

Analysis of the Match between Vocational Education Curriculum Setting and Market Demands in the Context of the New Economy

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Abstract: Under the background of the new economy, vocational education faces unprecedented challenges and opportunities. With the rapid development of emerging industries, the demand for highly skilled and high-quality talents in the market continues to increase, and traditional vocational education curriculum settings can no longer meet this change. This paper analyzes the development trends of the new economy, the current status of vocational education curriculum settings, and changes in market demands to explore the match between vocational education curricula and market demands. The study identifies gaps between the current vocational education curriculum and market demands and proposes specific strategies and policy recommendations to optimize curriculum settings, aiming to enhance the adaptability and effectiveness of vocational education to meet the needs of the new economy.

Keywords: New Economy; Vocational Education; Curriculum Setting; Market Demands; Matching Degree

1. Introduction

With the rapid transformation of the global economy and the rapid development of information technology, the new economy has become a significant driving force for social progress. Centered on technological innovation and the knowledge economy, the new economy has given rise to numerous emerging industries and professions, posing new requirements for vocational education. As a crucial pathway for cultivating technically skilled talents, the scientific and rational setting of vocational education curricula directly impacts the quality of talent cultivation and the ability to adapt to the market. Researching the match between vocational education curriculum settings and market demands in the context of the new economy is a necessary choice to adapt to the development of the times and a key approach to improving the quality of vocational education.

2. Current Development Status of Vocational Education under the New Economy

2.1 Development Trends of the New Economy

Driven by globalization and the information technology revolution, the new economy has gradually become the core force driving global economic growth. The new economy is characterized by digitalization, intelligence, and technological innovation, with technologies such as the internet, big data, and artificial intelligence fostering the emergence of many new industries, including e-commerce, fintech, green energy, and biomedicine. These emerging industries have not only transformed traditional production and lifestyles but also had a profound impact on labor market demands. The development trends of the new economy include continuous optimization and upgrading of industrial structures, shortened cycles of technological innovation, and increasingly fierce market competition.^[1]

In the context of the new economy, there is a growing demand for high-quality, versatile talents. These talents need to possess solid professional knowledge and skills, as well as innovative thinking, interdisciplinary abilities, and the capacity to adapt flexibly to changes. Meanwhile, traditional jobs are gradually being replaced by automation and intelligence, and new professions and positions are continually emerging. This requires vocational education to respond swiftly to market demands, adjusting and optimizing curriculum settings to cultivate high-quality technical and skilled talents that can meet the development needs of the new economy.

2.2 Current Status of Vocational Education Curriculum Setting

Currently, there is a certain lag in the content and structure of vocational education curricula, which cannot fully meet the demands of the new economy's development. Most vocational education institutions' curricula are still oriented towards traditional industries, with a heavy emphasis on theoretical knowledge and relatively weak practical teaching components. This situation results in students lacking the necessary hands-on and innovative abilities for practical work, making it difficult to meet rapidly changing market demands. Additionally, the curriculum lacks flexibility and cannot be adjusted in a timely manner based on market changes, leading to a disconnect between talent cultivation and market needs.

Although some vocational education institutions have begun to attempt curriculum reforms, such as introducing courses related to emerging industries, strengthening university-industry cooperation, and increasing the proportion of practical teaching, the overall effects have not been satisfactory. This is partly due to limitations in educational resources and teaching facilities and partly due to a lack of systematic policy support and guidance. To optimize vocational education curriculum settings, comprehensive improvements must be made in policy guidance, resource allocation, and mechanism innovation, promoting the deep integration of vocational education and new economic development.

2.3 Changes and Characteristics of Market Demands

With the development of the new economy, market demands for talents have undergone significant changes and exhibit new characteristics. Firstly, there is an increasing demand for highly skilled and high-quality versatile talents. Enterprises place more emphasis on employees' comprehensive qualities and interdisciplinary abilities, requiring them to have professional knowledge and skills, innovative thinking, teamwork abilities, and the ability to solve complex problems. Secondly, market demands are dynamic and diverse. The rapid development of emerging industries and technological updates lead to continuous changes in job positions and skill requirements, necessitating vocational education's flexibility and timely adjustment capabilities.^[2]

Additionally, market demands for vocational education have also changed, requiring not only the provision of professional knowledge and skills training but also the cultivation of students' professional qualities and comprehensive abilities. This requires vocational education to cover professional knowledge and skills training in curriculum settings and include innovation and entrepreneurship education, professional ethics education, and practical ability cultivation. Only by doing so can vocational education cultivate high-quality technical and skilled talents that meet the demands of new economic development, providing strong talent support for sustainable economic and social development.

3. Analysis of the Match between Vocational Education Curriculum Setting and Market Demands

3.1 Gap Analysis between Curriculum Setting and Market Demands

Currently, the gaps between vocational education curriculum settings and market demands mainly lie in curriculum content, teaching methods, and skill cultivation. Firstly, the speed of updating curriculum content cannot keep pace with the development of the new economy. Many vocational education courses are still based on traditional industries, with outdated content that lacks timely attention to emerging industries and new technologies. This leads to a mismatch between the knowledge students learn and the actual work demands after graduation, making it difficult for them to meet the requirements of new job positions. Secondly, vocational education curricula overly emphasize theoretical instruction, with relatively weak practical teaching components. Although some courses include practical training and experiments, limited resources and conditions prevent students from fully developing their hands-on and innovative abilities.

Additionally, vocational education curricula lack flexibility and specificity. Market demands are dynamic and diverse, with significant differences in needs across different regions and industries. However, current vocational education curricula are relatively fixed, lacking mechanisms to adjust according to market changes. The content and settings of courses cannot respond promptly to market changes, resulting in students being ill-prepared for job requirements. Furthermore, curricula lack a focus on cultivating interdisciplinary and versatile talents, failing to adequately consider the new

economy's demand for comprehensive and innovative abilities, thus limiting students' career development potential.

Moreover, the depth and breadth of university-industry cooperation need to be strengthened. Although many vocational education institutions recognize the importance of university-industry cooperation and have taken some measures, the overall effectiveness remains unsatisfactory. Enterprises' enthusiasm for participating in curriculum design and teaching is low, leading to a disconnect between curricula and actual work needs. Additionally, enterprises' support for vocational education is insufficient, lacking effective cooperation mechanisms, which affects the quality and effectiveness of practical teaching. These issues prevent vocational education curricula from seamlessly aligning with market demands.^[3]

Lastly, the gap between vocational education curricula and market demands also lies in the cultivation of students' professional qualities and comprehensive abilities. The new economy requires talents not only to have professional skills but also to possess good professional qualities, innovative spirit, and teamwork abilities. However, current vocational education curricula lack sufficient emphasis on these aspects, with related courses and training content being relatively singular and lacking systematic and comprehensive coverage. This results in students, while possessing certain professional skills, having significant shortcomings in professional qualities and comprehensive abilities, affecting their long-term competitiveness in their careers.

3.2 Analysis of Influencing Factors

The match between vocational education curriculum settings and market demands is influenced by multiple factors. Firstly, policy and institutional factors are significant reasons affecting curriculum settings. The development of vocational education requires policy support and guidance, but the implementation and enforcement of relevant policies are currently insufficient, lacking systematic and continuous efforts. This results in vocational education curriculum settings facing many constraints in practice, making it difficult to adjust flexibly according to market demands. Additionally, the education evaluation and assessment mechanisms need further improvement to ensure that curriculum settings genuinely reflect market demands and the practical effects of vocational education.

Secondly, the allocation and utilization efficiency of educational resources directly impact the quality and effectiveness of curriculum settings. Vocational education requires substantial practical teaching resources and facilities, but many vocational education institutions currently face significant shortcomings in these areas. Insufficient educational funding, outdated training equipment, and weak faculty strength severely constrain the development of vocational education. Moreover, the uneven allocation of educational resources leads to significant disparities in educational quality between different regions and schools, affecting the overall match between vocational education curriculum settings and market demands.

Enterprise participation and cooperation mechanisms are also important factors influencing vocational education curriculum settings. Enterprises are key stakeholders in vocational education, and their demands directly determine the direction and content of vocational education. However, currently, enterprises' enthusiasm for participating in vocational education is low, and cooperation mechanisms are imperfect. Enterprises' participation in curriculum design, practical teaching, and employment guidance is insufficient, affecting the actual effectiveness of curriculum settings. Additionally, the lack of effective communication and cooperation platforms between enterprises and vocational education institutions leads to information asymmetry, making it difficult to achieve resource sharing and complementary advantages.^[4]

Lastly, student demand and social recognition are key factors influencing vocational education curriculum settings. As the main subjects of vocational education, students' demands and expectations directly affect the direction of curriculum settings. However, current vocational education lacks sufficient research and analysis of student demands, and curriculum settings do not fully consider students' interests and development needs. Furthermore, social recognition and emphasis on vocational education need to be improved, with vocational education's status and recognition in society being relatively low, affecting students' learning enthusiasm and career prospects. These factors collectively contribute to the low match between vocational education curriculum settings and market demands, requiring further exploration and improvement in future research and practice.

4. Strategies and Recommendations for Optimizing Vocational Education Curriculum Settings

4.1 Principles for Optimizing Curriculum Settings

Optimizing vocational education curriculum settings should adhere to the principle of market orientation. Curriculum design should closely align with market demands, particularly those of emerging industries and new technologies under the new economy, to ensure that the talents cultivated can meet the actual needs of enterprises and industries. This requires establishing a dynamic market demand feedback mechanism, conducting regular surveys and analyses of market changes, and timely adjusting and updating curriculum content to ensure that curriculum settings remain highly consistent with market demands.

Optimizing vocational education curriculum settings should emphasize the principle of practice orientation. The core of vocational education lies in cultivating students' practical abilities and professional qualities; therefore, curriculum settings should focus on the design and implementation of practical teaching components. By increasing practical courses, university-industry cooperative projects, and simulation training, students' hands-on skills and practical operational levels can be improved. Additionally, incorporating innovation and entrepreneurship education into the curriculum will cultivate students' innovative spirit and entrepreneurial abilities.

Curriculum optimization should follow the principle of comprehensive quality cultivation. In the context of the new economy, enterprises demand not only professional skills but also comprehensive qualities and interdisciplinary abilities. Therefore, vocational education curriculum settings should cover multidisciplinary knowledge and focus on cultivating professional ethics, teamwork, communication skills, and leadership qualities. Offering comprehensive quality courses and organizing comprehensive quality training activities can comprehensively enhance students' professional qualities and comprehensive abilities.

Optimizing vocational education curriculum settings should implement the concept of lifelong learning. The new economic era is characterized by rapid technological updates, and vocational education needs to cultivate students' learning and adaptability skills. Curriculum settings should include training in lifelong learning skills to help students continually learn and improve throughout their careers, adapting to the ever-changing work environment and technological requirements. This not only aids in students' personal development but also meets the long-term demand for high-quality talents from enterprises and society.

4.2 Specific Optimization Strategies

Firstly, strengthen university-industry cooperation and deepen the integration of education and industry. Vocational education institutions should establish close cooperative relationships with enterprises, inviting industry experts to participate in curriculum design and teaching processes to ensure that curriculum content aligns with enterprise needs. Additionally, institutions should promote the joint construction of practical training bases with enterprises, providing students with more practical opportunities through enterprise internships and project collaborations, thus enhancing their practical skills and professional adaptability.^[5]

Secondly, create flexible curriculum setting mechanisms to adjust and update curriculum content promptly according to market demands. Vocational education institutions should establish curriculum evaluation and adjustment mechanisms, conducting regular market research and analysis of student employment situations to identify shortcomings in curriculum settings and make corresponding adjustments. Additionally, promoting modular and elective course systems will allow students to choose courses based on their interests and career development needs, enhancing the targeted and effective nature of their learning.

Furthermore, vigorously promote the application of information technology in vocational education to develop smart education. By introducing online education platforms, virtual simulation training systems, and intelligent teaching tools, teaching efficiency and learning outcomes can be improved. Additionally, strengthening teachers' training in information technology capabilities will enhance their application of modern educational technologies, ensuring the effective application of information technology in teaching and promoting the modernization of vocational education.

Moreover, emphasize the integration of innovation and entrepreneurship education to cultivate students' innovative spirit and entrepreneurial abilities. Setting up specialized innovation and

entrepreneurship courses, organizing entrepreneurial practice activities, and encouraging students to participate in innovation and entrepreneurship projects can cultivate their innovative thinking and entrepreneurial capabilities. Vocational education institutions should collaborate with innovation and entrepreneurship incubators to provide students with entrepreneurial support and resources, helping them transform innovative ideas into actual projects.

4.3 Policy Recommendations

The government should increase policy support and funding for vocational education to promote high-quality development. Special policies to support vocational education development should be formulated and implemented, providing sufficient financial funds to improve vocational education infrastructure and practical training conditions. Additionally, a vocational education development fund should be established to encourage enterprises and social forces to participate in vocational education, jointly promoting its sustainable development.

The government should improve the vocational education evaluation and quality assurance system to ensure the scientific and effective nature of curriculum settings. The government should establish vocational education quality evaluation standards and systems, conducting regular evaluations and monitoring to identify and solve problems in vocational education promptly. Additionally, vocational education institution certification and teacher qualification certification should be promoted to enhance the overall level of vocational education institutions and teachers, ensuring steady improvement in vocational education quality.

The government should promote the legalization of vocational education to provide legal protection for its development. Laws and regulations for vocational education should be formulated and improved, clearly defining the responsibilities and rights of governments at all levels, vocational education institutions, and enterprises, ensuring the legal status and rights of vocational education development. Additionally, the government should strengthen the promotion of vocational education law to enhance societal recognition and emphasis on vocational education, creating a favorable environment for its development.

The government should promote the establishment of a vocational education information sharing platform to strengthen information communication and cooperation among all parties. By establishing a national vocational education information platform, vocational education resources, market demand information, and employment data can be aggregated, providing reference for vocational education institutions. Additionally, promoting cooperation and exchanges between vocational education institutions and enterprises, industry associations, and others can facilitate resource sharing and collaborative development in vocational education.

4.4 Future Research Directions

Future research should focus on exploring the dynamic adaptation mechanisms of vocational education and market demands under the new economic background. By deeply studying the patterns and trends of market demand changes, scientific market demand forecasting models can be constructed to provide data support and decision-making basis for vocational education curriculum settings. Additionally, research should explore how to promptly reflect market demand changes in curriculum settings to achieve seamless alignment between vocational education and market demands.

Future research should investigate the deep application of information technology in vocational education to promote the development of smart vocational education. Future research should focus on how to utilize new technologies such as big data, artificial intelligence, and virtual reality to enhance the teaching effects and management levels of vocational education. Additionally, research should explore the integration model of online education and traditional vocational education, examining how to achieve personalized and precise vocational education through information technology methods.

Future research should strengthen the internationalization of vocational education by learning from advanced international experiences to enhance the international competitiveness of vocational education in China. Future research should focus on how to introduce high-quality international vocational education resources, promote international cooperation and exchange in vocational education, and explore international vocational education standards and certification systems to drive the standardization and internationalization of vocational education in China. This will provide support for cultivating high-quality technical and skilled talents with international vision and

competitiveness.^[6]

Future research should investigate the integration paths of vocational education and innovation and entrepreneurship education to explore new models for cultivating innovative talents. Future research should focus on how to organically integrate innovation and entrepreneurship education into vocational education curriculum settings, cultivating students' innovative thinking and entrepreneurial abilities. Additionally, research should explore the evaluation standards and methods for innovation and entrepreneurship education to provide scientific guidance for vocational education institutions.

5. Conclusion

Through this study, we have deeply analyzed the match between vocational education curriculum settings and market demands under the background of the new economy, identifying existing gaps and influencing factors, and proposing corresponding optimization strategies and policy recommendations. Future research should continue to focus on the development dynamics of the new economy, continuously track changes in market demands, and dynamically adjust vocational education curriculum settings. Additionally, further exploration of the optimization paths for university-industry cooperation mechanisms is needed to enhance the effectiveness and targeted nature of practical teaching, providing more scientific and systematic guidance for cultivating high-quality technical and skilled talents.

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