

# Construction of a strategic positioning and high-quality development path framework for vocational education internationalization in Guangdong province in the new era—prospective analysis oriented to 2035

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**Abstract:** In the context of China's "New Era", vocational education (VE) has evolved from a marginalized adjunct of academic education to a critical "type" of education essential for industrial sovereignty. Guangdong Province, as the locomotive of China's manufacturing sector and the heart of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), stands at a historical crossroads. This paper constructs a comprehensive framework for the high-quality internationalization of Guangdong's VE toward 2035. By integrating the Ministry of Education's mandate for category-based development with Guangdong's "Manufacturing Excellence" strategy, the study proposes four strategic pillars: the export of pedagogical standards, the establishment of "industry-school" overseas hubs, the digital transformation of cross-border training, and the cultivation of world-class "double-qualified" faculty.

**Keywords:** Guangdong; vocational education internationalization; strategic positioning and high-quality development

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## 1 Introduction

The global landscape of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is undergoing a paradigm shift driven by the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the systemic restructuring of global value chains. For Guangdong Province, the "vanguard, window, and experimental field" of China's reform and opening-up, the internationalization of vocational education has evolved from a supplementary activity into a strategic imperative (Ministry of Education, 2022).

As we look toward 2035—the milestone for China to basically achieve socialist modernization—Guangdong's VE system must address a fundamental contradiction: the enormous scale of its vocational institutions contrasts sharply with the qualitative gap in international standard-setting influence. This paper provides a prospective analysis of how Guangdong can leverage its industrial prowess to build a world-class vocational education highland that not only serves the "Global Factory" but also exports "Chinese Wisdom".

## 2 Strategic positioning: the "triple-dimension" framework

The high-quality development of the internationalization of Guangdong VE must be anchored in a multi-dimensional strategic positioning that aligns with national goals and regional characteristics.

### 2.1 The regional dimension: the GBA as a global TVET hub

Guangdong's primary positioning is to serve as the core driver of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA). The internationalization of VE here involves the "internal internationalization"—harmonizing the standards between the Mainland, Hong Kong, and Macao to create a unified vocational qualification framework [1]. This foundational policy emphasizes the creation of an education and talents highland. By 2035, Guangdong should function as a "Vocational Education Free Trade Zone", enabling the seamless flow of skills, credits, and certificates across borders.

#### 2.2 The industrial dimension: symbiosis with "going global" enterprises

The second dimension is the "Education-Industry Symbiosis". As Guangdong-headquartered multinationals like Huawei, BYD, and Midea expand their global footprint, the vocational colleges must provide the "human infrastructure". This positioning requires a shift from "Passive Service" to "Active Co-construction", where colleges and enterprises jointly establish training bases in Southeast Asia, Africa, and Europe [3]. *Action Plan for Promoting High-Quality Development in the Manufacturing Sector*, known as the "Manufacturing Excellence" strategy, mandates the deep integration of industry and education.

#### 2.3 The diplomatic dimension: the "soft power" of the maritime silk road

Historically, Guangdong has been the starting point of the Maritime Silk Road. In the new era, vocational education serves as a bridge for "People-to-People Exchange". By providing high-quality technical training to countries along the "Belt and Road", Guangdong VE contributes to global poverty reduction and industrialization, positioning itself as a provider of "Global Public Goods" in education.

### 3 Theoretical underpinnings: category-based development and high-quality growth

The Ministry of Education's emphasis on "Category-based Development" is the theoretical cornerstone of this framework. Unlike conventional academic education, vocational internationalization is measured by its "Industrial Relevance" and "Employment Competitiveness". High-quality development in this context implies a transition from "Scale Expansion"—the number of international students or MoUs—to "Connotative Development" (the influence of curriculum standards and the quality of global employment). "Type Education" requires unique quality evaluation metrics. This necessitates a "Guangdong Model" that integrates German "Dual System" rigor with Chinese "Industry-Education Integration" flexibility.

### 4 The path to 2035: four strategic pillars

#### 4.1 Evolution of "standard export": The GBA-VCTS

By 2035, the primary goal is to move from "Importing Standards" to "Exporting Solutions".

The Path: Guangdong must lead the development of the "Greater Bay Area Vocational Credit Transfer System" (GBA-VCTS). This involves distilling the technical competency requirements of the GBA's advanced manufacturing clusters (e.g., Electronic Information, New Energy) into modular curriculum units that can be adopted by international partners [2]. Current projections suggest that by 2030, no less than 50% of top-tier vocational majors in Guangdong will have international professional accreditation.

#### 4.2 Innovation of the "Luban Workshop" 2.0

The traditional "Luban Workshop" model must be upgraded. The 2.0 version should be "Enterprise-Led and School-Supported".

The Path: Establishing "Guangdong Industrial Colleges" (GICs) within overseas industrial parks. These colleges will leverage Chinese industrial equipment and software as teaching tools, effectively ensuring that foreign technical talents are trained on "Chinese Platforms". This creates a long-term technological dependency and brand loyalty to Guangdong's industries.

#### 4.3 Digital transformation and "borderless" training

The year 2035 will be defined by the "Digital Silk Road". High-quality development requires the virtualization of international cooperation.

The Path: Building a provincial-level "Digital Twin" vocational training platform, Guangdong can leverage 5G, VR, and AI-driven tutoring to export high-precision simulation training for sectors such as aviation maintenance or semiconductor manufacturing to BRI countries. This "Cloud-based Internationalization" bypasses physical mobility barriers and dramatically expands the reach of Guangdong's educational influence [4].

#### 4.4 Cultivating the "international craftsmanship" faculty

The "Double-Qualified" teacher must now become "Globally Qualified".

The Path: Implementing a mandatory international industry immersion for faculty at "Double High-Level" vocational colleges. By 2035, 40% of vocational teachers should hold international industry certifications and have no fewer than six months of experience in overseas R&D or production centers.

### 5 Challenges and risk mitigation

Despite the optimistic outlook, three major challenges persist:

Geopolitical Fluctuations: Rising protectionism may impede educational cooperation. Response: Prioritize multilateral cooperation frameworks like RCEP and ASEAN+3.

Cultural Asymmetry: The "Guangdong Model" must be localized to avert the risk of "educational neo-colonialism". Response: Emphasize "Co-construction and Shared Benefits".

Governance Lag: Current administrative policies on international student visas and fiscal allocation for overseas campuses are often rigid. Response: Grant "Internationalization Pilot Zones" to top-tier colleges with greater financial and administrative autonomy. Stresses the importance of agile governance in vocational systems [5].

### 6 Policy recommendations: the "three-step" roadmap

To ensure the realization of the framework by 2035, the following roadmap is proposed:

Phase 1 (2025-2028): Focus on "Standards Alignment". Align 100 key majors with international standards and RCEP professional requirements.

Phase 2 (2029-2032): Focus on "Hub Construction". Establish 50 "Guangdong Industrial Colleges" at strategic BRI nodal points.

Phase 3 (2033-2035): Focus on "Brand Leadership". Make the "Guangdong Standard" a globally recognized benchmark for smart manufacturing vocational training.

### 7 Conclusion

The construction of a strategic positioning and high-quality development path for Guangdong's vocational education is a mission-critical project for China's modernization. By 2035, Guangdong should not only be the world's factory floor but a global premier technological education hub. Through the synergistic integration of industry and education on a global scale, Guangdong VE will provide a sustainable supply of high-skilled talent for the "New Era", ensuring that the "Made in China" brand is synonymous with "Excellence in Training".

Guangdong's journey from "Educational Recipient" to "Educational Provider" will be the definitive story of vocational education in the 21st century.

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## **Conflicts of interest**

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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