

A Study on Building Vocational Education Teacher Teams through Value Co-Creation Theory

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Abstract: This study draws upon the theoretical framework of value co-creation to deeply investigate its guidance in the field of teacher team construction. It further synthesizes existing literature to reveal several challenges faced by the construction of teacher teams in Chinese vocational education: unclear individual career development planning for teachers, weak subjectivity and participation among teachers, loose communication and cooperation between teachers and schools, lack of innovation incentives in vocational education, and the inequality in the distribution of vocational education resources. In response to these practical issues, this research proposes solutions based on the theory of value co-creation: providing personalized career development planning and professional training, enhancing teachers' subjectivity and participation, strengthening the institutional construction of cooperation between teachers and schools, and optimizing the educational ecosystem by enhancing participation from all parties and encouraging teaching innovation. These suggestions aim to promote the construction of high-quality teacher teams in vocational education and push for its connotative development.

Keywords: Vocational Education; Value Co-Creation; Teacher Team Construction; Exploration of Paths

1. Introduction

Vocational education and general education are two distinct types of education, each holding equal importance.^[1] Without high-quality development in vocational education, there can be no high-quality advancement in the field of education. Modern, high-quality vocational education requires a high-quality vocational education teaching team. The construction of vocational education teaching teams is especially crucial against the current backdrop of educational and societal development. In today's complex context of societal and educational growth, the professional competence of vocational education teachers directly affects the quality of vocational education and its teaching outcomes. At the same time, it plays an indispensable role in enhancing students' skills and comprehensive qualities, adapting to the needs of educational reforms and societal innovation, and boosting national technological competitiveness.^[2] In 2022, the Ministry of Education of China highlighted its emphasis on the construction of vocational education teaching teams by proposing strategies across five dimensions, including improving the teacher standard framework, enhancing the quality of teacher training and education, innovating training models, and promoting school-enterprise cooperation and bidirectional mobility.^[3]

Although national policies have provided clear direction and support for the construction of vocational education teaching teams, there remain several challenges and issues in current practices. These challenges include unclear personal career development plans for teachers, weak teacher autonomy and participation, loose communication and collaboration between teachers and schools, a lack of incentives for innovation in vocational education, and uneven distribution of vocational education resources, among other key issues. To address these issues and further optimize the construction of vocational education teaching teams, this study proposes targeted strategies based on a systematic literature review analysis of the current state and challenges faced by China's vocational education teaching teams, drawing on the theory of value co-creation.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Value Co-creation Theory

2.1.1 Theoretical connotation

Value Co-creation Theory is a significant concept within modern management theory, initially proposed and systematically explained by C.K. Prahalad and Venkat Ramaswamy. [4] The core idea of this theory posits that the creation of value is a process involving multiple participants and joint actions, where customers (or stakeholders) are not merely recipients of value but active participants in the value creation process. [5] The main theoretical framework of this theory encompasses four aspects: (1) Cooperation and Interaction: Value co-creation emphasizes the interaction and communication between businesses and customers as well as other stakeholders. By establishing interactive mechanisms, businesses can further clarify their product positioning, and customers can better articulate their needs, enabling both parties to collaboratively create value that meets mutual interests. (2) Personalized Experience: Through customer participation, businesses can better understand customers' unique needs and preferences, thereby offering more personalized products and services. (3) Information Exchange: Through online platforms and social media tools, the theory promotes the sharing and collaboration of information among businesses, customers, and other stakeholders. (4) Innovation and Continuous Improvement: Through interactive learning, businesses can acquire new knowledge and inspiration, promoting innovation in products, services, and business models, thereby further refining their systems. [6]

2.1.2 Enlightenment of value co-creation on the construction of vocational education teaching staff

The application of value co-creation theory in the construction of vocational education teaching staff has opened a new perspective and strategy system, offering an innovative approach to improving the quality and effectiveness of vocational education.

At the practical level, the theory of value co-creation proposes a broad and diversified participation model for the construction of the vocational education teaching staff. This model transcends a singular focus on vocational education teachers and emphasizes integrating the forces of teachers, students, enterprises, and all sectors of society into the educational process to jointly participate in enhancing the teaching quality and effectiveness of vocational education. The construction of vocational education teaching staff needs to value deep cooperation with enterprises and industries, integrating enterprise demands and practical experiences into teacher training and professional development to achieve a blend of educational content with vocational practice. [7] Such cooperation not only enhances teachers' practical teaching abilities but also promotes teachers' understanding and mastery of the latest industry development trends, ensuring that vocational education training objectives meet the needs of industry practice.

In summary, the theory of value co-creation provides a comprehensive and systematic framework for the construction of vocational education teaching staff. The cooperation, interaction, and sharing concepts it advocates can not only effectively address the complex challenges faced by the contemporary education field but also provide momentum and possibilities for the continuous improvement and innovation of educational quality. By realizing the value co-creation in the construction of vocational education teaching staff, it will promote the high-quality development of the vocational education system and meet the broad demands of modern society for high-quality skilled talent.

2.2 Analysis of practical problems in the construction of vocational education teacher team

In the current education system, the construction of vocational education teaching staff faces a series of practical problems and challenges, which have their historical roots and are directly affected by social and economic development changes. The following is an analysis of the issues in the construction of vocational education teaching staff:

2.2.1 Insufficient professional competence of teachers

In the current field of vocational education, the teaching staff generally faces the problem of professional competence not meeting the teaching tasks, especially the deficiencies in high-skills and emerging technology fields are particularly evident. This situation mainly manifests in many teachers' lack of industry experience and knowledge of emerging technologies, which directly affects the quality of education and the effective cultivation of students' vocational skills. [8] Currently, the government's management policies on vocational education and training are mainly guided by technical rationalism,

tending to position teachers as controlled technical executors. Under this management mechanism, the development of teachers' professional competence lacks initiative and self-motivation, leading to a stagnation of professional levels. This situation highlights the urgency of re-examining and necessarily reforming the professional development mechanisms for vocational education teachers to stimulate their professional growth motivation and promote the continuous enhancement of their professional competence.

2.2.2 The career development paths for teachers are singular

In the vocational education system, career guidance courses play an indispensable role, requiring teachers to possess professional guidance abilities as well as a deep understanding of the relevant vocational fields.^[9] However, currently, vocational education teachers face relatively singular career development paths, lacking diversified development opportunities and effective promotion and incentive mechanisms. Additionally, the communication between teachers and school management is poor, leading to a lack of necessary support and resources in teaching and research activities. This limitation not only affects teachers' job satisfaction but also hinders the attraction and retention of outstanding talent to some extent. To improve the overall quality and effectiveness of vocational education, it is urgent to construct broader and more diversified career development pathways, by implementing concrete and effective incentive measures to stimulate teachers' professional enthusiasm and innovation potential, thus promoting the stable development of excellent educational talent.

2.2.3 The lack of individual agency and engagement among teachers is becoming increasingly evident in the field of vocational education

The root cause of the observed phenomenon lies in the lack of a robust incentive mechanism and a holistic evaluation framework specifically tailored for vocational education teachers within the prevailing educational infrastructure.^[10] This deficiency leads to a susceptibility among vocational education teachers towards professional exhaustion, adversely impacting their enthusiasm for teaching. Prolonged exposure to such conditions not only diminishes teachers' zeal for their profession but also precipitally affects their pedagogical effectiveness and ability to positively influence students' learning outcomes. Consequently, teachers' sense of self-efficacy and professional fulfillment remain undernourished, stunting their professional growth and contribution to educational excellence.^[11]

Addressing this critical challenge necessitates the strategic development and meticulous refinement of incentive and appraisal systems dedicated to vocational education faculty. The introduction of clearly defined motivational goals and evaluative benchmarks is essential for revitalizing the sense of purpose and participation among educators. Such a strategic overhaul aims to invigorate teachers' intrinsic motivation and pedagogical productivity, thereby fostering a conducive environment for the sustainable advancement of teaching quality. In essence, by reinvigorating the vocational education landscape with well-conceived incentive structures and comprehensive evaluation methodologies, the educational sector can aspire to a paradigm of continual quality enhancement, ensuring that vocational education remains responsive to the evolving demands of the workforce and society at large.

2.2.4 Teacher training and continuing education are inadequate

Although governments and educational institutions have recognized the importance of continuous education for vocational education teachers, in practice, opportunities for teachers to participate in continuing education and training remain limited. The training content and methods provided do not fully meet the individualized and diverse needs of teachers, often failing to gain the full attention of the teacher community.^[12] The teacher education and training methods for vocational education teachers have a profound impact on their professional knowledge, practical teaching abilities, and professional performance.^[13] Workplace learning plays a crucial role in the on-the-job practice of vocational education teachers and significantly contributes to promoting their continuous personal development. However, many countries and regions have not given enough attention to the continuing education of vocational education teachers.^[14] Therefore, establishing a comprehensive and systematic continuing education and training system to meet the development needs of vocational education teachers is key to improving the quality and efficiency of vocational education.

3. Strategies for building the teaching staff of vocational education

Within the perspective of value co-creation, the construction of the vocational education teaching staff not only focuses on the unilateral imparting of knowledge and skills training but emphasizes the comprehensive improvement of educational quality through the win-win cooperation of multiple

stakeholders. The following paths provide specific directions to achieve this goal:

3.1 Enhancing the professional capacity of teachers

In vocational education, boosting teacher professional capacity is crucial for enhancing educational quality. This study introduces a collaborative cooperation-based teacher development model. This model encourages strong interactive relationships between teachers, enterprises, and students using methods like project collaboration, internship guidance, and industry seminars. These activities enable teachers to grasp the latest industry trends and technologies, enhancing their professional knowledge and teaching skills. To facilitate this, educational institutions, businesses, and industry associations should collectively fund a training center. This center, offering both technology updates and teaching method training, enables teachers to keep their skills relevant and teaching methods innovative. Moreover, the model highlights teacher initiative in professional growth, engaging them in industry-related projects and activities to enrich their practical experience and teaching effectiveness. This approach not only improves teachers' abilities but also cultivates students' skills and innovation, contributing to the sustained enhancement of vocational education quality.

3.2 Enriching Teachers' Career Development Pathways

In the field of vocational education, expanding the career development pathways for teachers is particularly important. This study advocates for the construction of a diversified career development framework for teachers, which not only encompasses dimensions such as academic research, education management, and industry collaboration but also flexibly adapts to teachers' different professional aspirations and personal interests. It emphasizes the leading role of individual teachers in career planning, encouraging them to develop personalized development plans based on their interests, capabilities, and professional goals. The aim is to provide customized training and development opportunities, allowing teachers to gain deeper expertise in their fields, thereby enhancing the quality of teaching and fostering educational innovation. Further, the introduction of career development planning services can not only help teachers clarify their development direction but also offer them clear pathways for promotion and incentive measures. This service should focus on the concretization of teachers' professional goals and provide the necessary support and resources to achieve these goals. Through this mechanism, not only can teachers' job satisfaction be significantly improved, but it can also effectively attract and retain top talent, laying a solid foundation for the high-quality development of vocational education.

3.3 Enhancing Teachers' Individual Agency and Participation

The promotion of teachers' individual agency and participation is key to the development of vocational education. This study advocates for the creation of an open and inclusive educational atmosphere, motivating teachers, students, parents, and the community to actively participate in the planning and evaluation of educational activities. Based on the network collaboration perspective of value co-creation theory, it encourages schools to build a cooperative and mutually supportive educational ecosystem. This involves not only promoting collaboration among teachers, students, and management within the school but also extending cooperation to families, communities, enterprises, and other educational institutions. Such an ecosystem can provide teachers with a more diversified set of resources and support, thereby fostering educational innovation and professional growth for teachers. By institutionalizing pathways for teachers to participate in the school's decision-making process, teachers' influence on educational activities can be enhanced, along with their sense of self-worth and control. This will effectively stimulate teachers' innovative spirit and professional enthusiasm, providing momentum for the improvement of quality and innovative development in vocational education.

3.4 Strengthening Teacher Training and Continuing Education

The value co-creation theory provides theoretical support for establishing cross-disciplinary cooperation models in the field of vocational education teacher training and continuing education. It is recommended to create a collaborative network that includes enterprises, industry, and other educational institutions to jointly plan and implement training courses and continuing education programs that meet the developmental needs of teachers. By establishing a stable school-enterprise cooperation mechanism, teachers can directly access the actual work environment, gaining application experience with the latest industry knowledge and technical skills. Furthermore, such cooperative relationships also encourage teachers to deeply understand the current industry development needs, further translating these needs

into updates in teaching content and strategies, thereby effectively enhancing students' professional abilities and their future employability competitiveness. Simultaneously, by combining online and offline educational resources and platforms, flexible learning channels are provided to teachers to meet their personalized and differentiated learning needs, aimed at comprehensively improving teachers' professional knowledge levels, practical operational abilities, and teaching work efficiency. This strategy not only benefits the professional growth and skill enhancement of teachers but also contributes to the internal educational quality and teaching innovation of the vocational education system.

4. Conclusion

There is an indivisible relationship between economic development and the vocational education system. The economic foundation not only determines the development speed and quality of vocational education but also provides fundamental conditions for its development. As China's economy enters a stage of high-quality connotative development, vocational education is tasked with cultivating new types of skilled talents that adapt to industry upgrading and technological innovation demands, to further drive economic growth. On the other hand, vocational education also has a significant impact on the economy, serving as a key means for labor reproduction, technological progress, and enhancing labor productivity. By nurturing high-quality applied talents, vocational education can promote industrial transformation and foster comprehensive economic development.

From the perspective of value co-creation theory, the value creation process is emphasized as a collaborative, mutually beneficial endeavor. This process involves the integration and interaction of vocational colleges, educators, and learners at different links of the value chain, where vocational colleges, teachers, and students are seen as key components of an integrated value creation system. Building a high-quality teaching staff not only helps achieve value co-creation in vocational education but is also crucial for promoting a comprehensive enhancement of vocational education quality.

Therefore, this study believes that focusing on the construction of the vocational education teaching staff is key to achieving value co-creation and promoting the high-quality development of vocational education. By improving the overall quality of the teaching staff and educational outcomes, we can achieve a win-win cooperation in the field of education and effectively promote the realization of value co-creation. It is recommended to start from the following four aspects: (1) Enhancing teachers' professional capabilities; (2) Promoting the construction of personalized career development paths; (3) Elevating teachers' individual agency and sense of participation; (4) Strengthening the comprehensive training mechanism for teacher professional development.

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