

# Analysis of the Path for Rural Vocational Education to Serve the Revitalization of Rural Talents

-- Taking Jiangxi Province as an example

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**Abstract:** In recent years, the No. 1 document of the Central Committee issued by the Party Central Committee has emphasized strengthening the construction of rural talents and building modern rural areas. As a major agricultural province in China, Jiangxi Province should realize the transformation from a traditional agricultural province to a strong modern agricultural province under the background of the in-depth implementation of the rural revitalization strategy, and vigorously develop rural vocational education is the most reliable way. Through the analysis of the current situation of rural human resources and rural vocational education in Jiangxi Province, it is found that the development of rural vocational education lacks attraction, the prominent tendency of professional settings to "leave agriculture", and the problem of "three education" is prominent. Therefore, in the process of future development, rural vocational education in Jiangxi Province should strengthen the top-level design, effectively improve the treatment of rural technical talents, clarify their own positioning, strengthen the construction of agriculture-related majors and promote the reform of the "three education" to promote the revitalization of rural talents, and then promote the implementation of the rural revitalization strategy.

**Keywords:** Rural Vocational Education, Rural Revitalization, Talent Training.

## 1. Research Origin

China is a major agricultural country, and the development of agriculture, rural areas and farmers (hereinafter referred to as "three farmers") has always been a key area of concern in China. It can be seen from the Central Document No. 1 of the past three years that China has emphasized strengthening the construction of rural talent teams, attaching importance to the implementation of the training program for high-quality farmers, and building modern rural areas. Rural vocational education, as a type of education that directly targets rural areas, serves agriculture, rural areas and farmers, and focuses on cultivating rural technical and skilled talents, is of great significance in exploring its implementation path to better promote rural talent revitalization during the critical period when China's rural areas are transforming from poverty alleviation to rural revitalization.

Rural vocational education has been a hot topic of academic research since China's reform and opening up. Based on the theoretical perspective, Yang Hongquan et al., from the field theory perspective, demonstrated the significance of strengthening cooperation among the main bodies of rural vocational education fields for building digital villages. Liang Longfeng et al. indicated that the establishment of a quality assurance system for rural vocational education would be of great significance for promoting rural economic and social development at a high quality [1]. Ma Kuanbin et al. studied the development of rural vocational education in the 70 years since the founding of the People's Republic of China, indicating that in different historical periods, rural vocational education has played an important role in the development of agriculture, rural areas and farmers in China [2]. From a practical perspective, Ma Jianfu et al. summarized the achievements and problems of rural vocational education development during the 13th Five-Year Plan period, further clarifying the development path of

rural vocational education in the new era [3]. Li Xueli et al. studied rural vocational education through the PEST-SWOT model and proposed paths for rural vocational education to empower the development of rural revitalization [4]. Qi Zanyong et al. explored the validity of vocational education for increasing farmers' labor income based on propensity score allocation (PSM) [5].

## 2. Current Situation Analysis

### 2.1. Rural Human Resources Analysis

Marxism holds that productive forces are the most crucial element in the movement of the basic contradictions of society. The basic elements of productive forces consist of the laborer, the means of work and the object of work. Among them, the laborer is the most active and crucial element and plays a leading role in productivity. Human capital is the foundation of rural revitalization and a key element in promoting it. According to the data released in the "Jiangxi Statistical Yearbook 2023", the proportion of permanent urban residents in Jiangxi Province has been expanding at a relatively fast pace since 2000, while the proportion of permanent rural residents has been declining. In 2022, the total permanent population of Jiangxi was 45,279,815. Among them, the total urban permanent population was 28,105,181 an increase of more than 340,000 compared with the previous year, and the total rural permanent population was 17,174,634, a decrease of more than 230,000 compared with the previous year. Among them, 62.07 percent were urban residents and 37.93 percent were rural residents. From this, it can be seen that because of the continuous advancement of urbanization, cities, which offer better public service facilities, educational and medical resources, and living conditions compared to rural areas, have attracted many rural people to work in cities. The migrant workers are mostly young workers with a certain educational background

while those who remain in rural areas are mostly the elderly and children, lacking the corresponding working ability and unable to serve the construction of modern digital rural areas and modern agricultural production.

## 2.2. Analysis of the Current Situation of Rural Vocational Education

Rural vocational education in Jiangxi holds an important position in the provincial education system. In 2023, there were a total of 382 schools in Jiangxi Province with the qualification to recruit students for secondary vocational education, including 41 higher vocational schools (five-year integrated programs), 2 undergraduate institutions (five-year normal education students), 13 technical colleges, 26 senior technical schools and 80 technical schools<sup>[6]</sup>. According to the latest policy for 2024, provincial secondary vocational schools in Jiangxi Province will stop enrolling students from this year for resource integration. According to the data released in the "Jiangxi Statistical Yearbook 2023", the total output value of agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry and fishery in Jiangxi is 422,381.3 million yuan and shows a gradual upward trend. In terms of funding allocation, the allocation for general higher education is much greater than that for vocational education. In terms of the number of students, the proportion of students enrolled in agricultural-related majors in secondary vocational schools, higher vocational colleges and vocational undergraduate programs in Jiangxi is relatively low. The number of students in agricultural-related majors in Jiangxi's higher vocational schools is 15,222, accounting for 2.04%. The number of students admitted was 6,721, accounting for 2.4 percent. There is a lack of data for secondary vocational schools and vocational undergraduate programs. But from the number of vocational undergraduate programs, the scale of vocational undergraduate programs is relatively small. From the above data, it can be seen that the number of vocational colleges offering agricultural-related majors in Jiangxi Province has taken shape, but still needs to be improved. The enrollment of agricultural-related majors in secondary vocational schools, higher vocational colleges and vocational undergraduate programs still needs to be further increased.

## 3. The Predicament of Rural Vocational Education Development

### 3.1. Lack of Appeal

The traditional ideas such as "those who excel in learning should enter public service" and "those who work hard should govern others" and those who work hard should govern others are deeply rooted in the minds of the Chinese people. Despite the vigorous development of vocational education abroad, such as the dual vocational education system in Germany and the TAFE college in Australia, which have made significant contributions to the economic development of Germany and Australia. In China, however, vocational education has long been regarded as a lower level of education than general education, and there is even a subconscious belief that once children enter vocational schools, their future is bleak. Vocational education is not attractive enough to rural talents. Although the understanding that vocational education is a type of education that is as important as general education has been recognized in the academic circle, and the state and government have issued various policy documents to define the type attribute of vocational education and point out the

future development direction and path of vocational education<sup>[7]</sup>, and General Secretary Xi Jinping also said that vocational education has a broad future and great potential, in real life, there is still a long way to go to change people's mindset. Rural groups generally believe that receiving general higher education is an important way to change their way of life, improve their quality of life and social status. At the same time, due to the relatively backward economic and industrial development in rural areas, they are far inferior to cities in terms of convenience of life, education, medical care and employment opportunities, and the welfare wages in cities are mostly much higher than those in rural areas. As a result, a large number of young and middle-aged rural laborers have moved to cities to seek a way of making a living, leaving rural society with only the elderly and children, both physically and intellectually. It is difficult for them to become the main force driving rural development, resulting in severe rural hollowing. The severe empty-nest situation in rural areas has led to weak and lagging rural development, and the backwardness of rural development has caused most of the students who studied outside and the migrant workers who worked outside to be reluctant to return to the countryside<sup>[8]</sup>.

In addition, the emphasis on academic qualifications in the selection of talents by society is also one of the factors that make vocational education less attractive. At present, in the overall recruitment market of our country, people with technical skills earn much less than those with high academic qualifications. China's career access system has not yet been established. From the perspective of the overall job market, academic qualifications are the key to getting a job in most companies, especially large enterprises such as state-owned and central enterprises. Coupled with the stereotype of agriculture and the less-than-ideal development of agricultural-related majors in vocational education, rural vocational education is less attractive to rural talents and there is a shortage of talents for rural revitalization.

### 3.2. The Tendency of Professional Settings to Be "Out of Agriculture" is Prominent

Vocational education has the function of serving regional economic development. The professional Settings and training models need to be planned in accordance with the local economic development needs, which is the realistic basis for vocational education to stand firm in the local region for a long time. Rural vocational education, in order to serve rural revitalization, must offer specialties closely related to local rural construction and serve local rural and agricultural development<sup>[9]</sup>. However, due to the influence of their preconceived notions about agriculture and their own experiences with it, parents in rural areas think that agricultural work is very hard and they do not expect their children to study agricultural majors in the future, nor do they want their children to return to rural areas for employment in the future. Instead, they tend to study popular majors and hope that their children will work in cities in the future. They think it will be better to work in cities in the future. Influenced by this social environment and the number of students enrolled, major rural vocational schools and agricultural-related ordinary colleges and universities in Jiangxi Province have gradually started to offer popular majors such as computer science, artificial intelligence and e-commerce, and the number of agricultural-related majors has gradually decreased. According to the results of the record of professional Settings in higher vocational education in China,

a search with the keywords "Jiangxi Province and agriculture" yields only 25 records of agricultural-related professional Settings in higher vocational colleges in Jiangxi Province. Only 11 higher vocational colleges offer agricultural-related majors. Take Jiangxi Vocational College of Agricultural Engineering as an example. It offers 52 majors, more than 60% of which have nothing to do with agriculture. These include popular majors such as virtual reality technology application, artificial skills technology application, and internet of Things technology application. From the perspective of the agricultural -related majors offered in 25 higher vocational colleges, among which agricultural product processing and quality inspection and modern agricultural technology are the mainstream majors in all higher vocational colleges, spread throughout the urban areas of Jiangxi Province. The professional Settings lack their own characteristics and are difficult to serve the responsibility of cultivating diverse rural talents. From the successful experience of running vocational education around the world, vocational education is supposed to be accessible to all. However, in China, vocational education is mostly restricted by age or educational background, making it difficult to truly fulfill the responsibility of social training and cultivate a large number of agricultural-related professional and technical talents for our country.

### **3.3. The Problems of Teaching, Teaching and Education are Prominent**

#### **3.3.1. Teaching Materials Need to Be Updated Urgently**

According to the data on the official website of China Vocational and Adult Education Textbook Resource Center (hereinafter referred to as "Textbook Resource Center"), among the national planned textbooks in China, there are 214 textbooks related to agriculture forestry, fishery and animal husbandry in secondary vocational and technical education, 345 textbooks related to this major category in higher vocational colleges, and no relevant textbooks for vocational undergraduate education. Among them, only 11 textbooks are listed as excellent textbooks for vocational education in China. In terms of textbook attention, textbooks in the agriculture, forestry, fishery and animal husbandry category receive less attention; In terms of the number of professional category textbooks, agriculture, forestry, fishery and animal husbandry textbooks rank third from the bottom. At the same time, the number of textbooks in Jiangxi Province is also relatively low in the national ranking, which reflects the urgent need to strengthen the construction of agricultural-related professional textbooks in our province.

#### **3.3.2. The Number of Dual-qualified Teachers Needs to Be Increased Urgently**

Teachers are one of the key factors in determining the quality of teaching. In China, there is a general shortage of teachers in vocational education, with low professional skills and educational qualifications, and the resources of dual-qualified teachers are relatively scarce. According to the 2022 education statistics released by the Ministry of Education, there are 30,806 full-time teachers and 6,548 off-campus teachers in higher vocational colleges in Jiangxi Province. The number of off-campus teachers is only about 20% of the number of full-time teachers in the colleges. In neighboring Anhui and Hubei provinces, the proportion of full-time and off-campus teachers is both above 25%. The situation in Jiangxi's secondary vocational education is even worse, with 19,973 full-time teachers and 1,298 part-time teachers. The

number of off-campus teachers is only about 6% of the total number of on-campus teachers, while Anhui and Hubei provinces have more off-campus teachers than our province.

#### **3.3.3. Insufficient Training in Practical Teaching**

As an education mainly focused on technical training, vocational education pays more attention to developing students' practical skills, which is also the biggest difference between vocational education and general education. Practical teaching is the main way to develop students' practical skills and techniques, and the training bases of vocational colleges are the important carriers that support their practical teaching. According to the 2022 education statistics released by the Ministry of Education, Jiangxi Higher Vocational College has 2,909 training simulation resources, which is at a medium to low level in the country. Secondary vocational schools have 4,314 training simulation resources, which are above average in the country. However, according to the number of training bases published on the official websites of various vocational colleges, the number of training bases in county-level vocational colleges is far lower than that in provincial-level vocational colleges, and county-level vocational colleges are most closely linked to rural development. This leads to insufficient practical teaching training in the teaching process in rural vocational colleges, making it difficult to cultivate truly high-quality skilled and technical talents.

## **4. Paths to Rural Vocational Education Reform**

### **4.1. Strengthen Top-level Design and Effectively Improve the Treatment of Rural Technical Talents**

One of the important reasons why people do not choose to enter agricultural-related majors or leave the countryside is the society's stereotypical impression of vocational education and traditional farmers. To address this, the state should increase the proportion of investment in rural vocational education and introduce a series of supportive policies for rural vocational education; Secondly, policies such as tuition fee discounts and scholarships and grants should be provided for students participating in rural vocational education, and special enrollment plans should be set up for rural talents to mobilize the enthusiasm of the society to run rural vocational education at the national level. The government should take the initiative to act, make overall plans and top-level designs based on local rural development characteristics, open up upward channels between rural vocational education and urban vocational education, and meet the demands of students. At the same time, starting from stimulating market demand, attract various social forces to participate in vocational education through means such as service outsourcing, school-enterprise co-education, and financial subsidies<sup>[10]</sup> to form a friendly public opinion on rural talent cultivation in society and enhance the appeal to rural talents. Vocational colleges should build characteristic "agriculture +" professional clusters based on the local rural development characteristics, and match the development of The Times and the actual needs of the people to enhance their attractiveness in running schools. The three should jointly serve to improve the evaluation system for rural talents, innovate the evaluation method based on academic qualifications, pay attention to every person who truly works hard to contribute to rural

revitalization, increase their social subsidies, promote the spirit of rural craftsmanship, increase the recruitment of rural talents with skills and techniques, and shape an evaluation system throughout society that respects and loves rural talents.

## **4.2. Define One's Own Position and Strengthen the Construction of Agricultural-related Specialties**

In the process of running the school, rural vocational colleges should first clarify their own positioning, adhere to the "agricultural" characteristics to serve the rural revitalization development strategy, and provide support for rural development and construction through talent cultivation. First of all, rural vocational colleges should be clear about the requirements for talents in rural revitalization, and set up corresponding majors based on the characteristics of local economic development and in combination with their own educational strength and advantages. Secondly, specialized programs should be set up based on the current situation of modern agricultural production and operation and the development of science and technology to cultivate new types of professional farmers and promote the development of local agriculture. For example, the wide application of unmanned aerial vehicle technology in modern agriculture has greatly improved agricultural production efficiency. There are differences between cities and rural areas, and there are differences between cities. Rural vocational education in Jiangxi Province should offer specialized agricultural-related programs based on local regional development characteristics, and improve the fit between professional construction and regional economic development. For instance, Hebei Vocational College of Tourism has been deeply engaged in agricultural and tourism practice, providing development guidance to numerous villages in Chengde City, Hebei Province, either by relying on the original natural landscape environment, or by relying on the agricultural industry characteristics, or by relying on modern cultural creativity, adapting to local conditions and making the best use of the situation to help different villages explore their own characteristics and development paths.

## **4.3. Promote the Reform of Teachers and Teaching Methods and Materials**

### **4.3.1. Promote the Reform of Teachers and Teaching Methods and Materials**

Textbooks are the main reference material for students' learning and an important factor influencing the quality of talent cultivation. The government and vocational colleges need to attach greater importance to the development of teaching materials, based on local characteristics, formulate multiple subjects for the compilation of teaching materials, and allow enterprises to deeply participate in the development of teaching materials, so that enterprises can compile teaching materials in line with the actual job requirements, highlight the characteristics of vocational education, and meet the needs of practical skills training. At the same time, incorporate typical cases of vocational education serving rural revitalization across the country, the content of qualification certificate examinations and the cutting-edge technologies of industry development, etc, the timeliness of submitting teaching materials, enrich the content of teaching materials, enrich the content of teaching materials, increase interest, enhance students' interest in learning, and form a correct understanding of vocational education.

### **4.3.2. Introduce Talents and Enhance on-the-job Training**

Rural vocational education teachers are the main force for rural revitalization. They are not only nurturers of new rural professional farmers and rural talents, but also actual participants in spreading rural culture and promoting rural governance<sup>[11]</sup>. in response to the current problems of the rural vocational education teaching staff, efforts should be made to strengthen the construction of the dual-qualified teaching staff from both the internal training of teachers in vocational colleges and the external introduction. in terms of teacher training, vocational colleges should focus on further education for in-service teachers. Through the vocational education teacher training platform hosted by the Ministry of Education, various relevant incentive and assessment policies should be introduced to allow in-service full-time teachers to go out and systematically study relevant professional knowledge and understand the current situation of professional development. At the same time, they actively cooperate with enterprises, inviting part-time teachers from enterprises to give lectures to full-time teachers on a weekly basis, and even allowing some teachers to do on-the-job internships in enterprises, so that teachers can keep abreast of the latest developments in the industry. From the successful experience of international vocational education, the ratio of full-time teachers to part-time teachers from enterprises in higher vocational colleges is approximately 1:3. At present, the composition of the teaching staff in most rural vocational colleges in our province is far from reaching this level. Therefore, external recruitment of teachers is also very important for professional development. Vocational colleges should increase the number of part-time teachers hired by enterprises, and introduce dual-qualified teachers through multiple channels such as sister colleges in neighboring provinces and cities and overseas resources to build a well-structured teaching staff.

### **4.3.3. Optimize School-enterprise Cooperation and Improve Practical Training**

The quality of practical skills training is an important indicator for testing the talent cultivation in rural vocational education. in response to the current difficulty in carrying out on-campus training bases and practical teaching in rural vocational colleges in Jiangxi Province the government should increase financial input to rural vocational colleges to build training bases. Meanwhile, rural vocational education colleges should attract investment from enterprises, focus on local enterprises and factories, and optimize school-enterprise cooperation. In the process of implementing school-enterprise cooperation, companies and enterprises can provide valuable investment and practical training platforms for rural vocational education institutions, truly achieving a virtuous cycle of learning, practice, internship, re-learning, re-practice and employment, and improving the quality of talent cultivation. in this process, rural vocational colleges can provide targeted training for enterprises and factories to meet the development needs of enterprises and factories, and input high-quality skilled and technical talents for them.

## **5. Conclusion**

Rural vocational education in Jiangxi Province should take serving rural talent revitalization as its core mission, break through structural contradictions through systematic reforms, and construct a collaborative development model of "policy

guidance-industry-driven-educational innovation" to provide sustainable talent support and intellectual support for rural revitalization. Future research can further expand to cross-regional comparative analysis and deepen the research on the linkage mechanism between vocational education and rural governance as well as cultural revitalization.

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