The Problems Faced by Higher Vocational Colleges Against the Background of the 1-million Enrollment Expansion Plan and the Coping Strategies

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Abstract: The plan for expanding the vocational college enrollment by one million is an important policy for the country to vigorously popularize higher education and optimize human resources. Based on the implications and influences of the plan, this paper analyzes the problems faced by higher vocational colleges and puts forward corresponding coping strategies from the aspects of improving hardware conditions, broadening sources of students, strengthening the construction of teaching staff, reforming the existing enrollment system and changing the traditional management mode.

Keywords: The 1-million enrollment expansion; Higher vocational college; Problem; Coping strategy

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Chinese Premier Li Keqiang pointed out in the Government Work Report of the Second Session of the 13th National People’s Congress that a plan for expanding the vocational college enrollment by one million this year had been made, encouraging high school and secondary vocational school graduates, veterans, laid-off workers, rural migrant workers and modern professional farmers to attend targeted vocational skills training. At the same time, he stressed the new mission and new responsibilities of vocational education in solving the problem of lacking skilled workers and easing the current employment pressure. The proposal

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and implementation of the 1-million enrollment expansion plan puts vocational education at the national policy level for the first time, which indicates the coming great reform and development of vocational education in China, providing an important opportunity for the long-term development of vocational education. However, the implementation of the plan also brings great difficulties to the work of higher vocational colleges. The author makes a brief analysis of the problems faced by higher vocational colleges against the background of the 1-million enrollment expansion plan and puts forward corresponding coping strategies.

1. Implications and Influences of the 1-million Enrollment Expansion Plan

(1) Implications

The 1-million enrollment expansion plan pointed out by Premier Li Keqiang in the Government Work Report of the Second Session of the 13th National People’s Congress is a series of targeted measures that are related to goals, scale and form of the enrollment. The purpose is to solve the problem of lacking skilled workers and ease the current employment pressure, promoting the comprehensive development of modern vocational education in China. Therefore, the 1-million enrollment expansion plan mainly includes the following three implications:

1) Expanding the effective supply of highly qualified workforce
According to the plan of Made in China 2025, a large number of highly qualified workforce are needed in China. The proposal and implementation of the 1-million enrollment expansion plan has effectively stimulated the vitality of higher education and transformed a large number of young people into highly qualified workforce.

2) Promoting the transformation of modern vocational education
The Implementation Plan for Deepening the Reform of National Vocational Education promulgated by the State Council stresses that vocational education should be transformed into a type of education to promote economic and social development. Therefore, the proposal and implementation of the 1-million enrollment expansion plan is not only to expand the enrollment scale, but to change the form of higher vocational education, gradually turning the existing higher vocational education into appropriate education.
3) Promoting the fair and balanced development of education

Premier Li Keqiang said in the Government Work Report of the Second Session of the 13th National People’s Congress: “Make more young people realize the value of life with their skills”. Therefore, the proposal and implementation of the 1-million enrollment expansion plan enables more and more citizens to enter vocational colleges to receive the education that is suitable for them, which fully reflects such educational concepts as “education for anyone”, “giving full play to every student’s talent” and “teaching students in accordance with one’s aptitude”, gradually changing the value orientation of vocational education from social orientation to the orientation of giving attention to both socialization and humanization.

(2) Influences

1) Promoting the popularization of higher education

In the past few months, we have seen many remarkable achievements after implementing the 1-million enrollment expansion plan. According to statistics, the enrollment rate of colleges in China has increased from 48.1% in 2018 to more than 50% in 2019. The data show that more and more people are getting the opportunity to receive higher education, which will directly promote China’s higher education to enter the stage of popularization.

2) Promoting the development of higher vocational colleges and vocational education

The 1-million enrollment expansion plan takes the policy for developing vocational education as one of the national macro-control policies from the national strategic level. It effectively promotes the reform of the school-running system of higher vocational colleges, enriches the student structure of higher vocational colleges, improves the training mode of higher vocational colleges, promotes the integration of continuing education and vocational education and improves the quality of higher vocational colleges, greatly promoting the development of higher vocational colleges and vocational education in China.

3) Increasing the number of workforce with high-quality vocational skills

The implementation of the 1-million enrollment expansion plan has greatly increased the number of skilled workers in China and cultivated more skilled workers in such fields as manufacturing and service industries, promoting the continuous upgrading and transformation of China’s industrial structure and realization of the plan of Made in China 2025.
4) Diversifying ways to success

The proposal and implementation of the 1-million enrollment expansion plan has given the people, such as high school graduates, secondary vocational school graduates, veterans, laid-off workers, rural migrant workers, modern professional farmers and so on, an opportunity to receive higher education so as to achieve better employment and diversify their ways to success.

2. Problems and Deficiencies

(1) The demand for hardware conditions can not be satisfied.

According to the data released by the Ministry of Education, there are more than 1400 higher vocational colleges in China. However, with the exception of such provinces as Jiangsu, Guangdong, Henan and Shandong, most remote regions don’t have sufficient hardware conditions (classrooms, dormitories, stadiums, libraries, etc.) to carry the capacity of the students. Therefore, for those remote regions with insufficient hardware, the implementation of the 1-million enrollment expansion plan can easily lead to the decline in quality of teaching and learning, thus losing the significance of talent training.

(2) The demand for potential students can not be satisfied.

In recent years, China has made great progress in developing higher vocational education. However, the public still have a prejudice against receiving vocational education. Most parents want their children to be able to receive undergraduate education. A higher vocational college can only be chosen when there is no hope for them to attend an undergraduate college. Some parents even prefer their children to go out to work rather than attend a vocational college, leading to the result of being lack of potential students. At the same time, with the growing population aging in China, the population to go to college is decreasing significantly, which is also a major reason for being lack of students to study in higher vocational colleges.

(3) The demand for professional teachers can not be satisfied.

Being lack of professional teachers is one of the difficulties faced by higher vocational colleges against the background of 1-million enrollment expansion plan. There are several reasons for this. First, most teachers in higher vocational colleges are graduates of colleges. They have no practical experience in businesses or companies. They themselves are short of professional knowledge. There are not enough dual-qualified teachers to undertake teaching tasks. Second, in many higher vocational colleges, the teachers who have rich professional experience are often in
management positions. They are occupied and don’t have enough time to undertake teaching tasks. Third, young teachers in higher vocational colleges are always ready to change their jobs, which seriously affects the stability of routine teaching.

(4) The demand for enrollment system can not be satisfied.

Higher vocational colleges have been targeting at high school graduates. The students can be enrolled only when they attend the targeted examinations. However, there are a limited number of graduates. It is necessary to perfect the enrollment system and make more people have the opportunity to receive vocational education. Against the background of 1-million enrollment expansion plan, in addition to high school graduates, secondary vocational school graduates, veterans, laid-off workers, rural migrant workers and modern professional farmers are also included. With the development of society, the enrollment system is needed to be perfected gradually.

(5) The demand for soft power can not be satisfied.

Some higher vocational colleges take it for granted that the enrollment expansion only means to increase the number of the students enrolled. They do not realize the importance of soft power (management mechanism, specialties and courses offered, way of assessment, etc.). The higher vocational colleges encounter various difficulties against the background of the 1-million enrollment expansion plan. The soft power should be improved to meet the needs of higher vocational education.

3. The Coping Strategies

(1) To improve the hardware conditions

The improvement of hardware conditions often requires a period of time. However, from proposal of the 1-million expansion plan to its implementation, the time for higher vocational colleges to prepare is very limited. Therefore, the higher vocational colleges with poor infrastructure, if undertaking enrollment tasks, should make relevant preparations in advance and improve the hardware conditions so as to ensure the teaching quality and the learning quality. The colleges may take measures (strengthening infrastructure construction, cooperating with colleges and schools, cooperating with enterprises, etc.) to improve the hardware conditions. In order to strengthen infrastructure construction, the colleges need to build more classrooms, dormitories, gyms and libraries to meet the needs of the students’ daily study and life. Cooperate with other similar higher vocational colleges, secondary vocational schools and technical schools to share resources so as to reduce the pressure of teaching resources. At the same time, cooperate with enterprises for the chance of internship and practical training.
(2) To enroll students from different sources

The 1-million enrollment expansion plan encourages people from different sources (high school and secondary vocational school graduates, veterans, laid-off workers, rural migrant workers and modern professional farmers) to apply for education in higher vocational colleges. Therefore, higher vocational colleges should shoulder the task. On one hand, the student target should not be limited to the high school graduates and secondary vocational school graduates, people from different sources are needed to be considered so as to promote diversification of the student sources. On the other hand, it is necessary to cooperate with high schools and secondary vocational schools. Higher vocational colleges can establish cooperative relation with the schools according to their own characteristics and talent training objectives to build a talent training chain. At the same time, they should establish and perfect the diversified enrollment networks.

(3) To strengthen the construction of teaching staff.

Against the background of 1-million enrollment expansion plan, if a higher vocational college wants to achieve long-term and sustainable development, the basic way is to strengthen the construction of teaching staff so as to ensure the teaching resource and teaching quality. The colleges can attract talents from all walks of life by introduction of preferential policies. The teachers should be provided with enterprise training opportunities so that they can learn about the knowledge of professional skills, be familiar with the current situation of the industry and improve their practical teaching ability, thus gradually transforming theory-oriented teaching into application-oriented teaching. The colleges can also employ technicians and skilled workers from enterprises as part-time teachers to increase the proportion of dual-qualified teachers.

(4) To perfect the existing enrollment system

The existing enrollment system, which is unable to meet the demand for social development, is needed to be perfected. To reform the existing enrollment system, the colleges can take such measures as learning advanced experiences from the countries abroad, diversifying the student sources, further promoting the five-year higher vocational education aiming at junior high school graduates, broadening training channels and increasing non-academic and part-time training programs to make all social groups receive vocational training, etc. It is necessary to take personalized examinations and allow merit-based admission. It is suggested that the colleges strengthen the application of information technology in enrollment and management to improve work efficiency.
To change the traditional management mode

The traditional management mode has seriously affected the work efficiency of higher vocational colleges. Against the background of 1-million enrollment expansion plan, it is of great importance for the administrators to innovate the management mode and improve the work efficiency by taking measures. The administrators should also have a full understanding of the difficulties brought by the 1-million enrollment expansion plan and establish a management system that is suitable for the new management mode.

All in all, the proposal and implementation of the 1-million enrollment expansion plan brings great change to vocational education in China, promoting the popularization of higher education. The implementation of the 1-million enrollment expansion plan brings benefits to vocational education in China, promoting development of the higher vocational colleges. However, with the development of vocational education, a series of work problems are faced by higher vocational colleges. The higher vocational colleges need to actively deal with the problems from all aspects so as to take advantage of the opportunity to create a new future for vocational education in China.

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