



Jiaying Jian

Master of Social Policy

The Potential of Technical and Vocational Education
(TVE) to Prepare Young Migrant Women for
Successful Transitions from Education to
Employment in Urban China

This report has been written for The Future of Work Lab by

Jiaying Jian

Master of Social Policy
jiaying.jian@outlook.com



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The Future of Work Lab hosts talented Master's student interns who lead projects across a range of future of work issues. The interns produce policy reports covering pressing and timely topics in this area. Our interns are trained in advanced analytical, research and report-writing skills as well as collaboration, teamwork and interpersonal skills.

Jiaying Jian is an Intern at the Future of Work Lab. Jiaying is currently completing Master of Social Policy from the University of Melbourne. She is working on the research project focusing on youth transition and employment.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Technical and vocational education (TVE) is regarded as “a vehicle for improving the labor market outcomes of migrants, disadvantaged youth and marginalized groups” (UNEVOC, 2022) through preconditioning skills acquisition necessary for human capital accumulation and development. In the context of China, where structural transitions are accelerated by industrialization and informatization, TVE plays a significant role in addressing structural contradictions in the labor market adaptive to economic transitions, functionally complementing general education in the education system aiming to cultivate talents serving social and economic development (He & Xie, 2018). While TVE is stereotyped as one of the alternatives for individuals with inferior academic achievement (Shi, 2013), marginalized groups may encounter significant barriers and stigmatization when accessing quality TVE and stimulating the conversion effects of TVE on enabling successful transitions from education to employment.

Due to the massification of higher education, young women are overrepresented in attending TVE at the higher education level in the past decade (Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, 2022a). Moreover, young migrant women, referring to those migrating from rural to urban regions while lacking urban residential status in the household registration system determining individual access to social welfare and service, may not equally access and utilize educational resources as their urban counterparts do. To some extent, they are prone to have poor academic performance and be channeled to TVE to defer entry to the labor market (Ling, 2015). This research will explore the potential and limitations of TVE to assist young migrant women in transitioning from TVE to decent employment in urban China. Therefore, based on comparative research evidence, policy recommendations focus on multistakeholder actions on enhancing the potential of TVE to facilitate the inclusive development of the education system.

This report will outline the research findings by applying quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, which are demonstrated below.

1. Based on discourse analysis of policy documents and quantitative analysis of national survey data, the first section demonstrates the background and context of China’s TVE system with strong policy support that is not transferred to improved labor market outcomes for young migrant women.
2. The second section identifies the potential of TVE to be accessed and utilized by young migrant women with key findings from literature research, including higher return on investment, professional-oriented capacity development, and adaptation to economic transition.
3. According to ethnographic and quantitative research, the third section criticizes education stigmatization, inadequate quality of TVE, and gender segregation in TVE specializations that constitute the barriers and limitations hindering young migrant women from effectively utilizing TVE for school-to-work transitions.

4. The fourth section illustrates the purpose, objectives, and strategies of multistakeholder actions on addressing the limitations of TVE facing young migrant women based on the case study of a specific program targeting migrant youth, informing policy recommendations on facilitating stakeholder engagement.

Key recommendations:

1. Increase awareness of TVE potential among multiple stakeholders through “macro-level governance” and “meso-level advocacy” (UNESCO, 2021b, p. 9).
2. Address inadequacies of resource allocation for TVE and curriculums targeting transferrable skills with the subsidization scheme.
3. Promote inclusive development of TVE adaptive to the transforming labor market with the emphasis on gender responsiveness and intersectionality (Lange et al., 2020).

INTRODUCTION

Worldwide experiences indicate that TVE effectively addresses youth unemployment through capacity development, especially in targeting marginalized youth. This corresponds to the “SDG 4 on quality education and SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth”, calling for “the strengthening of skills for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship” (UNESCO, 2021a, p. 16). In urban China, TVE may be transferred to a conversion factor enabling migrant youth to access and sustain employment through specialized skills improvement. Due to the accumulation of socioeconomic inequalities in education under the urban-rural dual mechanism (Zhou, 2008), young migrant women, referring to those migrating from rural to urban regions while lacking urban residential status in the household registration system, may not equally access and utilize high-quality resources provided in urban regions. Regarding the impacts of gender segregation in the labor market on individual selection of disciplines and specializations, they may encounter more significant challenges in accessing quality TVE than their urban counterparts, offsetting the effectiveness of TVE in improving initial labor market outcomes and sustainable development. In other words, although the policy context supports the construction and development of TVE (Shi, 2013), quantitative and qualitative results, analyzed from national survey, literature review, ethnographic research, etc., demonstrate that the status quo of young migrant women with TVE credentials remains unchanged without multifaceted policy targeting respective stakeholders (UNESCO, 2021b).

SECTION 1 – BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

EDUCATION SYSTEM

China’s education system consists of 9-year compulsory education, upper secondary education, undergraduate, and postgraduate, as illustrated in Figure 1. Specifically, a typical student will be channeled to upper-secondary academic or technical and vocational school after attending compulsory education, including 6-year primary education followed by 3-year lower-secondary education (Wang & Guo, 2019). While graduates of general education will pursue undergraduate study or higher technical vocational education after the University Entrance Exam (UEE), secondary TVE graduates will have the option to pursue bachelor’s degrees in TVE if meeting threshold scores in the UEE or take the Self-taught Higher Education Examination to register for general disciplines at undergraduate level (Wang & Guo, 2019). Overall, whether a typical student will be channeled to the general or TVE education depends on the academic achievement defined by scores in the High School Entrance Exam (HSEE), which will determine their options for higher education to a great extent.

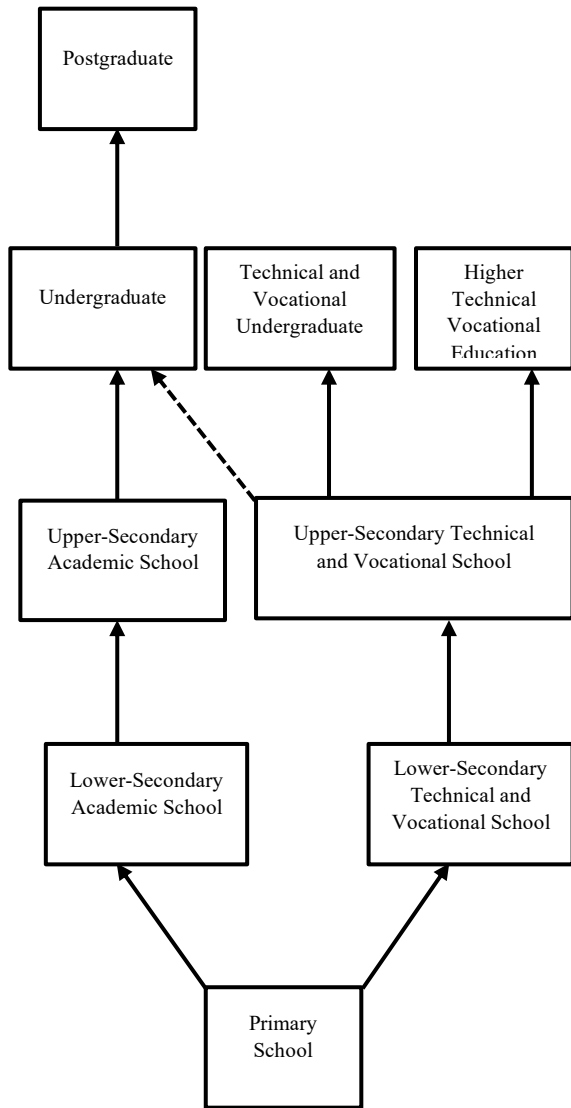


Figure 1: Progression of the education system in China
 Source: Adapted from Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China 2022b; Wang & Guo 2019.

Comparing enrollment of females in the general and vocational stream, firstly, Figure 2 demonstrates the upward tendency in female students attending academic high schools after the expansion of higher education since the twenty-first century (Lu & Zhang, 2021), accompanied by the downward trend of female channeled to the vocational stream at the upper-secondary level. Secondly, the figure below illustrates the increasing enrollment of females in higher TVE and the relatively considerable discrepancy between females

attending academic high schools and those pursuing undergraduate study, indicating that a substantial number of female graduates will probably be transferred to the vocational stream after graduation the UEE. While females have accounted for approximately 55 percent of higher TVE over the past several years (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2022b), either quantitative or qualitative research demonstrated that females from migrant backgrounds account for a more considerable proportion of TVE students at the secondary level (Hansen & Woronov, 2013; Ling, 2015).

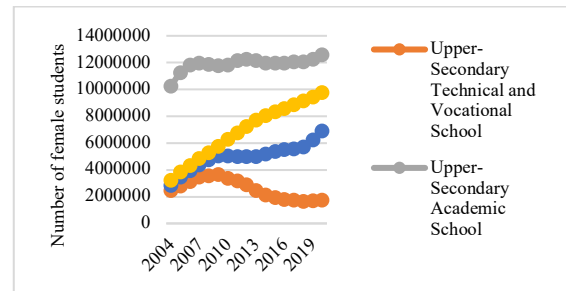


Figure 2: Number of female students by education type and level (2004-2020). Source: Adapted from Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China 2022a.

TVE POLICY SYSTEM

Table 1 (see Appendix) demonstrates the policy system consisting of key policies issued by the State Council and the Ministry of Education, aiming to ensure and improve the quality of TVE in China. The characteristics of the pre-existing policy system are outlined below.

1. The policy system is derived from the human capital theory (Koo, 2016), emphasizing economic determinism in education (He & Xie, 2018), consistent with national development strategies. Specifically, policy discourse, underpinning relevant implementation strategies, regards TVE as an essential

component to cultivating diversified and skilled talents within the national education system serving human resources development (He & Xie, 2018). Moreover, in response to the industrial structure transition, the policy system aims to increase qualified labor supply corresponding to the demand of emerging industries (Qi & Pang, 2010), such as high value-added manufacturing and service sectors.

2. The policy system standardizes and specifies the comprehensive development of the TVE system, including pedagogy and practice. The policy discourse articulates increasing governmental investment in TVE, aiming at expanding the quantity and improving the quality of TVE (Shi, 2013). Moreover, the policy strategies to ensure TVE graduates' transition from education to employment circumscribe the critical themes of innovation and entrepreneurship, diversifying the applicability of TVE instead of restricting the practice to specific labor demands (Fu, 2020).
3. The policy system is refining and diversifying pathways to ensure individual sustainable development (Zhang, 2012), mitigating the "crowding out" effects of education massification on the labor market. For instance, the amendment of the Vocational Education Law of the People's Republic of China, legally enforceable since May 2022, has incorporated TVE into the undergraduate level, expanding the opportunities for

secondary TVE graduates to pursue bachelor's degrees (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2022b). This may bring about systematic solutions to address the marginalization of TVE graduates, who used to attend the lower education level, in the competitive labor market.

LABOUR MARKET OUTCOMES

Structural contradictions and frictional unemployment are prominent issues in the labor market. First, structural unemployment is relevant to economic transformation and industry upgrading instigated by the rapid development of emerging industries underpinned by digitalization and informatization, materials, equipment, products, and business modes inevitably requiring the workforce to acquire updated knowledge and skills (Wu, 2020). Second, traditional positions, characterized by low-skilled labor, will be replaced by new positions derived from the gradual application of artificial intelligence and big data technology (Wu, 2020). Third, industrial transitions will vacillate the labor demand of resource-based and low-end manufacturing industries, leading to the contradictions between the supply of low-skilled labor to be transferred and the demand for labor equipped with updated skills (Wu, 2020). In this situation, young migrant women attending TVE may face considerable difficulties in accessing the opportunities for decent employment during school-to-work transitions, as discussed below.

1. The initial employment of young migrant women graduating from TVE is prone to be excluded from decent employment conceptualized by historical and social ideologies (Xu,

2011). Referring to the data released by the Ministry of Education (2021a), the employment rate of TVE has maintained a high level in the past five years. Specifically, employment rates of higher TVE graduates tend to stabilize at about 90 percent after graduating within six months (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2021a). Although influenced by COVID-19, the employment rate of those graduating from secondary TVE has achieved 84.23 percent (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2021a). However, as illustrated in Figure 3, the discrepancy in employment units between urban and migrant females attending the same education level may demonstrate the marginalization of the latter cohort from secure employment, such as positions located in governmental organizations and state-owned enterprises. Although initial employment of urban and migrant young women aggregated in private enterprise, attributing to the transformation from socialized to the marketized economy, migrant females with TVE credentials tended to become self-employed, compared to their urban counterparts.

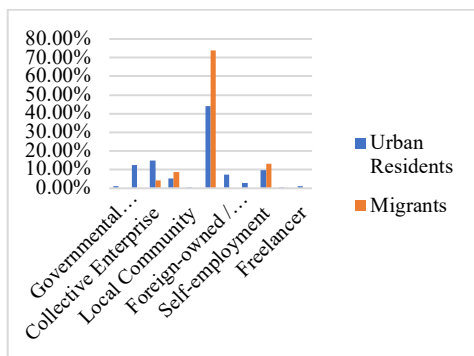


Figure 3: Organisation types where the initial employment located cross urban and migrant females attending higher vocational and technical education. Source: Adapted from China Labor-force Dynamic Survey 2018.

2. The quality of initial employment among migrant females with TVE credentials is relatively poor. The participation in the social insurance system, co-contributed by employers and employees, is a valuable benchmark to assess employment quality. A survey on the employment quality of secondary TVE graduates conducted in 2014 demonstrated that while 18.2 percent of respondents did not enroll in any insurance, only 23.8 percent of respondents had joined medical insurance, pension fund, and unemployment insurance under the social insurance system (Zeng & Wang, 2018). Moreover, data extracted from the China Labor-force Dynamic Survey (2018) indicated the discrepancy in the incidence of contributing to the comprehensive insurance system across education level and residence background (Figure 4). For one thing, the participation rate among urban females with higher TVE credentials was significantly higher than that of their migrant counterparts. For another, given the migrant background, the participation rate of females with bachelor's degrees is approximately twice higher than that of those attending higher TVE.

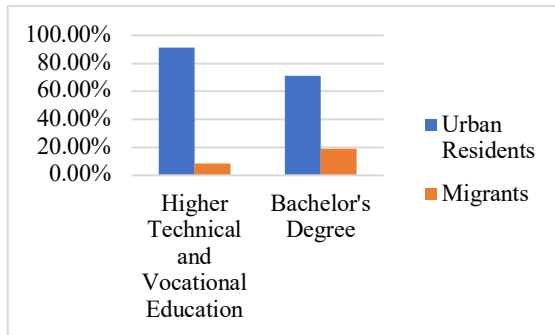


Figure 4: Comparison of social insurance system participation rate between urban and migrant females across education levels. Source: Adapted from China Labor-force Dynamic Survey 2018.

SECTION 2 – POTENTIAL COMPARED TO GENERAL EDUCATION

Although underestimated in education alternatives, TVE may have a higher potential to assist young migrant women with successful transitions to decent employment than general education. First, regarding the return on investment based on social and economic analytic benchmarks, diverse research findings suggest that TVE potentially has a higher rate of return on investment than general education, especially targeting marginalized groups (Guo & Wang, 2020). Second, according to the comparisons at the post-secondary level regarded as the watershed between TVE and general education, TVE students are ideally advantageous in acquiring vocation-specific knowledge and skills for diversifying livelihood strategies considering the integration of learning and practice (Zhang, 2012). Third, TVE curriculums are potentially responsive to the labor market demand (ILO, 2021), while it will take longer for upper-secondary academic institutions to modify and reconstruct specific disciplines. Overall, TVE has strengths in adaptability and efficiency compared to general education.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Considering economic rationale, return on investment (ROI), referring to the benefit derived by individuals from investing in TVE, will affect individual decisions on education pathways and career trajectories (UNEVOC, 2020a), correlating with Lu and Zhang's (2019) conclusion that expected ROI determined student's decisions on whether attending general education or TVE. Specifically, the analytic framework measuring ROI may include economic and social returns, differentiated to diverse contexts (UNEVOC, 2020a). In terms of the economic aspect, the cost-benefit analysis of TVE demonstrated that channeling to TVE "would be a better alternative in terms of both school-to-work transition and future labor market outcome," suggesting a higher rate of ROI, i.e., increasing earnings in specific occupations compatible with TVE graduate's field of study (Guo & Wang, 2020, p. 6). This result is consistent with the estimation of return on education based on the Chinese Twins Survey controlling the effects of socioeconomic background, which identified that TVE might bring about a more significant return than academic high schools in terms of earnings (Li et al., 2012).

Regarding the social aspect, returns on education should consider the conversion of household registration status that determines an individual's access to social welfare and services in China (Lu & Zhang, 2019). The quantitative research conducted by Zhao (2017) illustrated that TVE would increase the possibility of migrants to transfer their registered residence from rural to urban under the household registration system, compared to upper-secondary graduates from rural regions,

although migrants attending undergraduate education undoubtedly demonstrated higher returns on education. In this sense, considering accumulated discrepancies marginalizing rural cohorts and migrants from equally accessing and utilizing educational resources available to their urban counterparts (Xiong, 2015), young women from migrant backgrounds, possibly with relatively poor academic performance in the UEE, may be channeled to higher TVE stream or enter the labor market directly with lower returns on investment. Therefore, even though ROI positively correlates with educational levels, TVE is another but not inferior pathway for young migrant women to increase returns on education.

SPECIALISATIONS AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Comparing the purpose of the education system, TVE provides more comprehensive, universal, and specific conditions for human capital accumulation and human development (Zhang, 2012). The goal of TVE is to equip individuals with profession-oriented skills through the socialization function of education. In contrast, general education proposes the socialization process oriented by disciplines and knowledge system, suggesting the most apparent distinction between TVE and general education. As illustrated in Figure 5, the fundamental purpose of TVE, defined as necessary vocational skills utilized for livelihood strategies, is not applicable to the general education stream due to the former being originated from productivity and social division of labor (Zhang, 2012). In this sense, young migrant women facing the dilemma between attending academic high schools with unsatisfactory performance and early entry into

the labor market with minimum skills may be beneficial from the opportunities to access TVE that will equip them with vocational skills and capabilities to sustain their livelihood, which is embedded within the ideologies of China's TVE development.

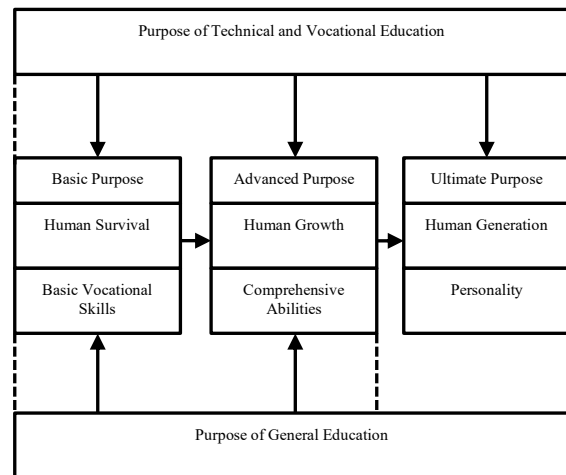


Figure 5: The hierarchical relationship between the purpose of vocational education and general education.

Source: Adapted from Zhang 2012.

ADAPTION TO ECONOMIC TRANSITION

TVE schools have the autonomy to adjust the availability and enrollment of specializations annually according to the updated version of the Vocational Education Specialization Catalogue issued by the Ministry of Education (2021b) recognizing changeable relations between economic trends and labor market demand. The ethnographic case analyzed by Hansen and Woronov (2013) demonstrated that, for one thing, TVE schools had targeted potentially promising employment opportunities for students, for instance, the prevalence of tourism vocational courses among different categories of TVE schools because tourism used to be a propitious field for generating jobs and income. For another, being conscious of informatization and digitalization, TVE schools updated the curriculum by replenishing courses

relevant to computer technology (Hansen & Woronov, 2013). From cross-sectional rather than longitudinal perspectives, young migrant women attending TVE at the post-secondary level potentially have higher responsiveness to labor market demand than those who enter the labor market without specialized skills after graduating from academic schools.

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SECTION 3 – BARRIERS AND LIMITATIONS

BACKGROUND

Although previous sections illustrate the policy context supportive of enhancing the developmental potential of TVE at the individual and societal level, young migrant women may face multidimensional barriers to attending TVE, exacerbating their initial employment outcomes and sustainable development. First, considering the socioeconomic and cultural determinants of the recognition and social status of TVE credentials, TVE is stigmatized as an inferior alternative for students with poorer academic performance (Woronov, 2011), accumulated from socioeconomic inequalities and intergenerational poverty (Hannum et al., 2011; Yeung, 2013). Second, the quality of TVE education is inconsistent with the upward tendency in governmental investment (Hansen & Woronov, 2013), to some extent implying the discrepancy between policy initiatives and implementation affected by the status quo of education stigmatization. Third, given the labor market is worsened by structural transitions leading to the reduction in and replacement of physical labor (Wu, 2020), young migrant women are marginalized in this situation characterized by existing gender discrimination and segregation (Shi, 2013).

Generally, the barriers and limitations are intertwined to hinder young migrant women from accessing and utilizing the untapped potential of TVE for school-to-work transitions.

EDUCATION STIGMATISATION

Reviewing historical and cultural context, the social status of TVE demonstrates a U-curve development pattern. In ancient China, socially stratified into scholars, peasants, workers, and businesspeople, TVE emerged in the form of apprenticeship workshops aggregating in small-scale manufacturing sectors (Schulte, 2003; Xu, 2011). After founding the People's Republic of China, with a more considerable demand for skilled labor serving economic development, TVE was regarded as a preferential alternative because TVE graduates were assigned to specific positions in the state-owned industries (Schulte, 2003). However, jointly impacted by economic marketization and the expansion and reformation of higher education, TVE gradually withdrew from the preference for individuals regarding bachelor's degrees as a guarantee of highly remunerative employment and upward mobility (Hao & Pilz, 2021). In this sense, the stigmatization of TVE, determining individual attitudes and actions toward TVE, is embedded within Chinese society.

Moreover, in terms of institutional impacts on individual decision making, the initial definition of TVE in the policy system, striding across the characteristics of education and training, is partly attributed to the inferiority of TVE. According to Xu (2007), the purpose of TVE used to be to cultivate skilled workers, i.e., "blue-collar" and "grey-collar" talents, narrowing

the definition as training, even though practices are indispensable in TVE. In other words, TVE barely represented the extension of enterprise training in the education system, denying the education characteristic of TVE (Xu, 2007). Based on human capital theory (Koo, 2016), other types and degrees of education aim to prepare individuals for specific vocations and specializations. In contrast, the preferred education types, such as undergraduate and above, are defined to fulfill the labor demand of high value-added positions where intelligent input accounts for a more significant proportion than physical efforts.

QUALITY AND APPLICABILITY OF TVE

The quality of TVE is characterized by a labor shortage and unequal distribution of human and financial resources (Xiong, 2010). First, while recognizing the incompatibility between the reformation of TVE and the quality of the teaching resources system, the government has stipulated that “double-qualified” teachers, defined as teachers obtaining teaching certifications and intermediate and above technical skill certificates, should be equipped for TVE schools (State Council of the People’s Republic of China, 2019). Specifically, the tailored implementation plan proposed two pathways for cultivating and recruiting a qualified workforce, including encouraging normal universities to develop TVE graduates and technical personnel into teachers and to expand the enrollment of postgraduates in vocational and technical education (State Council of the People’s Republic of China, 2019). Without supplemented policies tailored to increasing individual awareness and social recognition of TVE, the implementation of initiatives aiming to construct high-quality

teaching teams has not transferred to systematic improvement in the quality of TVE.

Second, similar to other education patterns in China’s education system, TVE schools are categorized as highly resourced and underfinanced, reflecting the impacts of unequal allocation of governmental resources on how TVE schools are structured and what kind of materials are taught (Hansen & Woronov, 2013). This corresponds to Ling’s (2015) longitudinal research of migrant TVE students’ experience in Shanghai. Particularly, the study identified that migrant students accounted for a much smaller quota for top vocational schools but a more significant proportion for majors requiring lower entry scores of the HSEE, although they were encouraged to study TVE with subsidies from the municipal government aiming to delay unemployment pressure and prevent sociopolitical instability (Ling, 2015). Nevertheless, according to Li and other scholars’ (2020) research on the causation between resource allocation and TVE student achievements, attending highly resourced TVE schools was insignificantly correlated with student’s improvement in vocational skills, transversal ability, and expectations toward career development, especially without financial incentives for TVE schools to provide curriculums specific to the latter two aspects. In other words, educational inequalities accumulated from compulsory education (Xiong, 2015) will inhibit young migrant women from receiving quality TVE and constrain them in inferior specializations of TVE stereotyped as an alternative for individuals from lower

socioeconomic backgrounds to delay entry into the labor market with minimum qualifications.

GENDER SEGREGATION IN THE LABOR MARKET

While gender segregation in the labor market, where females are employed in specific traditional occupations aggregating in the tertiary industry, has not been altered by the integration of industrialization and informatization, young migrant women may opt to study TVE majors according to their social expectations (Zhou, 2008). For one thing, contradictions between the homogenization of TVE specializations and employment saturation are overrepresented in the tertiary industry (Fu, 2020). As illustrated in Figure 6, the proportion of TVE students graduating from tertiary industry-relevant majors has exceeded that of those employed in the tertiary industry, demonstrating the development of TVE is falling behind the demand for industrial upgrading and economic structure adjustment (Fu, 2020). In this sense, without transferable skills in response to industrial transitions, young migrant women tending to specialize in service and trades may be further marginalized by structural contradictions emerging in the transforming labor market.

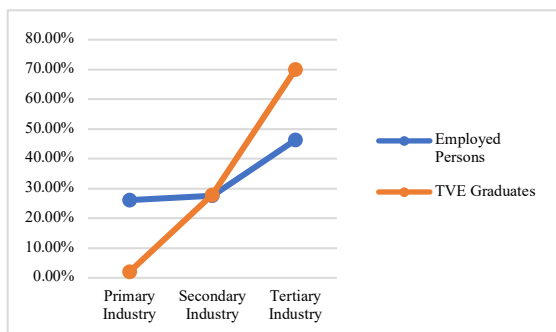


Figure 6: Composition of employed persons and TVE graduates across industries. Source: Adapted from Fu 2020.

For another, the “crowding out” effect of education massification may aggravate the contradictions facing young migrant women studying TVE. Based on the China Labor-force Dynamic Survey, the quantitative analysis demonstrated that the opportunities for TVE graduates to be employed in highly remunerative positions, especially in high value-added service sectors, were utilized by job seekers with bachelor’s degrees after the expansion of higher education, in turn reducing the return on investment in TVE (Lu & Zhang, 2021). This correlates with information asymmetry facing employers and employees, exacerbated by the homogenization of specializations between TVE and undergraduate studies (Lu & Zhang, 2021). Besides, the incidence of TVE graduates in flexible employment and self-employment has increased after the expansion of higher education (Lu & Zhang, 2021), implying the probability of excluding young migrant women with TVE credentials from relatively decent employment, compared to undergraduates of which females account for a more significant proportion.

SECTION 4 – MULTISTAKEHOLDER ACTIONS ON ENHANCING THE POTENTIAL

The inclusive development of TVE, referring to the ideology that individuals from different socioeconomic backgrounds access and utilize TVE for sustainable development (Lange et al., 2020), probably depends on “strengthened multi-stakeholder partnerships in TVET systems, capacity development of national stakeholders, a strong knowledge base and a supportive role by the international community” (UNESCO, 2012, p. 6). In China’s context

consisting of supportive policy system and initiatives, the barriers and limitations hindering TVE transformation are overrepresented in “partnerships within wider visions of development” instead of “the national ownership of TVET policies and strategies” (UNESCO, 2012, p. 6). In other words, it will be practical to engage multiple stakeholders in policy implementation to enhance the developmental potential of TVE. The case study demonstrated in this section may provide the purpose, objectives, and directions of strategies for various stakeholders to address the barriers hindering young migrant women studying TVE from successful transitions to decent employment.

CASE STUDY: EQUIPPING MIGRANT YOUTH WITH EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS AND EFFECTIVE NETWORKING FOR DECENT EMPLOYMENT IN CHINA

After recognizing the dilemma, striding across education and employment and facing disadvantaged migrant youth in the Pearl River Delta Region, one of the economically developed regions driven by export-oriented manufacturing industries in China, Save the Children implemented the Adolescent Skills for Successful Transitions (ASST) program in that region since 2020, which is sponsored by the Collinson Group actively engaging in corporate social responsibility. Aiming to provide migrant youth with capabilities and opportunities to access and secure decent employment, the program designed and implemented strategies emphasizing gender inclusivity, as illustrated in Figure 7 below. The strategies and activities incorporated in the program design were achieved by multistakeholder commitments, consequently enhancing migrant youth’s

employability skills and awareness of career development. The improvement among migrant youth was quantified by their perception of knowledge acquisition, for instance, self-reported improvements in employability skills and agency executed in job seeking.

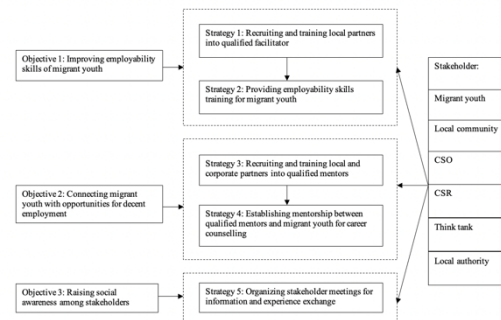


Figure 7: Project implementation strategies. Source: Adapted from Collinson Group 2021 and Save the Children 2022.

First, multistakeholder engagement was regarded as a continuing process to reconstruct social attitudes and awareness toward TVE. As illustrated in Figure 7, the implementation of strategies revolved around enterprises, CSO partners, local communities, and governmental agencies. For one thing, CSO partners dedicated to addressing barriers for migrant youth were able to bring about systematic solutions under the technical support from Save the Children and financial support from the enterprises incorporating youth employment into the corporate social responsibility. For another, systematic solutions to unemployment facing migrant youth included capacity development and awareness enhancement tailored to diverse stakeholders, ensuring the sustainability of project effectiveness. For instance, the facilitator training targeting corporate volunteers providing career counseling to migrant youth effectively

enhanced stakeholder capacity, while stakeholder meetings involved governmental agencies and think tank organizations to deepen stakeholders' understanding of employment dilemmas facing migrant youth.

Second, although actions proposed in the project did not modify the status quo of TVE, the improvement of employability skills would enact as a conversion factor enabling migrant youth to access and sustain decent employment requiring comprehensive abilities. As Zhang (2012) proposed, basic vocational skills include profession-specific skills and methodologies necessary to participate in professional activities and transferrable skills, such as communication, teamworking, multitasking, etc., which are scarcely imparted by traditional teaching materials (Li et al., 2020). Considering the approximate level of specialized skills acquisition, employers may have a higher inclination toward migrant youth with transferrable skills to solve complex issues with innovative solutions (Velde, 2009). In the future of work replaced by automation, individuals with strengthened transferrable skills will become relatively advantageous in performing unconventional responsibilities for transforming positions where the input of intelligent labor is outreaching that of physical labor (UNESCO, 2015; Zhou, 2021).

Third, the implementation strategies emphasizing gender inclusion and sensitivity would effectively assist young migrant women in dealing with gender segregation issues in the labor market. For one thing, while the recruited participants from TVE schools and local communities consisted of migrant youth studying diverse majors, the establishment of mentorship between migrant youth and

corporate volunteers was based on the former's personality and interest in career development, rendering migrant youth to acquire helpful advice on the relationship between their specializations and the adjustment to gender mainstreaming employment during career counseling activities. For another, focusing on young migrant women studying disciplines relevant to gender-segregated occupations, such as preschool teaching and social work, career counseling would focus on the solutions to gender stereotypes and discrimination that probably inhibit young migrant women from accessing diversified employment alternatives.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the governance approach to steer collective action proposed by UNESCO (2021b, p. 9), requiring "contributions of respective stakeholders to continuously maintain a responsive and agile system, keep it relevant for the economy and to make people capable and resilient to tackle current and future challenges in their working and private lives," practical and achievable recommendations to engage multiple stakeholders in addressing barriers and limitations identified in the previous section are demonstrated below.

1. Increase awareness of TVE potential among multiple stakeholders through "macro-level governance" and "meso-level advocacy" (UNESCO, 2021b, p. 9). For one thing, social attitudes toward TVE are fundamental to the effectiveness of the policy system consisting of multifaceted strategies ensuring the functionality of TVE (Liu & Wang, 2021). For another, as policies to involve stakeholders in the development of high-quality TVE are

recommendatory instead of enforceable, positive attitudes toward TVE correlate with stakeholder's willingness to cooperate and act (Liu & Wang, 2021). Consequently, their attitudes determine the strategies applied to ensure equal and effective access to TVE for individuals, particularly marginalized groups prone to be excluded from high-quality TVE. This will require the integration of supplemented policy initiatives tailored to increasing stakeholders' awareness and advocacy for cooperation underpinning the policy discourse targeting TVE.

2. Address inadequacies of resource allocation for TVE and curriculums targeting transferrable skills with the subsidization scheme. Considering the "micro-level delivery" conducted by TVE institutions (UNESCO, 2021b, p. 9), deficient and unequal financial support constitutes the infrastructure barrier hindering individuals from accessing effective TVE, further marginalizing individuals with relatively poor academic performance. Regarding the financial capacity of stakeholders, they may face challenges in providing consistent support specific to transferrable skills development. Therefore, subsidization initiatives differentiated to stakeholder engagement will be effective in ensuring the allocation efficiency of governmental investment in TVE (Liu & Wang, 2021).

Promote inclusive development of TVE adaptive to the transforming labor market with the emphasis on gender responsiveness and intersectionality (Lange et al., 2020). As contextual barriers inhibiting access to effective TVE correlate with socioeconomic inequalities accumulated from the education pathway and gender segregation in the labor market affecting individual selection of TVE specializations, specific strategies targeting intersectionality (Yeung, 2013) should be incorporated into the TVE policy system aiming to benefit the whole population. Consequently, the change in institutional discourse will assist stakeholders in gaining nuanced insights into issues resulting from intersectional inequalities and initiating solutions tailored to marginalized groups prone to be neglected in mainstreaming initiatives.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, young migrant women will benefit from the untapped potential of TVE while addressing individual and contextual barriers resulting from education stigmatization, inadequacies of resource allocation, and gender segregation in TVE specializations. First, while the construction and development of TVE in the education system are supported by the policy context specifying diverse implementation strategies to address inadequacies of TVE and facilitate youth employment, the labor market outcomes among young migrant women acquiring TVE credentials remain the status quo characterized by flexible and relatively low remunerated employment. Second, compared to the general education stream at the secondary level, TVE may have untapped potential to assist young migrant women with smooth transitions from

education to decent employment due to its advantages in higher returns on education with time efficiency, professional-oriented capacity development, and adapting curriculums to economic transitions. Third, conversely, young migrant women may encounter barriers to accessing the potential of TVE, attributing to the stigmatization of TVE, inconsistency between the quality of TVE and governmental resources

allocation, and female's overrepresentation in courses relating to the tertiary industry characterized by gender segregation within the labor market. Fourth, the specific case demonstrates the feasibility of multistakeholder actions in the localized context, informing policy to steer collective action (UNESCO, 2021b) in terms of social awareness, resource allocation, and intersectionality.

APPENDIX

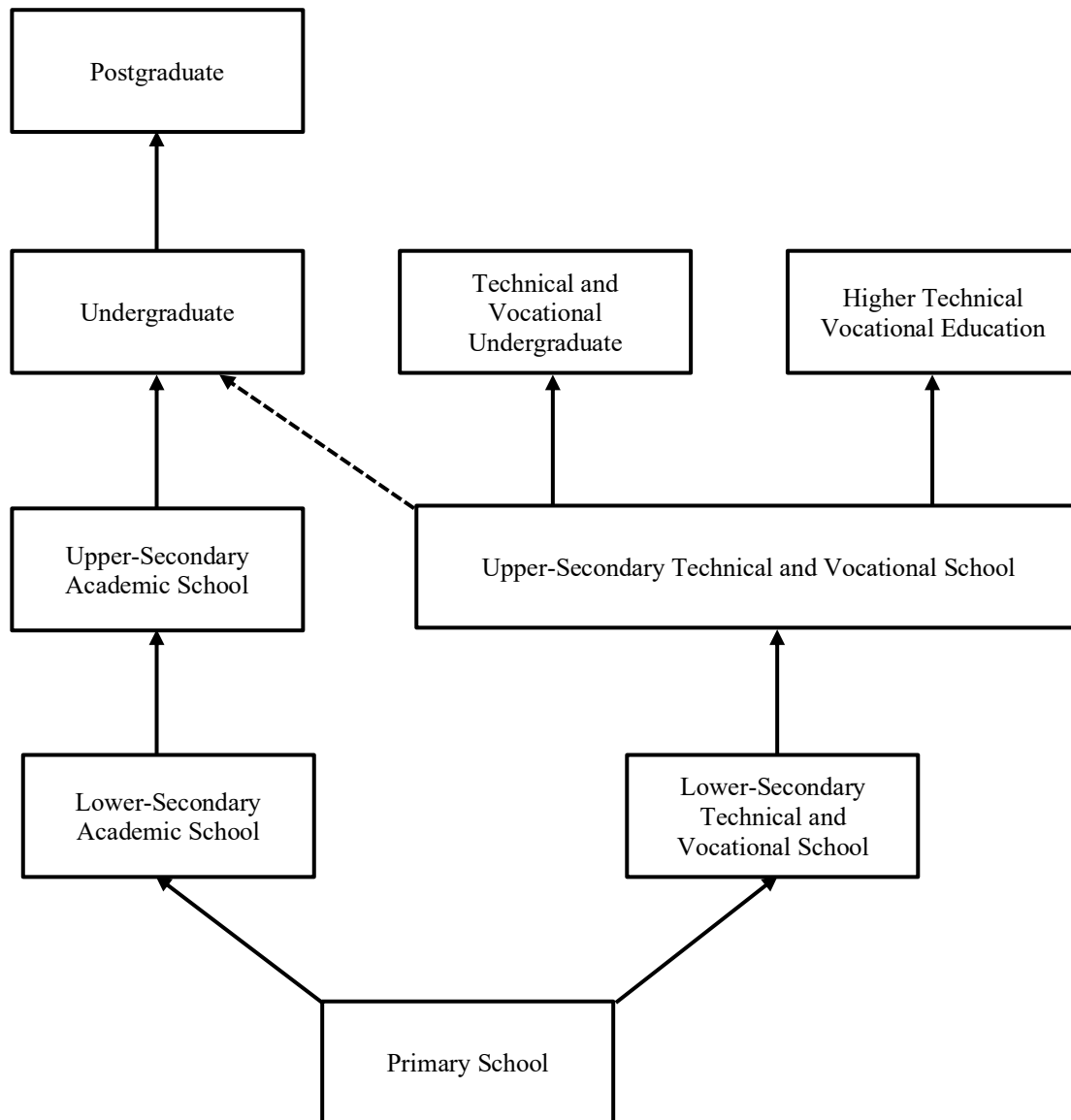


Figure 1: Progression of the education system in China

Source: Adapted from Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China 2022b; Wang & Guo 2019.

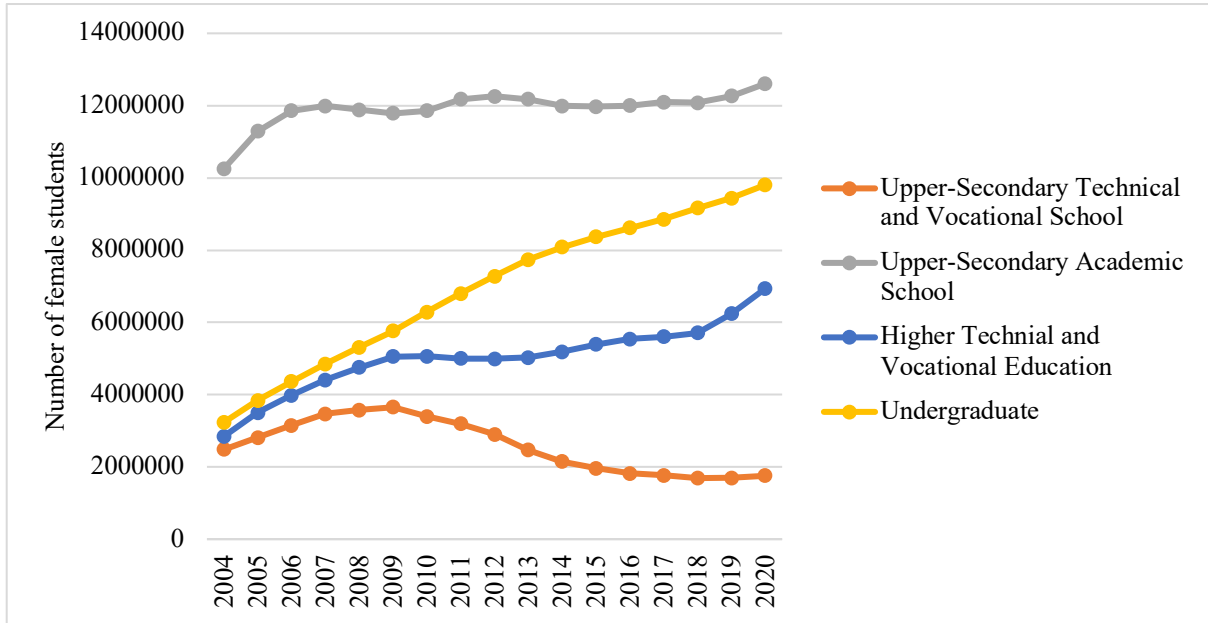


Figure 2: Number of female students by education type and level (2004-2020)
 Source: Adapted from Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China 2022a.

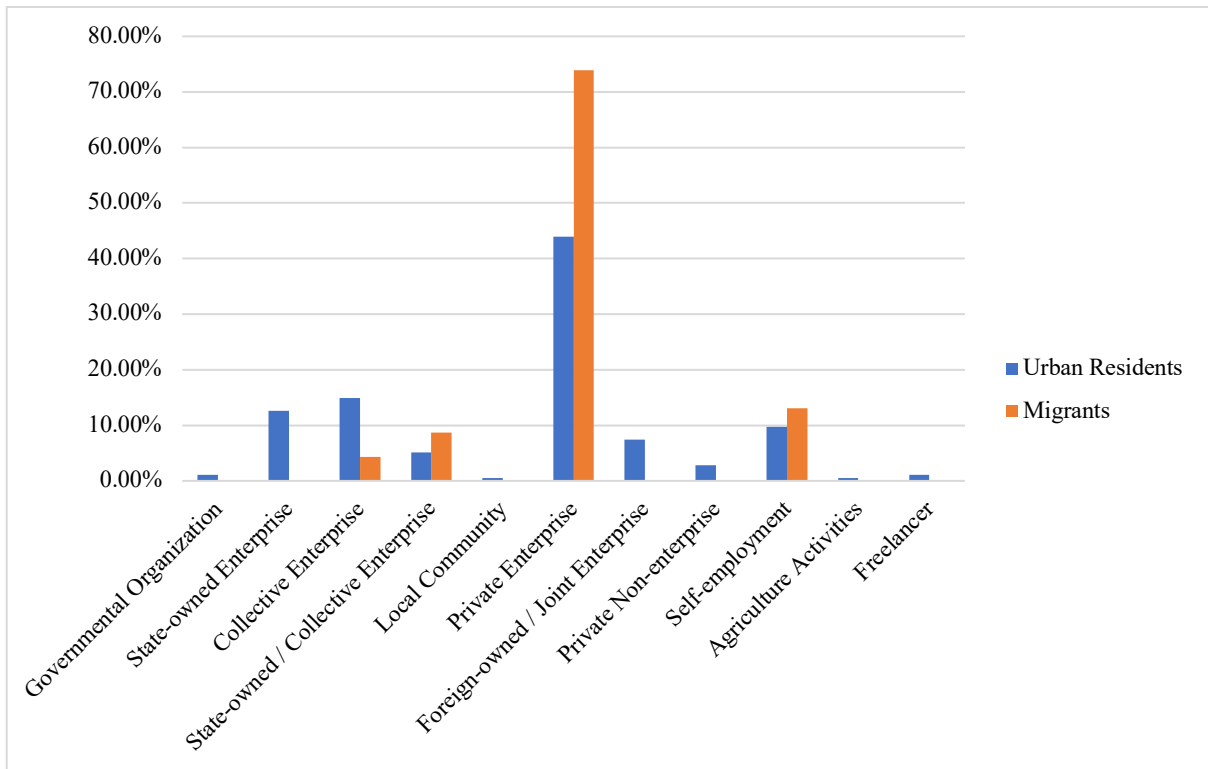


Figure 3: Organisation types where the initial employment located across urban and migrant females attending higher vocational and technical education
 Source: Adapted from China Labor-force Dynamic Survey 2018.

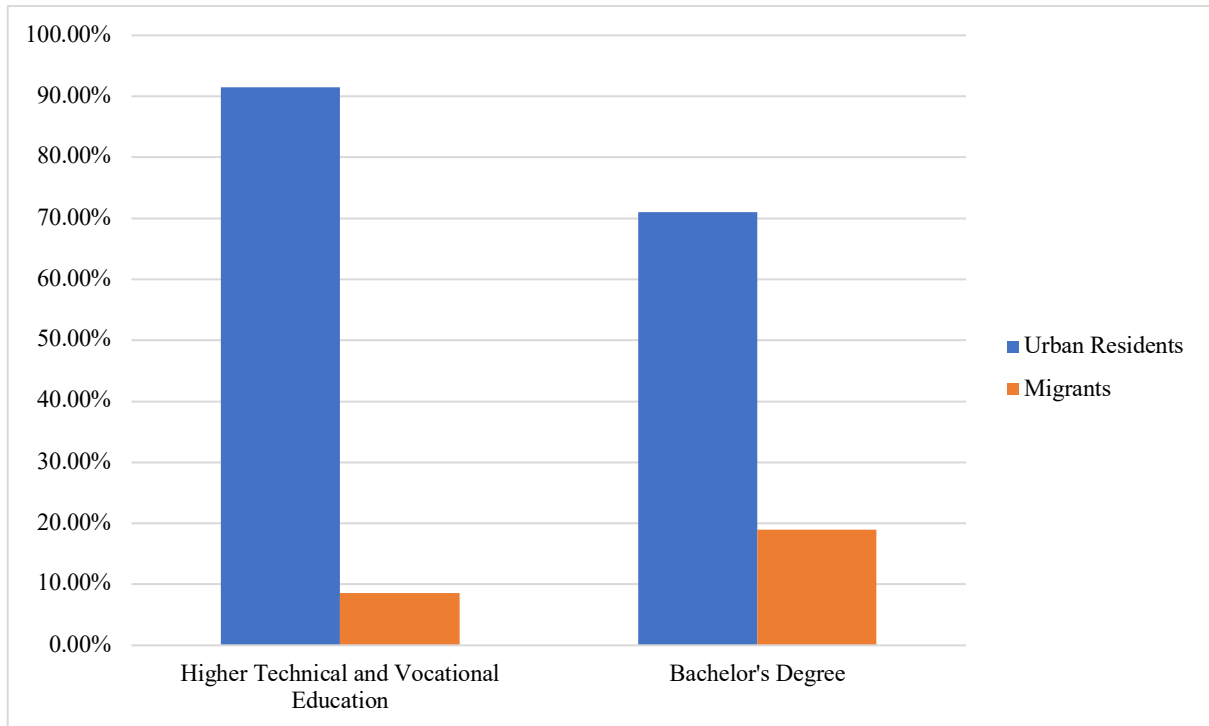


Figure 4: Comparison of social insurance system participation rate between urban and migrant females across education levels.

Source: Adapted from China Labor-force Dynamic Survey 2018.

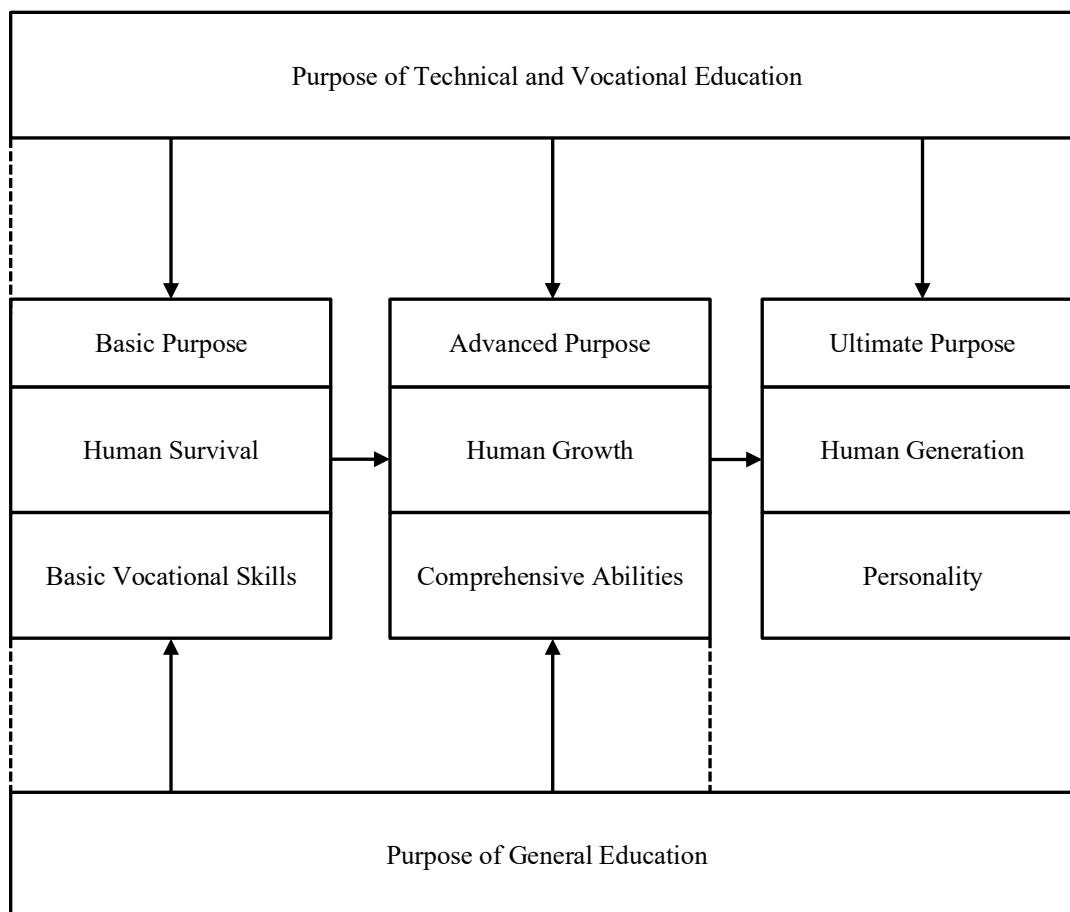


Figure 5: The hierarchical relationship between the purpose of vocational education and general education
 Source: Adapted from Zhang 2012

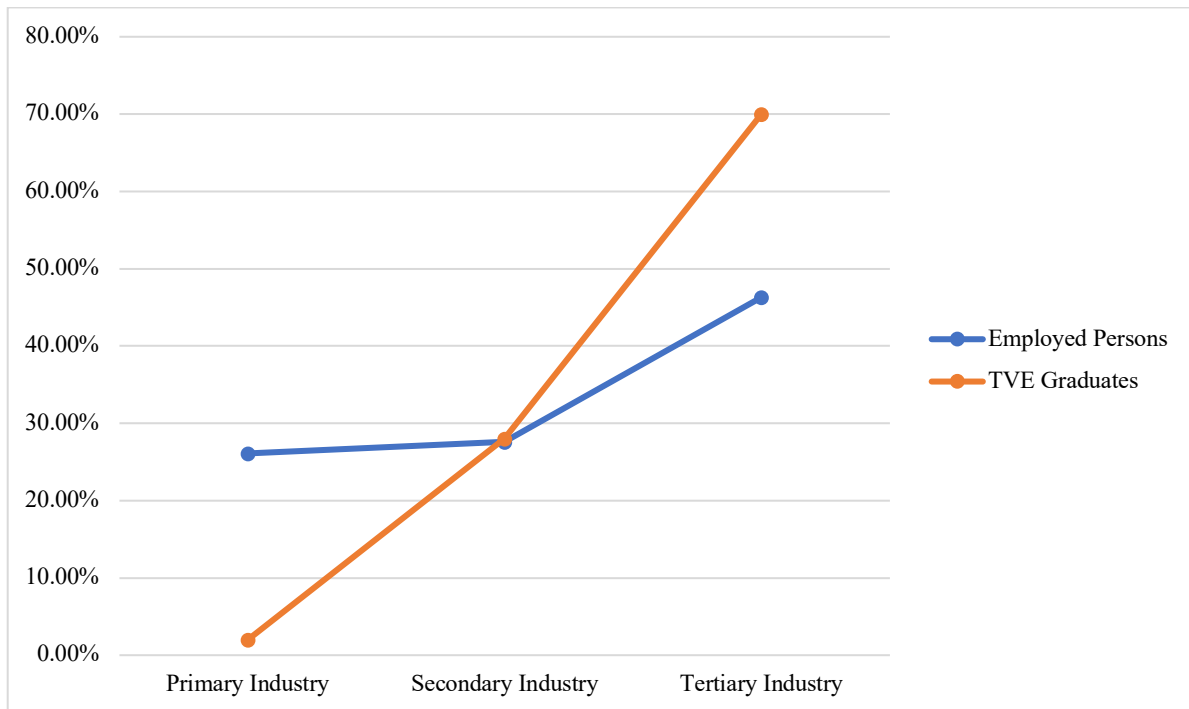


Figure 6: Composition of employed persons and TVE graduates across industries
 Source: Adapted from Fu 2020.

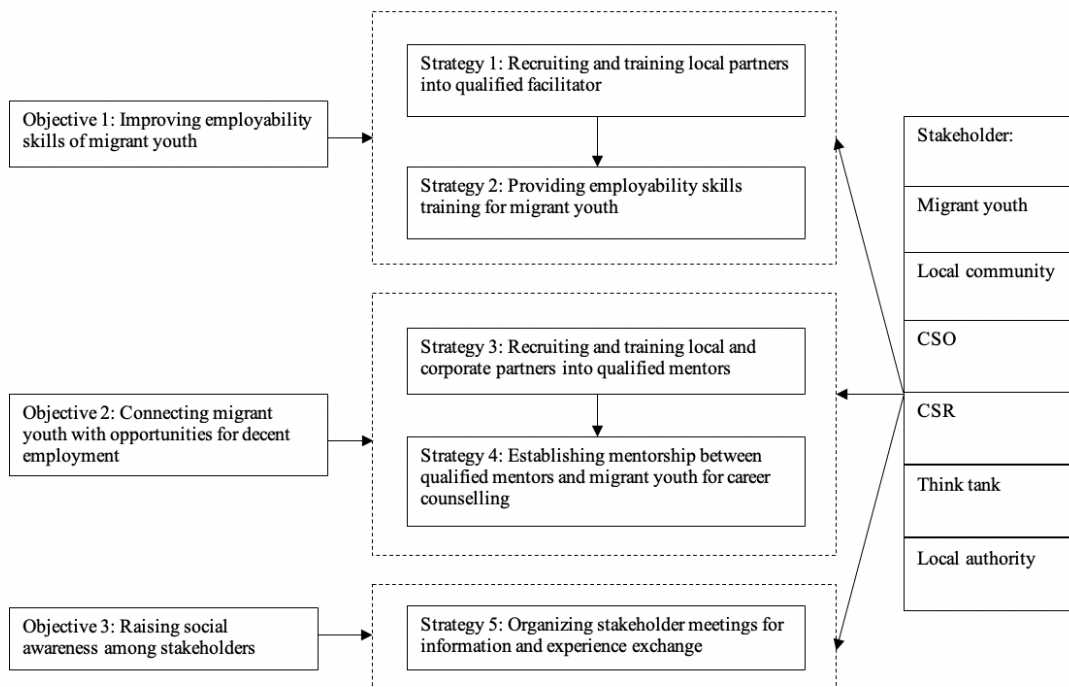


Figure 7: Project implementation strategies
 Source: Adapted from Collinson Group 2021 and Save the Children 2022.

Date	Issuance Department	Policy Name	Policy Category
February 2019	Ministry of Education	Implementation Plan for National Vocational Education Reform	Standard
February 2019	State Council	China's Education Modernization 2035	Supportive policy
February 2019	State Council	Implementation Plan for Accelerating Education Modernization (2018-2022)	Supportive policy
April 2019	Ministry of Education	Opinions on Implementing the Construction Plan of High-Level Higher Vocational Colleges and Specializations with Chinese Characteristics	Supportive policy
April 2019	Ministry of Education	Implementation Method of Establishing Enterprises Integrating Industry and Education	Standard
October 2019	Ministry of Education	Reform and Implementation Plan for Strengthening the Construction of "Double-Qualified" Teachers in Vocational Education in the New Era	Supportive policy
October 2019	Ministry of Education	Implementation Plan for Constructing National Site of Integrating Industry and Education integration construction point	Supportive policy
December 2019	Ministry of Education	Action Plan for Comprehensively Delivering Vocational Training and Promoting Employment and Entrepreneurship in Vocational Colleges	Supportive policy
September 2020	Ministry of Education	Action Plan for Improving Quality of Vocational Education (2020-2023)	Supportive policy
March 2021	State Council	Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan and 2035 Long-Term Objectives	Supportive policy
October 2021	State Council	Opinions on Promoting the High-Quality Development of Modernized Vocational Education	Supportive policy
May 2022	National People's Congress	Vocational Education Law of the People's Republic of China (2022 Amendment Version)	Standard

Table 1: Examples of TVE policy documents released from 2019 to 2020

Source: Adapted from Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China 2022c.

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