

Operational Dilemmas and Restructuring Strategies of the Integrated Secondary-Higher Vocational Coherent Training System

Surui Wu *, Yong Xu, Shuwei Pan, Qingxiao Kong, Yihuai Huang

Wenzhou Polytechnic, Wenzhou, Zhejiang, 325035, China

* Corresponding author: Surui Wu

Abstract: The "3+2" program and the five-year consistent education model in the integrated secondary and higher vocational education construct a stepped skill development pathway through a coherent training system, which can systematically cultivate high-quality skilled talents matching industrial demands. Nevertheless, three prominent problems have emerged in practical implementation. First, the guaranteed direct admission channel tends to foster students' passive mentality of treating further education as a fallback option. Second, ambiguous division of powers and responsibilities between secondary and higher vocational colleges during the academic transition period gives rise to management vacuums. Third, the lack of integrated coordination in curriculum standards for secondary and higher vocational education leads to overlapping teaching contents and discontinuous knowledge progression. Accordingly, this paper puts forward three optimization suggestions: implementing a segmented streaming incentive mechanism, improving the joint management model for the transition phase, and coordinating the development of an integrated curriculum system. It aims to refine the operation mechanism of integrated secondary-higher vocational training, fully unlock the strengths of coherent integrated education, and offer practical references for the long-term cultivation of vocational skilled talents in regional areas.

Keywords: Integrated Secondary and Higher Vocational Education; Five-Year Consistent Education Model; Coherent Training; Curriculum Integration; Segmented Streaming.

1. Introduction

The *Outline of the National Medium- and Long-Term Program for Education Reform and Development (2010–2020)* and the newly revised *Vocational Education Law of the People's Republic of China (2022)* regulate two teaching modes within the integration of secondary and higher vocational education, namely the five-year consistent system and the segmented "3+2" model. It is clarified that the original intention of constructing the integrated secondary-higher vocational education model is to establish a multi-path selection mechanism, address the fragmentation between different levels of vocational education, improve the long-term training system for vocational skilled personnel, and cultivate high-end technical and skilled talents in a hierarchical and progressive manner, rather than serving merely as a fallback pathway for further education[1-3].

The emergence of the integrated teaching model of secondary and higher vocational education enables teachers to possess a complete and consistent education cycle. With concentrated teaching time, teachers can conduct overall planning for the cultivation system of students' professional literacy, provide whole-process career planning guidance and targeted hierarchical training, and transform the fragmented phased talent training mode into a long-term, systematic and integrated cultivation mechanism for technical and skilled talents. This cultivation model can accurately adapt to the growth rules of students, continuously consolidate students' professional competencies, and facilitate the cultivation of high-quality technical and skilled talents that meet the development needs of regional industries.

Under the school-enterprise collaborative education mechanism and the phased and progressive curriculum

framework of the integrated training system for secondary and higher vocational education, students can continuously participate in vocational experience and explore career development paths, so as to select career development directions that conform to their personal characteristics and ability advantages[4, 5]. After clarifying their personal positioning, students can carry out targeted training on specialized competencies in accordance with talent training programs and gradually polish the comprehensive literacy and practical skills required for their chosen career directions. By deeply cultivating subdivided professional fields throughout the complete and consistent training cycle, students can build a progressively advanced professional competency system. This approach avoids the drawbacks of discontinuous learning and superficial skill accumulation existing in the segmented training mode, and helps students form differentiated competitiveness with in-depth professional capabilities. It not only enables students to quickly adapt to the actual job requirements of enterprises, but also lays a solid foundation for continuous technical improvement, thereby realizing sustainable growth and advancement in their career development.

2. Practical Problems in the Integration of Secondary and Higher Vocational Education

(1) Complacency Triggered by the Perception of Guaranteed Further Education

Compared with the competitive selection model for further education in general high schools, the integrated secondary-higher vocational education pathway provides students with stable expectations of further study and effectively relieves

their academic competition pressure[6]. Nevertheless, such guaranteed admission weakens external incentives and constraints, which tends to foster students' negative perception that they can easily gain admission without diligent efforts. Consequently, students suffer from a severe lack of internal learning motivation and lose their sense of competition and crisis. In the long run, widespread problems including slack study atmosphere and insufficient motivation emerge among students, hindering the improvement of their professional skills and comprehensive literacy. The overall

logical relationship is illustrated in Figure 1. This phenomenon significantly reduces the overall quality of talent cultivation under the integrated secondary-higher vocational education program, impedes the realization of the training objective for high-quality technical and skilled personnel, makes it difficult to fulfill the national policy vision of constructing a vertically connected vocational education system, and continuously leads to inefficient allocation and waste of high-quality vocational education resources.

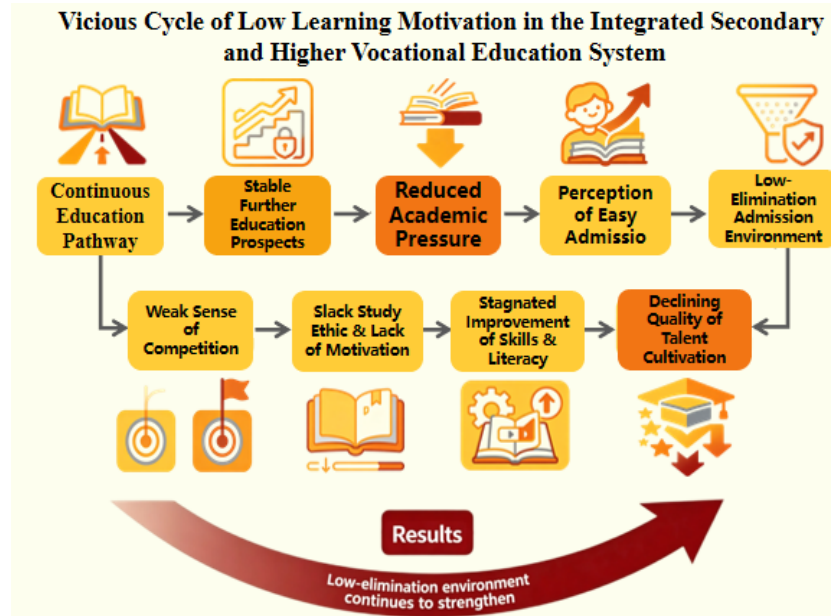


Fig 1. Formation Mechanism of the Vicious Circle Caused by Low Learning Motivation in Secondary-Higher Vocational Integration

(2) Dual Supervision Laxity Triggered by Identity Fragmentation Across Educational Stages

The third academic year of secondary-higher vocational integrated training serves as a critical transition period for talent cultivation, which determines whether students can smoothly realize the orderly shift of training focus from basic technical skill training at the secondary vocational stage to comprehensive vocational competency development at the higher vocational stage. Nevertheless, during this special period, due to imperfect collaborative management systems, secondary and higher vocational schools hold divergent understandings regarding the subject of student management, and the boundaries of inter-school management rights and responsibilities remain ambiguous, which tends to create a vacuum in student management responsibilities[7]. Secondary vocational schools believe that students will soon transfer to higher vocational colleges, thus gradually delegating management authority and weakening daily education and supervision. In contrast, higher vocational colleges refuse to conduct regular education and management in advance on the grounds that students have not completed student status transfer and formal enrollment. Both sides relax supervision and restrictions, leaving students in an unregulated "free-range" state. Such circumstances break the continuity of segmented education, induce problems including weariness of learning, slack attitudes and poor discipline among students, lead to declining quality of talent training, and run counter to the core goal of the integrated system, namely coordinated continuous cultivation of high-quality technical and skilled personnel.

(3) The Dilemma of Fragmented Curriculum Connection

System Under Dual-Track Training Standards

Differences in talent training programs between secondary and higher vocational colleges lead to prominent deficiencies in stage transition during integrated training, accompanied by fragmented curriculum standards. Secondary vocational colleges lay emphasis on basic general education, while higher vocational colleges focus on advanced professional skill training. The substantial divergence in teaching orientation and the lack of progressive transitional content result in obvious discontinuities in students' knowledge construction, making it difficult for them to establish consistent learning logic[7, 8]. Meanwhile, to satisfy assessment requirements of curriculum standards in both stages, many professional courses are offered repeatedly, which compresses teaching depth and creates a training dilemma characterized by "two rounds of superficial learning". This not only causes redundant investment in teaching resources but also imposes unnecessary ineffective learning burdens on students. The phenomenon hinders the progressive development of students' professional competence and tends to diminish students' enthusiasm for in-depth professional research, triggering a series of problems such as learning burnout. Ultimately, it undermines the institutional advantages of the five-year continuous training mode and greatly weakens the overall effectiveness of secondary-higher vocational integrated education.

3. Optimization Strategies for the Practical Problems

(1) Coordination of Resource Preference and Diversion

Elimination Mechanism

At the secondary vocational stage, integrated special courses are offered for students in secondary-higher vocational integrated classes, with priority access allocated to training competition resources and special scholarships and grants. After entering higher vocational colleges, students can further receive exclusive training programs for upgrading to undergraduate education, practice opportunities in core industrial projects, job referrals from outstanding enterprises, and qualification recommendations for vocational undergraduate programs. Meanwhile, phased comprehensive assessments are implemented each year throughout the integrated training process. Students who fail assessments up to the maximum allowable times will trigger the diversion mechanism and be transferred to regular classes of the corresponding educational stage[9]. Upon transfer, all exclusive preferential treatments will be permanently revoked. The threshold for further education will rise sharply, and access to high-quality development resources will be completely cut off, resulting in direct loss of core development opportunities including undergraduate admission, well-paid employment, skills competitions, honors and further study. This measure can fundamentally eliminate students' fluke mentality of "guaranteed admission without efforts" and their slack attitudes. Students will fully

perceive the irreversible development losses caused by diversion elimination, thereby respecting the phased assessment and withdrawal mechanism from the bottom of their hearts, and consciously abandon passive learning and slack behaviors. It helps maintain the high-standard talent cultivation baseline of the integrated program and effectively realize the high-quality training value of secondary-higher vocational integration.

(2) Clarifying the Boundaries of Rights and Responsibilities Through Joint Management Agreements

In the third academic year, a joint management agreement for secondary-higher vocational integrated training should be formulated to establish a collaborative education model featuring "secondary vocational schools as the main management body and in-depth participation of higher vocational colleges". Both schools shall assign exclusive instructors with divided responsibilities. Teachers from secondary vocational schools take full charge of daily management including student attendance supervision, daily discipline administration and routine academic assessments on campus. Teachers from higher vocational colleges are specifically responsible for professional training coordination, career development planning guidance, early warning of academic risks and other professional cultivation work. Relevant details are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Evaluation Indicator Table for Joint Management Effect of Secondary-Higher Vocational Integrated Program

Evaluation Dimension	Primary Indicator	Secondary Evaluation Indicator	Responsible Subject	Recommended Weight
Daily Comprehensive Performance	Attendance Management	Attendance Rate	Secondary Vocational School Teacher	15%
		Times of Late Arrival and Early Leave		5%
		Rate of Absence from Class / Personal Leave		5%
	Daily Discipline	Times of Disciplinary Violations		10%
		Compliance Rate of Code of Conduct		5%
		Participation in Collective Activities		5%
	Academic Assessment	Pass Rate of Cultural Courses		10%
		Quality of Homework Completion		5%
Professional Growth Effectiveness	Professional Training	Completion Rate of Training Projects	Higher Vocational College Teacher	10%
		Pass Rate of Skill Assessment		10%
		Quality of Training Achievements		5%
	Career Development Planning	Maturity of Professional Cognition		5%
		Intention of Further Study / Employment		5%
		Matching Degree of Internship Posts		5%
	Academic Risk Early Warning	Recognition Rate of At-Risk Students		3%
		Effectiveness Rate of Intervention Measures		2%

At the end of the third academic year, two-dimensional data covering students' daily comprehensive performance and professional cultivation outcomes shall be integrated to synchronously inspect the education performance of instructors from both schools. The completion quality of educational work in this stage will be incorporated into the annual performance appraisal system of faculty in secondary and higher vocational colleges. Appraisal results will be directly linked to teachers' merit evaluation and year-end bonus distribution. Such measures consolidate the management responsibilities of cross-school segmented education and eliminate supervision vacuum during the transition period[9].

(3) Collaboratively Construct a Progressive Training System

This paper explores the implementation path for secondary and higher vocational colleges to collaboratively develop integrated talent training programs. An integrated joint teaching and research team shall be established by both institutions to hold special seminars on a regular basis. Based on the learning characteristics and growth rules of students receiving integrated training, the team jointly formulates talent training programs and carries out integrated overall planning for teaching content throughout the five-year program. Following the progressive education logic, the team clarifies curriculum boundaries of each stage, scientifically divides basic teaching modules for secondary vocational stage and advanced vocational skill training modules for higher vocational stage, eliminates simply repeated teaching contents between stages, and builds a smoothly connected and progressively ascending cultivation system for professional knowledge and skills.

4. Conclusion

Secondary-higher vocational integration is an important vocational education model that connects secondary and higher vocational stages to systematically cultivate technical and skilled personnel. It can tackle the problems of fragmented curricula and segmented talent cultivation existing in the traditional separate further education mode. Nevertheless, prominent challenges remain in practice, including students' insufficient learning motivation, ambiguous management rights and responsibilities in the third academic year, as well as repeated and disjointed courses caused by inconsistent inter-school training standards. These problems can be addressed by establishing a phased diversion and elimination mechanism to correct students' learning attitudes, signing joint management agreements to clarify management duties during the transition period, and setting up cross-school teaching and research teams to develop

progressive integrated courses. Only by continuously deepening regular collaboration between secondary and higher vocational colleges, improving systems of diversion assessment, joint management and integrated curricula, and removing obstacles in the training process, can the effectiveness of integrated education be fully exerted. This will achieve the goal of cultivating high-quality technical and skilled personnel in a hierarchical and progressive manner and satisfy the talent supply demands of local industries.

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