

The Realistic Dilemmas and Breakthrough Paths of Faculty Construction in Vocational Undergraduate Colleges

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Abstract: As an important support for the high-quality development of vocational education at the undergraduate level, the construction of faculty in vocational undergraduate colleges is of strategic significance for improving the quality of high-end skilled personnel training, driving the optimization of industrial talent supply structure, and perfecting the modern higher education system. Currently, the construction of faculty in vocational undergraduate colleges is facing the reality of an imbalanced faculty structure, insufficient quality and ability, and high mobility. It is necessary to take the “dual-teacher” innovation team construction as the core to build a two-way flow mechanism of university and enterprise talents; to take the construction of teacher morality as the foundation to create a “moral, teaching, research and talk” four-in-one quality ability enhancement system; to incentivize and regulate the dual-track, escorting the sustainable development of faculty construction. The two tracks of incentives and regulations are parallel to support the sustainable development of the faculty's construction.

1. Background

Vocational education is a dynamic and continuous concept, and the high-quality development of vocational education is essentially a process of continuous development and evolution along with the development of China's socialist modernization [1]. Vocational education, as a type of education, shoulders the responsibility and mission of cultivating technical and skilled talents, with cross-border integration and other notable features, the participation of enterprises, industries, society, and other diversified subjects in running schools, in-depth education and teaching reform of the whole process of talent cultivation reforms and innovations of practicality and practicability [2]. In 2019, the Ministry of Education approved the first batch of undergraduate-level pilot schools of vocational education, 15, and required the pilot schools to adhere to the Pilot schools are required to adhere to the orientation of vocational education, strengthen the construction of “dual-teacher” teacher teams, deepen the integration of industry and education, and cultivate high-level technical and skilled talents. In 2023, the initiative "Promote the integration of vocational and general education, the integration of industry and education, and the integration of science and education, and constantly cultivate high-quality technical and skilled talents" was put forward. Vocational

education serves as a crucial source for cultivating high-quality technical and skilled talents, great craftsmen, and master craftsmen. The important position of vocational education and the significance of the integration of industry and education were emphasized once again. The development of vocational education at the undergraduate level is a major initiative to optimize the structure of higher education and improve the modern vocational education system at the national level, and it is a strategic choice to promote higher education to better adapt to and lead economic and social development.

With vocational undergraduate education entering a new stage of development, China's higher education is accelerating its transformation toward universalization, informatization, and internationalization. According to the 2022 National Education Development Statistical Bulletin, the gross enrollment ratio of higher education reached 59.6%, marking that China's higher education has entered the mid-stage of universalization. Against this backdrop, the state and society have put forward higher requirements for higher education and vocational education, and institutional evaluation, as a management tool, will play a more important role. Taking the teaching qualification evaluations for applied undergraduate programs conducted by the Ministry of Education in 2021 and 2022 as examples, the elimination rate of evaluation results was relatively high, among which the failure rate of private undergraduate institutions exceeded 50%, and they were required to rectify within a specified period. For the first batch of undergraduate-level vocational colleges nationwide, the upcoming teaching qualification evaluation for undergraduate programs is both a challenge and an opportunity to further improve the level of running schools. Facing the new situation of higher quality requirements, strict evaluation standards, and a high failure rate, the quality of talent cultivation has become the core indicator for institutions to pass the evaluation. As the key support and fundamental guarantee for talent cultivation quality, the construction level of faculty directly affects the effectiveness of professional construction and the quality of teaching implementation and is more profoundly related to whether institutions can achieve their expected goals in the evaluation.

2. The Importance of Faculty Construction in Vocational Undergraduate Colleges

High-quality and specialized faculty is the core driving force for vocational undergraduate colleges and universities to achieve connotation improvement and sustainable development.

2.1 Improve the quality of high-end skilled personnel training

In China's higher vocational education system, the first phase of the national “double high program” institutions are specialized schools, and their development has formed a significant advantage, which makes vocational undergraduate colleges and universities face a serious test of the quality of personnel training. If vocational undergraduate colleges can't surpass the higher vocational colleges in terms of talent cultivation quality, the positioning of their running level will lose its significance. At the same time, vocational undergraduate colleges and applied undergraduate colleges and universities belong to the same undergraduate-level, vocational undergraduate colleges and universities the quality of talent cultivation to meet the standards of undergraduate-level education are directly related to the vocational undergraduate colleges and universities of social acceptance. From the current development status, society has less knowledge about vocational undergraduate colleges and universities, and the construction level of vocational undergraduate colleges and universities lags behind that of applied undergraduate colleges and universities at the same level in terms of the construction of faculty and staff. The Opinions on Promoting the High-quality Development of Modern Vocational Education puts forward that “applied undergraduate colleges and universities are encouraged to carry out vocational undergraduate

education” and “by 2025, the enrollment scale of vocational undergraduate education will not be less than 10% of the enrollment scale of higher vocational education”, and it is expected that the state will build more than 150 vocational undergraduate universities. It is expected that more than 150 vocational undergraduate universities will be built, and a more severe competitive development pattern will be formed. This urgently requires vocational undergraduate colleges and universities to accelerate the level of faculty construction and elevate faculty construction to a strategic height, and faculty construction will be the key hand to improving the quality of talent cultivation and enhancing the core competitiveness of vocational undergraduate colleges and universities. Vocational undergraduate colleges and universities must realize the improvement of the quality of talent training by strengthening the construction of faculty, to establish their own characteristic positioning and development advantages in the higher education system.

2.2 Driving the optimization of the industrial talent supply structure

China's vocational education reform continues to deepen, and the related policy system continues to improve. 2018 Opinions on Comprehensively Deepening the Reform of Teacher Team Construction in the New Era explicitly put forward the general requirement of “comprehensively improving the quality of teachers in vocational colleges and universities”. The 2019 National Vocational Education Reform Implementation Plan further details the implementation path. In 2019, the Implementation Program of National Vocational Education Reform further refined the implementation path, and Article 12 of the program specifically deploys “taking multiple measures to build a dual-teacher teaching force”. In 2022, the Action Program for Enhancing the Capacity of Vocational Education Teaching Force was introduced, and the policy support system for the construction of vocational education teachers has been continuously improved. In this context, promoting the construction of faculty in vocational undergraduate colleges and universities will promote institutions to accurately meet the needs of industrial upgrading and optimize the structure of industrial talent supply. First, high-level faculty, especially “dual-teacher” teachers with practical experience in enterprises, have keen insight into industry dynamics, technology development trends, and enterprise employment needs. Teachers can integrate the latest needs of industrial development into the formulation of talent training programs to ensure that the high-end skilled personnel cultivated by vocational undergraduate colleges and universities match the needs of the industry. Secondly, excellent faculty can actively explore and innovate the teaching mode, take the actual project as the carrier, guide students to learn and apply knowledge in practice, cultivate students' practical operation ability, problem-solving ability, and innovation ability, better meet the industry's demand for high-end skilled personnel, and promote the change of industrial talent supply from quantity expansion to quality enhancement, and optimize the hierarchical structure of talent supply. Third, the faculty, as an important link of communication between vocational undergraduate colleges and enterprises, with its own professional influence and industry resources, will promote the integration of industry and education, in-depth cooperation between schools and enterprises, provide students with more practice opportunities and employment channels and realize the precise docking of talent supply and demand, which will further break down the barriers between the school and the enterprise, optimize the channel structure of the supply of industrial talents, and improve the efficiency of talent allocation.

2.3 Improvement of modern higher education system

The construction of high-quality professional faculty plays an important role in promoting the optimization and development of the higher education system. First of all, in terms of optimizing the structure of higher education, undergraduate vocational education is an important part of the

modern higher education system, strengthen the construction of vocational undergraduate colleges and universities faculty, can attract more high-quality talents to vocational undergraduate education, promote the development and expansion of vocational undergraduate colleges and universities, to optimize the proportion of the structure of the general undergraduate and vocational undergraduate in higher education, to make the system of higher education more diversified and rationalized. Secondly, to improve the quality of vocational education, a perfect modern education system needs high-quality vocational education as support. When the quality of vocational undergraduate education is improved, more students will be prompted to choose undergraduate-level vocational education paths, which in turn will promote the status of vocational education in the whole education system and promote the improvement of the education system. Thirdly, a perfect vocational education system requires close integration of education and industry to realize synergistic development. The increase in the proportion of “dual-teacher” teachers in vocational undergraduate colleges and the enhancement of teachers' practical ability help to deepen the integration of industry and education, which not only effectively improves the adaptability of undergraduate vocational education to industrial development, but also provides practical experience for the ecological construction of the higher vocational education system through the innovation and practice of the mechanism of articulation between education and industry.

3. The Realistic Dilemma of Faculty Development in Vocational Undergraduate Colleges and Universities

As of June 2025, the State has approved the establishment of 87 vocational undergraduate universities, marking that vocational education at the undergraduate level is developing rapidly in China. The “front-runners” of the national vocational education reform, the first batch of vocational undergraduate universities bear the important mission of exploring new modes of talent cultivation and building a distinctive schooling system. However, they still face multiple realistic dilemmas in the field of faculty construction.

3.1 Imbalance in the structure of faculty

A good faculty structure is conducive to improving the overall competence and quality of the faculty. At present, vocational undergraduate colleges and universities have deficiencies in the structure of the faculty, which are mainly manifested in the imbalance of the age structure, academic structure, title structure, and professional structure. Take the research of Jiangxi Nanchang Vocational University as an example: the university tends to be younger in age structure, with 16.02% of the teachers aged 26-30, 20.55% of the teachers aged 31-35, 16.90% of the teachers aged 36-40, 24.21% of the teachers in the two age groups of 41-45 and 46-50 overall, and even fewer of the teachers aged 51 or above, and the young and middle-aged teachers are mainly originated from The middle-aged and young teachers come from fresh graduates of bachelor's and master's degrees, and the older teachers are mainly retired and reappointed teachers. In terms of academic structure, the proportion of high-level teachers is low, with the highest proportion of master's degree teachers, the second highest proportion of bachelor's degree teachers, and the lowest proportion of doctoral degree teachers, which reveals that vocational undergraduate colleges and universities urgently need to increase the proportion of high-level teachers and balance the overall academic structure of the faculty. The survey shows that the title structure and professional structure are also unbalanced, the ratio of teachers without titles in vocational undergraduate colleges and universities is high, and the proportion of “dual-teacher” teachers is in urgent need of improvement. [3]

3.2 Low quality and competence of faculty

Quality and competence of faculty are the core of faculty construction in vocational undergraduate colleges and universities. First, the professional field involves the synergistic improvement of teaching, research, and innovation ability, specifically covering practical literacy, information literacy, and innovation literacy. Practical literacy refers to teachers' ability to learn new knowledge and solve practical problems; information literacy refers to teachers' ability to master and identify scientific research information and multimedia information; and innovation literacy refers to teachers' innovative and entrepreneurial thinking as well as their ability to transform knowledge. The second is the ethical field, the teacher's moral and ethical atmosphere of the faculty, the system, the teacher's work responsibility and social responsibility, and other dimensions; the third is the relational field, which refers to the teacher's ability to treat the surrounding environment, the personnel's ability to adapt and collaborate.

Vocational undergraduate colleges and universities have three main reasons for the low quality and ability of teachers: First, most vocational undergraduate colleges and universities are upgraded from higher vocational colleges and universities, which can't complete the improvement of quality and ability in a short time, and it takes a certain amount of time for the teachers to be cultivated and forged. Secondly, some teachers who have been working for many years are accustomed to the knowledge and skill objectives of the former higher vocational colleges and universities that focus on practical work, and they do not have a deep knowledge of the direction, orientation, and requirements of deepening vocational education reform, which requires continuous internalization and guidance from vocational undergraduate colleges and universities. Thirdly, the construction of “dual-teacher” teachers is difficult, and the relevant standards and systems are still in a state of continuous improvement at the development stage. It is difficult to promote the reform of the construction of teachers by schools and large and medium-sized enterprises, to implement the regulations on teachers' regular practice in enterprises, to support the technical backbone of enterprises to teach in schools, and to promote the combination of fixed and mobile posts and the recruitment of part-time teachers by schools and enterprises. It is difficult to accomplish the reform of teacher team building overnight. The above shortcomings need to be addressed urgently if vocational undergraduate colleges and universities are to continue to develop vigorously.

3.3 Higher mobility of faculty

Teachers in vocational undergraduate colleges and universities have higher mobility, which is especially prominent in private vocational undergraduate colleges and universities. Teachers are facing the dilemma of “difficult to attract, slow to nurture and weak to retain talents”, which is related to the deep-rooted problems in the management mechanism and system construction of vocational undergraduate colleges and universities, and is in urgent need of systematic optimization. From the viewpoint of faculty construction mechanism, vocational undergraduate colleges, and universities generally lack an institutionalized “passing on” cultivation system, which is specifically manifested in the following: professional development platform construction lags, and it is difficult to build a long-lasting mechanism for the collaborative development of the old, middle-aged and young faculty members; the “old and new” cultivation mode is just a formality and lacks standardization and standardization. The training mode of “bringing the old to the new” is just a formality, lacking standardized and ritualized training process, and it is difficult to form a cultural atmosphere of professional inheritance; innovative teacher-apprentice collaboration mechanism has not yet been established, which leads to the poor knowledge sharing and experience transfer channels among teachers' groups, and teachers' day-to-day work is mainly based on the fulfillment of individual teaching tasks, and the cross-generation and cross-discipline exchange of teaching

experience and academic collaboration is insufficient, which seriously restricts the professional growth of young teachers and stability of the teaching force.

In terms of assessment and incentive system, there are contradictions between the existing teaching evaluation system, title evaluation standard salary and welfare system, and the development needs of undergraduate vocational education. The teaching evaluation ignores the unique practical teaching ability and the effectiveness of industry-teaching integration in vocational education; the title evaluation standard fails to fully reflect the characteristics of vocational undergraduate programs, which inhibits the enthusiasm of teachers to devote themselves to teaching reforms and practical innovations; and the salary and welfare system lacks competitiveness and a dynamic adjustment mechanism, and has limited room for upward mobility, which makes it difficult to satisfy the needs of teachers' career development.

4. Breakthrough Path of Teacher Construction in Vocational Undergraduate Colleges

4.1 Anchor the Positioning of Dual-Teacher Teams and Smooth Two-Way Mobility of Schools and Enterprises

Teacher construction in vocational undergraduate colleges and universities needs to follow the dual principles of “top-level design orientation” and “adaptation of institutional characteristics,” and systematically promote the optimization of the teacher structure on the basis of the basic requirements for the teacher-student ratio of undergraduate-level vocational education. Based on meeting the basic requirements of the teacher-student ratio of vocational education at the undergraduate level, the optimization of faculty structure is systematically promoted. As a core task, the construction of “dual-teacher” innovative teacher teams needs to break through the current problems of lagging development concepts, ambiguous construction goals, unclear implementation paths, incomplete systems and mechanisms, and weak resource protection [4]. Vocational undergraduate colleges and universities should anchor the goal of “dual-teacher” innovation team construction, and build a systematic cultivation model of “platform support, institutional guarantee, two-way flow”. The specific measures are as follows: First, relying on the national teacher teaching innovation team, “dual-teacher” teacher training base, and master teacher cultivation platform [5], improve the “dual-teacher” teacher access standards, innovate the hiring and evaluation system [6], and guide teachers with innovation potential through policy incentives to participate in team building. Secondly, strengthen the design of the school-enterprise cooperation system, increase the policy support and resource inclination for the industry-teaching integration project, establish and improve the mechanism of mutual assignment and recruitment of teachers from schools and enterprises, and promote the in-depth collaboration between teachers and enterprise instructors in the fields of technology research and development, curriculum development, and practical teaching. Thirdly, for the group of part-time teachers from enterprises, we will build a system covering access management, teaching assessment, professional training, and performance incentives, to enhance the standardization and enthusiasm of enterprise teachers in teaching, and to form an innovative development pattern of collaborative education between schools and enterprises and a benign flow of teachers in both directions.

4.2 strengthen teacher ethics and teacher morale construction, build quality and competence system

“Adhere to the teacher ethics and teacher morale as the first standard” throughout the entire process of teacher development, promote the construction of teacher ethics and teacher morale normalization, long-term effect [7]. Constructing a perfect system of teacher ethics, including a

scientific teacher ethics evaluation mechanism, dynamic self-examination mechanism, and diversified supervision and feedback system, is not only an important guarantee to regulate the professional behavior of teachers and lead the direction of the construction of teachers but also a necessary prerequisite for fostering a good educational ecology and shaping the spiritual culture of the institution.

Based on building the cornerstone of teacher morale and ethical construction, vocational undergraduate colleges and universities need to deepen the construction of teachers' professional development system by taking the systematic and hierarchical teachers' ability improvement project as a hand. Attaching importance to the construction of teacher development centers, through the development of diversified teaching practice activities, such as professional teaching experience sharing meetings, scientific research competitions, multimedia teaching skills competitions, etc., to build bridges for teachers to share knowledge and learn from each other's abilities; combined with specialized teaching innovation training, industry cutting-edge technology training and other customized training programs, to promote teachers to realize the virtuous cycle of knowledge input and teaching output, and then to comprehensively enhance the core competence of teachers in the fields of professional teaching and scientific research. The core competitiveness of teachers in the fields of specialized teaching and scientific research will be enhanced in a comprehensive manner. Through the organization of interdisciplinary collaboration seminars, school-enterprise cooperation project negotiations, and other activities, we broaden teachers' academic horizons and industry knowledge and strengthen their comprehensive quality in teamwork and communication. The organization of interdisciplinary collaboration seminars, school-enterprise cooperation project negotiations, and other activities broadens teachers' academic horizons and industry cognition and strengthens teachers' comprehensive quality in teamwork communication and negotiation.

To sum up, to improve the professional quality and ability of teachers, it is necessary to organically integrate the construction of teacher ethics and teacher morality with the teacher ability enhancement project, and build a “moral education, research and talk” quality and ability cultivation system with the characteristics of vocational undergraduate education through the layering of four dimensions: moral cultivation, teaching ability, scientific research level, and communication and collaboration.

4.3 Promoting parallel incentive regulation and escorting the development of the teaching force

Based on the perspectives of Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory and Herzberg's two-factor incentive theory, the intrinsic driving force of teachers' professional behavior can be deconstructed into the cascading fulfillment of physiological, safety, social, respect, and self-fulfillment needs, and the synergy between incentive and health care factors is a key element in sustaining the stability of the teaching force. Maslow's theory of needs reveals that teachers' pursuit of salary and benefits, career security, team identity, professional reputation, and personal growth constitute the core motives of their professional behavior; Herzberg's two-factor theory further points out that incentives such as promotion opportunities and professional achievements can significantly stimulate teachers' motivation to work, while health care factors such as optimization of the working environment and improvement of the management mechanism provide the basic guarantee for the stability of the teaching force. Both of them provide an important theoretical basis for cracking the high mobility of teachers in vocational undergraduate colleges.

Given the real demand for the construction of faculty in vocational undergraduate colleges, it is necessary to build a dual-track mechanism driven by the synergy of “incentive regulation”. At the level of incentive mechanism, efforts should be made to improve the salary and benefit system and

title evaluation system, through the establishment of a competitive salary system in line with the market, optimize the performance incentive mechanism, and strengthen the positive feedback of salary on teachers' professional ability and work effectiveness; reform the evaluation standard of titles, and include the results of the integration of industry and education, practical teaching quality and other characteristics of vocational undergraduate education into the evaluation system, to broaden the career development channels of teachers and meet their needs for respect and self-realization. The reform of the evaluation standard of titles includes the evaluation system of the achievements of the integration of production and teaching, the quality of practice teaching, and other characteristic indicators of vocational undergraduate education. In addition, a harmonious organizational culture should be created to enhance teachers' sense of belonging and happiness. In the construction of the regulatory system, it is necessary to establish a scientific evaluation index system for faculty construction, closely focus on the development goals of vocational undergraduate education, integrate process evaluation and stage evaluation, internal demand and external standards, and dynamically monitor the effectiveness of faculty construction by combining quantitative assessment and qualitative evaluation, to provide data support for the adjustment of policies and resource allocation, and to ensure that the direction of faculty construction is consistent with the development strategy of the institution.

5. Conclusion

In the context of the modernization of vocational education and industrial upgrading, the construction of faculty in vocational undergraduate colleges is the key breakthrough to cracking the bottleneck of the quality of talent cultivation in undergraduate-level vocational education. As the foundation of the connotative development of institutions, the effectiveness of faculty construction directly affects the effectiveness of undergraduate vocational education in serving the needs of industrial development and cultivating high-end skilled personnel. During the historical opportunity of deepening the integration of industry and education, vocational undergraduate colleges and universities should take the construction of “dual-teacher” faculty as the strategic anchor point, build a four-in-one system of “moral, teaching, research and talk” to improve the quality of teachers, and organically integrate the cultivation of teachers' morality, teaching innovation, scientific research and the cultivation of communication and collaboration ability. The system integrates the cultivation of teachers' moral integrity, teaching innovation, scientific research transformation, and communication and collaboration ability; deepens the mechanism of collaborative education between schools and enterprises, and establishes a platform for teachers' practical ability enhancement and technological innovation with the linkage of industry-academia-research integration. The systematic and multi-level initiatives to build teachers will effectively promote the precise connection between the cultivation of talents in vocational undergraduate colleges and the need for industrial change, and at the same time, vocational undergraduate colleges will inject strong kinetic energy into their sustainable development in the process of upgrading the adaptability of vocational education.

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