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Research on the Practical Path of Higher Vocational Colleges Serving Community Education under the Background of Home-School-Community Collaboration

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Abstract: Based on the theoretical framework of collaborative education among families, schools, and communities, this report combines the actual development of community education in Sichuan Province and the practical foundation of six established community colleges in Suining City, where the research team is located (Sichuan Vocational and Technical College). It systematically analyzes the current situation and challenges of higher vocational colleges serving community education, extracts typical case experiences of collaborative community colleges built by families, schools, and communities, and then constructs a four-dimensional collaborative mechanism of "organizational management - resource integration - communication and coordination - supervision and evaluation". Furthermore, it designs practical paths from four aspects: course supply, teacher allocation, activity organization, and platform construction. The study finds that as an institutionalized carrier of collaborative education among families, schools, and communities, the key to the effectiveness of community colleges lies in embedding the professional resources of higher vocational colleges into the community education demand chain, while ensuring the stability of collaboration through clear boundaries of rights and responsibilities and sustainable incentive and restraint mechanisms. Finally, the report proposes countermeasures and suggestions for constructing a quality assessment system and promoting the model.

Keywords: Home-school-community collaboration; Higher vocational colleges; Community education; Community college; Practical path

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1. Introduction

Driven by sustained policy initiatives, both participation rates and satisfaction levels in community education have progressively increased [1]. However, structural challenges persist: the capacity of community education providers remains constrained, with inadequate supplies of venues, facilities, instructors, and funding; despite

possessing professional and practical training resources, vocational colleges struggle to intervene effectively due to rigid curricula and insufficient service mechanisms; and the unclear delineation of responsibilities among families, schools, and communities in collaborative efforts hinders the formation of a cohesive force.

Against this backdrop, exploring practical pathways for higher vocational colleges to serve community education within the collaborative framework of home-school-community, with the institutional vehicle of jointly establishing community colleges, holds significant theoretical value and practical urgency. Drawing on the research team's prior practical experiences in Suining City, Sichuan Province, this report employs a comprehensive approach integrating literature review, survey analysis, and case comparison to address three core questions: What are the practical challenges confronting higher vocational colleges in serving community education? How can a collaborative mechanism for jointly building community colleges be established among families, schools, and communities? What are the key components of a replicable practical pathway?

2. The current situation and challenges of community education services provided by higher vocational colleges

2.1. Structural shortage of community education resource supply

Community education caters to residents of all ages and diverse backgrounds, with demands spanning multiple fields such as vocational skills, cultural literacy, health and wellness, and extracurricular education for youth. However, community education institutions generally face the dilemma of "a small horse pulling a large cart". In the context of Sichuan Province, Wang Ling, the Secretary of the Party Committee of Sichuan Open University and a member of the Provincial Political Consultative Conference, pointed out in a 2026 survey that many regions still face issues such as "uneven development, inadequate safeguard mechanisms, weak professional management teams, lagging digital construction, and a lack of high-quality curriculum resources", especially in remote areas [2]. The limited staffing of full-time community education personnel, the instability of part-time teaching teams, and the weak curriculum development capabilities have resulted in service provision remaining at a low level of repetition. The essence of this dilemma is not the absolute scarcity of total resources, but rather the malfunctioning of the resource allocation mechanism: higher vocational colleges possess practical training bases, dual-certified teachers, and professional curriculum systems, but these resources have not yet established institutional channels for regular flow to the community.

2.2. The disconnection between the curriculum system of higher vocational colleges and community needs

The curriculum design of higher vocational colleges is primarily driven by academic education logic, emphasizing the systematic of professional knowledge and the standardization of skill training. Its update cycle is often based on the academic year, making it difficult to match the rapidly changing and highly fragmented characteristics of community education needs. Kan Li's research points out that there are issues such as "lagging educational philosophy" and "impaired integration mechanism" in higher vocational colleges serving community education, and there is a clear tension between course content and actual community needs [3]. The research team also found in the early stage of investigation that although some higher vocational colleges are willing to open up course resources, they lack the secondary development ability to transform professional courses into modules suitable for the community, resulting in an awkward

situation where "resources cannot be utilized and demands cannot be met". What community education needs is not a compressed version of academic courses, but modular learning content centered on problems, experience-oriented, and characterized by short cycles. This poses new requirements for the curriculum governance ability of higher vocational colleges.

2.3. Role ambiguity and mechanism deficiency in home-school-community collaboration

The concept of collaborative education among family, school, and community has gained widespread recognition [4]. However, in the context of community education, the boundaries of rights and responsibilities, as well as the logic of action, among the three parties have not yet been clarified. At the family level, some parents completely delegate educational responsibilities to schools, and their participation in community educational activities remains at the level of passive cooperation. At the school level, although vocational colleges have a social service function based on policies, there is a lack of institutional traction for incorporating it into teacher assessment and resource allocation, resulting in insufficient motivation to participate. At the community level, residents' committees or community education stations have limited functional cognition as "educational organizers," and lack initiative in demand collection, activity organization, and effect feedback. The "Teaching Alliance" Work Plan for Collaborative Education among Family, School, and Community, issued by the Ministry of Education and 16 other departments at the end of 2024, proposes "striving to establish a 'Teaching Alliance' in all counties by 2027." Its core objective is to break this loose joint state and form an "organic whole" rather than a "simple superposition." For community colleges to become effective carriers, they must make a transition from "activity-based cooperation" to "institutional collaboration" at the organizational structure level.

3. Case studies and mechanism refinement of community colleges co-built by families, schools, and communities

3.1. Practical basis

The community college of the research group's affiliated institution has explored cooperation with communities, township governments, street offices, and other units. Six community colleges have been established, and relatively stable cooperative relationships have been established with local communities. Relevant construction experiences have been reported by media such as China.com.cn and Sichuan News. In terms of curriculum development, the research group has launched multiple community education characteristic courses, among which "Morality Never Stands Alone, There Must Be Neighbors" - Morality and Law Around Us was adopted by Sichuan Lifelong Learning Online and successfully applied for one of the first community education "Experts as Teachers" series characteristic courses and one typical case by the Department of Vocational and Adult Education of the Ministry of Education. Sichuan Vocational and Technical College and Sichuan Daying Prison signed an agreement on August 31, 2023 to jointly build the province's first "school-prison cooperation" type community college (Mingde Community College), which is also a characteristic site for providing educational services to special groups in the school community college system. These early practices provide observable samples for mechanism research [5].

From the perspective of operational performance, the basic framework of this model is as follows: vocational colleges provide curriculum plans, teachers, and practical training venues, while communities are responsible for student organization, demand feedback, and venue coordination. Families are involved

through participation in parent-child courses and family education guidance activities. In practical operations, the three parties do not exert equal effort: vocational colleges have the strongest supply capacity, communities have the second-strongest organizational mobilization capacity, and families have the weakest active participation. This finding suggests that the design of the collaborative mechanism should not assume a natural equivalence among the three parties, but should allocate differentiated responsibilities based on the actual distribution of capabilities.

3.2. Refinement of key mechanisms

Firstly, the demand alignment mechanism. Effective operation of community colleges begins with demand identification. The practice of the research team shows that the "three-stage filtering" process, which involves community grid workers collecting residents' learning intentions, professional teaching and research offices in higher vocational colleges matching courses, and then review and confirmation by the head of the community college, can significantly reduce the blindness in course offering. The core function of this mechanism is to transform scattered residents' demands into actionable course orders, avoiding "supply based on experience" in higher vocational colleges.

Secondly, flexible teacher mobility mechanism. Teachers in higher vocational colleges face institutional barriers in class hour recognition and performance accounting when participating in community education. A feasible approach in practice is to incorporate community courses into the teacher social service workload accounting system, and at the same time, have the entire teacher team undertake the courses in the form of "course packages" to reduce the coordination costs for individual teachers. In addition, residents with professional skills in the community (such as retired doctors, legal practitioners, and intangible cultural heritage inheritors) can be recruited as auxiliary teaching staff, forming a teacher combination of "higher vocational college teachers leading + community capable individuals assisting".

Thirdly, a two-way resource opening mechanism. Higher vocational colleges open their training bases, libraries, and sports facilities to the community, while the community provides practical scenarios and research samples to higher vocational colleges. This two-way opening not only expands the educational space of the community but also provides a real environment for students' internships and social practices in higher vocational colleges. Xu Kuihong pointed out in his research on the operational mechanism of community colleges that funding raising and evaluation system are two key variables determining the sustainability of community colleges. In practice, the cost-sharing issue of resource opening needs to be clarified through school-level coordination and community co-construction agreements.

Fourth, a quality feedback closed-loop mechanism. After each course session, the community college organizes student satisfaction surveys, teacher reflection sessions, and re-surveys on community needs, forming a short-cycle loop of "implementation - feedback - adjustment". The value of this mechanism lies in shifting community education from a "just do it" approach to one that "produces tangible results", providing a basis for subsequent course optimization.

4. Four-dimensional construction of collaborative education mechanism

4.1. Organizational management mechanism: Establish a governance structure with clear rights and responsibilities

Community colleges should establish a committee composed of leaders in charge from higher vocational

colleges, community leaders, and parent representatives as a decision-making and coordinating body. The committee's functions include: reviewing annual course plans, deliberating on budgets and resource allocation plans, and coordinating the resolution of cross-departmental obstacles in operation. The daily operation is the responsibility of the community college office (which can be located in the community or in the higher vocational college), and the office director is jointly appointed by personnel dispatched by the higher vocational college and community staff, forming a "dual-leader" system. The intention of this design is to avoid any one party having a dominant role: higher vocational colleges possess professional resources but lack community mobilization capabilities, while communities are familiar with residents' needs but lack educational supply capabilities. The dual-leader system forces both parties to balance and cooperate in decision-making.

4.2. Resource integration mechanism: Building a "curriculum-teacher-venue" trinity supply chain

The key to resource integration lies not in listing resources, but in establishing standardized conversion processes. At the curriculum level, each professional department in vocational colleges submits a list of course modules that can be opened to the community each semester. The community college then selects and combines these modules based on demand research results, forming a course package consisting of "basic modules + customized modules". At the teacher level, a community education teacher database is established. Teachers included in the database must have completed at least one community teaching training to understand adult learning characteristics and community classroom management norms. At the venue level, vocational colleges' training rooms and multi-function halls are open to community colleges during non-teaching periods, while the community provides grassroots spaces such as party and mass service centers and cultural activity rooms as teaching points, forming a spatial layout of "central school + teaching points" [6].

4.3. Communication and coordination mechanism: Reduce collaboration costs through normalized information exchange

The inefficiency of home-school-community collaboration often stems from information asymmetry. Feasible approaches include establishing a WeChat group or online collaboration platform for community college work, enabling real-time synchronization of course scheduling, student registration, and teaching feedback; holding a monthly meeting of tripartite liaison officers to address specific issues in daily operations; and submitting quarterly operational briefings to the council, covering core indicators such as the number of courses offered, participant attendance, satisfaction, and resource utilization rate. The design principle of the communication mechanism is "instant communication for daily affairs, regular discussion for important matters, and a channel for urgent issues", avoiding limiting collaboration to the level of meetings and lacking daily operability.

4.4. Supervision and evaluation mechanism: taking learning effectiveness and community benefits as core indicators

The quality assessment of community education cannot simply adopt the logic of examination pass rates in academic education. The assessment system should include three dimensions: learning effectiveness, which focuses on the actual changes in learners' knowledge, skills, or attitudes, and can be collected through brief pre- and post-course assessments, learners' works or achievements display, etc.; community benefit, which examines the driving effect of courses on community governance, cultural atmosphere, and residents' participation

awareness, and can be evaluated qualitatively by community workers and resident representatives; operational efficiency, which assesses management indicators such as resource utilization efficiency, course enrollment rate, and learner retention rate. The assessment results should be reported to the council and serve as the basis for course adjustments and resource allocation in the next cycle. The current academic consensus on the issue of "insufficient research on effect evaluation systems" suggests that the solution lies not in pursuing precise quantitative indicators, but in establishing an institutionalized cycle of "evaluation-feedback-improvement".

5. Design of practical pathways for higher vocational colleges in serving community education

5.1. Curriculum pathway: Transitioning from "supply-driven" to "demand-supply bidirectional calibration"

Higher vocational colleges should establish a dedicated mechanism for community curriculum development, spearheaded by the School of Continuing Education or social service departments. Each community college has clearly delineated functions, including skills training, academic advancement, and science popularization. Upon its inauguration, Lingying Temple Community College proposed activities such as "academic upgrading, skills enhancement, science dissemination, psychological counseling, and training for entrepreneurship experts". Beixing Community College leveraged institutional resources to offer classes on traditional Chinese culture and family education guidance. Longfeng Town Community College, established in April 2025, focuses on public welfare initiatives such as cultural and artistic endeavors, health science promotion, and family education, centered on "enhancing residents' quality and facilitating industrial upgrading". In practice, community needs are assessed through two lenses: "community education service activities" and "vocational skills training", with supply strategies tailored accordingly [7].

5.2. Teacher pathway: Cultivating a teaching corps with "full-time and part-time integration, school-community interconnectivity"

Higher vocational colleges should integrate community education instruction into teachers' social service evaluations, specifying criteria for converting teaching hours and incorporating these into professional title assessment requirements for social service. Concurrently, residents with professional expertise or technical skills should be recruited from the community, trained, and integrated into the part-time teaching faculty to assist in instruction or deliver specialized courses. Research team experience indicates that the involvement of community experts (e.g., retired educators, medical professionals, legal practitioners, and intangible cultural heritage bearers) significantly enhances the local relevance and sustainability of courses, as they serve as both instructors and learners, eliminating institutional barriers with students.

5.3. Activity pathway: Organizing community education services through project-based approaches

Beyond regular coursework, community colleges can capitalize on the specialized strengths of higher vocational colleges to devise thematic community education projects. For instance, health management programs can conduct community health screenings and wellness coaching; electronic information programs can offer smart technology training for seniors; art and design programs can facilitate workshops for micro-renovations of community public spaces; and early childhood education programs can organize parent-

child reading sessions and family education guidance. The merits of project-based operations include clear objectives, manageable timelines, tangible outcomes, straightforward evaluation and dissemination, and greater receptivity from communities and residents.

5.4. Platform pathway: Integrating into the digital learning support ecosystem

Sichuan Province has established a province-wide digital learning support system via the "Sichuan Lifelong Learning Online" platform. For vocational colleges (exemplified by Sichuan Vocational and Technical College), the crux lies not in constructing separate systems but in effectively linking the existing community college network with provincial and institutional platforms, fostering a tripartite collaboration among the "provincial platform, institutional platform, and offline sites". The institution has launched the "Sichuan Vocational and Technical College Lifelong Education Community Learning Platform" (sczyjsxyzsjy.mh.chaoxing.com), featuring a "community portal" with sub-sites for various community colleges (e.g., Xiniu, Beixing, Shenglian Island, Lingying Temple) and thematic sections like "Rural Revitalization through Vocational Education". This institutional platform complements "Sichuan Lifelong Learning Online" by providing credit accreditation, a course repository, and elderly education resources at the provincial level, while managing specific course schedules, event announcements, and learning progress tracking at the institutional level, thereby preventing duplication of efforts.

6. Countermeasures and suggestions

Firstly, integrate the establishment of community colleges into the social service evaluation system of higher vocational colleges. The current lack of motivation for higher vocational colleges to engage in community education primarily arises from the absence of institutional incentives. It is recommended that educational administrative authorities incorporate a "community education service" metric into the assessment of the educational quality of higher vocational colleges, encompassing verifiable elements such as the number of courses offered, the volume of services rendered, and community satisfaction levels, thereby establishing institutional impetus.

Secondly, foster a diversified funding mechanism for community education. The operational expenses of community colleges should not be solely dependent on government allocations or self-financing by higher vocational colleges. A hybrid model comprising "government-purchased services + community contributions + low-cost fees" could be explored: basic public welfare courses could be funded by special government allocations for community education, vocational skill enhancement courses could be partially financed by the community or learners, and higher vocational colleges could contribute corresponding shares based on their resource inputs. Diversified funding also encourages all stakeholders to cultivate a collaborative mindset of "shared investment and shared responsibility."

Thirdly, establish a system for the sharing and professional development of community education instructors. It is advisable to create a community education instructor database at the municipal or county level, encompassing instructors from higher vocational colleges, community experts, and industry professionals. A management approach featuring "unified registration, on-demand deployment, and hourly remuneration" should be implemented. Concurrently, regular training sessions on community education pedagogies should be organized to assist higher vocational instructors in adapting to the learning characteristics of adult learners and the teaching rhythm of community classrooms.

Fourthly, drive model optimization through the iterative promotion of exemplary cases. The practices of

the six community colleges affiliated with the research team have laid a solid foundation, yet their scalability necessitates broader validation. It is suggested to conduct adaptive trials in diverse community types (mature urban communities, urban-rural fringe communities, and county-level communities) across Sichuan Province. Based on the feedback received, localize adjustments to the mechanism design, thereby formulating a promotion strategy characterized by "a unified core mechanism and flexible operational plans."

7. Conclusion

The crux of higher vocational colleges serving community education within the home-school-community collaboration framework lies not in "whether higher vocational colleges should participate," but rather in "what institutional arrangements can ensure effective and sustainable participation." The research presented in this report demonstrates that community colleges constitute the institutionalized foundation for such collaboration.

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