

POLICY REVIEW

Vocational education reform made major national goal

New guideline mandates closer cooperation with private sectors, increased financing, sharing of expertise and better training for teachers nationwide

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China plans to advance the reform and development of its vocational education sector to be able to train greater numbers of highly-skilled technicians, according to a new guideline.

Recently issued by the general offices of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council, China's Cabinet, the guideline is intended to boost the capacity of vocational schools and increase the quality, adaptability, and appeal of the education they offer.

The reform of national vocational education will focus on developing a multiform, multichannel, and sustainable education and training system, as well as a cooperation mechanism for governments, industries, businesses, and schools.

Vocational education for sectors such as information technology, computer-controlled machine tools and robots, aviation and space equipment manufacturing, and biomedicine, will be prioritized, and the guideline encourages leading businesses and schools in these sectors to boost cooperation.

More effort will be placed on raising faculty standards in vocational schools devoted to manufacturing, agriculture, and the service sector. The guideline encourages the hiring of core experts from businesses in these sectors to teach at schools.

More policy support for vocational education has also been promised. The guideline encourages local governments to explore new mechanisms of cooperation with the private sector, and to attract more private and industrial investment in vocational education. Financial institutions are also welcome to offer their services and support.

A group of high-level vocational schools and majors will be created to contribute to social and economic development. The vocational college enrollment system will be improved, and colleges offering bachelor's degrees should work to expand enrollment.

The guideline also stressed the need for innovation in terms of international communication and cooperation. China must establish a number of high-level international vocational schools and create globally influential standards for vocational majors, curricula,

teaching resources and teaching equipment.

Chen Ziji, director of the Ministry of Education's Department of Vocational Education, said the guideline is the first to be issued by central authorities on vocational education since the 20th Communist Party of China National Congress last October.

The Congress placed great emphasis on the importance of vocational education, which has been given unprecedented weighting in the overall education system, Chen said at a recent news conference, adding that since the Congress also stressed the importance of education, technology and talent in building a powerful country, deepening the reform of modern vocational education is an ever more challenging and important task.

Chen said that the guideline dismissed misconceptions that belittle vocational education by stressing that it promotes the fully-rounded development of students.

By promoting the integration and balanced development of vocational education with general education, students with different abilities and needs have greater choice and any anxiety parents feel about vocational schools should now be alleviated, he added.

"Vocational education is not 'low-level education' nor is it 'education for the less able'. It is a form of education with its own distinct characteristics," Chen said. "Vocational education students can choose to pursue further studies or enter employment, and we will try our best to help expand their choices for self-improvement."

The guideline also stressed the importance of public sector participation, stating that industries, businesses, governments and schools should coordinate resources to advance vocational education.

Ou Xiaoli, an official at the National Development and Reform Commission, said that vocational education is key to the development of human resources and the economy, and to protecting and improving livelihoods.

Vocational education is as important as other forms of education. In recent years, enrollment has risen sharply, with secondary and higher vocational schools turning out around 10 million technicians every year.

Responding to social demand, vocational schools have adjusted their majors and created more than 1,300 new courses that essentially cover every sector of the economy.

In order to deepen integration of industry and vocational education, 21 cities have been selected as pilot

zones, and local governments have set up 4,600 businesses deeply integrated with vocational education, he said, adding that the commission has increased investment and funding for vocational education, and has encouraged local governments to issue special bonds to fund school infrastructure.

Jin Hongyang, director of the Tianjin Municipal Education Department, said that to promote international cooperation in vocational education, Tianjin has set up 21 workshops around the world, which are named after the deity Lu Ban, who is known as the "father of carpentry" in China, and who exemplified craftsmanship and creativity.

The Luban workshops not only train professionals, but also serve the development of the Belt and Road Initiative.

Tianjin will continue to open more workshops and to train more qualified technicians in countries and regions participating in the BRI, he said.

CRRC and Shenzhen Polytechnic focus on tomorrow's technicians

By ZOU SHUO

Businesses and vocational schools are determined to pursue integration to drive the reform of vocational education and help train more qualified professionals with vocational skills.

Wang An, Deputy Party Secretary of the CRRC, the world's largest supplier of rail transit equipment, said that the corporation will work with other vocational schools to nurture students who will be able to work at the CRRC after graduation.

Xu Jianling, president of Shenzhen Polytechnic said the school will closely follow the trend toward industrial upgrading and technological reform, and make sure its majors are centered around advanced manufacturing and the modern service sector.

It will strengthen cooperation with industry and companies, work with leading businesses to develop new courses and will incorporate new skills, techniques, and standards in classroom teaching, Xu said. It will also invite more master technicians and skilled workers to teach as visiting professors, and improve the abilities of its full-time teachers by making use of the national teaching training platform.

Shenzhen Polytechnic will also accelerate its digital transformation, adapt to smart education, strengthen its immersive and smart technical training system and improve the practical digital skills of its students and teachers, he added.

Policy Digest

Rest homes' ability to treat COVID emphasized

Local governments must ensure that elderly people in rest homes are promptly treated for COVID-19, said the State Council's Joint Prevention and Control Mechanism, the national task force responsible for controlling COVID-19.

Local authorities must ask community and town health centers to assess health risks to residents of rest homes, provide health management accordingly and make house calls when necessary, the department stated in a notice released online earlier this month.

The department stated that authorities should also draw up emergency treatment plans for rest homes, and make sure all homes are able to transfer critically-ill residents to tertiary hospitals for emergency care, and asked emergency medical centers to partner with rest homes to ensure there is no delay in ambulance services.

Also, tertiary hospitals and other health institutions must make full use of information technology and offer online health assessments and consultations to rest home residents.

Ministry seeks industrial economy growth in 2023

At a meeting convened in Beijing earlier this month, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology called for all-out efforts to promote the steady growth of the country's industrial economy in 2023.

Targeted plans should be made to ensure the growth of different sectors, the ministry said, encouraging major industrial provinces to play a vital role in achieving growth.

It also said that it supports central and western regions in accommodating and developing industries that have moved there from elsewhere, and voiced its support for northeastern China, the country's traditional industrial heartland, for making breakthroughs in revitalizing local manufacturing.

Among other requirements, the ministry called for efforts to stabilize the consumption of bulk items, including automobiles, upgrading the national consumer goods industry and increasing the supply of household products for the elderly.

Other tasks this year include properly implementing the 14th Five-Year Plan, making key national industrial chains more independent and controllable, and

speeding up upgrades to traditional manufacturing industries.

Rail staff to be vigilant during travel rush

Railway transport companies should improve health management for their staff and advise passengers to take precautions, the National Railway Administration said, as the large number of travelers during the Spring Festival travel rush potentially pose a challenge to national pandemic response efforts.



It is estimated that more than 2 billion passenger trips will be made during the 40-day travel rush, which will last from Jan 7 to Feb 15.

In a notice released online on Friday, the administration urged employees to wear a mask and keep their hands clean at work, and to reduce socializing after work.

Railway transport companies should monitor the health of employees daily and those who have a fever or show other symptoms should inform their employers and take leave.

Employees can return to work a week after developing symptoms or if their symptoms have already passed, the administration said, urging those who have been ill to practice strict precautionary measures upon returning to work.

Railway companies should ensure that all employees not contraindicated receive COVID-19 booster shots.

While they should no longer take the temperature of passengers, companies should remind them to wear masks, wash their hands, maintain social distancing and practice cough etiquette during the journey, the administration said, calling on people with symptoms or who have tested positive to refrain from traveling.

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