Practice and Reflections on the Coordination Mechanism of Vocational
Education of Press and Publishing in Across Regions: A Case Study of the
Yangtze River Delta Press and the Publishing Vocational Education
Innovation Alliance

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Abstract

It is important for the development of vocational education in the contemporary era that we should improve integration between education and industry, cooperation between schools and enterprises, and cooperation in vocational education across regions. This study analyzes and explicates the idea of the cross-regional, vocational education coordination mechanism. It argues that the core of creating a cross-regional vocational education alliance is “seeking common ground while reserving differences.” [1]. In combination with the Press and Publishing Vocational Education Innovation Alliance in the Yangtze River Delta, this study analyzes the significance of the establishment of the Vocational Education Alliance, as well as its operating system and mechanism. Finally, it analyzes the six paths for ensuring a coordinated development of cross-regional, vocational education, focusing on five particular dimensions: system construction, teaching and research, teacher training, safeguarding, and international exchanges.

Keywords: Press and publishing, Vocational education, Coordination mechanism

I. Introduction

The action plan and guiding ideology for promoting the development of vocational education in the new era both stipulate that vocational education should “deepen integration between industry and education and improve cooperation between schools and enterprises (proposed in the report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China)”. The “Modern Vocational Education System Construction Plan” (2014-2020) states that the following steps are necessary: increase cooperation in regional vocational education; encourage localities to break away from the restrictions imposed by administrative divisions; establish platforms to encourage regional vocational education; coordinate development policies for vocational education; take the lead in stimulating cross-provincial cooperation among vocational colleges. This would help to cultivate new talents, develop teachers and courses, as well as disseminate digital teaching resources and scientific research on education in the Yangtze River Delta and elsewhere. As specific economic regions become increasingly integrated, the degree of collaborative innovation will increase along with the integration of vocational education. Analysis of the coordinated development of vocational education in the cross-regional press and publishing industry shows that the system and mechanism of vocational education need reforms. This would help to solve the problem of the lack of talent while transforming and upgrading the press and publishing industry. It would also function as a reference point for developing other regional economies and industries. The “National Demonstrative Higher Vocational College Construction Plan,” which was implemented in 2006, marked the beginning of a new historical period for cross-regional vocational education cooperation. Building cross-regional cooperation in vocational education colleges...
and universities is an important indicator in social service. It will be incorporated into the assessment system as part of the plan for better vocational education.

II. Explanation of the Connotation of the Cross-regional Vocational Education Coordination Mechanism

2.1 The connotation of the cross-regional vocational education coordination mechanism

Establishing a cross-regional vocational education coordination mechanism means setting up a collaborative relationship that relies on cooperation across borders. This takes the form of a vocational education consortium in which vocational colleges, enterprises, and industry organizations located in different administrative regions aim to share resources, foster common development, and create complementary advantages. It enables the effective circulation of educational and industrial resources among different administrative regions through the division of labor, platform construction, and innovations in systems. Participants cooperate in the same model for training new talents, managing teaching, social services, teacher training, applied R&D, and sharing experimental training resources. This improves the quality of the vocational training, as well as the overall competitiveness of the industry.

2.2 The need and possibility for a cross-regional vocational education coordination mechanism

The aim of the Vocational Education Alliance is to “seek common ground while reserving differences”. A three-dimensional coordinated development mechanism of vocational education should be built through alliances. This three-dimensional mechanism should include collaboration between schools and enterprises, collaboration between schools, collaboration between regions, and collaboration between industries. This should be based on the principle of seeking common ground while reserving differences. Within this model, “common ground” refers to having the same industry background, same industry culture, same discourse system, and mutual acceptance, resulting in cultural proximity. As a result, there is the potential for cooperation potential and the cooperation will be conducted smoothly. The so-called “difference” here is the logical starting point for mutual coordination among people experiencing vocational education, as well as the necessity of cooperation. It is the “differences” among schools and enterprises in different administrative regions that makes it possible for cooperation to be effective. Therefore, it is through the process of seeking common ground while reserving differences that it is possible to create a cross-regional vocational education and education coordination mechanism.

2.3 The significance of constructing a cross-regional vocational education coordination mechanism

The inter-provincial Yangtze River Delta Press and Publishing Vocational Education Innovation Alliance, as a characteristic vocational education model with both regional and industry attributes, is an attempt of cross-regional exchanges, school-enterprise (inter-school) cooperation, and multiple integration. [2] The establishment of a cross-regional vocational education coordination mechanism has practical significance for regional economic development and for improving the quality of talents. The operation of the coordination mechanism would enhance the coordination and balance of the overall development of regional vocational education. Constructing a cross-regional vocational education coordination mechanism would help different individuals undergoing vocational education to experience several advantages. It can help differentiate between those who are managing skills, promoting the transformation of talent training from scale expansion to connotative promotion. The cross-regional vocational education coordination mechanism would allow for more industrial and educational resources to be collected more easily. It would help with the economies of scale, as well as the scope and agglomeration of vocational education. Cross-regional vocational education coordination has supported the process of regional economic integration. It will help to develop the vocational training program and the industrial program for press the press and publishing industry in the Yangtze River Delta.

III. Practice of the Coordination Mechanism of Press and Publishing Vocational Education in the Yangtze River Delta

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3.1 The current situation regarding cooperation in education in the Yangtze River Delta

The Yangtze River Delta is one of the most economically developed regions in China. It has always been at the forefront of the country when it comes to reforms, opening up, and innovative development. After long-term development and interaction, the Yangtze River Delta has formed an urban agglomeration headed by Shanghai. In recent years, there have been continuous advances in cooperation in vocational education in the cities in the Yangtze River Delta. For example, there has been cooperation in areas such as enrollment and employment, course materials, faculty, and practical teaching. At the same time, in promoting the integration of vocational education in the Yangtze River Delta, various localities have also conducted effective explorations into coordination mechanisms and cooperation policies [3].

Due to their geographical proximity, personal affinity, and linguistic and cultural proximity, there is an innate sense of closeness among the regions of the Yangtze River Delta. This is a crucial prerequisite for regional cooperation. In recent years, the Yangtze River Delta region has been able to flourish. It has promoted comprehensive reforms in education and continuously improved the mechanism for coordinating the development of regional education. It has endeavored to build a world-class education system with regional and Chinese characteristics. Its aim is to support the development of new talents, socio-economic growth, and the industrial transformation of the Yangtze River Delta.

The construction of the Yangtze River Delta Education Cooperation Mechanism began in 2009. Thus far, 34 project agreements have been signed in the following areas: “International Exchange and Cooperation in Education”; “Establishing the Education Cooperation Research Center”; and “The Yangtze Delta Graduate Education Innovation Program Cooperation Agreement”. A considerable amount of productive cooperation has been carried out, including the joint training of teachers, sharing educational and pedagogical resources, jointly building experimental training bases, and cooperating in promoting education and teaching reform. In 2014, the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China issued the “Guiding Opinions on Further Promoting Educational Reform and Cooperative Development in the Yangtze River Delta”, which laid out a new blueprint for educational cooperation in the Yangtze River Delta at the national level.

Overall, vocational education in the Yangtze River Delta continues to grow steadily. However, there are still some problems when it comes to vocational education cooperation in the Yangtze River Delta. These are mainly due to differences in the administrative divisions and the regional characteristics of policies. For example, the enrollment policies implemented in Shanghai City, Jiangsu Province, and Zhejiang Province are still largely protectionist; students cannot flow freely within the regions. Cross-regional vocational education cooperation needs to be strengthened for industries and enterprises to participate in it enthusiastically. In general, an atmosphere of close cooperation has not developed. Both the breadth and depth of cooperation need to be enhanced. For example, the development of resources for vocational education in the press and publishing in the Yangtze River Delta is not yet sufficient. Furthermore, the spatial distribution of vocational education resources in the Yangtze River Delta is not yet balanced; neither resources nor information are shared effectively. For instance, when it comes to cooperation between schools and enterprises, students still engage in internships within their province. The scale of cross-regional exchanges for teachers and students is also small, and there is no vocational education synergy that is compatible with industrial development and economic integration in the region.

3.2 The establishment of the Yangtze River Delta Press and Publishing Vocational Education Innovation Alliance

Shanghai Publishing and Printing College has led the establishment of the Yangtze River Delta Publishing and Media Vocational Education Innovation Alliance. With the strong support of the education and industry authorities and through school-enterprise cooperation and inter-school cooperation, the alliance has cooperated with vocational colleges, enterprises, institutions, and industry associations in press and publishing. The alliance is based on the principles of equality, willingness, and mutual benefit. The alliance’s mission is to serve the development of the press and publishing industry in the Yangtze River Delta region. Its core goal is to improve the
level of publishing and media and the quality of training for new talents. It focuses on improving the vocational education system for press and publishing in the region and is committed to meeting the needs of the press and publishing industry. It trains talents who are innovative and have the required knowledge and skills. The alliance promotes the comparative advantages of each participant, optimizes the allocation of resources, and promotes resource sharing. It ensures collaborative innovation and leads to mutually beneficial cooperation. It promotes the scientific development of vocational education for press and publishing in the Yangtze River Delta. As such, the alliance provides powerful intellectual support and helps to guarantee the talents necessary for economic development, industrial transformation, and upgrading. The alliance focuses on the following projects: “Construction of the Publishing and Media Vocational Education Collaborative Organization Platform”; “Collaborative Development of the Publishing and Media Vocational Education Professional Standards”, “Teacher Training for Publishing and Media Vocational Education”, “The Publishing and Media Vocational Education Student Employment and Entrepreneurship Improvement”, and “The Cooperative Compilation and Release of the Yangtze River Delta Publishing and Media Applied Talent Supply and Demand Index”. The alliance allows key higher vocational colleges to play a leading role in the development of regional vocational education, as well as allowing the industry to assist in the socio-economic development of the Yangtze River Delta. It places education and teaching at its core, with mutual benefits as the main goal. It aims to improve and perfect the operating mechanism and management system for ensuring educational cooperation and exchange in publishing and media in the Yangtze River Delta region. The alliance promotes the common development of regional vocational colleges, enterprises, and other member units through cooperation, leading to the development of talents in the cultural industry who are more technically skilled.

3.3 The operating mechanism of the Yangtze River Delta Press and Publishing Vocational Education Innovation Alliance

The inter-provincial Yangtze River Delta Press and Publishing Vocational Education Innovation Alliance is a model for running vocational education that has both regional and industry attributes. It attempts to provide cross-regional exchanges, multilateral cooperation between schools and enterprises, diversified integration, and multi-party collaboration. The alliance aims to promote school-enterprise cooperation in vocational colleges in the region and to carry out group-oriented education. The vocational colleges and enterprises in the alliance work closely with the guidance committees in the industry, as well as with vocational education groups, and school-enterprise cooperation councils. They take “school-enterprise cooperation”, “inter-school alliances”, and “cooperation between school associations” as their starting point.

The alliance operates under the guidance of competent authorities in the industry. The “Articles of the Alliance” serve as the basis for the operation of the alliance operation. All of the entities participating in the alliance abide by these articles. The alliance preserves the current operating mechanisms, management modes, and funding sources of the entities that are participating. At present, the goal of the Yangtze River Delta Press and Publishing Vocational Education Innovation Alliance is to move the source of coordinated development from government administrative departments to schools and enterprises. Thus, the driving force behind the coordinated development of the alliance would be “bottom-up” rather than “top-down”. The basic model for the coordinated development of the alliance has changed from being based on “organizing activities” to being based on “building mechanisms”. The key focus of the coordinated development of the alliance has been changed from being project cooperation to setting standards. The model for the coordinated development of the alliance is to improve quality constantly. The Yangtze River Delta Press and Publishing Vocational Education Innovation Alliance is an innovative platform whose main mechanism is collaboration. In terms of the operating mechanism, the alliance uses a rotational method to promote the alliance’s various aspects. In the future, as a special vocational education model, the alliance will consolidate the design at the top level, taking into account the long-term effectiveness of activities, the mechanisms of cooperation, and the long-term development of cooperation. This will make collaboration more effective. As the alliance has developed, new experience has been gained regarding the integration of regional industry vocational education. A new model and mechanism have been introduced that can be replicated and promoted elsewhere, providing a reference point for cooperation and exchange in other regions and industries across the country. It
plays a leadership role across the country.

3.4 The path for collaboration in the Yangtze River Delta Press and Publishing Vocational Education Innovation Alliance

The path towards collaboration as part of the Vocational Education Alliance is multilateral. It differs from a unilateral approach that would be implemented by a single institution. It emphasizes all-round cooperation across the industry. Within the scope of the Yangtze River Delta Press and Publishing Vocational Education Innovation Alliance, the press and publishing vocational colleges in the region can carry out substantive exchanges and engage in cooperation through mutual visits of teachers and students, mutual recognition of credits, cooperation in scientific research, and sharing resources and information. There are four aspects to the collaboration in the Yangtze River Delta Press and Publishing Vocational Education Innovation Alliance: resource sharing, information exchange, interactions between main bodies, and integration between the industry and education. There are six aspects to the synergy of the alliance:

3.4.1 System dimension: Co-construct a modern vocational education system

The alliance is an interactive platform and a link for building a modern, vocational education system for the press and publishing industry in the Yangtze River Delta. Based on the socio-economic development of the Yangtze River Delta, the alliance will actively promote links between vocational education institutions and the industry in the region. It will carry out a pilot reform of the integrated training model of applied talents for secondary vocational students, higher vocational students, applied technology undergraduates, and professional master’s students. The alliance will keep up with new trends, upgrades and changes in the industry, optimizing and integrating high-quality human resources in the business world, as well as high-quality vocational education resources in the world of education. The alliance implements models for integrating the process of training talents through industry-education integration, school-enterprise cooperation, and a combination of work and learning. At the same time, by advancing the construction of a modern, vocational education system, the alliance will ensure that the education system and the industry are linked to each other and updated simultaneously. The alliance will be a platform for guiding the professional structure of vocational colleges in the region. By sharing information across colleges, enterprises, and industry organizations, schools and enterprises can jointly forecast the demand for talents in the press and publishing sector in the Yangtze River Delta. They can also guide how students are prepared to enter professional settings, prevent majors from becoming homogenous, and avoid creating low-quality professional resources. As a systematic project, adjusting majors used to be done within the education system (within colleges and universities), based on subjective experiences and the faculty structure at the school. This meant that there was a blind approach to the professional structure, making it difficult to adjust the structure accurately and in place. In practice, two tendencies are prone to appear. The first is that the content of the majors becomes outdated. Taking into account the stability factors such as emotions between the teachers and students and the placement of personnel, some schools fail to eliminate some majors that no longer meet the needs of the market economy. As a result, students who graduate are sometimes unable to find a job, and the professional counterparty rate is extremely low. The second tendency is that the majors are sometimes too advanced. Majors are sometimes set based on what is in fashion. They will sometimes be structured according to whatever vocabulary is popular in society at that moment, ignoring social needs and the requirements for running a school. According to statistics, the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence, virtual reality, robotics, and big data have all become hot options for new majors in various vocational colleges. A cross-regional vocational education alliance is a promising way of countering these tendencies. An alliance is a consortium of schools and enterprises that can recognize the real demand for talents in enterprises. They can also coordinate the division of labor and the forms of collaboration necessary for the professional development of different institutions. Professional alliances can encourage some competent, experienced, and time-honored colleges to meet certain needs first. Then, once they have gained some experience, they can share it with other colleges and universities in the region.

3.4.2 Teaching dimension: Collaborate to create a platform for sharing talents

Talent training is the central task of vocational education. Aligning innovation in vocational education with strong

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multilateral cooperation and the integration of industry and education integration will proceed from the current situation of the demand for talents in the industry. This will promote the cultivation of talents in the news and publishing industry. The vocational education system established by the alliance is better able to guide how the press and publishing profession in the Yangtze River Delta region is structured and developed. It does this by establishing a committee composed of press and publishing professionals to guide teachers and participating vocational colleges. The Teaching Guidance Committee gives advice based on scientific goals for training talents and setting the standards for courses. It examines curriculum reforms using a model that “combines work and learning”. It considers updates to the content of courses, develops professional teaching materials, and expands employment channels. Establishing the alliance will have a profound impact on the development of practical teaching [4]. As industry and education become more integrated and schools and enterprises cooperate more effectively, the alliance will enable training resources to be shared leading to an alliance based on multilateral cooperation. The alliance conducts job training for employees at all levels, establishing lifelong education for employees in the press and publishing industry. It also improves the overall technical skills of industry employees in the region. For example, with widespread digitization and the introduction of network technologies in the publishing and printing industry, the alliance has guided various colleges and universities in making adjustments and adding new profound changes. The alliance has also reformed the teaching content, gathering experts and teachers from key enterprises and colleges to develop professional teaching materials that cover digitalization and media integration. The coordinated development of media vocational education in the Yangtze River Delta region allows the industry and its disciplines to flourish. As press and publishing become digitized, teaching resources regarding the internet and education are being shared across regions, and inter-school cooperation is improving. The alliance is organizing more than one seminar a year to exchange new information and new teaching practices. It is striving to build a platform for exchange in information about professional education in press and publishing in the Yangtze River Delta.

3.4.3 Innovation dimension: Work together to build a collaborative platform for innovation
In the field of applied technology R&D and social services, the alliance takes various research institutions as its main body and uses collaborative innovation to integrate the resources for scientific and technological innovation, as well as the social services, in schools and enterprises. The alliance strengthens team work in science and technology, raising the level of science and technology services. It develops cooperation across universities and the industry, integrating research and promoting in-depth cooperation between vocational education and the industry, as well as between schools and enterprises. It ensures education keeps up with industrial development. Based on the coordination mechanism, the alliance promotes all-round cooperation between enterprises in the press and publishing industry in the Yangtze River Delta and press and publishing colleges. It integrates resources related to technology, experimentation, and training. Under its framework, the alliance accelerates the construction of workspaces facilitating school-enterprise cooperation. It sets up skilled master studios in schools, establishes bases for teaching in enterprises, and builds joint technical service platforms such as teaching consultation centers, product design and technological transformation centers, R&D centers, and centers for the promotion of technology. The alliance works together to form an R&D team focused on applied technology. It declares major research topics and undertakes technical service projects. In this way, the alliance gradually promotes technological innovation that adapts to the development of the publishing and media industry. It makes it easier to implement changes based on scientific and technological R&D results, expanding the influence of social services. In terms of education, teaching and research, the Shanghai Publishing and Media Research Institute takes the lead in organizing institutions that provide relevant vocational education research. It also holds regular seminars with organizations on the direction, goals, and approaches used to integrate vocational education in the press and publishing industry in the Yangtze River Delta (on a theoretical and a practical level). As such, the Yangtze River Delta region is expected to become an important center for research into vocational education in the press and publishing industry not only in China but throughout the world, in the country even around the world [5].

3.4.4 Teaching dimension: Collaboratively build a base for teacher training and sharing
At present, the Yangtze River Delta Press and Publishing Vocational Education Innovation Alliance is providing a training platform and a mutual (inter-employment) exchange platform for teachers to build a high-quality faculty
team, promote teacher exchanges among schools in the alliance, and advance the resource pool of industry experts and skill masters in the alliance. The alliance establishes a mechanism based on “school-enterprise exchanges and the two-way flow of talents”. It allows teachers to go to enterprises to practice. At the same time, it allows enterprise executives, industry experts, and skilled craftsmen to give lectures in class to improve the overall quality of the professional teachers and the students in news and publishing. This helps to ensure that the requirements for new talents are met [6]. With the strong support of the provincial administrative department for education and the department for industry, the Yangtze River Delta Press and Publishing Vocational Education Innovation Alliance has organized three consecutive teacher training courses. These training courses have clear themes, a prominent focus, rich content, and strong relevance. They involve areas such as international vision, regional education collaboration mechanisms, enhancement of leadership, management execution, school-enterprise cooperation, major development, and the cultivation of craftsmanship. The themes of the training courses cover the key points, as well as any difficulties or hot issues in the development of vocational education. The training class has not only strengthened teachers’ understanding of the core tasks when it comes to training high-quality technical talents but also enhanced exchanges and cooperation among the teachers in the member schools of the alliance. This plays a positive role in improving the ability and the level of core teachers and management personnel. In the future, the alliance will actively apply for training projects for both national and provincial training. This will aim to increase the scope and the overall level of teacher training. It will also improve the quality, ability, and skill of the teaching staff. It will increase the vitality of vocational education, reforming and developing teaching across vocational schools.

3.4.5 Guarantee dimension: collaboratively create a resource sharing platform
In terms of resources, it is often difficult to allocate laboratory equipment adequately. It can be hard to meet the needs of human resources in terms of the spatial layout. With strong support from the government, colleges and universities generally have better experimental training equipment. At present, media companies, especially printing companies, are still predominantly small- or medium-sized. They often lack the financial strength to purchase large-scale equipment. Enterprises, however, are more sensitive to technological innovation. For enterprises, building a platform of resource sharing in the region is conducive to creating high-quality equipment for universities, enabling them to conduct scientific R&D activities. Alliance members participate in the development of training, sharing resources and complementing each other’s advantages. They build a platform to share resources, thereby increasing the utilization of equipment and facilities. By integrating the high-quality resources of both parties, schools and enterprises jointly establish internal and external training to develop practical skills. They also develop joint institutions for appraisals, promoting the improvement of the overall technological skills of people in the industry.

In terms of system and policy guarantees, government departments should reduce the amount of direct administrative intervention. They should optimize the external environment for the development of vocational education through policy guidance and the design of top-level support. They should guarantee the sustainable development of the alliance by offering tax reductions and exemptions for enterprises in the alliance. At the same time, the government should actively take measures to break the barriers in the system when it comes to student status management, access to employment, enrollment training, the identification of vocational qualifications, and social security. This would help to ensure that vocational education was completely integrated. When it comes to self-improvement, the alliance should further clarify the rights and obligations of the participants by establishing rules and regulations. It should create a strong institutional environment for the development of collaborative education in the region.

3.4.6 International dimension: Collaborate to promote excellent education overseas
In terms of international cooperation, the alliance can be used as a platform to promote international exchanges and cooperation in vocational education in the press and publishing industry in the Yangtze River Delta. The schools in the alliance should work together to develop excellent resources for news and publishing vocational education overseas. They should increase the amount of overseas study and improve training for teachers and students. They should develop locations for offering training overseas. They should also try to attract more skilled craftsmen and
technical experts from world-renowned media companies to come and teach in the Yangtze River Delta region. At present, the alliance actively responds to the call of “the Belt and Road Initiative”. In other words, it uses industry associations as a platform for foreign exchanges, with leading universities like Shanghai Publishing and Printing College at the center. It integrates high-quality resources from schools, enterprises, and industries throughout the alliance. The alliance also actively encourages groups to try and bring in employees from other countries. It encourages innovation with skill competitions around the world.

IV Conclusion

Theory and practice both show that the construction of a modern vocational education system led by the government, with schools and enterprises as the main bodies, and significant participation from enterprises, helps to ensure the sustainable development of cross-regional cooperation in vocational education. The establishment of the Vocational Education Innovation Alliance is an important part of building a modern, vocational education system. The cross-regional vocational education alliance has become an efficient platform for integrating the high-quality resources of enterprises into vocational education. It has helped to coordinate the development of cross-regional collaborative education. The coordination mechanism and the cooperation path constructed by the alliance meet the needs of transforming and upgrading the industry. They embody the concept of lifelong education and enhancing the development of regional socio-economic integration. The mechanism and path are conducive to improving the level of vocational education, leading to innovations in training talents and encouraging educational reforms in Shanghai.

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