

China's TVET: Reform and Opening-up
—Speech at the WFCP 2012 World Congress

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Distinguished colleagues and participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon. My colleagues of China Education Association for International Exchanges (CEAIE) and myself as well as leaders from Chinese Technical and Vocational Education (TVET) institutions presenting here, are indeed very much honored to be invited to this 2012 World Congress of WFCP. We are very thankful to the organizers of this Congress, to President Mr. Knight and his team, to our Canadian colleagues for the warm hospitality.

This is very special for us. Last year, CEAIE became WFCP's member, and was greatly honored to be a board member. We are now joining the efforts with all of you to achieve WFCP's goals and values, to promote economic and social development in communities, countries and the world. Together we will contribute to build a better future. On behalf of all the Chinese participants, I would like to say thank-you again for the leadership of the President and the warm hospitality of our Canadian colleagues and all WFCP colleagues.

Dear Colleagues, this Conference's theme "Driving the Global Economy" is both timely and significant. Globalization that we are facing today is accelerating at a faster and faster speed. Challenges and opportunities are unprecedented. Education and human resources development are the core factors for our social progress and sustainable development, This Session on "Advanced Skills for Economic and Social Development" provides a meaningful perspective to look at the unique role of TVET. Ten days ago, I was in Shanghai to attend the 3rd International Congress on TVET which was co-sponsored by UNESCO and the Chinese Ministry of Education. The Congress emphasized and reiterated that TVET plays key role in and makes essential contribution to economic, political, cultural, social as well as ecological progress, that TVET itself faces huge needs for new challenges and opportunities. The need and training for more advanced skills is an urgent and constant task. TVET in every country and region urges to embrace new strategy, policies, measures, partnerships. Advanced skills are not only a matter of technical working skills, but also a matter of the way in life. It is all about how to learn and to live in this changing world. We must innovate and be more creative in TVET. China's TVET is facing the similar challenges and opportunities. During the 3rd International Congress on TVET in Shanghai, Chinese leaders, practitioners and scholars comprehensively elaborated broadly about Chinese TVET. Their speeches are available on

the websites of UNESCO (www.unesco.org/TVET). We bring some of those copies here, which are handed out to this conference. By the way, there is an useful website in China to get information about Chinese TVET: www.tech.net.cn.

Because of the time limitation, I will focus on some specific features of Chinese TVET beginning with the background.

I . Background and Current Development of TVET in China

Over the past 30 years, China transformed from a highly centralized planning economy into a dynamic market economy. China has experienced an annual GDP growth rate at 9%, and become the world's second largest economy entity. China has gained economic and social progress, which attributes to the all round Policy of Reform and Opening-up in political, economic, social sectors and also in cultural, educational, scientific and technological fields.

In the education field, China has now the world's largest education system. Chinese education system involves pre-school education, nine-year compulsory education, high school education and higher education. Today, more than 260m students enrolled in over 600,000 education institutions at all levels. There are as much as 17m faculties and staff. In 2010, the National Outline for Medium and Long Term Educational Reform and Development (2010-2020) was released. This new strategic plan specifies the targets to fully modernize the education

system by 2020. At the same time, we must enhance special education, education for minorities, continuing and lifelong education so as to achieve a "lifelong learning society". China is determined to become a country of abundant highly qualified human resources. The key words for this ambitious plan are Quality and Equity, Equality, Equal Access. We believe that the success of China's education is also a contribution to the world's labor force market and to the world's economic and social development.

Equal access and quality are also the keys to the further development of TVET in China. Our TVET has 3 components. **First, TVET at secondary education level**, which trains operation-oriented skilled workers; in 2011, the total enrollment of students at secondary TVET schools is 22 million, which accounts for half of the number of high school students. **Secondly, TVET at tertiary education level:** Advanced skills and competencies for manufacturing, management, services, and construction are trained during this phase. In 2011, a total of 7.44m students enrolled at 1,280 TVET institutions nationwide, which is almost half of the total number of higher education receivers. We call this higher TVET, which has the dual functions of both higher education and vocational/technological education, which bears a responsibility of cultivating advanced skilled people who are capable to compete in international market. Now TVET students' employment rate stands at

90%, which means TVET provides the core workforce for every industry.

Thirdly, In-service training: Each year, as many as 100m people receive trainings from various non-degree TVET providers by education institutions as well as by enterprises and companies, which is very tremendous.

II. Now, I would like to share with you some features of China's TVET development.

First, it's urgent for China to intensify efforts in developing TVET.

China now is at a new stage of development in the context of industrialization, urbanization and internationalization, the fast development of information technology, together with the pressure of the population, natural resources and environment issues. This urgently calls for the economic restructuring, the upgrading of all sectors of economy, and the transformation of the mode of economic development. However, regional development of China is unbalanced. For example, different regions in China are at different stages of industrialization: among the 31 provinces and municipalities, 7 of them are at post-industrialized stage, 13 of them are still at the pre-industrialized stage, and 11 of them are in the mid of industrialization. In the past 10 years, about 10 million rural labor forces per year flooded into urban areas. This accelerates the urbanization of China. The uneven development of industrialization

requires that the purpose and objectives of TVET should be multi-dimensional. In addition to the above new features, the globalization and the information technology accelerate the world economic restructuring process. China has adjusted the strategy from *Made in China* to *Created in China*. Large amount of innovative employees with practical experiences, advanced skills, and international communication capacities are needed. Today the average year of schooling of Chinese people above 15-age is more than 8.5 years, that of the new labor force is 11 years. TVET has its new role to play in providing high quality employees with advanced skills.

For example,

in order to meet the needs of the development of modern industrial system, the Chinese government has made policy to strengthen the training of urgent-required workforce with special skills in key areas. The target of the policy is to train more than 5 million high-skilled workforce in economic key areas by 2020, such as equipment and manufacturing, information, biotechnology, advanced material, aerospace, ocean realm, finance and accounting, international business, ecological and environmental protection, modern transportation, agricultural science; to train more than 8 million high-skilled workforce in social development key areas by 2020, such as education, politics and law, propaganda, medical and health, disaster prevention and mitigation. The total amount

of the high-skilled workforce in China will reach 34 million by 2015, and will up to 39 million by 2020, including 10 million technician and senior technician.

Secondly, China is taking actions to achieve sustainable development of TVET. The government support is critical in pushing forward TVET development. TVET is important not only because it creates more jobs for young people, but more importantly it is an education and training that everyone needs.

I'd like to point out that higher vocational education has given full play to its leading role in the reform and development of vocational education in China. In 2006, China's Ministry of Education initiated the "Top 200 National Demonstrative Colleges Project" aimed at giving priority to the development of 200 vocational colleges by selection. For 6 years, demonstrative colleges have made notable progresses in industry involvement mechanism, jointly-run programs, work-study training model, enrollment pilot, social service ability, sharing high quality education resources across the region, which has played a leading role in the reform and development of higher vocational colleges in China.

Recently, to implement the National Outline for the Year 2020, Chinese government issued plans to build a world-class TVET system by 2020. This further modernized TVET system will be more relevant, connective and multi-dimensional. The emphasis is to put on all round

development of the student, social needs, and systematic training of people at different levels. It aims at realizing lifelong learning and skills for lifelong. The whole TVET system will integrate schools, colleges, enterprises and communities, it will be an open system with multi-pathways which make close linkages with various types and levels of education and training. Close connections will be made with industries. However, this is not an easy job. The Chinese traditional culture is knowledge-oriented, praises “*a good scholar can become an official*”. For a long time, even today, TVET is regarded as sub-class or lower rank education. Now it’s a time for change. Our society needs all kinds of people with different knowledge and skills. Yes, we need knowledge and intellectual support in economic development. But we also do need powerful skills and high-quality innovative people to build the world more beautiful. There is a good Chinese saying: *every trade has its master*. I believe that the students we are teaching and training today will be *masters* of their trades in the future. In a word, what we need is a *whole person education* which gives sustainable development abilities.

III. Finally, I would like to draw your attention to the international exchanges and cooperation of TVET in China

The Opening-up Policy has been and will continue to be the driving force of China’s reform in every field, including in educational administration and school running system. The content and method of

teaching and learning are significantly changed. International cooperation and exchange of TVET in China are also multi-dimensional. From governmental to nongovernmental organizations and agencies, more and more institutions are committed to facilitating the international cooperation and exchange of TVET. Among them, China Education Association for International Exchange (CEAIE) has been one of the most important platforms since its establishment in 1981. As a national comprehensive body of educational cooperation and exchange between China and foreign countries, CEAIE always commits itself to promoting international exchange of China education. Among some 60 CEAIE programs and activities, broadening the international dimension of TVET has always been the focus. Here, I have three cases to offer:

i. Vocational Education Leadership Training (VELT) Program

VELT was launched in 2008 with special financial support of MOE (Ministry of Education) and MOF (Ministry of Finance) of China. It is an important part of *National Model Higher Vocational College Plan*. So far, among over 1000 higher vocational colleges, more than 500 leaders have joined the program, which cooperate with America, Canada, Germany, Britain, Singapore, etc. It is the biggest training program in Chinese educational history. The program helps TVET leaders to study and share good practices together. It greatly promotes TVET development in China.

ii. TVET Excellent Teacher Exchange Program

In recent 5 years, about 2000 teachers were sent abroad through the program. The program activities mainly include curriculum development, teachers' training and teachers and staff development. Through those activities as well as teaching and learning experiment, high-quality resources have been introduced. It plays the role of excellent teachers to guide and motivate others to improve continuously.

iii. Chinese-Foreign Joint Advanced Skill Training Program

The program supports cooperation between Chinese TVET institutions and the foreign partners. It proposes $n+n$ training pattern which aims to introduce high-quality resources and develop local curriculums that fit for the Chinese practice. By this cooperation, students can directly obtain bachelor degree of the partner institution. Institutions have promoted mutual credit recognition and credit transfer. The program is also exploring ways of jointly running universities with foreign partners, which is practice oriented and profession oriented.

By doing so, we are expecting China Higher Vocational Colleges to go global, while we hope to attract more and more foreign students to study in China, including students from the countries that all of you present here are representing. Welcome to China! It is my very sincere hope that through our joint efforts, TVET education across the world will continue to be the key providers for advances skills, so that it could help to drive the global economy worldwide. Thank you for your attention.