

Research on the Function and Value of Vocational skills Competition

Xueyun Zhong, Yingjiang Zhang

Hubei University of Technology, Wuhan, Hubei Province, 430068, China

Keywords: vocational skills competition, professional education, function and value

Abstract: Vocational skill competition is an important means to improve the quality of education. In the process of development of vocational education, its status is increasing day by day. The government, industry enterprises and vocational colleges attach importance to the holding of vocational skill competition. This paper expounds the educational value, management value and social value of vocational skill contest, and analyzes its function and value for the overall development of vocational education, highlighting its important role.

1. Introduction

In recent years, vocational skills competitions are in full swing throughout the country. Every vocational and technical college in China can organize students to participate actively in vocational skill competitions. From the specific situation of the competition, it is not only sought after by vocational colleges, but also supported by the strong support of enterprises' industry, and highly valued by government leaders at all levels. With the continuous development of vocational education and the higher requirements of the society to skilled personnel, vocational skills competition is playing a great role in the development of enterprises, whether for students, vocational colleges or the government.

2. Educational Value of Vocational Skills Competition

The first part is to consider the value of vocational skills competition from the perspective of students. Since students are the contestants, the educational value of the contest is obvious. Firstly, this paper talks about the educational value of competition to students from two aspects that are, improving students' comprehensive quality and increasing the weight of employment competition.

2.1 Help to Improve the Comprehensive Quality of Students

Vocational skills competition is a nationwide selective competition and an important means to test students' learning results. It requires students to have rich professional theoretical knowledge, excellent professional skills and practical ability, as well as good psychological adjustment ability.

2.1.1 Professional theoretical knowledge is the basis of guiding students to practice

Theoretical knowledge is a scientific summary and conclusion of all kinds of experience in the development of Vocational education. It is a scientific theory withstanding the test of practice, playing an extremely important role in guiding vocational students to study efficiently and improving their vocational skills. Students are required to master solid basic professional knowledge, participate practical training scientifically, and lay a solid foundation for participating in competitions. In addition, every competition item involves a wide range of aspects. For example, in accounting competition, its contest content involves professional accounting foundation, cost accounting, financial accounting, financial management and other aspects of knowledge. Only by extensive involvement, can students acquire rich professional knowledge and lay a solid foundation for the competition.

2.1.2 Carrier of competition assessment is students' professional skills and practical ability

Under the guidance of scientific theory, students must constantly strengthen their training,

acquire skilled operation skills and improve their practical operation ability in the normal learning process, so as to successfully enter the final competition in tense competition and in a prescribed time with better performance than other players. Moreover, contents assessed by various specialties in the National Vocational College Skills Competition are very difficult and keep pace with the development trend of the times. Students must improve their operation level and keep up with the latest professional related developments so as to ensure that they are not lagged behind by the new development of science and technology. At the same time, the software and machines used in the skills competition of national vocational colleges are in the leading place in industries. In order to win the competition, some colleges and universities purchase similar equipment, which will give players the opportunity to access the latest scientific and technological achievements, greatly increasing the possibility of students winning the competition.

2.1.3 Good psychological adjustment ability is an important quality in the competition process

In terms of rank and scale, the National Vocational Skills Competition is a national competition ascending from the local, municipal, provincial and lastly to the national level. This kind of elimination will exert invisible pressure on students. Therefore, they must have strong psychological endurance ability, treat the competition as normal as possible, and meet the competition with a relaxed attitude, so that they will not be too nervous and make mistakes in the competition. Especially in the finals, there may be some difficult problems or sudden situations. For example, the difficulty of assessment is much greater than that of provincial competitions, or the pressure leads to a lack of sleep and a lack of clear mind. At this time, it is particularly important to be attentive and calm. After all, students who are qualified for the final stage are all selected through layers by virtue of their own excellent abilities and are winners who defeat strong opponents. A peaceful mind means a greater possibility of winning.

2.2 Chips for Increasing Students' Competition in Employment

Most vocational students failed in the college entrance examination enter vocational colleges, which means that in the current situation of severe employment pressure, they have a lower starting point and platform than students of ordinary colleges and universities, and are at a disadvantage in the employment competition. However, participating in vocational skills competitions can increase the weight of their employment.

2.2.1 Competition cultivates students' good professional habits

To enter the provincial or even national vocational skills competitions is not achieved overnight, but in the daily practice of preparing for the contests, and in the results of repeated operation, correction and operation under instructor's careful guidance. This spirit of repeated research and refining is the flashing point in the process of employment. At the same time, solid theoretical foundation and skilled operation ability are cultivated during a cumulative process. Students should actively spend more time in the preparation of competitions. In addition to hard study of theoretical knowledge and repeated training operations, they are supposed to also learn to make learning plans, distinguish primary and secondary, carefully examine mistakes and mistakes in practice, learn to think and summarize comprehensively and make progress in the process, which is a comprehensive manifestation of good professional habits.

2.2.2 Competition enhances students' team cooperation ability

Many of the events in the competition are team events, which can only be completed smoothly through the joint efforts of everyone in the team. Only in the process of peacetime training that all members discuss with each other about the existing problems and cooperate with each other in order to defeat other teams in the fierce competition can successfully become winners. The ability to cooperate with each other is indispensable to the development of every enterprise.

2.2.3 Competition increases students' confidence in employment

Students who participate in competitions are selected through colleges' assessment layer by layer.

They have rich professional knowledge and excellent practical operation skills, and become the professional elite who represent colleges to participate in provincial competitions and the whole province to participate in national competitions. More importantly, the competition will eventually announce the results and issue certificates to students who have won the ranks. Certificates are undoubtedly the most authoritative recognition for vocational students who are disadvantaged in social recognition and have no degree certificates.

3. Management Value of Vocational Skills Competition

The second part considers the value of competition from colleges' point of view, and discusses the value of competition management from two aspects, that are, innovating management methods and promoting teaching reform.

3.1 Help to Innovate Teacher Management Method

3.1.1 Help establish “double-qualified” teachers

By preparing for skills contests, it is conducive to promote teaching and learning, promote the improvement of students' skills, stimulate teachers' enthusiasm to continue learning and further improve teachers' skills, which is propitious to the rapid growth of “double-qualified” teachers ^[1]. Some teachers in Vocational Colleges misinterpret the concept of applied talents, focusing only on the cultivation of students' operational ability, and their actual operational level in peacetime teaching preparation but ignoring theoretical and cultural knowledge with less academic reports published. It is no wonder that the training of applied talents is based on the comprehensive development of students. Teachers should pay attention to students and teachers themselves' theoretical knowledge and other aspects of learning while improving their practical ability. With the opportunity of vocational skills competition, it is difficult for colleges to achieve good results through the gradual definition of pure operational skills in the competition. The theoretical basis is the necessary condition to support students to defeat their opponents. Therefore, the “double-qualified” teachers with solid theoretical knowledge and skilled operation skills are increasingly becoming the object of competition in Vocational colleges. Meanwhile, vocational colleges are also striving to train current teachers to be “double-qualified” .

3.1.2 Innovate boldly the way of introducing teachers and evaluating their professional titles

The phrase “College Entrance Examination in General Education and Competition in Vocational Education” has been widely circulated in Vocational colleges. It can be seen that vocational skills competition plays a very high role in Vocational colleges, and awarding certificates and bonuses is the most basic recognition of excellent athletes. Tianjin, Anhui, Guangzhou and other places have given greater recognition to students and teachers who have achieved excellent results. On the one hand, some students who have won the first prize of the National Competition are allowed to stay in colleges to teach. Because the prize-winning students themselves have strong theoretical level and practical ability, they are more professional than ordinary teachers in practical training and guidance. Especially when they are instructing students to participate in competitions in the future, they have more direct experience. On the other hand, the competition project is completed by students under the guidance of teachers, so it will enhance the status of some teachers who have won the first prize in the national competition. This is a clear incentive policy for teachers' professional titles, which promotes instructors to constantly enrich their own strength and master the latest science and technology of their specialty, and to a certain extent enriches the existing knowledge and practice level of teachers. For example, Guangzhou Panyu Vocational and Technical College regards the performance of guiding students in professional skills contest as an important indicator of teachers' evaluation, post promotion and title promotion. ^[2] At present, there are not many areas to implement these incentive policies, but they have played a good demonstration role for other areas and colleges that have not yet implemented this provision.

3.2 Help to Promote Teaching Reform

The purpose of vocational skill contest is to lead the construction and development of related specialties in Vocational colleges, so as to make the talent training work of Vocational Colleges go ahead of the industrial development and highlight the future development trend^[3].

3.2.1 Help grasp the direction of professional construction

Competition majors set up in vocational skills competitions represent the new development trend of industries and enterprises under the new situation, and are the vane of professional settings in Vocational colleges. Therefore, vocational colleges are required to use the professional settings of annual competitions as a reference for their professional input, accurately determine the direction of future industries, and timely provide talents needed by industrial enterprises.

3.2.2 Help scientific curriculum planning

The criteria for professional evaluation of competitions are the results of research and negotiation by experts from colleges, enterprises and industries, which are the most authoritative. By participating in the competition, vocational colleges can further clarify the standards of personnel training, update the new standards of professional development brought about by social progress in time, incorporate the key points of talents assessment in the competition into colleges' curriculum and teaching plan, such as imparting new knowledge in peacetime teaching, adding new operations in training, and at the same time, learn from the competition the existence of their own professional development. It is a process of mutual exchange and learning to participate in competitions.

3.2.3 Stress the investment of hardware facilities

As the main carrier of vocational skills competition assessment, students' practical operation ability subjectively needs to constantly improve their practical skills in the preparation of daily competitions, and objectively needs vocational colleges to provide adequate training places and supporting facilities. But at present, in addition to the serious shortage of teachers, some vocational colleges are unable to meet the needs of the rapid development of society and the growing growth of students in terms of quantity and quality of training bases, in-college laboratories and experimental equipment. On the one hand, competition enables vocational colleges with outstanding achievements to enhance their professional visibility. In addition to raising the government's attention, more relevant enterprises will come to provide financial and technical support to achieve the purpose of introducing high-quality talents for enterprises themselves, which provides substantive help for vocational colleges to build laboratories and training bases. On the other hand, colleges mostly rely on trump card majors to enhance their own strength and expand the source of students. Participation in competitions makes vocational colleges that have won the rank become the attention focus of students, industries, enterprises, government and society. Especially, the software and equipment used for competitions represent the latest development of the industry and play a leading role in demonstration. This will enable vocational colleges to voluntarily increase their investment and manpower to speed up the construction and improvement of supporting facilities, so as to improve their comprehensive strength, which is objectively conducive to their long-term development.

4. Social Value of Vocational Skills Competition

The third part is to consider the value of vocational skills competition from both the government and enterprises, and to discuss the social value from two aspects. One is to specify the direction of government policy making and the other is to optimize the relationship between industry enterprises and colleges.

4.1 Direction for Government Policy Making

4.1.1 Provide the basis for formulating relevant policies of vocational education

Vocational skill competition is widely carried out throughout the country, and it plays an important role in Vocational education. As a policy maker, the government has to consider the far-reaching impact of vocational skills competition in the development of vocational education documents, and use it as a reference standard for formulating relevant policies. Competition is devoted to training excellent technical and skilled talents. Students participating in the competition not only have basic theoretical knowledge, skilled operation skills, correct learning attitude and strong psychological adjustment ability, but also always grasp the leading science and technology in the industry. The comprehensive quality of these students is the personnel training direction of vocational education. In the Decision of the State Council on Accelerating the Development of Modern Vocational Education (No. 19 of Guofa [2014]), it is clearly proposed that “Carry out Vocational Skills Competition” should be carried out to promote the innovation of talent training mode. It can be seen that the state recognizes and accepts the high-tech skilled talents selected through skills competition and takes them as the basis for formulating talent training standards, which is an important impact brought by the increasing scale of vocational skills competition.

4.1.2 Help increase financial support for vocational education

Vocational education has always been at a disadvantage in the education system. Our government’s financial allocation for education is mainly focused on the investment in general education. For vocational education, besides the demonstration vocational colleges, which are the key investment of the state, the allocation of funds for vocational colleges is very small. Especially the allocation of education funds is apt to capital cities and vocational colleges with strong comprehensive strength. While, for vocational colleges located in prefecture-level cities and areas with weak comprehensive strength, especially in underdeveloped areas, even if a certain specialty is quite excellent, their capital investment is far less than that of Vocational Colleges in other areas. There are many reasons for this phenomenon, and the inferior position of vocational education is one of the most important reasons. At present, vocational skills competitions provide all kinds of vocational colleges at all levels with equal opportunities and platforms to show their professional and brand advantages. The high skill level of students in competitions surprises colleges and enterprises. Those with outstanding performances are fiercely contested by industries and enterprises. With the increasing impact of competition in the country, vocational colleges have gradually become the focus of attention of all sectors of society. The government has gradually realized the importance of vocational education personnel training. One of the manifestations is to increase the proportion of investment in Vocational Education funds. Vocational skills competition has gradually become one of the factors affecting the proportion of government funding for vocational colleges at all levels.

4.2 Optimize the Relationship between Industry Enterprises and Colleges

4.2.1 Promote the in-depth development of college-enterprise cooperation

One of the purposes of the annual National Vocational College Skills Competition is to show the experience and practice of “work-study combination, college-enterprise cooperation and post practice” that vocational education has explored for many years to the society and the public, and at the same time to lead the teaching reform and technological innovation of the whole vocational college. ^[4] The main ways of college-enterprise cooperation are to invest in the construction of training bases, to provide students with places to operate internships, to accept student internships, to provide students with internships, and so on. This is different from students’ simulated internships in colleges. The environment of real work provided by college-enterprise cooperation helps students to show themselves and test their mastery and application of knowledge, find problems in the learning process in time and find solutions, let experienced enterprise engineers participate in the course construction, formulate typical work tasks based on the actual work process,

and implement task-driven teaching in the classroom with actual projects as the carrier, so as to help students better analyze, design and implement practical projects, effectively enhance their comprehensive ability level, and shorten the gap with the actual needs of enterprises for talents.^[5]

4.2.2 Promote the maximization of human resource benefits

The National Vocational Skills Competition is equivalent to a temporary “talent market”. From the perspective of recruitment enterprises, the competition gathers the best among students of vocational colleges all over the country. Through competition, enterprises are able to accurately excavate in the shortest time to maximize the value of their interests in the shortest time, reduce the cost of recruiting for the market, and also reduce employing risks. Especially based on the premise of college-enterprise cooperation, enterprises have the right to choose excellent students first and send excellent employees to vocational colleges to teach. On the one hand, they transfer advanced knowledge and technology to students. On the other hand, they invisibly transmit the enterprises’ cultural ideas. This practice enlarges the brand effect of enterprises, helps to gain students’ identity as well as cultivate students’ loyalty to enterprises in the future. From students’ point of view, there are leading enterprises in all walks of life in the competition. Students want to win other competitors in the fierce competition and become the ultimate winner. From this point of view, they show their abilities to major enterprises in order to get a satisfactory job. Comparing with a series of links such as online recruitment platform, human resource center or sending resumes through other channels, participating in written interviews, competition not only brings convenience to students, but also improves their competitive chips and transforms their status in general recruitment. Because they will receive invitations from many enterprises and then the right of choice is transferred to students’ hands, which reduces a lot of time, money and energy. Moreover, the employment promoted by the competition can effectively guarantee the counterpart between the major they have learned and the employment. In the long run, it can guarantee the maximization of the benefits of human resources.

5. Conclusion

The background of “Internet +” artificial intelligence and big data and the proposal of “made in China 2025” has provided fertile soil for the rapid development of vocational education. Whether the government, industry, enterprises, vocational colleges or students are aware of the important position of vocational skills competition in their own development process and they are willing to actively participate in the competition. Therefore, it is particularly important for vocational education to clarify the function and value of competition for each subject. Suggestions are put forward from three levels that are, college, teacher and student.

From colleges’ point of view, vocational skills competition makes vocational colleges more clear about teaching concept and direction of reform. They are advised to actively explore the integration of vocational skills competition projects into curriculum system and teaching, timely connect the latest competition projects with the usual teaching content, and emphasize the integration of teaching and learning, project orientation and task driven. Skills competition and curriculum reform are mutually complementary. Through skills competition, curriculum reform can be accelerated. To guide, promote and test curriculum reform by skills competition. Curriculum reform can transform the content of skills competition into curriculum teaching reform projects, reflecting in the teaching process, and the project requirements of skill contests into every curriculum, every project and every task of curriculum reform plan.^[6]

From teachers’ point of view, it is essential to focus on training “double-qualified” teachers. By organizing teachers to directly participate in and guide students to participate in skill contests, teachers can fully grasp the needs of high-quality skilled personnel training and related vocational positions in the industry and enterprises, and further constantly improve their professional level and practical ability, so as to truly achieve the goal of “promoting teaching through competition”.^[7] On the other hand, it is also supposed to improve the teacher training system and incentive mechanism, appoint teachers to study outside or invite elites from industry and enterprises to make academic

reports. At the same time, the evaluation and reward of teachers' teaching tasks will be included in the work of guiding students to participate in vocational skills competitions, so as to improve teachers' practical teaching guidance ability.

From students' point of view, vocational skill contest is a competition with fastly unpadding knowledge and information, so that it not only make students no longer confine to the book knowledge they have learned in peacetime, but also have a wider grasp of the changing information. Moreover, it cultivates students' understanding of the professional and industry development, increases students' enthusiasm for participating in the contests actively, enriches students' practical ability and enables them to have a clear positioning, so that they have more confidence.

References

- [1] Song Zhiqiang, Xie Liping, Feng Rongzhen. Study on the Construction and Incentive Mechanism of "Double-qualified" Teachers from A Multidimensional Perspective [J]. Contemporary Vocational Education, 2016 (11): 58-62.
- [2] Li Shaozhong. Vocational Skills Competition Improves the Quality of Higher Vocational Talents Training - Take Panyu Vocational and Technical College of Guangzhou as An Example [J]. Vocational Education Newsletter, 2012 (14): 15-17.
- [3] Tang Liang. Enlightenment of China's World Skills Competition Selection on the Training of Talents in Jiangsu University of Economics and Trade Technicians as an example [J]. Chizi (Early and Mid-term), 2016, (18).
- [4] Deng Zhaohu. Analysis of the Influence of Vocational Skills Competition on Higher Vocational Education [J]. Science and Education Educational Journal, 2011, (22): 62-62, 70.
- [5] Gu Jianlui. Study on the Significance of Vocational Skills Competition in Higher Vocational Colleges for Talents Training [J]. Computer Knowledge and Technology, 2018,14(25): 176-177.
- [6] Song Chaohui. Influence of Vocational Skills Competition on Professional Construction [J]. Science and Technology Innovation Report, 2017, (36): 210-211.
- [7] Qian Jie, Chu Yiping. Optimize the Training of "Double-qualified" Teachers in Vocational Skills Competition - Taking Yixing City, Jiangsu Province as An Example [J]. Vocational Education (Mid-term Journal), 2014 (07): 45-47.