

Research on the Training Path of “Integration of Vocational Education and Continuing Education” Under the Background of “Southern Guangdong Housekeeping” Project Construction: Taking Zhuhai City Polytechnic as an Example

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Abstract: The integrated development of vocational education and continuing education is an important measure for the construction of a powerful education country in the new era. This paper discusses the feasibility of the talent training path of “integration of vocational education and continuing education” to bridge the talent gap in the domestic service industry, with a focus on the construction of the “Southern Guangdong Housekeeping” project in Guangdong Province as background. Drawing from the experience of talent training at Zhuhai City Polytechnic, this paper proposes measures such as integrating educational resources, reconstructing the curriculum system, implementing a credit bank, and activating skill masters.

Keywords: Southern Guangdong Housekeeping project; Talent training; Integration of Vocational Education and Continuing Education training path

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1. The identification of issues

The 14th Five-Year Plan advocates for “enhancing the lifelong learning system, fostering a learning-oriented society, and promoting the accessibility of high-level university educational resources” while also “facilitating the recognition and transfer of various learning achievements”^[1]. Positioned at the overarching goal of enhancing the populace’s overall competence, the government has articulated the imperative of “harmonizing the collaborative innovation of vocational, higher, and continuing education”^[2], rendering integrated educational development a compelling necessity for the establishment of a robust educational infrastructure. The judicious amalgamation of diverse educational modalities, leveraging their respective strengths to collectively address learning needs, holds profound implications for advancing universal education and lifelong

learning.

The new Vocational Education Law underscores that “the state shall take measures to accelerate the training of technical and skilled personnel in sectors such as childcare, nursing, healthcare, and housekeeping”^[3]. Addressing the pressing demand for domestic service amidst changing demographics, Guangdong Province and Zhuhai City have sequentially rolled out the implementation scheme for the “Southern Guangdong Housekeeping” initiative since 2019, with a focus on bolstering employment. The initiative aims to leverage domestic service’s role in job creation, stimulating demand, and enhancing livelihoods. To facilitate the effective execution of the “Southern Guangdong Housekeeping” initiative, Zhuhai City Polytechnic, leveraging the educational resources of the “one school with two brands” Open University, charts a novel course for integrating educational streams to cater to the talent requirements of the domestic industry. This endeavor seeks to forge seamless linkages across the education, talent, industry, and innovation chains, actively contributing to the cultivation of high-caliber technical personnel for the burgeoning domestic industry sector.

2. Research the status of domestic service talent training in China

The discipline of domestic economics in China has undergone phases of resurgence, development, and restructuring, transitioning from non-academic education to higher education and progressing towards standardization and deeper development, supported by state and local government policies^[4]. Despite the rapid growth of the domestic service industry under policies aimed at “enhancing quality and expanding capacity,” there remains a strong demand for high-quality talent, yet the vocational education system for domestic economics still falls short of meeting industry demands.

In stark contrast to the industry’s growth trajectory, domestic service talent training faces a conundrum of being “in-demand externally but lacking internally.” Research by Lu *et al.*, focusing on the domestic service industry in Jiangsu province, identified issues such as insufficient training scale, teacher shortages, and an incomplete curriculum system^[5]. Sun highlighted the misalignment between the current domestic management majors’ positioning and national policy guidance, market demands, regional characteristics, and professional attributes, resulting in a lack of market competitiveness for domestic staff^[6]. From a production-education integration perspective, Chen *et al.* identified practical challenges in domestic service professional training, including the mismatch between practical skills training and job requirements, inadequate practical training facilities, and teachers’ insufficient practical training capabilities^[7]. Xue summarized recruitment challenges, teacher issues, and curriculum deficiencies as primary obstacles to domestic service and management construction from a social cognition and evaluation standpoint^[8]. Existing research indicates issues such as inadequate quantity, unreasonable structure, low overall quality, and an unstable workforce within China’s domestic service talent pool, falling short of modern society’s demand for highly skilled talent in household services.

Scholars have proposed countermeasures and suggestions to advance domestic service talent training from various perspectives, aligned with industrial policy directives and local experiences. These include advocating for a “production-education integration” model to establish a cooperative education mechanism involving government, academia, industry, and enterprise, emphasizing higher vocational education attributes^[5]. The “cross-cultural” model draws on Japan, Germany, and other countries’ home economics development experiences to enhance teaching staff construction and foster an international, professional, and practical teaching team^[10]. The “standard-led” model aims to formulate teaching, curriculum, local, and enterprise standards with Southern Guangdong characteristics, guiding teaching practices accordingly^[11]. Lastly, the “resource integration”

model promotes interdisciplinary collaboration, integrating disciplinary and teacher resources to leverage complementary advantages^[12].

Currently, a substantial disparity persists between the domestic service talent pool's current state and development objectives. Existing research primarily focuses on individual vocational education reforms, leaving ample room for practical research on integrating vocational education and continuing education.

3. The legitimacy and feasibility of integrated development of vocational education and continuing education

In recent years, initiatives such as the National Vocational Education Reform Implementation Plan and the Education Informatization 2.0 Action Plan have proposed establishing a comprehensive and coordinated mechanism between vocational education and continuing education, providing policy backing for their integrated development. Considering the current landscape of China's education system, both types of education share common elements, lending legitimacy to their integration. Continuing education activities, organized by higher vocational colleges, vocational colleges, and adult colleges, alongside distance education primarily conducted by regular undergraduate colleges and adult universities, serve as foundational elements for further integration and development^[13].

Regarding the integration pathway, Long *et al.*, using Guangdong Open University with its “one team and two brands” model as an example, outlined an integration mode that achieves mutual recognition of different learning outcomes through the “credit bank” system^[14]. Zeng *et al.* focused on vocational education talent training and proposed constructing interconnected, integrated, and penetrative talent training channels to achieve integration of secondary education^[15]. Moreover, strategies such as leveraging complementary teaching strengths through school-enterprise cooperation, jointly building and sharing resources, integrating social resources for talent training in short supply, and encouraging extensive participation of vocational colleges in continuing education through performance assessments and supportive policies, have emerged as pathways to integrating secondary education.

Presently, the academic community widely acknowledges the necessity of integrated development between these two education types, with research emphasis placed on their complementary advantages. The integrated development of vocational education and continuing education is predicated on constructing cooperation platforms, sharing resources, fostering school-enterprise cooperation, and establishing credit bank systems, among other levels of intervention.

4. Integration of vocational education and continuing education: the practice path of domestic service talent training

Under the initiative of the “Southern Guangdong Housekeeping” project, Zhuhai City Polytechnic (referred to as the “College”) commenced the first enrollment of modern home economics service and management vocational students in 2021. Leveraging the distinctive “two brands, one team” school model in collaboration with Zhuhai Open University, the College actively explores the “Integration of Vocational Education and Continuing Education” pathway for domestic service talent training.

4.1. Integrating high-quality vocational resources and establishing a collaborative education mechanism

The foundation of “Integration of Vocational Education and Continuing Education” lies in merging high-

quality teaching resources from vocational education and continuing education to achieve a synergistic effect. Aligned with the domestic service industry's layout, the College utilizes professional clusters as a platform to amalgamate teaching, practical training, and teacher resources from modern domestic service and management, social work, preschool education, and related majors. It aims to nurture domestic service talents with diverse abilities. The College establishes an integration of vocational education and continuing education through top-level design, fostering deep cooperation between the College, domestic service enterprises, and industry associations. It offers varied education and training paths, including short-term training, skill appraisal, academic education, and online learning resources, to cater to diverse learning needs.

4.2. Reforming the talent training program and reconstructing the bridging course system

The essence of “Integration of Vocational Education and Continuing Education” is to construct an integrated talent training program comprising specialized education and continuing education. Following research on industry talent needs, the College has devised talent training objectives aligned with the local domestic service industry's development. It has adjusted the curriculum for junior college education, incorporating professional courses in high-end domestic service such as “Family Financial Planning,” “Home Storage,” and “Flower Arrangement and Tea Art.” Simultaneously, continuing education focuses on skill upgrading and knowledge updating. Through short-term training courses and the Open University's online learning platform, the College provides advanced training in housekeeping techniques and service concepts. The course system between the two stages emphasizes characteristic development and orderly connection to ensure the continuity and flexibility of talent training.

4.3. Implementing a credit banking system and expanding qualification certification channels

Credit banks accumulate credits across different education stages through certification, enabling systematic management and effective certification of learning experiences. Leveraging the Open University's credit banking system, the College innovates the graduation qualification certification for domestic service majors. Vocational education stage students accumulate credits through online course credit recognition, vocational qualification certificates, skills competition awards, etc., to meet graduation requirements. Once the accumulated credits fulfill the graduation criteria of the talent training program, students can obtain graduation qualifications even without completing all campus-offered professional courses. Moreover, continuing educators with work experience may be exempted from certain courses, allowing them to begin learning high-level home economics courses from a higher starting point and even obtain a higher level of qualification certificate, thus enhancing the industry's professional standard and service quality.

4.4. Harnessing the skill master platform to enhance skill education effectiveness

The “Southern Guangdong Housekeeping” Skill Master Studio significantly contributes to realizing the “Integration of Vocational Education and Continuing Education” effect. Leveraging school-enterprise cooperation resources, the studio provides real-world environments and practical opportunities for domestic management enterprises. Students apply their learned skills in actual work scenarios, deepening their understanding and mastery of professional skills. External high-skilled part-time teachers hired as studio enterprise tutors not only enrich teaching content but also provide insights into industry trends and needs, aiding students' adaptation to industry standards and development trends. This enhances the education's pertinence and practicality. Additionally, the studio conducts quantitative on-the-job training and continuing education for domestic staff annually, positively impacting on-the-job staff's skill and quality enhancement.

5. Conclusion

The “Integration of Vocational Education and Continuing Education” stands as a crucial pathway toward constructing a robust education and learning society. It also presents a viable model for addressing the shortage of highly skilled domestic service talents in the “Southern Guangdong Housekeeping” project. Through profound integration of production and education, it is imperative to enhance the level of school-enterprise cooperation, establish an integrated curriculum system interconnectedly, perfect the talent training format through credit banking, fully leverage the practical training and advantages offered by skill master studios, and implement multiple measures to bolster the talent training for “Southern Guangdong Housekeeping.”

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Disclosure statement

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