

# Current Development, Problems and Reform Trends of Comprehensive High Schools in China

Li Wei<sup>1\*</sup>, Gao Zhidan<sup>2</sup>

1.Professor of Education School, Huanggang Normal University, Huanggang City, Hubei Province,438000, China

2.Postgraduate student of Education School, Huanggang Normal University, Huanggang City, Hubei Province,438000, China

\*Corresponding author: Li Wei, 542790659@qq.com

**Copyright:** 2025 Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY-NC 4.0), permitting distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited, and explicitly prohibiting its use for commercial purposes.

**Abstract:** In August 2023, the Opinions on the Implementation of the Action Plan for Expanding and Improving the Quality of Basic Education in the New Era, jointly issued by the Ministry of Education and three other departments, proposed to “actively develop comprehensive high schools.” The construction of comprehensive high schools is an important initiative to promote the integration of vocational and popular education, aiming to promote the integration of high school education in China, cultivate all-rounded talents, and help alleviate the pressure of further education. This study traces the history of comprehensive high schools in China, analyzes their current development, and points out the problems and challenges faced in policy support, innovation in school operation mode, curriculum construction, and teacher training. In order to achieve the steady development of comprehensive high schools, China is actively promoting reforms, including optimizing top-level planning to meet national development needs, deepening the integration of vocational education and popular education to explore diversified operation, strengthening curriculum construction to promote students’ personalized development, and improving teacher quality to build a comprehensive team of teachers.

**Keywords:** Comprehensive High schools; Current Development; Problematic Challenges; Reform Trends

**Published:** Apr 16, 2025

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.62177/jetp.v2i2.242>

## Introduction

On August 30, 2023, China’s Ministry of Education, National Development and Reform Commission, and Ministry of Finance jointly issued the Opinions on the Implementation of the Action Plan for Expanding and Improving the Quality of Basic Education in the New Era, which proposes to “promote the diversified development of ordinary senior high schools, build a number of ordinary senior high schools with special features in science and technology, humanities, foreign languages, sports, and the arts, and actively develop comprehensive senior high schools “. Comprehensive senior high schools are a new type of school model that integrates general senior high schools and secondary vocational education. They offer the cultural curriculum of general senior high schools, laying the foundation for students to take the general college entrance examination; they also offer vocational courses, cultivate students’ professional skills, and provide students with pathways to enter higher vocational colleges and universities or direct employment. Comprehensive senior secondary schools aim to meet the diversified development needs of students and realize the integration of general education and vocational education. Students can flexibly choose between different programs according to their own interests and abilities, adapting to society’s

demand for diversified talents and expanding more possibilities for future development.

Comprehensive high school was first created in the United States, and has now become a mainstream and universal trend in the development of high school education in the world. China has also been continuously exploring and reforming comprehensive high schools, from initial exploration, steady progress, and declining to the present day development, actively exploring comprehensive high schools has once again become an important way for China to promote the integration of vocational and popular education. In recent years, provinces and cities across the country have responded to the national policy call to promote the development of comprehensive high schools, however, there are still many difficulties and challenges in the implementation process. It is especially necessary to analyze the current situation and problems of comprehensive high school development in China, and to clarify the trend of reform.

## **1. Historical origins and current development of comprehensive high schools in China**

Integrated high schools are a product of the universalization of educational development and are now widely used around the world. In Europe, since the 1940s, with the increase in the popularization of education, the topic of “comprehensive education and choice education” has been discussed in the education policies of various countries, providing the basis for the development of comprehensive high schools. In China, with the diversification of society’s demand for human resources and the deepening of education reform, comprehensive high schools, as an innovative school model, aim to promote the all-round development of students and provide them with diversified learning paths to choose from.

### **1.1 Origins and international development of comprehensive high schools**

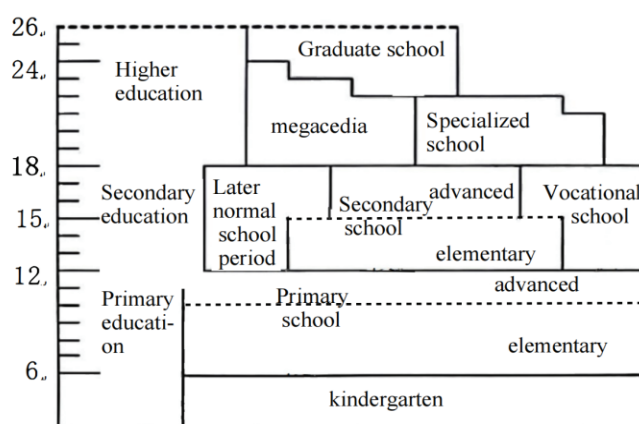
Comprehensive high school is an educational model first created in the U.S. In 1917, the U.S. enacted the Smith-Hughes Act, which provided for the addition of elective vocational education courses in general high schools and transformed them into comprehensive high schools with both higher education and employment orientation, marking the initial formation of a parallel education system of vocational schools and comprehensive high schools. In 1918 the U.S. Commission on Reorganization of Secondary Education issued the Fundamental Principles of Secondary Education, which formally established the basic status of comprehensive high school education at the high school level.<sup>[1]</sup> In 1918, the U.S. Commission on Reorganization of Secondary Education issued the Fundamental Principles of Secondary Education, which formally established the basic status of comprehensive high schools in the high school education stage.<sup>[2]</sup> Into the 1960s, thanks to the famous educator Conant’s strong promotion, comprehensive high school gradually became the most popular form of high school education in the United States. According to statistics, the percentage of students in comprehensive high schools in the United States in 1991 was already as high as 98.4%.<sup>[3]</sup> The successful practice of comprehensive high schools in the United States has had a profound impact on the world, and many countries have followed suit. Taking the United Kingdom as an example, in 1965, the Labor Party government implemented the reform of comprehensive high schools in order to break down the barriers between grammar high schools and modern high schools. To date, comprehensive secondary schools have become the main form of senior secondary education in the United Kingdom.<sup>[4]</sup> According to the British Bureau of Statistics, by 2007, there were a total of 3,399 secondary education schools in England in the three main forms of academic, vocational and comprehensive education, of which 176 were modern secondary schools, 164 were grammar secondary schools, and 3,059 were comprehensive secondary schools, accounting for about 90%.<sup>[5]</sup> Since the 1970s, Sweden has abolished the original vocational high schools and merged them with general high schools, collectively known as comprehensive high schools, and currently about 90% of lower secondary school graduates choose to study in comprehensive high schools.<sup>[6]</sup> In addition, countries such as Australia, Germany, Japan, Finland and the former Soviet Union have also carried out reforms of comprehensive high schools to varying degrees and achieved positive results. Overall, comprehensive high school as an educational model has become widely popular around the world and has gradually become a core component of the high school education system in various countries. Although there are differences in the structure, curriculum, teaching staff and duration of the school system in these countries, they all unanimously emphasize the balanced development of general cultural education and vocational skills education. The popularity of this education model not only reflects the internationalization of education, but also the pursuit of diversity and inclusiveness in education. In contrast, the development of comprehensive high schools in China has been slow.

## 1.2 The Development of Comprehensive High Schools in China

### 1.2.1 Exploring Comprehensive High Schools in the Republican Era

China's exploration of comprehensive high schools began as early as the Republic of China Period before the year of 1949(R.O.C.) In 1922, the R.O.C. school system was enacted, which advocated the establishment of vocational education courses in general secondary schools to train people with certain professional skills, and the implementation of agriculture, industry, commerce, teacher training, and family affairs in senior secondary schools.<sup>[7]</sup> This period was the first practical exploration of comprehensive high schools in China, which attempted to integrate general education with vocational education at the high school level. However, due to the limitations of the social and economic conditions at that time, there were conditions such as insufficient student population and low popularization, and students had difficulties in earning a living and pursuing education to achieve the original intention and purpose of the policy design. In 1932, with the introduction of the Vocational School Law and the Vocational School Charter and other related policies, the comprehensive high school system was officially abolished, and general secondary schools, vocational schools and teacher training schools were established respectively at the secondary education stage. The boundaries between vocational education and general education became clearer, and the two began to develop along different paths.

Figure 1: The Renxu Educational System Diagram



### 1.2.2 Development of comprehensive high schools after the reform and opening up

In the 1980s, some regions of China began to sporadically explore the mode of operation of comprehensive high schools; in October 1980, the State Council of the People's Republic of China approved a report by the Ministry of Education and the State General Administration of Labor, entitled "Report on the Structural Reform of Secondary Education". It was clearly stated therein that general education should be organized in parallel with vocational and technical education, and that vocational and technical education courses should be gradually added to general high schools, with the subjects of study to be chosen by the students themselves. Some general high schools are to be reorganized into vocational (technical) schools, vocational high schools and agricultural high schools. These schools enroll junior high school graduates for vocational (technical) education and offer general culture courses. Subsequently, the Decision on the Reform of the Education System, issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the State Council in May 1985, pointed out that basic education should be carried out in stages, that secondary education should be diversified, and that vocational and technical education was regarded as the key to restructuring secondary education. The decision called for practical and effective measures to be taken to vigorously develop vocational and technical education in order to meet the needs of economic and social development for skilled personnel of all kinds. Both of these policy documents and reports have pointed out the direction and laid the foundation for the reform of China's secondary education, especially upper secondary education. They were of great significance in promoting the synergistic development of China's general and vocational education to meet the needs of socialist modernization.

By the 1990s, with the establishment of the socialist market economy system and the continuous development of higher education, the reform of state-owned enterprises led to the layoff of a large number of workers, and the employment space for

secondary graduates was squeezed, while vocational schools lost their advantages and experienced a shortage of students after they switched from assigning work to recommending employment. The enrollment scale of universities has been expanding, and university graduates have stronger competitiveness in the job market. Against this background, the educational concepts and values of students and their parents have also shifted. With the increasing emphasis on enhancing core competitiveness in the job market, people are more and more eager to receive a university education to enhance their competitive advantage in the job market. The previous vocational skills orientation of “mastering a trade” is gradually being replaced by “pursuing opportunities for further education”. However, at that time, the system of further education mainly served the selection of general higher education institutions, making it difficult for vocational school students to enter universities through the general college entrance examination. In order to change this situation, the state began to actively promote the integration of general and vocational high schools, and in 1999, the State Council formally approved the Ministry of Education’s “Plan of Action for the Revitalization of Education in the 21st Century,” which for the first time explicitly mentioned the concept of “comprehensive high school” at the national level, encouraging more economically developed regions to explore the development of comprehensive high school education. It encouraged more economically developed areas to explore the development of comprehensive high school education. In the same year, 19 middle and vocational schools in Wuhan were authorized to offer general high school classes, and the period from 2003 to 2005 was a period of rapid “development” for comprehensive high schools in Wuhan. At that time, the size of comprehensive high schools accounted for about 25% of the secondary schools, with an even higher proportion in the far urban areas. By 2000, most provinces (autonomous regions and municipalities), such as Anhui, Guangxi, Shanxi, Henan, Sichuan, and Heilongjiang, had experimented with comprehensive high schools, which not only eased the problem of the tightness of general high school places, but also stabilized the student population of secondary schools.

Since then, there has been little explicit reference to comprehensive high schools in other Chinese policy documents. For example, although the 2001 State Council Decision on the Reform and Development of Basic Education and the Tenth Five-Year Plan for National Education Programs mentioned encouraging the development of senior high schools that combine general education and vocational education, they did not clearly define the positioning and value judgment of comprehensive senior high schools, making the policy orientation unclear. With the passage of time, the National Medium- and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020) promulgated in 2010 proposed to “promote the diversified development of ordinary senior high schools and explore the development mode of comprehensive senior high schools”. Led by the central government’s reform of the education system, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Hunan and other parts of the country began to actively explore comprehensive high school models, and gradually formed a characteristic school system.

### **1.2.3 Revitalization of comprehensive high schools in the new era**

In 2017, the Ministry of Education and other four departments issued the Plan for the Popularization of High School Education (2017-2020), which once again proposed to “explore the development of comprehensive high schools, improve the implementation of the curriculum, school registration and management, examination and enrollment and other supportive policies, and implement the integration of universal vocational education, so as to increase the opportunities for students to make choices”. In 2022, the report of the 20th CPC National Congress proposed “insisting on the diversified development of senior high schools”, and in July 2023, the Ministry of Education, the National Development and Reform Commission, and the Ministry of Finance jointly issued the Opinions on the Implementation of the Action Plan for Expanding Excellence and Improving the Quality of Basic Education in the New Era, which put forward the active development of comprehensive senior high schools, and the promotion of the diversified development of ordinary senior high schools. A series of national policies and documents have laid a good foundation for the development of comprehensive high schools, and comprehensive high schools have once again received extensive attention from the society.

Looking back on the development of comprehensive high schools in China, as a mode of schooling that tries to integrate general education and vocational education, its schooling orientation has changed and developed with the changing needs of the market, the state and the society. In different historical periods, the goals of comprehensive high schools varied. Starting from the early Republic of China, comprehensive high schools first helped students broaden their choices of employment;

around the 21st century, comprehensive high schools further provided students with more opportunities for further education; and since the development of comprehensive high schools, they have delayed students' choices between general and vocational education through "natural streaming", giving students more time and opportunities to consider and decide on their future development. Through "natural streaming", the development of comprehensive high schools has delayed students' choice between general education and vocational education, giving them more time and opportunities to consider and decide on their future development direction, and alleviating the educational anxiety caused by "vocational and general streaming". In conclusion, comprehensive high schools have been practiced and explored many times in China. Although some challenges and problems have been encountered in the process of exploration, with the deepening of education reform and the diversification of education needs, comprehensive senior high schools are still an important direction for the diversification of China's senior high school education.

## **2.Problems and challenges in the development of comprehensive high schools in China**

Although vocational education plays an important role in economic development, under the impact of the "general high school fever" and the pressure of competition for higher education, the recognition of vocational education in Chinese society is still low, and most junior high school graduates and their parents tend to choose general high schools. According to the survey data of China Education Tracking Survey (CEPS) in recent years, only 31.4% of parents of students in compulsory education in China can accept their children going to vocational schools after junior high school, and 54.5% of parents agree that "the probability of a child's success in life will be greatly reduced if he or she fails to get into a good university". 54.5% of parents agree that "the probability of their children's success in life will be greatly reduced if they fail to get into a good university", and that parents' expectations and anxieties about their children's education are generally at a high level.<sup>[8]</sup> The development of comprehensive high schools is an important initiative to meet the needs of economic and social development, ease educational anxiety and pressure for further education, promote the all-round development of talents, enhance the status and attractiveness of vocational education as well as promote the fair and balanced development of education. Based on the actual situation of schools and the specific needs of students, it is undoubtedly a wise choice for weak high schools and their students to seek a sustainable development path by building a platform for integrating general education and vocational education, and promoting the transformation of general and vocational high schools into new comprehensive high schools. Therefore it is very necessary to study the development of comprehensive high schools in China.

### **2.1 Policy leadership to be clarified**

With the deepening of China's senior high school education reform, the focus of education policy is shifting from popularizing senior high school education to promoting students' personalized development. In 2023, the Ministry of Education, the National Development and Reform Commission, and the Ministry of Finance jointly issued the Opinions on the Implementation of the Action Plan for Expanding the Excellence of Basic Education and Improving the Quality of Basic Education in the New Era, which explicitly proposed to "promote the diversification of the development of ordinary senior high schools, and actively It is clearly stated in the Opinions on the Implementation of the Action Plan for the Expansion, Improvement and Quality of Basic Education in the New Era that "the diversified development of ordinary high schools will be promoted, and comprehensive high schools will be actively developed to better satisfy the people's wish of "going to a good school. Students and parents are also in pursuit of better quality education resources, hoping that their children can enter better schools. In particular, students at the bottom of the admission batch of ordinary senior secondary schools and students at the top of the admission batch of secondary vocational schools have higher expectations and anxieties about education. In order to meet this demand for "good schools", the "deferred streaming" model of comprehensive high schools can effectively meet the expectations of students and parents. For example, in May 2024, Xiaogan City, Hubei Province, carried out the pilot work of comprehensive high school classes in all counties of the city, and the municipal education bureau, according to the ratio of vocational and general education, the declared plan and school resources, set up one experimental class of "general high school-middle vocational" in one high school school in the city, and established 21 experimental classes of "vocational and general education integration" in 12 middle vocational schools. Establishment of 21 experimental classes for the integration of vocational and general education, with 50 students in each class, totaling 1,050 students. The control



line for admission to the experimental class of the consortium is not lower than the minimum control line for admission to local ordinary high schools. In the experimental class of secondary vocational integration, the admission control line is not lower than the minimum control line of local ordinary high school admission by 50 points. Admitted students are included in the senior high school registration, after one year of study, found that they are not adapted to the general high school-based curriculum, you can apply for transfer to secondary schools to study, to participate in the skills college entrance examination (including the classification of higher vocational exams) promotion examination. If students wish to continue to retain their general senior secondary school registration, they will follow the original training program and take the general college entrance examination. This model creates conditions for diversified development and individual growth of students. Despite policy support, the lack of a clear definition and interpretation of comprehensive senior secondary schools at the policy level, as well as the lack of specific operational recommendations and promotion strategies, such as the lack of specific planning on how the curriculum is to be set up, how examinations are to be evaluated, and how teachers are to be arranged, make it difficult to realize true integration of vocational and general education.

## 2.2 School model to be clarified

Most of China's comprehensive high schools have implemented the "segmented streaming" mode of operation, that is, education before streaming, in which students are first given comprehensive basic education in the first and second years of a comprehensive high school, and then are streamed according to their strengths and desires, so that they can continue their studies in either a general high school or a vocational school on the basis of their desire to enter a general high school or a vocational school. For example, students in the pilot classes of comprehensive high schools in all counties and cities in Hubei Province who, after studying in general high school courses in their first year of high school, find that they are not adapted to the general high school-based curriculum can apply to transfer to a vocational school and sit for the Skills Higher Education Examination (including the Higher Vocational Classification Examination) for further study. If students wish to continue to retain their general senior secondary school registration, they will follow the original training program and take the general college entrance examination. However, most of the students attending comprehensive senior secondary schools are "second best" choices after having difficulty in entering ordinary senior secondary schools, and streaming after the first year of senior secondary school is not entirely based on students' wishes; in fact, only a small number of students with high grades are able to go to ordinary senior secondary classes after streaming. Although comprehensive senior secondary schools provide both general education and vocational education, they do not cultivate comprehensive talents, and after the first year of senior secondary schooling, students can either choose general senior secondary schooling or vocational secondary schooling, and the education they receive is still "one-dimensional" rather than "comprehensive". The original intention of comprehensive high schools is to promote educational equity, provide more choices for students, and cultivate all-rounded people, but in practice it ignores students' learning needs and interests, and the so-called diversified development and free choice are essentially passive choices based on students' academic performance, forcing them to be streamed.<sup>[9]</sup>

## 2.3 Curriculum to be improved

The curriculum of comprehensive senior secondary schools is set up with the cultivation of talents as the starting point, and with the cultivation of human beings as the center. In view of the imbalance in the economic level of different regions, how to build a comprehensive senior secondary school curriculum system that embodies local characteristics and realizes the integration and smooth articulation of national and local curricula has become a key issue that must be explored in depth in order to promote the development of comprehensive senior secondary schools. At present, the curriculum systems of many pilot comprehensive high schools still remain at the level of a simple combination of general high school cultural courses and vocational and technical courses, and have not yet succeeded in constructing a comprehensive curriculum system that integrates general education and vocational education in depth. These two types of curricula are often fragmented and lack integration, showing a patchwork character. This patchwork curriculum model makes it difficult to meet the dual needs of further education and employment, making comprehensive high school students less culturally literate than general high school students, and lagging behind vocational high school students in skill mastery. For example, students unify to learn the general high school curriculum in their first year of high school, and some of them who have been streamed into vocational

high schools in their second year of high school can apply to switch to key or brand specialties to study in some of the schools, but they have already lagged behind by one year in their specialized courses of study. Learning have lagged behind by one year, which not only fails to fully demonstrate the unique advantages of comprehensive senior secondary schools, but also leads to their disadvantageous position in taking the General Certificate of Education Examination and the Vocational Skills Classification Examination. On the other hand, due to the lack of effective integration of curricula, students are required to study a wide range of courses and have a heavy academic burden, which in turn affects the actual teaching and learning effectiveness and quality of integrated senior secondary schools. In the UK, comprehensive senior secondary schools enjoy a high degree of curriculum autonomy. Under the framework of the National Curriculum, schools have the right to decide independently which courses to offer, the number of courses to offer, and which assessment organizations to choose, making the curriculum very “independent” and “flexible”.<sup>[10]</sup> Only by setting up a scientific and reasonable integrated curriculum system in accordance with national and local realities can teaching materials be developed and teaching arrangements be made to fundamentally promote the integrated development of senior secondary schools.<sup>[11]</sup>

## **2.4 Teachers' qualifications need to be improved**

Comprehensive senior secondary schools are more demanding and need to meet the needs of both general and vocational education. However, in reality, comprehensive senior secondary schools are mostly transformed from weak senior secondary schools or secondary vocational schools, which lack the corresponding facilities, teachers and management experience. From the perspective of teacher deployment, when a vocational school organizes a pilot class for a comprehensive senior secondary school, the resources of teachers for specialized subjects are usually not a problem, but the quantity and quality of teachers for cultural subjects are often difficult to meet the requirements. On the contrary, when ordinary high schools try to organize integrated high school courses, they have relatively well-qualified teachers for basic cultural subjects, but there is a relative lack of teachers for vocational and technical subjects. Many general high schools even have difficulty in finding a teacher who can teach general technology well. Most of the teachers of general technology courses in general high schools offering integrated high school experimental classes are formed by transferring to other jobs or taking part-time classes, lacking specialization and teaching experience. At the same time, due to the shortage of experimental equipment and venues, general technology classes in comprehensive high schools are often turned into places where teachers read from a book, and students' interest and enthusiasm in learning are greatly reduced. For secondary schools, although teachers in professional skills are relatively strong, teachers in cultural foundation courses are relatively lacking. In the construction of comprehensive high schools, secondary schools also face the problem of insufficient teachers for general education. This severance between teachers of cultural courses and teachers of specialized courses has become a major obstacle in the communication between general education and vocational education.<sup>[12]</sup> At the same time, the level of teachers is also an important consideration for students and parents whether to choose a comprehensive high school, and it is more important to improve the level of teachers and the quality of school operation in the pilot classes of comprehensive high schools in secondary schools.

## **3.Reform Trends in China Regarding Comprehensive Senior High Schools**

As an important part of the modern education system, the future direction of comprehensive high schools is a major concern. In order to better realize the people's wish for “good schools”, an “overpass” has been built to integrate ordinary high schools and vocational schools. In recent years, on the basis of international experience and summarizing the experience gained in the development and construction of comprehensive high schools in previous periods, and in the light of the actual situation in each region, China has been carrying out reforms in the four areas of policy frameworks, modes of operation, curriculum development and teaching staff, and has been developing comprehensive high schools in a variety of ways and means.

### **3.1 Systematic refinement of the policy framework**

The development of comprehensive high school in China, the policy plays a key role in leading and guaranteeing, comprehensive high school to really become a new education choice and education supply accepted by the public, relying only on the “slogan” policy initiatives is far from being enough, it must be policy innovation.<sup>[13]</sup> China attaches great importance to the construction and development of comprehensive high schools, and has issued a series of policy documents encouraging localities to carry out comprehensive high school pilots, adopting a pilot and then gradual roll-out approach,

gradually building up a close link between various types of schools in different locations, and ensuring a smooth interface between the curriculum and the goals of school education. On this basis, all parts of the country have responded positively, giving full play to the vitality of all parties in running schools, gradually creating regional programs and school cases of integrated high school operation, and accumulating experiences and methods that can be promoted.<sup>[14]</sup> In Guangzhou City, for example, from 2024 onwards, the pilot work of comprehensive high school will be carried out in district public secondary schools in five districts, including Yuexiu, Haizhu, Tianhe, Huadu and Panyu, with a total enrollment of 1,100 students. Based on regional educational resources and economic and social development needs, Guangzhou has developed a detailed pilot plan, with clear arrangements from enrollment plans, curriculum to teacher staffing, and subsequent development of more detailed specifications based on the pilot experience, so that the development of comprehensive high schools can be guided by rules and regulations.

### 3.2 Innovations in regionalization of the school model

In order to achieve the diversified educational goal of “further education + employment + whole-person development”, comprehensive high schools must break the limitations of traditional independent school running, deepen the integration of vocational and popular education, actively explore diversified school running paths, and give full play to their comprehensive advantages in talent cultivation through the integration and optimization of resources.<sup>[15]</sup> In recent years, in terms of school-running mode, China’s comprehensive high schools have actively explored diversified paths, emphasizing the two-way penetration of general education and vocational education. Most of China’s comprehensive high schools used to operate in the form of comprehensive high school classes within secondary vocational schools or general high schools, with comprehensive basic education in the first and second grades followed by streaming. In recent years, some regions have begun to explore more flexible ways of running schools. For example, in Sichuan Tianfu New Area Comprehensive Senior High School, the school follows the idea of “integrating vocational and popular education to cultivate talents”, and carefully formulates talent cultivation programs. Through the scientific and rational integration of the curriculum, and the implementation of “stratified classification, selective classroom” teaching mode, the right to choose to fully empower students.<sup>[16]</sup> Chengdu Qingyang Comprehensive Senior High School has adopted the “one school, two registrations” mechanism, which allows students to register for general senior high school registration or secondary school registration, take basic courses in the first year of senior high school, and then choose academic or vocational courses according to their interests in the second year of senior high school, with three opportunities to switch pathways. 2025, the school plans to open eight classes, enrolling 440 students, with a curriculum covering a wide range of courses. In 2025, the school plans to open eight classes and enroll 440 students, with a curriculum system covering three types of modules: cultural foundation, vocational application and specialty development, realizing the goal of “comprehensive experience in the first year of high school, independent choice in the second year of high school, and diversified development in the third year of high school”. In terms of enrollment and streaming mechanisms, Qingdao City, Shandong Province, has created a unique “score-banding” enrollment policy, a “single-registration, dual-management” school registration management system, and allocated 10 million yuan in special funds to support the construction of comprehensive high schools. A number of comprehensive high schools have innovated comprehensive evaluation enrollment mechanisms that take into account a variety of student factors; explored democratic multiple streaming mechanisms that give students multiple opportunities to provide personalized courses; and created an all-encompassing resource-supply guarantee mechanism that builds teacher teams and guarantees internships and practical training.<sup>[17]</sup>

### 3.3 Convergent restructuring of the curriculum

The quality of curriculum design and implementation is directly related to the quality and effectiveness of education. The curriculum of comprehensive senior secondary schools should, first and foremost, fully reflect its aim of nurturing all-rounded people and helping students to better adapt to the development needs of the future society. In order to realize this goal of schooling. Local governments and schools in China have continuously strengthened their curriculum construction, placing emphasis on the general cultural curriculum while setting up multiple curriculum systems, such as specialized courses, elective courses and school-based courses, aiming to satisfy students’ individualized learning wishes through rich



curriculum supply and open choices.<sup>[18]</sup> For example, Sichuan Tianfu New District Comprehensive Senior High School sets up three major curriculum systems, namely academic, applied and arts and sports specialties. Classes are dynamically set up and curricula are implemented by grade, with the first semester focusing on cultural foundation and comprehensive attempts to provide a variety of course combinations; the second to third semesters focusing on open choices and diversified development, with students applying for switching academic status and class types; and the fourth to sixth semesters focusing on goal-oriented and precise cultivation, with precise cultivation programs formulated according to the students' choice of fixed class types.<sup>[19]</sup> In addition, career planning courses have gradually become an important part of the curriculum system of comprehensive senior secondary schools. Through career assessment, enterprise visits and lectures by industry experts, students are helped to understand their own interests and abilities and clarify their career goals. When at the streaming stage, students are able to choose courses and future development directions in a more targeted manner according to their own circumstances.

### 3.4 Structural upgrading of the faculty

In recent years, in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning in integrated high school pilot classes, education bureaus and schools throughout China have increased their efforts to recruit teachers for integrated high schools, and have provided teachers with a wealth of academic resources and training opportunities through the establishment of partnerships with colleges, universities and research institutes. Schools have established cooperation with teacher training colleges in the city to train free teacher trainees and master's degrees in education, providing them with systematic theoretical guidance and practical opportunities based on their career aspirations to train professional teachers suitable for integrated high schools. At the same time, regular teaching seminars and academic exchange activities can be organized to promote mutual learning and reference among teachers. For example, the city of Guangzhou has strengthened its comprehensive high school teachers through a variety of initiatives, such as open recruitment, teacher training, and twinning and cooperation with general high schools, and the school has introduced well-known general high school teacher resources in the region.<sup>[20]</sup> Guangzhou Haizhu Arts and Crafts Vocational School, in the pilot construction of a comprehensive senior high school, has strengthened teacher staffing through a number of initiatives, including the Haizhu District Education Bureau's special opening up of five teacher preparation slots for comprehensive senior high school teacher recruitment, and the simultaneous independent recruitment of subject teachers at the school level. At the same time, the Education Bureau of Haizhu District has also established a mechanism for teacher exchange and rotation, and relying on the region's high-quality educational resources, in-depth cooperation with the centuries-old famous school NANWU Middle School, sharing the curriculum system and management experience, to provide a strong guarantee for the smooth sailing of the comprehensive high school. Another example is a comprehensive high school in Qingdao City, Shandong Province, which builds a high-level teacher team through the mode of "integration + introduction + training". On the one hand, it integrates high-quality resources, hires the heads of the teaching and research groups of nine subjects in Qingdao No. 2 Middle School as the chief instructors, and carries out cross-school twinning, joint teaching and research and resource sharing; on the other hand, it introduces publicly-funded teacher-training students from key colleges and universities, master's and doctoral degree holders, and high-quality teachers of general high schools, forming a reasonably-structured team of specialists. Meanwhile, the school has established master teacher studios, invited enterprise experts for training, and supported teachers to visit schools to improve their compound teaching ability. In terms of internship training, the school has established cooperation with nearly 100 enterprises, such as Huawei and Haier, to build an "embedded whole process" guarantee mechanism. Before the internship, the school strictly selects counterpart enterprises and establishes an evaluation database. In the internship set up by the enterprise mentor, professional teachers and parents to participate in the guidance team, jointly formulate training programs, accurate arrangement of positions, and regularly send teachers to enterprises for training, effectively cracked the school-enterprise cooperation "school hot enterprise cold" problem, to achieve collaborative education.<sup>[21]</sup>

## 4. Conclusion

The active development of comprehensive high schools is not only the key to exploring new paths and grasping new opportunities in Chinese education, but also an important measure to promote the process of integrating high school education

and the overall improvement of the quality of high school education. In order to continue to promote the development of comprehensive high schools in China, it is necessary to closely follow the development trend of secondary education in the world, and at the same time, rooted in the actual situation of China's education development, to optimize the top-level design, to continuously improve the mode of operation, and to focus on strengthening the curriculum system and the construction of the teaching force. It is believed that through continuous reform and exploration, the quality and level of education and teaching in China's comprehensive high schools will continue to improve, opening up a broader world of development for students, giving them more diversified possibilities for growth, and injecting new vitality and kinetic energy into the vigorous development of China's high school education.

## Funding

Hubei Provincial Education Science Planning Major Bidding Project “Supervisory Innovation Research on the Diversified Development of Ordinary High Schools in Hubei Province” (2024ZD003); Huanggang Municipal Education Science Planning Key Project “Research on the Path of Characteristic Development and Enhancement Strategies of Ordinary High Schools in County Areas of Huanggang City”(2023JA09).

## Conflict of Interests

The author(s) declare(s) that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

## References

- [1] Zhang Jian. Reflections on the development of high school education in China: a comparison based on comprehensive high schools in the United States[J]. Vocational Education Newsletter,2020,(01):98-106.
- [2] Zhou Jingshu. Research on the realization path of universal vocational integration in senior high school [D]. Nanjing Normal University,2013.
- [3] Sui, L.. A comparative study of the development of comprehensive high schools in China and the United States and its implications[J]. Teaching and Management,2005(07):77.
- [4] Wang Jiling. Curriculum and inspiration of comprehensive high school in the UK [D]. Hunan Normal University,2016.
- [5] The composition of schools in England[EB/OL].<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SBU/b000796M2-2008.pdf>.
- [6] KAN Qi-Biao. Vocational education in Swedish comprehensive high schools[J]. Vocational Education Abroad, 2006,38-39.
- [7] Wu Hongcheng. Research on the history of vocational education system in modern China [M]. Beijing: Intellectual Property Press, 2012.1.
- [8] Wang Weidong. Returning to the essence of education for children's comprehensive and healthy growth [N]. Guangming Daily, 2021-10-26 (13)
- [9] Wang, Hongbin. Development dilemma and change of comprehensive high school[J]. Teaching and Management,2017,(31):11-14.
- [10] Wang Jiling. Curriculum and inspiration of comprehensive high school in the UK [D]. Hunan Normal University,2016.
- [11] Wang, Hongbin. Development dilemma and change of comprehensive high school[J]. Teaching and Management,2017,(31):11-14.
- [12] LIU Liqun,LIU Jiawei. Analysis of the reasons for the difficulties of universal and vocational integration in China's senior secondary education[J]. Journal of Educational Science of Hunan Normal University,2015,14(02):75-79.
- [13] QI Zhanyong,DU Yue. Impact assessment of educational policy implementation[J]. Educational Research,2023,44(05):145-156.
- [14] Ting-Jin Hsien, You-Ran Chen. Possible Paths to Diversification in High School Education: Changes and Perspectives of Comprehensive Secondary Schools in the United Kingdom[J]. Journal of Comparative Education,2024,(02):3-17.
- [15] Xue Han,Zhao Yanning. The Logical Direction, Realistic Blockage and Innovative Path of Comprehensive High School Development in the Context of Vocational-Popularization Integration[J]. Contemporary Vocational

Education,2024,(05):22-31.

- [16] HU Youzhou,HUANG Fang,WANG Hongkai,et al. Reflections on the Metamorphosis and Development Prospects of Vocational-Population Integration Education--A Case Study of Comprehensive Senior High School in Tianfu New District, Sichuan[J]. Education Science Forum,2025,(02):18-22.
- [17][21] PAN Haisheng,YUAN Wenchao,SONG Yafeng. Practice mode and path choice of coordinated development of universal vocational education--a case study based on comprehensive high school[J]. China Vocational and Technical Education,2022,(22):21-28.
- [18] Wang Bo. Era background, school running mode and promotion strategy of comprehensive high school construction under the concept of integration of vocational and popularization[J]. Education and Career,2024,(22):29-37.
- [19] Hu Youzhou. Exploring a new model of integrating vocational and universal education--The case of Sichuan Tianfu New District Comprehensive Senior High School[J]. Principal of Primary and Secondary Schools,2024,(02):19-21.
- [20] Chen Li. Five secondary schools in Guangzhou pilot integrated high schools[N]. Nanfang Daily, 2024-04-17(A03).