

# Research on the Value and Path of Rural Vocational Education to Promote Rural Revitalization in China

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Making use of rural vocational education is an important drive to accelerate the implementation of the rural revitalization strategy. Rural vocational education promotes rural revitalization which is endowed with the value and significance of stimulating rural industries, cultivating rural talents, and nurturing rural culture. In practice, rural vocational education can effectively promote rural revitalization by undertaking agriculture-friendly reform, constructing a sustainable development system for talents in rural revitalization, and fostering rural cultural confidence.

*Keywords:* rural vocational education, rural revitalization, countermeasures

The implementation of the rural revitalization strategy is a major decision and arrangement made by the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, and a major historical mission to win a decisive victory in comprehensively building a well-off society and to fully build a modern socialist country. As China completes the comprehensive building of a well-off society by 2020, the *Law of the People's Republic of China on the Promotion of Revitalization of Rural Areas* was officially promulgated in May 2021, and the implementation of China's rural revitalization strategy has entered a new phrase of promotion in full strength and protection by law. The law clearly stipulates that the government should take measures to strengthen vocational education and organize vocational skills training to cultivate high-quality farmers, rural practical talents and innovation, and entrepreneurship leaders who are educated, skilled, good at operation and management. It is worth thinking about how the rural vocational education, as an important drive of rural revitalization, better promotes rural revitalization. This paper intends to briefly sort out the present researches on the promotion of rural vocational education to rural revitalization in China, analyzes the value and functions of rural vocational education in rural revitalization strategy, further explores the main path of rural vocational education's contribution to rural revitalization in China, and provides references for policymakers and relevant researchers.

## **Overview of Researches on Rural Vocational Education Promoting Rural Revitalization**

There are relatively abundant research achievements about China's domestic rural vocational education promoting rural revitalization. From general perspective, the researches mainly focus on two fields including the dialectical relationship between rural vocational education and rural revitalization, and the problems and countermeasures of rural vocational education promoting rural revitalization. In the *Strategic Plan for Rural Revitalization (2018-2022)* issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State

Council of the People's Republic of China (2018) in September 2018, it can be clearly seen that it is necessary to rely closely on rural vocational education to strengthen the revitalization of talents, cultivate new vocational farmers, and improve the quality of rural population. Rural vocational education is an important drive to achieve the modernization of agricultural production, and also an important means to promote and consolidate the integration of poverty alleviation and rural revitalization. At the same time, rural revitalization also provides a fine economic guarantee and external environment for the development of rural vocational education. Firstly, in the perspective of the research on the dialectical relationship between rural vocational education and rural revitalization, some scholars, analyzing the functions of education, believe that rural revitalization affects the orientation and development of the functions of rural vocational education which is endowed with new requirements and missions. It is positive for stimulating the adjustment of the functions of rural vocational education. And the positioning of the functions for rural vocational education determines the progress of rural revitalization. Some other scholars, analyzing the aspect of talent service, think that the main task of rural vocational education is to cultivate new technical and skilled talents to serve the rural revitalization and promote the orderly implementation of the rural revitalization strategy. Some scholars, doing analysis from the need of development, conclude that the rural revitalization strategy requires high standard rural vocational education, training skilled workers, and cultivating highly qualified talents. Rural vocational education needs the opportunities of development, the improved development conditions, and a broader service market provided by rural revitalization in order to promote its circulated development. Secondly, in the perspective of the research on the problems and countermeasures in rural vocational education promoting rural revitalization, some scholars research on the main existing problems and their countermeasures, summarize that the main problems in rural vocational education currently are the unclear positioning of school, insufficient integration with the goal of rural revitalization, lagging behind in the educational concept, inaccurate educational positioning, and not focusing on "agriculture, rural areas, and farmers". Some scholars believe that the main problems at present are limited conditions for school-running of rural vocational education, the low quality of talent training, the large gap in educational investment between urban and rural areas, the outdated teaching facilities for rural vocational education, the inadequate structure of teachers, and the lack of teachers. Some scholars think that the main problems are currently lying in the weak guidance and poor implementation of the rural vocational education policies in serving rural revitalization. Regarding the countermeasures research on the solutions to the above problems, some scholars believe that it is necessary to focus on the requirements of "agriculture, rural areas, and farmers", especially change the mode of thinking in how rural vocational education serves rural revitalization, enhance the promotion of modern agricultural technology, and establish a multi-level talent team for rural revitalization. Some scholars believe that it is necessary to improve the policy system and system construction, promote the systematic development, optimize resource allocation, and improve the quality of rural vocational education.

However, there are, in general, shortcomings and insufficiency in these studies. First, the research methods are flawed which are mostly featured by little investigation when describing phenomena, lack of empirical explanation when conclusions are reached mostly by refining results. Second, the contents of researches are insufficient which are characterized by grand descriptions, lack of detailed researches in teaching content, methods, etc.

### **The Value and Function of Rural Vocational Education in Rural Revitalization Strategy**

The 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, on the historical height of comprehensively building a well-off society and fully building a modern socialist country, proposes rural revitalization strategy, which is of great realistic and far-reaching historical significance. Rural vocational education should shoulder the important responsibility and promote the rural revitalization strategy. Because there is an infinite circular relationship between rural vocational education and rural revitalization (Yu, Ma, & Ning, 2022), which should be a relationship of promotion. Following the requirements of rural revitalization, rural vocational education actively carries out educational practice and obtains educational achievements which in turn promote the realization and further development of rural revitalization. Therefore, rural vocational education, with a unique role of value in the rural revitalization strategy, should start from the rural revitalization strategy, follow the general objectives and tasks, focus on the construction of the Beautiful Countryside, and insist on playing its functional role in the revitalization of rural industries, talents, and culture.

#### **Promoting Rural Industries**

Developing modern agriculture is the most important part of industrial prosperity. Rural vocational education consistently makes improvements to be more agriculture-friendly, assists villages in seeking for the industrial development pathway in accordance with their characteristics, and upgrades the rural economy. Rural vocational education can set up programs coincided with the actual needs, start one classroom for one industry, one region or one group of people, and help develop various rural industries, which is a powerful guarantee for the prosperity of the industries.

#### **Cultivating Rural Talents**

Rural revitalization depends on industries, and the prime factor for industry to flourish and develop is the talent. Talents are the first resource and the most powerful driving force for innovation and development. On the one hand, rural vocational education cultivates new farmers who are educated, skilled, and capable of management, and enhances farmers' ability to acquire wealth. On the other hand, it attracts innovative talents who know agriculture, love the countryside and love farmers to get into the countryside which forms a multi-level team of talents in rural area.

#### **Nurturing Rural Culture**

Education and culture are mutually inclusive and interactive. The development of culture needs to be carried by education, and education accumulates and inherits culture by educating people. In this sense, rural vocational education is not only the carrier for transmitting rural culture, but also an important means of creating rural culture. Rural vocational education cannot be simply regarded as skill training. Rural vocational education, while cultivating rural talents, serves the nurturing of rural culture. The knowledge of civilization, hygiene, ecology, and democracy needed by the countryside will be passed on to the farmers to improve their ideological and moral standards as well as scientific and cultural knowledge. Rural development not only shapes the form, but also builds the soul, laying a solid foundation for rural civilization.

### **Exploration on the Path of Rural Vocational Education Promoting Rural Revitalization**

Rural vocational education must closely combine the development of agriculture and rural areas with the reform and development of rural vocational education in order to promote the revitalization of industry, talents, culture, and the realization of the goal of rural revitalization strategy.

### **Carrying Out the In-depth Agriculture-friendly Reform of Rural Vocational Education**

In order to effectively assist rural revitalization, rural vocational education firstly should vigorously exercise the agriculture-friendly reform. The characteristics of vocational education should be combined with rural differences in varied regions to carry out education and teaching reform. Starting from in-depth field investigation and analysis in rural areas, vocational education is becoming more agriculture-friendly by adopting the two-way integrated development model of “industry-education-industry” (Peng, 2022, pp. 23-29), and reforming teaching objectives and contents, etc. Rural vocational education, on the one hand, should put more efforts in organizing team of teachers, establishing teacher training bases, exploring rural practice mobile station of rural vocational education teachers, etc., making teachers understand and concern the countryside. It also needs to urge teachers to establish a modular curriculum system of training for new farmers, which adapts to the development of county industries, design a training model of “qualification+skills” for new farmers, and develop series of teaching materials for training. On the other hand, rural vocational education should deepen the cooperation between enterprises and schools in the integration of industry and education, which further strengthen the cooperation with various types of agricultural cooperatives, farmers’ associations, agriculture-related enterprises, etc., and form a new cooperation pattern of vocational education and rural areas. “Vocational education, as the intermediary and link of integration, needs to actively be spatially, structurally, elementally and functionally interlocked with the rural industrial system, so that vocational education and rural industry can achieve mutual development.” (Zhu, 2020, p. 10). Rural vocational education serves the development of rural industries from technological innovation, product research and development, product marketing, etc., and innovates vocational education system and mechanism by building a training base integrating industry and education, promoting the construction of characteristic industrial colleges, etc.

### **Accelerating the Construction of the Sustainable Development System for Talents in Rural Revitalization**

The difficulty of talent shortage faced by rural revitalization, fundamentally, is the problem of sustainable development of talents. Due to the lack of infrastructure, low salary, incomplete industrial chain, few employment opportunities and other reasons in rural areas, even if highly qualified talents are introduced, it is difficult to make them stay and serve the countryside. In order to solve the problem of talents, rural vocational education needs to adopt multi-level training methods to achieve sustainable development of talents. For one thing, the scale of schools should be enlarged. It means strengthening the position of vocational education and developing high-level vocational college education. A large number of highly qualified skilled talents trained by colleges and universities are sent to the countryside. Those talents are encouraged to stay in the countryside, and make achievements in the vast countryside. For another, skill education for post should be developed. The fundamental dynamics for rural revitalization lie in the local farmers (Kuang, 2022). If the comprehensive quality of the local people in the countryside is not improved and only by attracting foreign aid, it just develops without a foundation. Therefore, rural vocational education should be focused on the needs of rural farmers, be committed to serving the local farmers in rural areas, and advocate them to become new vocational farmers. Rural vocational education should implement the training system for farmers, lead high-quality training resources to be open to farmers, establish skills training centers, hold rural skills competitions, etc., fully making use of the training to improve the promotion and application of modern agricultural technology. All above are for the better preparation of training high-quality rural talents sustainably.

### **Fostering Cultural Confidence of Rural Revitalization**

Culture is pioneer in rural revitalization. Cultural confidence in rural areas can invigorate the spirit of rural people and endow a strong and lasting spiritual impetus to rural revitalization. To contribute to rural revitalization, rural vocational education is bound to promote the revitalization of rural culture. In one perspective, confidence in rural culture should be fostered. Outstanding rural culture embodies the deepest ideological wisdom of the Chinese nation. Education should deeply explore and inherit the family tradition and family education handed down from generation to generation, the simple feelings of revering heaven and worshiping ancestors, unique folk activities, and rich folk cultures, and make use of these deepest collective memories of the Chinese nation to stimulate the vitality of rural cultural development. Specifically, characteristic festivals, exhibitions, events, and other ways are held to nurture the rural humanistic spirit, strengthen the emotional connection and cultural identity among villagers, and ultimately achieve the goal of encouraging rural people to strengthen cultural confidence. In other perspectives, the digital vocational education is promoted. Modern means of communication are adopted to rebuild the living environment of rural culture. Informatization is used to inform new farmers of rural culture and make them participate in cultural construction. Virtual public cultural space of rural areas is vigorously created, through texts, pictures, audio, video, and other forms, rural cultural atmosphere is created to guide the development of rural culture, and cultivate rural cultural confidence.

### **Conclusions**

To sum up, the implementation of the rural revitalization strategy is an opportunity as well as a challenge for the development of rural vocational education in the new era. In order to make full use of the main functions of rural vocational education and demonstrate its unique advantages, the value of rural vocational education should be further discovered, and new paths and methods of practice should be explored. On the basis of the in-depth agriculture-friendly reform of rural vocational education, the accelerated construction of a sustainable development system for talents in rural revitalization, and the deep fostering of the environment of cultural confidence in rural revitalization, the development of agriculture and rural areas will be further integrated with the reform of rural vocational education to better contribute to rural revitalization in China.

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