

Reflection on the Policy of General and Vocational Diversion in Senior High Schools in China

Hongyuan Luo, Anding Yu

School of Marxism, Sichuan University of Light Chemical Technology, 643000, China

Abstract: In senior high school, general education and vocational education advocate "roughly equal" in enrollment scale, which is the consistent policy of separating general education from vocational education in China in recent 40 years. In view of this policy, the author makes a rational analysis from three dimensions: educational equity, social development and personal development. In order to promote the all-round development of people and the sustainable development of society, the proportion of general posts should be determined according to local conditions; Distribute according to reason, adjust educational resources and improve the quality of running schools; According to the situation, the combination of general education and vocational education, and the construction of smooth educational channels, this paper puts forward some suggestions on the diversion of general education and vocational education.

Keywords: General Job Diversion; General-vocational Ratio; Integration of General and Vocational Education.

1. Introduction

The newly revised version of People's Republic of China (PRC) Vocational Education Law, which came into effect on May 1, 2022, replaced the words "implementing education diversion at different stages with emphasis on junior high school" with the expression "promoting the coordinated development of vocational education and general education according to local conditions". After the publication of the newly revised Vocational Education Law, some media and experts interpreted the "coordinated development of general education and vocational education" as "canceling the general education and vocational education after junior high school". Director Chen Ziji responded that this was actually a misunderstanding. In different stages after compulsory education, vocational education and general education should be coordinated. In view of this policy, the author makes rational thinking on the following issues.

2. Organization of the Text

2.1. The Development and Changes of the Scale of General and Vocational Diversion in China

In the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China's Decision on the Reform of Education System, which was promulgated in 1985, China clearly put forward the concepts of "separation of general education from vocational education" and "general equality". [1] In the 1980s, the proportion of general education was too large and the proportion of vocational education was too small. With the rapid development of market economy after the reform and opening up, China needed a large number of professional workers. In 1993, the Outline of Education Reform and Development in China called for vigorously developing secondary vocational education, so that 50% ~ 70% of junior high school graduates could gradually enter secondary vocational schools or vocational training centers. [2] As shown in Figure 1, from 1991 to 1997, the enrollment of secondary vocational schools surpassed that of ordinary high schools, and the ratio of vocational education to general

education increased. As secondary school graduates are not assigned jobs, the enrollment expansion of higher education, as shown in Figure 2, decreased from 1999 to 2005. In 2005, "the State Council's Decision on Vigorously Developing Vocational Education" required: "By 2010, the enrollment scale of secondary vocational education will reach 8 million, which is roughly equivalent to that of ordinary high schools". Zhejiang Province requires: "A county with strong education must meet the requirement that the enrollment ratio of secondary vocational schools is not less than 50%; If it has not reached the proportion for two consecutive years, its title of strong education county will be revoked." [3] As shown in Figure 2, the job-to-general ratio increased again in 2005 - 2009. Since then, although China has successively introduced policies, people's living standards have been continuously improved, and they have higher development needs for themselves. Pursuing higher education has become the universal value pursuit of society. As shown in Figure 2, the job-to-general ratio has decreased since 2010. According to the data of live births released by the National Bureau of Statistics and the Health and Health Commission, although the number of students in senior high schools fluctuates from 2022 to 2036, it will not endanger the foundation of secondary vocational schools, but it is a foregone conclusion that the number of people born in 2022 and beyond will decrease year by year. After 2036, the number of students in most secondary vocational schools will shrink sharply year by year. [4] Therefore, a large number of social experts and scholars have sparked heated discussions on whether secondary vocational education is still necessary in the new development stage.

2.2. Second, Thinking About the Policy of Separating General Education from Vocational Education

2.2.1. From the Perspective of Educational Equity, Talk About "General and Vocational Diversion"

Among the experts and scholars who advocate the separation of general education and vocational education, most think that the separation of general education and vocational education can increase the equality of educational opportunities, that is, there is no strict economic threshold for

the separation of general education and vocational education, and there is no discrimination in mechanism, so that students with poor grades can also have the opportunity to continue their studies, so that students with the same talents can have the same opportunity to go to school. However, some scholars have pointed out that the separation of general education and secondary vocational education is unfair, and this unfairness is artificially created. According to the principle of "maximizing the interests of the least beneficiaries" advocated by Rawls' theory of justice, if the inequality of opportunities must be expanded, the disadvantaged groups should benefit the most. However, as some scholars have pointed out, the equal opportunity of general and vocational diversion is probably false for the disabled and vulnerable groups. [5] The students who graduated from junior high school are not mature in mind, and their self-cognitive ability is not high. They lack contact and learning about social

occupations in the compulsory education stage, and their understanding of society is relatively simple. Nearly half of the students are forced to divert to various majors in vocational education only by relying on the scores of a senior high school entrance examination, which outlines the development path of life. The author believes that there is a lack of respect for students' right to choose. In 2016, some scholars studied the family background of 1,782 students in 23 ordinary high schools and 1,901 students in 22 secondary vocational schools in 9 provinces, and found that "the vast majority of students in secondary vocational schools come from rural areas and towns, accounting for nearly 70%, of which nearly 53% are from rural areas." [6] According to the survey, farmers and children from lower classes in towns and villages are easily diverted to secondary vocational education in the process of general vocational diversion, which in fact has caused an unfair educational phenomenon.

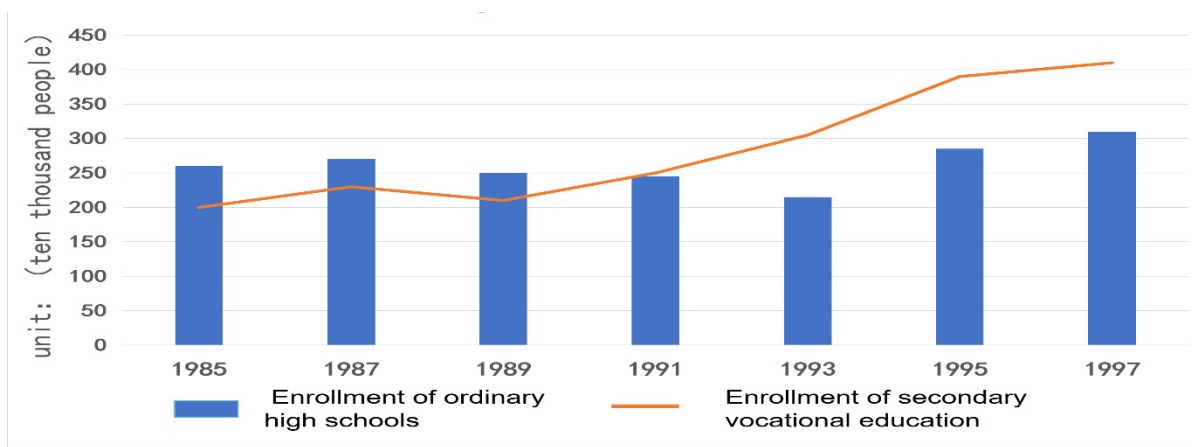


Figure 1. Enrollment of secondary vocational education and senior high school from 1985 to 1997
 Note: The data are compiled from "China Educational Statistics Yearbook" from 1980 to 1997

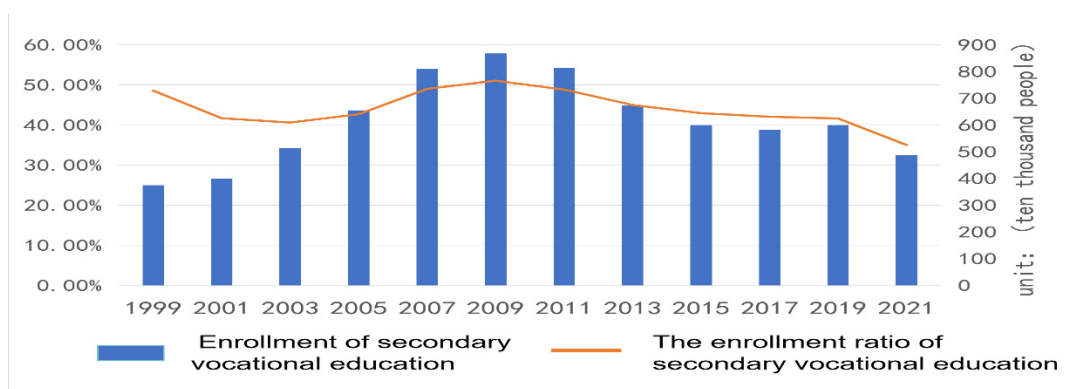


Figure 2. Enrollment and Enrollment ratio of secondary vocational schools from 1999 to 2021
 Note: The data are compiled from the "Statistical Bulletin of National Education Development" from 1999 to 2021

2.2.2. From the Perspective of Social Development, Talk About "General and Vocational Separation"

From the perspective of social development, China put forward the development of vocational education from the period of reform and opening up, and some scholars emphasized that "general-vocational separation" is conducive to meeting the needs of social posts, promoting employment and producing greater social value. The lack of first-line skilled personnel in the domestic employment situation has caused the phenomenon of "difficulty in recruiting workers" in the first-line occupations of enterprises. The policy of "separating general education from vocational education" in the senior high school entrance examination has promoted the cultivation of technical and skilled personnel. In recent years,

China's economic development level has been continuously improved. In 2022, China's total GDP ranked second in the world, and the three major industrial structures have been continuously optimized, gradually changing from resource and labor-intensive to capital and technology-intensive. However, there is a shortage of high-level technical and skilled personnel in China, and there is a disconnect between talent training and industrial demand, so it is difficult for skilled personnel to match the development needs of industrial upgrading. At present, strategic scientists and high-level basic research talents are particularly lacking in China, which has become an important bottleneck for high-level scientific and technological innovation. Therefore, after the first demographic dividend tends to disappear, it can no

longer meet the long-term needs of economic development in the future to force the whole country to continue to maintain the "general-vocational ratio" of general vocational education.

2.2.3. From the Perspective of Personal Development to Talk About "General-vocational Diversion"

From the perspective of personal development, a large number of scholars believe that "general-vocational separation" is convenient for teaching students in accordance with their aptitude. Gardner, a psychologist at Harvard University in the United States, put forward the theory of multiple intelligences, arguing that the connotation of intelligence is diverse, and intelligence exists not in an integrated way but in an independent way. There are differences among individuals in cognitive style, thinking level and personality characteristics, and each student has the plasticity of his own intellectual characteristics and development direction. [7] According to students' abilities and qualities, only by receiving education that matches them can the greatest educational effect be exerted. According to the survey, Germany, Japan and other countries have a complete system of further education. When children enter the pre-school education stage or the primary education stage, teachers will make detailed plans according to the students' comprehensive performance, and recommend them to enter suitable schools to continue their studies when they graduate, which can adapt to the development of students to the greatest extent. But from the perspective of educational theory, first of all, one-sided consideration of national development needs and employment needs is not conducive to students' all-round development and sustainable development. The starting point and foothold of education is to cultivate people with all-round and harmonious development. The longer people receive general education, the more generous foundation and extensive adaptability they have. They can not only deal with specific affairs in various professional fields with comprehensive literacy, but also accurately grasp the true orientation and development trend of social practice. [8] Vocational education in senior high school is employment-oriented, and it is difficult to accept systematic and profound knowledge to pave the way for all-round development. Secondly, the influence of the environment on individuals can not be ignored. Junior three graduates are not yet mentally developed, lack autonomy and judgment, and students with poor academic performance enter vocational schools, which is easy to have a negative impact on each other's learning motivation. Thirdly, the vocational education curriculum is simple, and it is difficult to develop students' potential. Students are prone to have a negative mentality of "being inferior to others" and lack the pursuit of the future and the yearning for further study in universities.

2.3. The Policy Recommendations for the Separation of General and Vocational Education

2.3.1. According to the Needs of the Ratio, According to Local Conditions to Determine the Scale Ratio of General Posts

It is not appropriate to require all regions of the country to implement a unified "roughly equivalent" policy. Local governments can define the scale ratio of local vocational education and general education according to the development characteristics of each region. Local governments need to adjust the proportion structure according

to the local economic, demographic, cultural and other practical needs, and constantly optimize the proportion of general and post-secondary school entrance examinations. Taking Beijing in the east, Liaoning in the northeast, Henan in the middle and Shaanxi in the west as examples, the ratio of general education to vocational education will change from 52%: 48%, 65%: 35%, 61%: 39% and 65%: 35% in 2013 to 79%: 21%, 69%: 31% and 65% in 2020. [9] Thomas B. Smith, an American scholar, put forward a dynamic framework of ecological relations aimed at analyzing the relevant influencing factors in the process of policy implementation, which is regarded as a typical research paradigm in the academic circles. Based on this process model, in order to promote the implementation of the general vocational diversion policy, we must comprehensively consider the policy itself, the target student group, the middle schools and secondary vocational schools in various places and the policy implementation field. [10] According to the characteristics of local development, each region can clearly understand the needs of regional secondary vocational graduates, independently determine the proportion of general vocational education, fully respect the educational choice of parents and students, and can not engage in "one size fits all" in order to give full play to the maximum social benefits of secondary vocational education.

2.3.2. Rational Distribution, Adjustment of Educational Resources to Improve the Quality of Running Schools

The key to parents' reluctance to enter vocational education lies in the quality of vocational education. "People's Republic of China (PRC) Vocational Education Law" clearly points out that the establishment of vocational schools should have teaching and practical training places, facilities, equipment, curriculum system, education and teaching resources that are suitable for the implementation of vocational education and meet the prescribed standards and safety requirements. [11] The school's hardware facilities are insufficient, and the teachers are thin, which has become an important starting point for improving the quality and increasing the capacity of secondary vocational education. On the one hand, it is necessary to strengthen the infrastructure construction of secondary vocational schools and improve the education and teaching conditions. Local governments and relevant departments increase their support for vocational education through policies or funds, expand the dormitory area and teaching building area, rectify the training practice room, and regularly supervise and evaluate the infrastructure of vocational education. On the other hand, it is necessary to strengthen the construction of teachers in secondary vocational schools and build a team of high-quality teachers. Local governments can improve the attractiveness of vocational education teachers' posts through talent introduction or establishment. Vocational schools can pay attention to the cultivation of teachers' teaching ability, teaching and research innovation ability and professional skills internally; We can develop social education resources, invite teachers of related majors in colleges and universities to teach at the school, or cooperate with enterprises to hire employees with superb practical skills to enter the school as part-time teachers. In addition, we should improve the student management system, enhance students' self-management efficiency, clarify the functions of management departments and class teachers, and strengthen autonomous management. Only by concentrating on running fewer but better secondary

vocational education with high quality and characteristics can we run high-quality vocational education and reassure students and parents.

2.3.3. Deployment According to the Situation, the Integration of General Education and Vocational Education to Build a Smooth Channel

The correct attitude towards children is: you can't think that children can't read and don't teach literacy, and you can't think that children can't become artists and don't have aesthetic education. The purpose of education is to promote the development of students, not to make a simple conclusion about their talents and talents. On the one hand, build an "overpass" for the integration of general vocational courses. In order to meet the demand for talents in the new era, to enhance students' knowledge reserve and broaden their horizons, we can integrate general vocational education courses. Appropriately increase the setting of general courses in vocational education, and complete the core academic courses of ordinary high schools in secondary vocational education. Besides Chinese, mathematics and English, politics, history, biology, chemistry, geography and physics are optional compulsory courses. At the same time, as a credit for entrance examination, the course requirements are slightly lower than those of high school students in general education. An optional course of vocational education can be added to general education, so that high school students in general education can understand the development and changes of social occupations and build a correct outlook on occupations. On the other hand, break through the "barriers" of the academic system of general vocational education. Students should be provided with more possible choices, so that students can have multiple choices between general vocational education, so that students can voluntarily and naturally divert. Using Rawls' equity theory, we fundamentally oppose different education because of individual quality differences, and think that the premature separation of general education and vocational education has closed the door for students to choose. [12] Both general education and vocational education belong to high school education. We can refer to the formulation of the transfer system in the province to construct the transition period of the first year of general education or vocational education. After one school year, vocational education can be transferred to general education according to academic requirements, and after one school year, general education can be transferred to vocational schools according to vocational education requirements. Choosing under the condition that students experience general vocational education not only further guarantees the educational choice of students and parents, but also makes their choices more objective. Finally, open up the rising channel of vocational education to ensure the right of secondary vocational students to enter higher schools fairly. At the beginning of the 21st century, about 18% of the freshmen in German comprehensive universities are graduates from vocational high schools. [13] The diversion of general and vocational education should not only coordinate the diversion plan, but also build a system of further education for vocational education based on China's national conditions, take the road of further education with China characteristics, and construct a variety of smooth channels for secondary vocational graduates to enter higher education.

3. Conclusion

The State Council made it clear at the beginning: "Vocational education and general education are two different types of education and have the same important position." Vocational education shoulders the important mission of cultivating a large number of high-quality workers and is the basic force of China's economic development. Vocational education and general education are both components of China's high school education. We should have a clear idea about the future of secondary vocational education in view of the hot discussion on the general-vocational diversion in senior high school. From "educational diversion" to "coordinated development" is by no means to cancel the diversion of general vocational education, but to clarify the focus of the development of general vocational education and shift from "structure" to "structure" and "quality". At present, there is a serious shortage of skilled talents in China, and the quality of labor force is far from the level of developed countries, so China can't and can't give up secondary vocational education. Only by coordinating the coordinated development of general education and secondary vocational education, solving the difficult points of secondary vocational education, and giving full play to the maximum benefits of secondary vocational education to individuals and society on the basis of respecting the education fairness of the educated, can we meet the needs of national development, meet the educational needs of the people, and enhance their sense of acquisition and happiness!

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