

## Preliminary Exploration of Publishing Models for Vocational Education Professional Textbooks under the “20 Measures for Vocational Education” : Postprint

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### Abstract

While promoting the reform and development of vocational education in China's new era, the “20 Articles on Vocational Education” will inevitably exert a profound influence on the publication of specialized textbooks for vocational education. This article examines how publishing houses can transform their publishing models for vocational education professional textbooks under the backdrop of the “20 Articles on Vocational Education” reform, from four perspectives: market opportunities, textbook formats, integrated publishing, and course-certificate integration.

### Full Text

#### A Preliminary Study on Vocational Education Professional Textbook Publishing Models Under the Background of the “Vocational Education 20 Articles”

**Abstract:** The “Vocational Education 20 Articles” will profoundly impact the publishing of vocational education professional textbooks while promoting the reform and development of vocational education in China's new era. This article analyzes how publishers should transform their vocational education professional textbook publishing models from four perspectives: market opportunities, textbook forms, integrated publishing, and curriculum-certificate integration.

**Keywords:** vocational education reform; professional textbooks; publishing model

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Vocational education professional textbooks serve as a “rigid demand” for teaching activities in vocational colleges and often constitute a significant portion of revenue for relevant industry publishers, playing a decisive role in their development. Therefore, studying the reform and development direction of vocational education and developing corresponding professional textbooks is crucial for the sustainable development of such publishers. On January 24, 2019, the State Council issued the “National Vocational Education Reform Implementation Plan” (State Council Document [2019] No. 4, hereinafter referred to as the “Vocational Education 20 Articles” ), which outlines the fundamental strategy for reforming and developing socialist vocational education with Chinese characteristics in the new era through 20 measures across seven dimensions. While promoting the reform and development of vocational education in China’s new era, these measures will inevitably exert a profound influence on vocational education professional textbook publishing. This article explores how publishers should transform their vocational education professional textbook publishing models under the backdrop of the “Vocational Education 20 Articles” reform from four aspects: market opportunities, textbook forms, integrated publishing, and curriculum-certificate integration.

## **1. Large-Scale Enrollment Expansion Creates Favorable Market Opportunities**

The “Vocational Education 20 Articles” require maintaining a roughly equivalent ratio between vocational and general high school education, ensuring that the vast majority of new urban and rural labor forces receive senior secondary education. Additionally, the policy promotes the transformation of qualified regular undergraduate institutions into application-oriented universities and encourages eligible regular higher education institutions to offer applied technology majors or courses. These measures will correspondingly expand the student population receiving vocational education at both secondary and undergraduate levels. Premier Li Keqiang proposed in the 2019 Government Work Report several supporting implementation measures for the “Vocational Education 20 Articles,” particularly setting a specific target to “reform and improve the examination and enrollment methods of higher vocational colleges, encourage more recent high school graduates, veterans, laid-off workers, and migrant workers to apply for admission, and expand enrollment by 1 million this year.” According to Ministry of Education statistics, in 2018, China’s regular junior college enrollment totaled 3.6883 million, representing a 5.16% increase compared to 2017. An additional enrollment expansion of 1 million this year would amount to a substantial 27.17% increase over 2018. This demonstrates that as the various measures of the “Vocational Education 20 Articles” continue to be implemented, the student population receiving vocational education will significantly increase, leading to a corresponding surge in demand for vocational education professional textbooks.

Since professional textbooks are a “rigid demand” for vocational education delivery, publishers should seize this opportunity of substantially increased demand and make rational arrangements to expand their textbook market share.

## **2. Practical Teaching Requires Corresponding Practical Textbooks**

The “Vocational Education 20 Articles” explicitly stipulate that “practical teaching hours in vocational colleges should, in principle, account for more than half of the total class hours.” This requirement not only reveals the market space for vocational education professional textbooks but also points to the direction for their development. The core essence of practical teaching comprises two aspects: first, teaching content must originate from actual work tasks and processes in industries and enterprises; second, students learn through simulated operations or even actual hands-on practice. Consequently, vocational education professional textbooks must be practical textbooks that satisfy these essential requirements.

Simultaneously, the “Vocational Education 20 Articles” provide clear guidance for developing practical textbooks, calling for “the development of a large number of national planning textbooks through school-enterprise ‘dual-element’ cooperation, advocating the use of new loose-leaf and workbook-style textbooks with supporting information resources.” This guidance addresses three key aspects: first, textbook development models should adopt school-enterprise “dual-element” cooperation to ensure textbooks genuinely reflect actual industry work tasks and processes; second, textbook presentation forms should adopt a “loose-leaf” style to facilitate practical teaching and flexibly adapt to changes in work tasks and processes; third, textbook writing formats should adopt a “workbook” style to make content more closely aligned with actual operations and provide students with a stronger sense of immersion. Thus, whether a textbook possesses “practicality” will be a crucial criterion for evaluating vocational education professional textbooks. To capture greater market share, publishers must address these three aspects to create high-quality practical textbooks.

## **3. “Internet + Vocational Education” Requires Integrated Publishing Textbooks**

The “Vocational Education 20 Articles” state that to “meet the development needs of ‘Internet + Vocational Education,’ modern information technology should be used to improve teaching methods, and the construction and widespread application of online learning spaces such as virtual factories should be promoted.” This is not merely a conceptual trend. During this year’s “Two Sessions,” Ma Huateng, a deputy to the National People’s Congress, stated in a media interview that “the second half of the Internet belongs to the industrial Internet” [?]. This perspective reflects not only Ma Huateng’s view but also the consensus within the Internet industry. Currently, “the Internet has become the infrastructure of the economic and social system” [?], and both traditional and emerging industries are embracing the “Internet +” approach. Moreover, “Internet + Vocational Education” aligns with the current trend of Internet

development. The 43rd “Statistical Report on China’s Internet Development” released by the China Internet Network Information Center in February 2019 shows that as of December 2018, China’s netizen population reached 829 million, with students being the largest group at 25.4%, while mobile netizens reached 817 million, accounting for 98.6% of all netizens. Today’s vocational education students are all “Internet natives” with nearly 100% mobile phone coverage, and mobile phones have become the primary “culprit” affecting classroom teaching. Therefore, vocational education professional textbooks must also “support the development of information resources” and pursue integrated publishing. On the one hand, this satisfies the need for simulated operations in practical teaching, records student learning trajectories, analyzes learning conditions, and improves teaching effectiveness. On the other hand, through features such as online tasks, human-computer interaction, and online communication, it transforms mobile phones from “culprits” disrupting teaching into “electronic teaching aids” that support instruction.

#### **4. The “1+X Certificate” System Calls for Curriculum-Certificate Integrated Textbook Systems**

The “Vocational Education 20 Articles” propose that “starting from 2019, pilot work on the ‘academic diploma + several vocational skill level certificates’ (hereinafter referred to as the ‘1+X certificate’) system will be launched in vocational colleges and application-oriented undergraduate institutions.” The goal is to “encourage vocational college students to actively obtain multiple types of vocational skill level certificates while acquiring their academic diplomas, expand their employment and entrepreneurship capabilities, and alleviate structural employment contradictions.” The “1+X certificate” system targets the alleviation of structural employment contradictions to achieve employment stability. Therefore, it is foreseeable that vocational skill level certificates as “X” may hold equal importance to academic diplomas in future vocational education, with some vocational colleges even requiring students to obtain relevant vocational skill level certificates to graduate. However, vocational college students have limited time and energy. Separating the acquisition of academic diplomas and vocational skill level certificates would increase their burden to some extent. Conversely, integrating these two tasks to achieve curriculum-certificate integration would not only avoid increasing student burden but also enhance the effectiveness of practical teaching.

Publishers can collaborate with industry organizations qualified to issue vocational skill level certificates to design vocational skill level assessment systems for specific industries and develop curriculum-certificate integrated practical textbooks accordingly. After students complete relevant courses using these textbooks and pass the vocational skill level assessments, they can earn both academic credits and corresponding vocational skill level certificates. Taking the customs brokerage industry as an example, the China Customs Brokers Association has established a customs proficiency assessment system compris-

ing three levels—primary, intermediate, and advanced—targeting practitioners. Those who pass assessments at certain levels receive corresponding customs proficiency certificates, with the primary level targeting new practitioners. Publishers can align the textbook for the core customs brokerage course “Customs Practice” with the primary customs proficiency assessment system. After studying the “Customs Practice” textbook and passing the primary customs proficiency assessment, students can earn credits for the course and obtain a primary customs proficiency certificate issued by the China Customs Brokers Association. Additionally, related majors such as international trade, international business, and international logistics also offer the “Customs Practice” course, allowing students in these majors to obtain the primary customs proficiency certificate as well. For students, this not only reduces the burden of obtaining vocational skill level certificates but also helps them acquire more such certificates. For publishers, this can significantly enhance textbook competitiveness within the major and expand the textbook’s market into other related majors.

Under the backdrop of the “Vocational Education 20 Articles” reform, publishers should transform vocational education professional textbook publishing models through the following approaches:

**4.1 Design Curriculum-Certificate Integrated Textbook Systems and Promote Their Implementation** For professional courses that already have corresponding vocational skill level assessment systems, publishers can design professional curriculum standards accordingly and develop supporting curriculum-certificate integrated textbooks. Conversely, for courses without such systems, publishers must first collaborate with relevant industry associations or organizations to jointly design corresponding vocational skill level assessment systems. This is only the first step. Subsequently, publishers must work with industry associations or organizations to establish corresponding mechanisms: on the one hand, promoting recognition of these vocational skill level assessment systems by industry employers and using the corresponding certificates as bases for hiring and evaluating talent; on the other hand, promoting recognition by vocational colleges and including the corresponding certificates among the “X” certificates. Only when both industry and colleges simultaneously recognize the system can textbooks truly achieve curriculum-certificate integration and the system be genuinely implemented.

**4.2 Design Textbook “Practicality” for Actual Application** Curriculum-certificate integrated textbook systems align completely with the practical teaching philosophy, but this does not mean that textbooks developed under this system are automatically practical textbooks. As previously discussed, publishers should focus on three aspects—textbook development models, presentation forms, and writing formats—to design “practicality” effectively, enabling vocational colleges to organize practical teaching based on the textbooks and even allowing students to conduct actual operations by following the textbooks.

**4.3 Design Online-Offline Integration to Incorporate Online Resources into Teaching Activities** Currently, regarding the development of “information resources” to accompany textbooks, most publishers have only addressed the issue of availability—that is, uploading courseware, audio-visual materials, animations, online exercises, and other resources to a certain online platform for student access—without effectively managing the learning process, resulting in low online learning rates and wasted resources. Therefore, publishers should also incorporate features such as instant interaction and quick-response functions, as well as mechanisms like time-limited tasks and point-based rankings, on online platforms to enable teachers to integrate online resources into teaching activities and encourage students to use mobile phones for learning.

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*Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.*

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