

## *Original Paper*

# The Direction of Ethnic Vocational Education under the Way of “Positional Education”

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### **Abstract**

*The essence of education is to develop people and develop humanity. No matter what kind of education, must follow this essential provisions. Vocational education for ethnic minorities is an important link in the education chain and plays an important role in improving the quality of ethnic minority members and adapting to economic and social needs. However, the emergence of common assimilation and marketization in the objectives and courses of ethnic vocational education has brought about the lack of ethnic and professional characteristics in ethnic vocational education, which has caused the problems such as the failure of the trained talents to meet the needs of local economic and social development. The concept of “positional education” has brought a new Angle of thinking about this issue to ethnic vocational education. Ethnic vocational education must first be accurately positioned, and then it can seek development.*

### **Keywords**

*positional education, national education, vocational education, national culture*

Since the beginning of time, there has been human education. As to what man is, people have been searching all over the world, but there is still no single accepted answer. However, what man does and can do, that is, the apparent material and spiritual achievements, are quite rich. This is the culture created by man, which is what Cassirer called “symbols”. When people create symbols, they first start by knowing the surrounding environment. A unique system of heaven and earth breeds a unique culture. After solving the problem of survival, man began to seek development. This driving force has dominated human society from ancient times to the present. Therefore, in order to survive and develop, the first thing to face is the relationship between man and nature. Man depends on nature to survive and needs to obtain resources for survival from nature. In this process, man has learned that he must respect and Revere nature in order to obtain the gifts of nature and survive. The natural environment is complex, the life dependent

on nature is hard, so people need to form a certain organization, unity and cooperation, common comfort, so that the relationship between people, and derived from the social organization, social system and so on. When human society has developed to a certain extent, the problem of survival has been basically solved. In the face of the complex and changeable external world, the inner balance of human beings has been broken, and then the problem of how to get along with one self has emerged. The relationship between man and nature, between man and man, and between man and himself, is not a simple issue. Problems in any aspect will affect the development of human beings.

Education is a kind of activity devoted to the survival and development of human beings. Therefore, the problem of education is ultimately a human problem (Zhang, 2009). The complexity of the environment in which people live determines the complexity of human nature, which also determines the importance of education and the arduousness of the task. The essence of education is to develop people and humanity. In the face of such a complex environment and complex humanity, what kind of education can develop people? In the final analysis, we have to go back to the essence of human beings. Man is what his environment makes him. He draws strength from his surroundings, develops and strengthens himself, but in the end he is trapped by what he has developed. To take up the responsibility of human development, education must start from teaching people to understand the surrounding environment, adapt to the surrounding environment, and develop reasonably. This is the “location education” advocated by Mr. Pan Guangdan. Only in this way can human development take a long-term road.

### **1. The Practical Problems of Ethnic Vocational Education**

The “Decision on Accelerating the Development of Education for Ethnic Minorities” issued by The State Council proposes to “accelerate the development of education for ethnic minorities and ethnic minority areas to achieve long-term peace and stability of the country and prosperity of the Chinese nation. We will develop vocational education in ethnic minority areas, train innovative and entrepreneurial talents and cultivate new types of professional farmers and herdsmen.” As an educational facilitator for the economic and social development of local ethnic groups, safeguarding the reunification of the motherland, and promoting ethnic unity, vocational education in ethnic areas is of great significance in actively cultivating and practicing core socialist values, establishing a regular mechanism for ethnic unity education, promoting exchanges and integration among students of all ethnic groups, and promoting cultural integration and innovation of all ethnic groups. To accelerate the development of ethnic vocational education in ethnic areas, it is necessary to properly define its functions, start with training innovative and entrepreneurial talents and cultivating new types of professional farmers and herdsmen, and focus on strengthening school-enterprise cooperation, promoting the integration of production and education, and supporting the development of outstanding traditional ethnic cultures based on excellence. In order to accelerate economic and social development in ethnic minority areas, safeguard the reunification of the motherland, promote ethnic unity, and build a strong sense of community among the Chinese nation, it is necessary to formulate a blueprint.

In recent years, with the economic and social development, the fact that human capital acts as a strong driving force for economic and social development has become more and more prominent. At the same time, the structure of talents is unreasonable, and structural unemployment still exists in large numbers. All walks of life in society have an increasing demand for high-quality and highly skilled professionals. At the same time, for a long time, China's educational thought and educational practice there is a serious focus on general education and ignore the tendency of vocational education, resulting in the imbalance of educational structure, disadvantages appear, to human development and economic and social development has brought great negative impact, the state vigorously adjust and optimize the educational structure, vocational education has been vigorously advocated and developed. Due to the natural, historical, social development and other reasons, the development of education in minority areas is slow, and vocational education is a weak link in the chain of national education.

#### (1) Deviation in the value orientation of ethnic vocational education

Value orientation is the core value problem in the field of education (Tan, 2000). Educational value orientation reflects the subject's understanding of education and its value as well as the subject's educational demands. Once established, it will internally determine the direction of educational reform and development, restrict all aspects of educational practice, and directly affect the establishment of educational objectives, teachers' educational views, the choice of educational content and teaching methods, and the evaluation of education and teaching. Educational value orientation includes instrumental rational value orientation and value rational value orientation. The instrumental rational educational value orientation emphasizes the instrumental value of education, such as promoting the external aspects of social political and economic development, while the educational value rational value orientation emphasizes the intrinsic value of education in promoting human development. Ethnic vocational education focuses more on the cultivation of professional skills, and trains people as tools to promote economic and social development. The essence of education is to cultivate people. People are a complete concept, not only political people, economic people, but also cultural people. National vocational education also needs to comply with the essence of education, and must take the cultivation of people as its value orientation, focusing on the improvement of personality, the formation and promotion of good morals, the progress of knowledge, the formation of skills and other aspects of personal accomplishment. Only to promote the development of people first, and then let the developed people to promote the development of all walks of life in society.

#### (2) Homogenization of specialties in ethnic vocational education

Due to a certain lag in the development of ethnic vocational education, the development of ethnic vocational education is mainly carried out with reference to the model of Han areas, especially in the professional setting, the homogenization phenomenon is very obvious. Electronics, computer, business management and other majors are offered in almost every vocational school in ethnic minority areas, while the specialties that reflect ethnic characteristics, such as ethnic traditional science and technology, ethnic traditional handicraft and other majors or courses are almost not involved. This homogenization

phenomenon is the result that ethnic vocational education does not take into account the special cultural background of ethnic vocational education students, the special rules of students' learning, the employment prospects of students and the actual needs of economic and social development, and does not fully integrate with the actual background of ethnic areas. As a result, ethnic vocational education has no ethnic characteristics, majors and graduates have no competitive advantage in the market, which greatly hinders the development of ethnic vocational education.

### (3) The positioning deviation of ethnic vocational education

The orientation of running a school determines the direction of education development and the mode of personnel training. Vocational education in most ethnic areas of our country orientates itself to export talents or labor services outside the region, instead of training suitable talents for their own ethnic groups according to the actual needs of the economic and social development of the region. Such orientation will inevitably lead to ethnic vocational education ignoring the impact and needs of the natural environment, social environment and cultural environment in ethnic areas, resulting in the development of ethnic vocational education and the local economic and social development is not closely linked, resulting in ethnic vocational education to lose ethnic characteristics, resulting in the loss of material and spiritual homes for people trained by ethnic vocational education.

## **2. The Alienation of Ethnic Vocational Education from the Environment of Ethnic Areas**

The homogeneity of ethnic vocational education and its development characteristics are not obvious, which is extremely unfavorable to the economic and social development of ethnic minority areas and the development of ethnic vocational education itself, especially the development of people in ethnic minority areas. The main reason for such problems is the estrangement between ethnic vocational education and the environment of ethnic areas.

### (1) Ethnic vocational education does not adapt to the natural environment of ethnic minority areas

Natural environment is the basis for human survival and development, and its impact on education is mainly manifested in affecting the distribution of schools, the mode of running schools, the source of students and their structure, and the content of teaching. The ethnic vocational education in a specific ethnic area is bound to be affected by the specific natural environment, and at the same time, it gives feedback to the natural environment. At present, the vocational education for ethnic minorities pays little attention to the natural environment in ethnic minority areas. Most of China's ethnic minority areas are located in southwest, northwest, Northeast and other places rich in natural resources such as mountains, grasslands, plateaux and other areas where the ecology is extremely fragile. However, the professional setting, teaching content and teaching methods of ethnic vocational education schools are mainly based on the model of vocational education in Han areas. The teaching contents rarely involve the resource situation, development and utilization, environmental protection and other aspects of specific ethnic minority areas. The ethnic vocational education focusing on technology lacks technical ethics education and focuses on teaching students to use various modern technologies to seize natural resources without

paying attention to environmental protection education, which is not conducive to the harmonious and sustainable development of man and nature in ethnic minority areas.

(2) Ethnic vocational education is out of harmony with the social environment in ethnic minority areas Under the influence of certain natural and historical conditions, the economic and social development of ethnic minority areas is relatively slow, and the development of vocational education is also relatively backward. Vocational education is the type of education most closely related to the social economy, and majors should be set up according to the needs of society. If we do not consider the reality of economic and social development and the needs of ethnic minority areas to set up vocational education majors, the study can not be used, can not solve the problems of local economic and social development, can not meet the special needs of ethnic minority areas for specialized talents, students, parents and the whole society will greatly reduce the recognition of ethnic vocational education. The development of ethnic vocational education will encounter problems such as shortage of students and decline in quality, which will not only affect the economic and social development of ethnic minority areas, but also be detrimental to the development of ethnic vocational education itself.

(3) Ethnic vocational education is alienated from the cultural environment of ethnic areas

A unique world system produces a unique culture, and national culture has a profound impact on all aspects of the economic and social development of ethnic minority members and ethnic areas, which is also where ethnic education embodies its characteristics. In recent years, ethnic education has paid more and more attention to the influence of ethnic culture, and consciously taken some special measures in the aspects of campus culture construction, educational content arrangement and teaching language selection. The vocational education which takes the teaching of science and technology as its duty pays attention to the modern technology education, while the traditional culture of ethnic minorities and the traditional science and technology are not involved and inherited. On the one hand, the alienation between ethnic vocational education and ethnic culture hinders students' adaptation and acceptance of vocational education, on the other hand, it is not conducive to the inheritance of ethnic culture.

### **3. Return to “Location Education”—The Development Road of Ethnic Vocational Education**

Ethnic vocational education is an important part of vocational education and ethnic education. It is necessary to make full use of the advantages of ethnic vocational education to provide human resources guarantee for the economic benefits and social productivity of ethnic minority areas. Through the education and training of the knowledge, skills and cognition of the educated, the quality of the educated is improved in all aspects, and the opportunities for workers in ethnic areas to receive education are also increased. To improve the over all quality of laborers and alleviate the problems such as the imbalance of labor force structure in the process of modernization in ethnic minority areas; The development of ethnic vocational education can optimize the structure of ethnic education, improve the overall benefit of ethnic education, and promote the modernization of ethnic education itself (Xu, 2001). All along, ethnic vocational education pays attention to modern science and technology education, pays attention to skill

training, and emphasizes its instrumental rationality in promoting economic and social development, while the value rationality of education in promoting human development has been obscured.

At present, a complete vocational education system has been established in most ethnic minority areas in China. However, with the economic and social transformation, the development of ethnic vocational education is difficult, and the deep-seated problem behind it is the alienation of ethnic vocational education from ethnic areas, which does not reflect nationality. Moreover, this kind of vocational education mainly refers to the mainstream ethnic Han vocational education model, its talent training objectives, curriculum, teaching and other aspects are mainly oriented to the broader mainstream market, and it is far from the root of ethnic vocational education—national culture, such ethnic vocational education has lost its survival cultural soil, destined to be unable to grow healthily.

In 1926, Mr. Pan Guangdan made a comparative study of Confucius' Social philosophy and sociobiology in his article "Confucius' social Philosophy from the Biological Point of View", and proposed the concept of "social location education", that is, "Western Social adjustment is the meaning of social location education in the Middle of the mean: 'to be neutral, the status of heaven and the cultivation of all things'. And the one who nurtures will be born (Pan, 2000)." "Positional education" is to be able to "live in its place". People should not only abide by the regulations of the surrounding environment for living beings, but also take the initiative to adjust themselves and change the environment to adapt to their own progress.

#### **4. Location Education and National Vocational Education**

The purpose of ethnic vocational education is mainly to train vocational and technical talents for the economic and social development of ethnic areas. At present, the vocational education in ethnic minority areas is mainly an extrapolated development model with inaccurate positioning. The major setting, curriculum development and personnel training system mostly follow and imitate the developed areas, and a large number of graduates flow to the developed areas. Ethnic vocational education plays a subordinate role in the economic and social development of ethnic minority areas. In order to change this situation and change the extrapolation development to the internal development, it is necessary to reposition the ethnic vocational education.

Like all other forms of education, the essence of ethnic vocational education is also for human development. Since we want to develop people, we must understand people, understand the environment in which people live, understand the relationship between man and nature, between man and man, and between man and himself in this environment. Ethnic vocational education to develop people in ethnic areas, we must first let students understand their own environment, natural environment and cultural environment, which is "position", that is, strengthen students' ethnic identity education, which is the basis for students in ethnic areas to communicate with others and get along with them selves. Secondly, it is "education", education requires "then its life also", on the basis of understanding their own culture, the formation of the corresponding national identity, in contact with other cultures, maintain a correct attitude, moderate integration, in the identification of the national culture while absorbing other cultures.

Ethnic vocational education to cultivate people one is to have a national character, one is to have a professional. However, the people trained by ethnic vocational education are not machines in the production chain, but people with their own national culture and all-round development. They have the cultural identity of their own national culture, and at the same time, they have the technical skills to adapt to the actual economic and social development of ethnic areas. Such skilled talents are the real needs of ethnic areas and are suitable for the actual vocational skills of ethnic areas. In the practice of ethnic vocational education, how should we reflect the idea of “positional education”?

(1) Secure its location—clear location, accurate positioning

Ethnic vocational education must first have a clear orientation and find its own position. There are two characteristics of ethnic vocational education: nationality and occupation. In the specific practice of ethnic education, we must combine the two closely, and can not ignore one. Nationality is the characteristic of ethnic vocational education. Without this nationality, ethnic vocational education will lose its cultural characteristics and the soil for its survival and development. Therefore, it is necessary to find a reasonable position in the practice of ethnic vocational education. The first orientation of ethnic vocational education is to train talents suitable for the economic and social development of ethnic areas. What kind of talents are suitable? One is to understand the national culture, which inevitably includes understanding the heaven and earth system of culture generation; Second, we must have vocational skills and professional qualities suitable for the economic and social development of our ethnic areas. Only in this way can national vocational education have a clear goal.

(2) Making a living—adapting to local conditions and developing reasonably

After solving the positioning problem of ethnic vocational education, understanding the natural geographical situation of the ethnic group, knowing the culture of the ethnic group, and clarifying what kind of vocational skills the ethnic group needs, the next step is to talk about the development of ethnic vocational education. In the specific practice of ethnic vocational education, we should pay attention to the following aspects:

1). Strengthen ethnic culture education

A unique system of heaven and earth breeds a unique culture. National culture is the sum total of material and spiritual products formed by all nationalities in their long-term practice of production and life. It is the crystallization of the wisdom of all nationalities in their understanding of nature and themselves. Because ethnic vocational education is not to train a machine in the production chain, every educated person in it has been influenced by national culture since childhood, and this cultural influence has gone deep into the heart, that is, has formed a strong national cultural identity. This is the key for a nation to be a nation. Although the people educated in ethnic vocational education are living in the living national culture, but for some ethnic culture, not everyone in it understands, there is still a wide range of “do not know the truth” situation. Therefore, in the practice of ethnic vocational education, we should first strengthen the students’ study of ethnic culture.

2). Set up majors and courses according to the cultural characteristics of the nation

Ethnic culture is the matrix for the survival and development of ethnic vocational education, which solves the students' cultural identity and lays a rich soil for the development of ethnic vocational education. But ethnic vocational education still has to face a professional problem. The occupation which comes from its nationality must be closely combined. Without nationality, it is not nationality vocational education. The embodiment of nationality does not mean only considering the narrow nationality, but also having an open vision and an inclusive mind, actively absorbing and learning from the strengths of other ethnic vocational education in other regions and putting them into use.

In the practice of ethnic vocational education, specialty homogeneity should not be carried out, and ethnic culture should be combined with the specialties and courses of ethnic vocational education. However, not all the contents of ethnic culture can be used as the content of ethnic vocational education. Due to the large number of ethnic groups in China, each ethnic minority has its own unique ethnic culture, and the different ways of production and life of each ethnic group and other special circumstances, the specialty and curriculum of ethnic vocational education should be tailored to local conditions. First, the specialty and curriculum should reflect the particularity of ethnic culture. On the other hand, it is necessary to reflect its appropriateness, in line with the local production and life reality, according to different types of economic and cultural development, to establish the corresponding vocational education personnel training model (Qian, 2010), So that the trained personnel can adapt to the reality of local economic and social development. For example, ethnic areas have pastoral areas, agricultural areas, semi-agricultural and semi-pastoral areas, so the ethnic vocational education in this area can not be a one-size-fits-all, it is necessary to take into account this difference, so that students can be active in learning, and the trained talents can be useful.

3). Encourage the development of ethnic traditional cultural industries, and provide policy support for their graduates to start their own businesses and find employment.

Finally, the effect of ethnic vocational education must be tested in practice. With appropriate goals and majors of ethnic vocational education, students need to have a platform to apply what they have learned after graduation. The government can reflect its functions in it. Besides supporting the development of characteristic ethnic vocational education, it should also provide a better development environment for its development. For example, the government can advocate and support some traditional ethnic handicraft industries with social and economic value, improve or expand their production scale, increase the publicity of products to the outside world, and form a benign market effect. On the one hand, this inherits the ethnic culture; on the other hand, it also makes the talents trained by ethnic vocational education useful and retained. To maintain important human resources for the local economic and social development of the ethnic group.

4). Train technical and skilled personnel rooted in the plateau

Vocational education is closely related to regional governance, cultural education, human resources development, scientific and technological innovation and industrial development, especially in border areas and highly disadvantaged areas, vocational education is an important part of the regional economic



revitalization strategy, and vocational education plays an irreplaceable role in training talents with certain professional basic knowledge and production skills. The educational goal of vocational education is to cultivate the knowledge and ability of the educatees to learn professional knowledge and technical skills through education, so that they can adapt to the needs of social development and become application-oriented talents. Through the cultivation of students' overall quality and comprehensive ability, the vocational colleges for ethnic minorities can promote the social and economic development of ethnic areas after the students enter the local society. Vocational education should adhere to the principle of "shifting from promoting talent flow out and transferring employment to attracting talents back to their hometowns for employment, entrepreneurship and prosperity". The natural and geographical environment of ethnic areas is characterized by inconvenient transportation and limited information. The fact that the local education development lags behind, the shortage of talents and the slow economic development should be highly consistent with the requirement of training new types of local professional farmers and herdsmen in the new era. The difficulty of talent introduction in ethnic areas is a major disease that hinders the social and economic development of this region. Although the region has made great efforts in talent introduction and attracted talents with high salaries in recent years, when talents reach a certain stage of development, they have to face the secondary loss of talents due to the lack of platforms. Therefore, it is very important to train practical talents based on the reality and rooted in the ethnic areas.

The way of "location education" provides another Angle for us to think about ethnic vocational education. Only by depending on the place, time and people, can ethnic vocational education promote the development of people in ethnic areas, promote the economic and social development of ethnic areas, and achieve sustainable development of ethnic vocational education itself.

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