

## Market-driven Value in Shanghai's Higher Vocational School

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### Abstract

*In China, higher vocational education (HVE) is a specific educational form in terms of its educational goals, management structure, and close relationship with the economy. Since 1978, China has experienced not only a substantial increase in economic progress, but also the impact of globalization on its political, socio-economic, and educational development. This paper, based on a case study conducted at the Vocational College of Shanghai Jiaotong University (VCSJTU), examines how the school culture and values in HVE schools have changed since the 1970s. It also discusses the development of HVE in the context of globalization and how globalization has impacted China's educational system over the past thirty years. This paper uses a qualitative research approach, and describes the purpose, procedures, results, and implications of the VCSJTU case study.*

**Key Words:** globalization, higher vocational education, case study, Shanghai, China

### **1.0 Introduction: The Vocational College of Shanghai Jiaotong University (VCSJTU) Case Study**

This section includes five subsections. 1.1 provides the definition and characteristics of HVE. 1.2 examines theories of globalization. 1.3 discusses the rationale and purpose of the VCSJTU case study. 1.4 introduces basic information about VCSJTU. 1.5 presents the procedure used to conduct the case study.

#### **1.1 Higher Vocational Education (HVE): Definition and Characteristics**

In this section, definition and characteristics of HVE will be discussed.

##### **1.1.1 Definition**

In China, HVE is a specific type of post-secondary education in terms of its educational goals, management structure, and most importantly, its close relationship with the economy. According to Shi (2001), "The term 'HVE' is very much a Chinese 'invention'; because we have never encountered such a term in foreign texts, or in international cooperations. HVE is similar to the 'technical education' or 'professional education' offered in Western countries" (p. 336).

HVE, the highest level of vocational education, is one component of the higher education system in China. After the nine-year compulsory education program (ages 6-15), students in China must pay to go to a senior secondary school, which provides both academic and vocational education. These senior secondary schools include specialized technical schools, skilled workers' schools, and secondary vocational schools (Cleverley, 1991). HVE is a form of tertiary education that is open to all secondary school graduates. In China today, "vocational" skills mainly refer to technical skills including computer science, business negotiation, and translation and interpretation. Oriented to the local economy, the two-or-three school year programs of HVE institutions and colleges provide the advanced skills or specialists training needed by grass-roots working units.

##### **1.1.2 Characteristics**

HVE has a "dual" character since it provides both vocational and higher education. Whereas vocational education offers students practical and specialized skills, higher education sets a certain academic standard that satisfies the requirements of post-secondary education (Zhong, 2002). Thus, HVE is not merely training specialists for the labor market, but also is educating intellectuals to help with the development of a prosperous nation.

#### **1.2 Theories of Globalization**

Section 1.2.1 provides a brief look at how the term "globalization" is presented in literature. 1.2.2 examines the impact of globalization on China's education and 1.2.3 analyzes the cultural ideas that frame the VCSJTU case study.

### 1.2.1 Globalization: Literature Review

Globalization is a relatively new concept (Currie & Newson, 1998). Many researchers have attempted to define the term, but no comprehensive definition has been offered. The recent literature highlights the complexity of globalization, and scholars focus on its diverse political, economical, and cultural characteristics. Many researchers believe that a precise definition of globalization must address all three of these dimensions (Burbules & Torres, 2000; Rizvi, 2000). Rajae (2000) points out that “globalization is simultaneously political, economic and cultural” (p. 44). Shaw (1997) maintains that globalization is comparatively multi-dimensional and suggests that it is “a complex set of distinct but related processes—economic, cultural, social and also political and military—through which social relations have developed towards a global scale and with global reach, over a long historic period” (p. 498).

These wide-ranging attempts to “pin down” a definition demonstrate that globalization is a complex concept. Many researchers also observe that globalization is both a useful and slippery concept (Jordan & Yeomans, 2003). The term “globalization” is used with increasing frequency, but often in different ways by different commentators who support different perspectives. Nevertheless, the term “globalization” reminds us of the shared fate of people from different origins and national and cultural borders.

As the most widely-accepted definition of globalization is from the economic perspective (Ghosh, 2004; Luke & Luke, 2000), market-driven values had impacted China’s school setting tremendously. When market-driven values first influenced Chinese educational system in terms of introducing the sense of competition, effective management tools like contract with academic faculty, student survey, etc., the values proved to be an effective means of reducing state authority and enhancing academic power (Wang, 2008). However, since the late 1990s, some countries, for example, Great Britain, are introducing plans for market-driven school systems, whose purpose is to find, read, and respond to signals from the broad economic market. When universities are responding to the pressing demands from the market, market-driven values are becoming obvious in university governance (Mok, 2003).

### 1.2.2 China’s Experience of Globalization: Education over the Past Thirty Years

The People’s Republic of China was founded in 1949. In the 1930s, the Chinese educational system resembled the American system (Chow, 2002), and after 1949, the educational system in China gradually shifted towards the Soviet model. During the latter part of the 1980s and early 1990s, China’s educational system, to a large extent, returned to the former pre-Soviet model (Chow, 1994).

China has a centralized educational system. The Ministry of Education (MOE), the supreme administrative body for education in China, was also founded in 1949:

It is responsible for carrying out related laws, regulations, guidelines and policies of the central government; planning development of the education sector; integrating and coordinating educational initiatives and programs nationwide; maneuvering and guiding education reform countrywide (Education Evolution in China, 2004).

The curriculum and school administration in China is set by the MOE. However, since the late 1970s, many aspects of the educational system have changed. The first and most important transformation was the decentralization of education. Since the late 1980s, pressure to ensure that each Chinese province could acquire autonomy in education came from various sectors including business groups, professional educators, and the National Council of Education (Xu, 2001). Therefore, initially, reform in higher education was intended to increase the autonomy of institutions and to break apart the unified system of programs and the unified curriculum structure. Decentralization of education throughout China has been one of the long-term goals of the *Outline of Reform* issued by the State Council in 1993—a goal that was successfully accomplished by the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Overall, the educational structure has become more “rational” in terms of many new, practical educational policies issued over the past thirty years. For example, the *Higher Education Law of People’s Republic of China* was issued in 1998, along with many other proposals and policies. As a result, since the 1990s, the quality of education and training and the efficiency of higher education institutions have noticeably improved and become more responsive to the needs of economic and social development in the nation (Jin, 1998).

### 1.2.3 The Cultural Ideas That Frame the VCSTU Case Study

Many researchers have been critical about the relationship between globalization and culture. For example, Burbules and Torres (2000) present an interesting point of view:

A number of developing countries, such as China or Malaysia, have become increasingly suspicious of globalization and have tried to find ways to constrain its effects on their national way of life. Yet, at the same time they desire some of the benefits of participation in a global economy and exchange of goods and information (p. 17).

As an independent school, the experiences and practices of VCSJTU are more valuable because “the cultural flows of globalization are experienced more directly by self-managing schools and their students, as well as in a mediated fashion via educational policy and restructuring” (Lingard, 2000, p. 80). Thus, what are the VCSJTU experiences in terms of culture and value changes? What are the ideas about culture that frame the VCSJTU case study?

The first framing idea is a new form of culture, a *global culture* that accompanies growing globalization. Rizvi (2000) observes: “Such a dynamic cultural context has given rise to the so-called ‘third cultures’ in which the stories of movement are best told under the signs of hybridity and cultural *mélange*, rather than cultural adaptation” (p. 209). As discussed in section 1.2.2, China’s educational system has undergone radical and fundamental changes since the late 1970s: “Global changes in culture deeply affect educational policies, practices and institutions” (Burbules & Torres, 2000, p. 21). Thus, the idea of “global culture” is particularly useful for understanding the diversity of voices at VCSJTU, especially since the role of higher education is undergoing profound transformation, and students, faculty, and administration, may be operating with contradictory ideas about their own positions, and about what higher education is and can be.

The second framing idea is *the relationship between globalization and education*. Morrow and Torres (2000) suggest that: “The most visible impact of globalization on education in developing societies stems from the imposition of structural adjustment policies” (p. 43). This influence is particularly important for China. Carnoy and Rhoten (2002) suggest five ways in which globalization is making a major impact on education. In financial terms, most governments are under pressure to reduce public sector spending and to find funding sources for educational system expansion. In labor market terms, governments are being pressured to attract foreign capital and increase the average level of education in the labor force. Also, pressure exists to expand higher education due to the relative rise in demand for more higher-educated manpower. In educational terms, the quality of national educational systems is increasingly being compared internationally. Thus, Carnoy and Rhoten’s five judgments about how globalization is making a major impact on education are basic evaluation guidelines for the VCSJTU data analysis.

### 1.3 Rationale and Purpose of the VCSJTU Case Study

The topic of vocational education always has been one of the key research concerns in Chinese education, since it involves some complicated and dynamic factors such as the population, the economy, and decisions made by a socialist government. To date, researchers have investigated many aspects of HVE from diverse perspectives. For example, Yang and Wang (2000) examined the quality of HVE teachers and curriculum development. Cao, Zhang, and Huang (2002) point to the responsiveness of HVE to the labor market as well as analyzing the quality of the HVE program.

A review of the literature concerning HVE in China indicates that little research exists on the evolution of HVE, especially with regards to the broad background of the socialist market economy (SME) and globalization. As well, little research has been done with respect to interpreting the relationship between globalization, SME, and HVE in terms of the actual changes in HVE schools (Cheng, 1997). The lack of such research may distort any existing information and promote false conclusions concerning HVE policy formulation, implementation, and the evaluation process. Therefore, further HVE research is needed and thus my case study at VCSJTU.

The purpose of the VCSJTU case study is: 1) with regard to the broad background of globalization and the economic and educational contexts in China, to explore and interpret the actual changes in HVE—politically, ideologically, structurally, functionally, and operationally—as represented at VCSTJU, and 2) to investigate why the changes occur as they do by specifically examining the relationship between globalization and HVE in China, with a particular emphasis on explaining how HVE has been shaped and initiated by the emergence of SME and globalization.

#### **1.4 Vocational College of Shanghai Jiaotong University (VCSJTU)**

Since the late 1970s, China has introduced a series of educational reforms, and HVE has assumed an increasingly important role in Chinese education (Ma, 2002). In the 1990s, the establishment of a HVE college within a university marked a common trend within international higher education. For example, in Shanghai, many HVE schools were established during this time. VCSJTU being one of them.

VCSJTU is a subordinate college of Shanghai Jiaotong University. One of the oldest universities in China, Shanghai Jiaotong University was founded in 1896, and it is ranked as one of China's top ten universities. VCSJTU is autonomous and reports to the local Shanghai government, not to the central Beijing government. By 2003, VCSJTU had five departments: Business Management, Business English, Electrical Engineering, Naval Watercraft, and Tele-Communication. From 1999 to 2003, VCSJTU graduates received a diploma of education after three years of studies. Since the fall semester of 2003, VCSJTU has been entitled to deliver Bachelor's degrees in four departments, the only exception being the Naval Watercraft Department.

VCSJTU has a reputation of recruiting first-class faculty and students. It hires teachers from throughout the whole nation, and by 2002, 83.3% teachers were from areas outside of Shanghai. Without a doubt, the students at VCSJTU are top achievers in terms of the HVE field in Shanghai. From 2000 to 2003, their entrance examination records have always placed them first over other applicants, and graduates are very much welcomed in the labor market.

VCSJTU students perform their field work in their last school year. For the Naval Architecture Department, this field work takes over six months; for the other departments, at least three months are required. The job-hunting practices of VCSJTU students are similar to those in Western countries, and so in their last school year, they prepare their CV, make copies of their various certificates, and mail their application kit to the companies or enterprises in which they wish to be employed.

#### **1.5 The Case Study Method and Data Analysis**

In this section, why the case study method was employed and how the data was analyzed will be discussed.

##### **1.5.1 Why the Case Study Method?**

The case study method was chosen to do this research for two reasons. First, a review of the literature about HVE in China during the past decade indicates that few researchers had tried to interpret the relationship among globalization, SME, and HVE in terms of actual changes in HVE schools. The lack of such research may lead to distorted information and false conclusions with respect to HVE policy formulation, implementation, and its evaluation process.

Second, whether or not the case study is the most appropriate method for researching VCSJTU can be measured against the criteria established by Yin (1994). This criteria includes three conditions: 1) Research questions must be more exploratory than explanatory and descriptive. Yin (1994) suggests that the case study is most effective in searching for causes, i.e., in answering the "why" and "how" questions; and this strategy describes my research question type. 2) The control an investigator has over actual behavioral events is crucial. A researcher of VCSJTU would not have control over the events studied, e.g., the learning and teaching activities. 3) The degree of focus on contemporary events as historical events also is an important determinant. The VCSJTU research is about globalization, which is a generally new topic. Thus, according to these criteria, the case study is the most suitable and feasible method for doing research at VCSJTU.

##### **1.5.2 Data Analysis**

In the data analysis, special attention was paid to three things due to my foreknowledge about the potential difficulties that could arise. The research questions came first. The four research questions were taped to my work table, so I could review them whenever I was working there. This was a very useful strategy that helped me to maintain my sense of direction.

The phenomenological framework came second. As Patton (1990) observes, "The analysis will be heavily shaped by the theoretical framework within which the study is conducted" (p. 373). I often turned to my phenomenological framework and consulted related readings on phenomenology. I kept asking myself: "What is your own sense/feeling about the content?" "What questions were generated during the interview process?" "What personal insights/truths emerged?"

I find that analysis is a process of inductive reasoning, reflecting, searching, and theorizing. Within the phenomenological framework, pattern matching is another thing to keep in mind. The VCSJTU case study is a descriptive study that attempts in every possible way to work within its phenomenological framework, so as to establish its internal validity.

Alternative interpretation came third. I carefully considered the alternative interpretations after I had read sufficient evidence. I particularly noticed, for example, the frequency of different events and any possible means and variances that Miles and Huberman (1994), as well as Yin (2003), suggest.

This present paper is written on the basis of the VCSJTU case study. Its purpose is to examine market-driven values impacting education in China in terms of how they came to be the initiative for school reforms; and to better understand the ways VCSJTU in which the perceptions and behaviors of the teachers, students, and management of VCSJTU are shaped by these values.

## **2.0 Dominant School Culture: Market-driven Values**

In this section, subsection 2.1 presents the school mission and educational goals that set the orientation of VCSJTU. Subsection 2.2 examines the outcomes generated by these market-driven values.

### **2.1 School Mission and Educational Goals**

The SME emerged in 1992 when China's economic development evolved to a new stage. The main characteristic of this new stage was that the global expansion of markets and technical advances were the fundamental sources of structural development in the contemporary Chinese economy. Therefore, education, especially HVE, needed to be responsive to this development by making appropriate changes (Yu & Zeng, 1994).

As a HVE college born during this time, VCSJTU was inevitably influenced by SME and globalization. Since its establishment, VCSJTU has tried in every possible way to allow for such influence and has set out its own school mission: 1) to cultivate the skilled talents of those who are specialized in advanced technology applications and who are competent in production, construction, management, and service; 2) to foster cooperation between the college and industrial enterprises; 3) to emphasize the HVE curriculum development; and 4) to encourage the development of a faculty with two qualifications: one academic (such as professors, assistant professors) and the other practical (such as qualified engineers or accountants). To achieve these objectives, each specialty/major of each department has its own educational goals to accomplish. Both the school objectives and the educational goals of the department act to "guide" the HVE program. Each year, in its program description bulletin, VCSJTU sets forth its HVE program aims, which are administered by the Shanghai Educational Committee according to the terms of reference set down by the HVE policies of China. The 2003 bulletin summarizes the five aims of VCSJTU for the year:

- 1) Provide HVE students with a solid knowledge foundation and versatile practical skills, especially in foreign language and computer application skills so to meet social and economic requirements. By the time of graduation, each HVE student should try to gain the proficiency certificate related to his/her major.
- 2) Develop corporation between college and industrial enterprises. Enterprises are encouraged to engage in curriculum design and to provide a place for field work/internship.
- 3) Maintain a teaching body that is both theoretically knowledgeable and practically skillful.
- 4) Promote our HVE program level by cooperating with international universities and colleges, and by learning about the experiences of advanced HVE colleges overseas.
- 5) Enhance our understanding of the importance of our students finding employment and try to increase their employment rate each year.

These aims clearly show that the overall objective of the HVE program at VCSJTU is to promote the HVE level within the college (aims 3, 4, and 5), and this strategy is definitely linked to a broad context of national economic development (aims 1 and 2).

### **2.2 Market-driven Value as the Initiative for School Reforms**

When VCSJTU set its educational goals based on market concerns, a distinct market-driven ideology becomes evident in the school culture. This value is deeply embedded and consistent with the local education policy priorities in Shanghai. Moreover, this ideology is in sharp contrast to the standards that held more strongly to the non-market, educational discourses that had existed in China for decades before the emergence of SME in 1992.

For example, consider the school's majors. The respondents at VCSJTU were aware of the need to bring the school's development in line with the changing global economy—even though they claimed that they were more concerned with educational than economic change—especially with what they perceived as global trends towards an outcomes-based curriculum driven by the market. Besides, business executives also were involved in the design of the major/specialty, and the new skills that they needed for their businesses became the courses at VCSJTU. As Yang—the administrator in charge of student admissions—indicated: “If the graduates of some majors cannot survive in the labor market for two successive years, that is, if their employment percentage are lower than 80%, we will immediately cut down old and set up new majors” (Yang, personal interview, July 1, 2002).

This kind of market-driven approach goes well beyond the majors alone. Li and Yang, two administration officers, both observed that the market economy, school management and policy, and especially the quality of their HVE program are all subject to the strict regulations set by market outcomes. Li said, “We run our school to meet social needs—needs set by the employment and labor market” (Li, personal interview, August 26, 2003). Yang added, “Whether or not our program is successful is not determined by us, rather, by whether or not our graduates can survive in the labor market and do a good job in the future” (Yang, personal interview, July 1, 2002). At VCSJTU, this understanding is not unique to Li and Yang. This accepted value certainly directs school development and influences its culture in a fundamental way, even well beyond the expectations of VCSJTU. The following section examines further the results of such market-driven values.

## **2.2 Outcomes Generated from Market-driven Values**

Two outcomes will be examined in this section. 2.2.1 discusses two different voices at the school. 2.2.2 analyzes the student's role.

### **2.2.1 Two Different Voices**

Overall, administrative staff and some faculty were positive about the benefits of changes made according to market-driven values, especially the new orientation set by SME and the impact of economic globalization. For example, one professor said, “We are considering establishing our own independent university, so as to no longer be the subordinate college of Shanghai Jiaotong University.” When being asked what “good” the independent university will bring them, he summarized:

An independent university means we will enjoy flexibility in recruiting students. We will recruit as many students as possible. Well... now we have to consider the annual quota Shanghai Jiaotong University gives. In 2003, the quota of our Bachelor program students is only 181. If we are an independent university, there can be 2,000 students in our Bachelor program alone. More students means more money, and then our equipment and facilities will all be improved (W, personal interview, September 1, 2003).

However, some strong negative voices also spoke against market-driven values. Shen, a student who came to VCSJTU in 2000, said:

I think our curriculum is ‘too much’ closely related to the market. Everything must meet the market's standards. Our exam marks, or number of certificates, are like the ‘sign’ of a successful HVE program. Colleges are for cultivating ‘people’, not ‘certificates’ or a ‘passing test rate.’ Well, I understand this is a HVE college so the market requirement is very important; but anyway, this is still a college first, isn't it? It is not a training center for distributing diplomas (Student group #1, group interview, December 6, 2003).

Some faculty also expressed their concerns from another angle. They worried about the effect of “overly fast” major changes, which not only caused a substantial increase in their work load, but also led them to doubt the quality of the new majors. One professor who had been at VCSJTU since its establishment said:

We cannot only focus on our ‘success’ in terms of money gained. The teaching quality and well-rounded, well-educated students are always the most important thing in a school... Also, I think our school board and administration body should learn some educational theory; this is school administration, not the administration of other settings. Educational theory can also enable more efficient communication between the administration body and our faculty (G, personal interview, November 13, 2003).

Market-driven values, instead of encouraging VCSJTU to consider its students' requests to reorient the curriculum and enhance the efficiency of administration, create pressures towards curriculum conformity, especially when the needs of business and the labor market are involved. Increasingly, VCSJTU is in a more competitive external environment, and thus has to improve performance to secure adequate funding and gain a favorable standing in the HVE field. School policy development and the design of new majors are increasingly guided and shaped by the perceived needs of consumers and the markets. Under such a value regime, the "unsuccessful" curriculum or "poor" performance of the school mainly refers to a failure to meet market needs, or to a lower employment percentage. Shi, a female graduate, commented: "The all-around education is not only faded in our school, but in other HVE colleges as well. When the whole atmosphere changes, the education will no doubt be influenced no matter whether you like it or not" (Shi, personal interview, November 22, 2003). A professor in the Business Management department also said:

What kind of values are running our majors set-up? What kind of values are being promoted—market and efficiency? With this direction, I dare say that the future of our education is in really dangerous waters. You can see such values even in the popular songs. I mean, if we enjoy it only as an entertainment, then that is OK. But, if everyone is pursuing that and ignores the real valuable culture of our own tradition, don't you think it is dangerous? (Z, personal interview, October 8, 2003)

Under this market-driven value atmosphere, VCSJTU gradually separated into two groups, each of which includes students, faculty, and representatives of the administration body. One group feels very positive about this value, whereas the other group does not exactly oppose it, although they feel anxious, uneasy, deeply concerned, and kind of "lost." According to the interview data, they are afraid not of the Westernization accompanying the spread of globalization, but of the possible precipitate retreat of their native culture beat down by that globalization. Besides these two distinct groups, some hesitant people exist "in the middle." The conflict between those holding market-driven and non-market-driven values creates a deep schism between the two groups. The following section examines the behavior and practices of one group of students.

### **2.2.2 Students or Consumers?**

At VCSJTU, a group of students who have adopted market-driven values behave in a way that most people would not attribute to a "good Chinese student." Classroom observation, interviews, and my own experience demonstrate that several serious problems have occurred with these students. Chow (2002) suggests that the most distinguishable feature of Chinese students is the following: "Chinese students by and large tend to take their studies seriously" (p. 134). However, this characteristic has quickly faded away, and diligent students are becoming more scarce. Some students have a strong sense of so-called "individualism." Instead, I would call it being "self-centered" rather than "individualistic" because it is not individualism in the generally understood sense. These students show no respect for the faculty or their teachers' work. According to my data, such students come to VCSJTU for the sake of the Bachelor degree, or the HVE diploma issued by Shanghai Jiaotong University, which are credentials to enhance their job prospects after graduation. These students do not view themselves as "students" but as "paying customers" who deserve everything because they have paid their fees. They are not pursuing a further education; rather, they are consuming a subject called "education." This sense of being a paying customer "penetrates" their words, behaviors, and thoughts. This kind of student, representing a growing trend, usually are economically advantaged and do not cherish their college opportunity. Professor Zhao in the Electronics Department explains:

They don't care about their academic records; they care for nothing. Even if they fail to graduate, they won't care at all. You want to see the hard-working students like you and me in our college life from decades ago? I'm afraid you can only find a few (Zhao, personal interview, September 29, 2003).

Zhao believes that these students' lack of commitment to academic study is the result of both individualism and the failure of their family upbringing. From my own observations, I believe that these students see college as a marketplace, and themselves as its consumers. Naturally, from this perspective, they will ask VCSJTU to reward them fairly as consumers or quasi-employees in the marketplace. Therefore, for these students, the relationship between teachers and students is more like a "cooperative partnership" than that of "a mentor and a learner". Together, these "cooperative partners" engage with the labor market challenges and issues like the employment rate, gaining more certificates, etc.

### **3.0 HVE–China’s Response to Globalization in Educational Terms**

Through observing the practices of VCSJTU, it is becoming clear how HVE has responded to globalization, and how globalization has shaped the development of HVE. Reorienting the educational system means training for new purposes and recognizing new priorities, which are likely to impact the new educational forms being offered, and the new educational goals being established. Agelasto and Adamson (1998) observe:

The adoption of a new economic model, which involved a change from planned economy to socialist market economy, had important implications for higher education... This latter type of economy is characterized by volatility, competitiveness, openness and information network. It requires a large supply of trained professionals and technical personnel who are practical, flexible, versatile, international and innovative. Since the market fluctuates quickly according to the principle of supply and demand, the society constantly needs people who are well-trained in a certain specialty or a combination of specialties quickly. A market economy not only requires trained personnel speedily, it also needs a large number of them (p. 4)

Agelasto and Adamson’s comments perfectly describe China’s situation. In the transformation from socialist planned economy (SPE) to SME, HVE emerged as a new form of education, which for two reasons can be viewed as a Chinese response to economic transformation.

First, the emergence of HVE was a response to the pressure of economic development. HVE emerged in the mid 1980s to meet the demands created by the development of science and technology. Before 1985, vocational education in China was mainly at the secondary level (Yu, 1998). However, in the late 1980s, an acute shortage of scientific and technical personnel occurred, brought about by the rapid rise of economic development. Consequently, graduates from secondary vocational schools fell far short of the demand, both in quality and quantity. In 1987, the Party Congress of China proclaimed that further economic growth “hinged” on the progress of science and technology, and increasingly on the quality of education received by personnel (Seeberg, 1998). In response, HVE was enlarged to satisfy the social and economic demands for labor, and it was expanded to produce personnel skilled in processing technology and information (Seeberg, 1998). As a result, from the mid 1980s onward, enrollment in HVE more than doubled to almost 3 million by 1994 (World Bank Report, 2003).

Second, HVE is designed to meet the requirements set by SME. In the 1990s, China’s economic reform expanded into education (Lin, 1999). Also at that time, a series of administration and curriculum reforms led to the restructuring of the HVE system (Yu & Zeng, 1994).

It is obvious that the emergence of SME shaped the development of HVE in both theory and practice. At the theoretical level, in various ways, policies, official documents, and laws confirm the close relationship between SME and HVE. For example, Yu (1998) clearly articulates the goal of vocational education reform:

The comprehensive goal of our reform is: guided and planned by the government, on the basis of a multi-sponsored school-managing system contributed to by different trades, enterprises and institutions, oriented by the demand of labor market and vocational education training market, while supported by a comprehensive vocational education service system, and supported by the policies of the governments of all levels, a new vocational education system should be developed to respond to the developing socialist market economy (p. 23).

This statement demonstrates that the SME controls the path and pace of the development of HVE. Whether or not HVE can meet the requirements of SME becomes the criteria by which to measure the efficiency and quality of HVE.

### **4.0 VCSJTU Case Study Implications**

According to the Carnoy and Rhoten’s (2002) criterion introduced in section 1.2.3, globalization is producing major impacts on China’s higher education. This phenomenon can be observed in the changes and practices at VCSJTU, its financial sources, and its close relationship with the global labor market. However, VCSJTU does not believe that the impact of globalization is a one-way, top-down process in which global influences are brought to bear on passively receptive colleges, their educational goals, and practices. Rather, evidence from this present case study indicates that VCSJTU tries to be actively involved in constructing global patterns, and in modifying global trends so that the process is interactive.



Consequently, the HVE program at VCSJTU is becoming “market oriented.” Then, the question arises: As the most closely market-related educational form, is the HVE in VCSJTU inevitably market oriented? Evidence from the case study suggests that to a very large extent, the origins of various conflicts are rooted in this concern. Based on my observations, the tensions at VCSJTU cannot be simply explained by analyzing globalization and its impact on education. Rather, a whole range of factors specific to Shanghai and to VCSJTU combine to explain the origins of these conflicts. At a more profound level, the disagreements at VCSJTU are rooted in the conflict between Chinese culture and globalization. Consequently, “deep” concerns arise about globalization and its impact on HVE, given the “superficial” success of VCSJTU in the past decade.

As a latecomer to China, HVE needs to strive for world-class quality, which requires learning from, and conformity to, international practices. Facing the external pressures of globalization, VCSJTU did not ignore the imperatives for change that were internal to HVE. In fact, VCSJTU understood the necessity of putting HVE on Chinese soil and of using China’s contemporary context and real needs as the starting point from which to determine whether HVE could be successful. These “internal initiatives” can turn almost automatically into “internal pressures” if they do not mesh well with “external pressures.” Unfortunately, VCSJTU was successful in introducing the values of globalization into its school, although it failed to realize that the values inherent in globalization are not in accord with traditional Chinese values. The gap between these two value systems is too great for VCSJTU to have reconciled them within only a few years. Therefore, the more advanced the VCSJTU curriculum becomes, the more internal pressure the school suffers, especially because VCSJTU is not closely linked with the central government— rather, it is on its own.

The most striking finding of the VCSJTU case study is that the HVE program needs to cope with the Chinese setting in a more rational way, and thus work to reorient itself, given the close relationship between HVE and the economy. As long as HVE wants to develop in a rational way in the long run, the tradition out of which it grew cannot be ignored. Therefore, the following suggestions have as much to do with promoting a more supportive background for HVE to develop, as they do to make it more widely recognized and to function properly in China.

First, VCSJTU needs to understand that HVE in China is not a duplicate of foreign educational systems. Rather, despite all the foreign influences brought into the educational system, the first consideration was always that the system remain “Chinese.” This imperative implies that Western culture and learning are just for the head, while the heart remains resolutely native.

Second, VCSJTU needs to embrace both technology and basic traditional Chinese knowledge. Ignoring local culture in an era of globalization can result in the loss of personal identity.

Third, given its achievements in the past decade, VCSJTU needs to develop an understanding of the importance of reflecting on its own Chinese culture. Such reflection will help VCSJTU to gain a more insightful perspective on the various problems that arise in the school, and to find a more rational, suitable orientation for the future.

Overall, the examination of VCSJTU practices shows that the introduction of HVE requires the necessary Chinese “soil” to grow well. Moreover, no educational system exists so that a society can only employ its “form” and ignore its “soul.” A mismatch between an educational form and a local educational setting leads to a distortion of the nature of education and a loss of HVE identify itself. Introducing a new educational form is more like introducing a collection of new ideas and values. In essence, recognizing a new educational form is to recognizing the values behind the form.

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