

Enlightenment of Government-Guided Intermediary Organizations' Participation in School-Enterprise Cooperation in Vocational Education.

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ABSTRACT

Using the literature research method and based on previous scholars' research, this paper sums up foreign intermediary organizations' experience in school - enterprise cooperation. It studies the motives and evolution of American intermediary organizations in this cooperation and presents Norwegian and Swiss intermediary organizations' participation in vocational training from four core issues. Thus, it concludes that establishing intermediary organizations can be a solution to China's school - enterprise cooperation difficulties. Suggestions are as follows: Macro - level action strategies include legal coercion and leadership for social recognition, policy specification and authorization for social identity, and funding guidance and temptation for more institutional participation. Micro - level specific measures for intermediary organizations' training departments in school - enterprise cooperation cover work allocation, funding arrangement, and tracking and supervision.

KEYWORDS

intermediary organizations; vocational education; school-enterprise cooperation; experience and enlightenment

1 Introduction

Since 1980 when higher vocational education emerged in China, a series of policies have been introduced to guide the cooperation between higher vocational colleges and enterprises. From the "joint teaching, scientific research and production" in the 1985 "Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Reform of the Educational System" to the clear statement in the 2019 "Twenty Policies for Vocational Education" that vocational colleges and industry enterprises should form a community with a shared future, China's higher vocational education school - enterprise cooperation has gradually developed a new situation under policy promotion, featuring professional co - construction, talent co - cultivation, process co - management, resource sharing and responsibility sharing.^[1] Although China's higher vocational education school - enterprise cooperation policy has changed for over half a century and is constantly evolving towards high quality, various problems have emerged during implementation. For example, there is an imbalance in the application of policy tools, a lack of normative guidance, dilemmas of multiple subjects,^[2] and common issues like the "two skins" and "fireplace phenomenon"^[3] in school - enterprise cooperation, as well as "malignant interaction" between schools and enterprises. Regarding solving these difficulties, scholars currently have two viewpoints: government - led or market - led, that is, building a mechanism through third - party institutions.

2 Definition of Concepts

Regarding third - party institutions in education, American scholar Burton Clark said they can be "buffer organizations" and "intermediary bodies". But in 1991, some scholars noted not all intermediary institutions buffer. Some define them as formally established organizations between government agencies and others to achieve public goals, and in higher education, they're between government and higher education institutions. In this study, intermediary organizations mainly mean non - profit ones between the government, vocational colleges, and enterprises, providing coordinated services for school - enterprise cooperation.

There are many terms for school - enterprise cooperation abroad. Many sociological and economic terms used in educational research can imply school - enterprise cooperation, like PPPs, PFI, PSP, etc. Their common features are: multiple stakeholders in cooperation (local governments, NGOs, trade unions, enterprises); complex goals (for social and economic benefits); focus on results (with specific goals and effective resource use); equal responsibility (partners responsible for results and risks equally distributed); long interaction cycle; and relationships formed by agreements (contracts, memorandums, etc.).

3 Experience of Foreign Intermediary Organizations Participating in School-Enterprise Cooperation

School - enterprise cooperation models vary among countries, with differences in intermediary participation. The dual systems in some European countries are similar in system but different in content. English - speaking countries have practical - oriented apprenticeship training with high cost. Some countries have the "factory school" model like Singapore. Different countries explore based on their conditions. Germany and Switzerland maintain the dual training model, but attempts to change it failed.^[6] In Austria, dual vocational training has weakened and a full - time system has been established.^[7]

Most countries like China, the US, and Russia explore promoting enterprise participation in vocational education. All adopt market - oriented approaches. Some scholars note intermediaries' supervision and agreement implementation can overcome liberalization drawbacks.^[9] The US has important labor intermediary organizations for school - enterprise cooperation. Chinese scholar Zhou Yingwen believes China's socialist market economy is relatively loose like the US's free market economy, forming a "vocational colleges - intermediary organizations - enterprises" model.^[10] He analyzes US intermediary organizations' motivation, action strategies, types, and functions in vocational education, and how they change over the years. US intermediary types include associations, etc.; functions include decision - making research, macro coordination, and information services. Institutional laws, policies, and cognitive factors promote their active development. The action strategy involves the government creating an environment, standardizing certification, and making investments. More US intermediary organizations participate and become more standardized, with the organizational change process being coercion - imitation - normativeness.

The core tasks of school - enterprise cooperation involve system development, content determination, fundraising, training, supply - demand matching, monitoring, review and certification. Cooperation among national institutions, enterprises and intermediary organizations is crucial.^[11] Research focuses on countries like Switzerland. Switzerland once had a dual training model.^[12] It implemented an apprenticeship model in 1997 and listed training institutions as intermediary organizations, having unique experiences. Scholars investigated in Switzerland and Norway.

Table 1 Practical Investigation of Training Institutions as Intermediary Organizations in Norway and Switzerland ^[12]

Issues	Country	
	Norway	Switzerland
Provision of training	Single enterprise	Several enterprises together
funding arrangements	High national subsidy. Low enterprise expenditure. Through long-term public monitoring and quality assessment.	(member enterprises take turns) Low national subsidy. High enterprise expenditure.
supervision and tracking	Providing training quality documents to local governments. Conducting public surveys of apprentices and training teachers every year.	Regular communication and investigation with apprentices by training institution managers. Visiting apprentices and companies after they take up their posts.
Recruitment practices	Individual enterprise. Training institutions promote positions or screen. Combination of industry, organizations and individual companies.	Training institutions (publishing, recruiting, and selecting). Individual member enterprises with advantages will want to take the initiative, and training institutions will obey. Individual companies.

4 Enlightenment of Foreign Intermediary Organizations' Participation in School-Enterprise Cooperation to China

"To a certain extent, the future of China's educational development depends on the efforts and actions of educational intermediary organizations today." ^[13] School-enterprise cooperation has always been a topic of discussion in various countries. In order to carry out effective school-enterprise cooperation, actively exploring the construction of intermediary organizations can be a choice.

4.1 Macro level: Action strategies

Legal coercion and leadership to establish social recognition. If a policy or plan gradually becomes legal through law or other forms, the organization's compliance with the policy or plan is more stable. As the institutionalization degree of this measure increases, the organizational structure change is also more profound, thus closely integrating with the actions of organizational participants. ^[14]

Write the provisions on intermediary organizations participating in school-enterprise cooperation into the law and define their structure, functions and scope of activities. At the same time, establish relevant resource libraries, information centers and databases, and upload the successful cases and work experience of intermediary organizations participating in school-enterprise cooperation to the resource library; the information center is linked with the labor market, publicly disclose enterprise internship plans, and stipulate that enterprises need to arrange training after recruitment; the database records the data of young apprentices and stipulates that they can only take up posts or be promoted after completing relevant training courses.

4.2 Policy specification and authorization to enhance social identity

If legal coercion input is the obedience of subordinate units to superior units, then specification authorization is the active or voluntary seeking of authorization, approval or legalization by

subordinate units from superior units. This "normative" pressure is particularly likely to occur in professional departments and organizations.^[15] Provide certification services. After intermediary organizations participating in school-enterprise cooperation obtain certification through national vocational ability tests and vocational quality tests, they can become issuing institutions of relevant vocational skills and quality certificates.

4.3 Funding guidance and temptation to increase institutional participation

Intermediary organizations participating in school-enterprise cooperation are non-profit organizations. Whether the funding is sufficient is one of the important factors affecting their sustainable development. Relevant departments can formulate special funds to support intermediary organizations participating in school-enterprise cooperation. At the same time, link the allocation of funds with the degree of success of intermediary organizations participating in school-enterprise cooperation, and establish an evaluation mechanism. For development trends such as organizational construction and scale expansion, government functional departments can provide expert guidance and seek donations from enterprises with successful school-enterprise cooperation.

4.4 Micro level: Suggested measures

School-enterprise cooperation is a model that focuses on cultivating quality, focuses on learning in school and enterprise practice, and focuses on the sharing of resources and information between schools and enterprises. The existing school-enterprise cooperation models in China mainly include "the school introduces enterprise model, work-study alternation model, school-enterprise interaction model," and "order-based training" model. The starting point of each model is the combination of practice and theory. In the joint work plan for school-enterprise cooperation in Europe, providing more and better training is considered a priority. The author suggests including internships and training in a department of intermediary organizations - the training department. For this department, three core issues are mainly discussed.

1. How to allocate work. The ultimate goal of school-enterprise cooperation is that students can directly take up posts and be in line with the market and meet social needs when they are employed after graduation (or after a period of time). Intermediary organizations participating in school-enterprise cooperation are recommended to be established by local governments, and enterprises participate as members. The management of intermediary organizations is led by the government. The training department manager is held by school teachers and is mainly responsible for various management matters and establishing relevant databases. Trainers are allocated by each enterprise according to the development layout and production structure. Students can also learn more extensive skills according to market demand and their own requirements and record them in archives. The skill training venues are in various enterprises, and the quality training venues are in various schools. The standards for selecting students for internships are implemented by enterprises, and the duration of internship training is determined by each enterprise.

2. How to arrange funds. Intermediary organizations participating in school-enterprise cooperation are non-profit organizations, and the nature of their organizations determines the source of funds. The level of national (local) appropriation affects the degree of dependence of the organization on the government. Government subsidies are not generally accepted in some other countries. The author suggests that in the early stage, the training part of intermediary organizations participating in school-enterprise cooperation can rely on the incentive policies and plans of short-term appropriations from local governments, and later obtain financial assistance

from enterprises: first, when enterprises participate in school-enterprise cooperation in the form of members, raise the threshold (funds) for joining; second, for the degree of contribution made by reference trainees to enterprises, participating enterprises pay service fees provided by training institutions, including operating costs and apprentice wages. In addition, social donations can also be sought.

3. How to track and supervise. Intermediary organizations have a bad reputation, and to some extent, there is a reason for weak supervision. Supervision means assessment, and the degree of supervision and quality control depends on the requirements for details. If intermediary organizations participating in school-enterprise cooperation can provide potential solutions to ensure that supervision work can be implemented in place, we can refer to the experience of Norway and Switzerland in supervising and managing the quality of training institutions.

One is to leave it to public supervision. Word-of-mouth reputation spreads with each session of students, forming a competition mechanism; the second is that local governments arrange field inspections every year and provide training quality documents for filing; the third is that schools regularly communicate and investigate with students; the fourth is that the labor department distributes questionnaires every year to survey the satisfaction of apprentices and enterprise instructors with the training department. Eventually, an elimination system is implemented.

5 Conclusion

Based on the previous scholars' research, this paper mainly summarizes the experience of foreign intermediary organizations participating in school-enterprise cooperation: at the macro level, it combs the motivation for American intermediary organizations to participate in school-enterprise cooperation and how these intermediary organizations have changed later; at the micro level, it introduces the participation of intermediary organizations in Norway and Switzerland in vocational training from four core issues. In order to explain the difficulties faced by school-enterprise cooperation in China, it can be tried to solve by establishing intermediary organizations and provides suggestions. In the future, successful cases of other countries' participation in school-enterprise cooperation can be expanded, and further research can be conducted by using methods such as field investigations and on-site interviews.

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