The development and reform of vocational education in China

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This paper describes the reform and development of vocation education (VE) in China over the past 20 years. Since the open policy to the outside has been carried out, the vocational education system in China has been established and developed.

The developing process of the VE system in China can be divided into three phases:

- energetically reforming senior secondary VE (1980----)
- actively developing higher VE (1994----)
- making great efforts to establish the overpass of the VE system (1998----)

The system of vocational education consists of education in vocational schools and vocational training. Vocational education in China is provided at three levels: junior, secondary, senior secondary and higher. In 1999, there were 1319 junior secondary VE schools with 337,600 students, 21,542 senior secondary VE schools with 14.1751 million students and 161 higher VE schools with 234,200 students.

From the development point of view, these are some features of VE in China:

- from the development of secondary VE to secondary and higher VE
- attaching importance to the links among different types and levels of VE
- from increasing quantity to improvement of quantity and quality
- from single-government operation to joint operation

Now that China is in the economy transition process, and will enter into WTO, VE is needed to resolve these following problems:

- the decline of secondary VE
- setting up the links between secondary VE and higher VE
- establishment of a system in which VE system can reflect labour market demand swiftly
- introduction of advanced VE theories and modes, curriculum development, teaching method, evaluation, teacher training, etc.

To resolve these problems, a series of policies, regulations and laws have been promulgated by the Chinese government. They have not only created a good social environment for the development of VE, but also shown the direction for reform and development of VE in the 21st century.