Undergraduate Courses to Form an Integrated Curriculum System

First, general undergraduate universities should strengthen the communication and cooperation with corresponding higher vocational colleges. General undergraduate universities should set up courses that are connected with their higher vocational education according to the characteristics of students, form an integrated curriculum system of higher vocational and general undergraduate, and avoid the waste of national educational resources caused by repeated learning or irrelevant learning.Second, we should deal with the relationship between practice skills and theoretical knowledge learning, and complement each other in higher vocational and undergraduate education. That is, the same major, in the stage of higher vocational education mainly attaches importance to practical training and skill practice, supplemented by the study of basic theories; In the undergraduate study stage, the students should focus on the study of theoretical knowledge, appropriately increase the study of practical skills, and schools should pay attention to the cultivation of students' sustainable development ability and innovation ability. "It can better realize the communication between higher vocational education and applied undergraduate, consolidate the achievements of higher vocational education reform, and gradually form the training mode of application-oriented talents with higher vocational education."

5.3 Reforming the System of "Upgrading Examination" and Increase the Content of Vocational Skills Test

The "upgrading from junior college to university" has influenced the development of vocational education in many junior colleges. The direct reason is that at present, the "upgrading examination" of various majors in higher vocational colleges is mainly based on the academic course in the college entrance examination, which has little connection with the professional knowledge of vocational education, and has almost no requirements for vocational skills. As a result, students can completely

give up the vocational skills training in higher vocational education, and achieve the purpose of being admitted to the undergraduate university by simply reviewing the academic course. This purely knowledge-based selection method breaks the connection with vocational education majors and makes students have to do two things at once, which is not conducive to passing the entrance examination and not conducive to students' professional learning in vocational education stage. It is necessary to reform the current examination system of "upgrading from junior college to university" , which emphasizes theory and neglects skills, and construct a set of examination selection system closely related to professional knowledge and skills of higher vocational education. It is necessary to reduce the score proportion of college entrance examination of academic courses, increase the examination of professional skills, increase practical operation items, and pay attention to the examination of ability. All higher vocational students who wish to continue their studies must master relevant professional knowledge and skills before they can participate in the upgrading examination, so as to ensure that even if they fail to enter the university, they can still have a certain reserve of professional knowledge and skills for employment. In this way, we can reverse the current tendency of emphasizing theory and neglecting skills in the upgrading examination, and explore the new examination system suitable for higher vocational education.

The purpose of developing vocational education is to meet the needs of economic and social development and train a lot of high-tech talents. Since the exploration of upgrading examination has already been carried out, the country should seriously consider how to construct a perfect vocational education system and formulate a reasonable examination selection system according to the need of connecting higher vocational education with general undergraduate education.

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