

# Social Responsibility and Corporate Ethics in School-Enterprise Cooperation in Vocational Education from the Perspective of Economic Sociology

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**Abstract:** With industrial upgrading and technological innovation, vocational education plays a key role in cultivating qualified technicians. But the neglect of corporate social responsibility and ethics issues in school-enterprise cooperation, one of its core model, affects the effectiveness of cooperation. Based on the economic sociology, the paper analyzes the social responsibility and corporate ethical and proposes strategies to high-quality development of vocational education.

**Keywords:** Vocational education; School-enterprise cooperation; Social responsibility; Corporate ethics; Economic sociology

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As a key model of vocational education, school-enterprise cooperation can connect educational resources with industrial needs. However, in practice, many enterprises overemphasize short-term versus and ignore long-term social responsibility and ethical issues. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) theory emphasizes that enterprises should not only pursue profit, but also assume social responsibilities. Especially in the field of education, enterprises should promote the cultivation of technicians and social development through school-enterprise cooperation.

The embeddedness theory in economic sociology posits that enterprises' economic behaviors are driven not only by market demands, but also by social relations, cultural norms, and institutional frameworks. In school-enterprise cooperation, enterprises should assume CSR when concern returns. This paper adopts this perspective to investigate the social responsibility and ethical dilemmas in school-enterprise cooperation, and proposes sustainable strategies to optimize mechanisms and promote deepening cooperation.

## 1. Present Status and Challenges of School-Enterprise Cooperation in Vocational Education

### 1.1 Evolution and Development Models of School-Enterprise Cooperation

**Internship and Training Cooperation:** Initially, enterprises offered a short-term internship to help students gain practical experience. However, students' technical skills have not been effectively promoted due to the short internship period and insufficient training.

**Joint Curriculum Development:** To remedy the limitation of the internship model, enterprises began participating in curriculum design by providing equipment, technical support, ensuring that educational content aligned with industry needs.

**Industry-Education Integration:** Recently, school-enterprise cooperation has entered a new stage of industry-education integration, which encompasses not only internships and curriculum development but also efforts in technology research and innovation, fostering a deeper integration of vocational education and industry.

### 1.2 Motives and Responsibilities of Enterprises in School-Enterprise Cooperation

The motives of enterprises participating in school-enterprise cooperation are varied, including obtaining technicians satisfied needs, promoting technological innovation, and enhancing corporate social image. Through cooperation, enterprises can reduce costs and boost brand value through taking social responsibilities. Otherwise, enterprises prioritize short-term versus over long-term returns and lack the sense of CSR, which leads to uneven responsibility distribution and unsatisfied cooperation.

### **1.3 Major Challenges in School-Enterprise Cooperation**

**Weak Awareness of Social Responsibility:** Many companies regard school-enterprise cooperation as a means to make short-term profit, with limited investment and focus on long-term development.

**Incomplete Cooperation Mechanisms:** Despite government efforts to promote policies, the sustainability and depth of school-enterprise cooperation remain limited. Many partnerships lack long-term planning, resulting in suboptimal outcomes.

**Uneven Benefit Distribution:** There is a conflict between short-term returns and long-term responsibilities, particularly in small and medium-sized enterprises, where the economic benefits of cooperation do not justify the risks of long-term investment, leading to insufficient depth of cooperation.

## **2. Social Responsibility and Business Ethics in School-Enterprise Cooperation**

### **2.1 The Importance of CSR in Vocational Education**

CSR in vocational education promotes social equity by providing skills and employment opportunities. By collaborating with educational institutions, businesses enhance talent quality, align skills with industry needs, and foster sustainable development. CSR initiatives also strengthen community ties and boost corporate reputation, benefiting both society and long-term business success.

### **2.2 Ethical Challenges in School-Enterprise Cooperation**

**Conflict Between short-term versus and Long-Term Responsibilities:** When participating in school-enterprise cooperation, enterprises attach importance to short-term economic benefits and ignore long-term social value of vocational education. For instance, traineeship offered by enterprises can satisfy short-term needs but lack comprehensive skill training.

**Ethics of Formalized Cooperation:** Some enterprises engage in school-enterprise partnership to meet policy demand or seek government support, instead of investing resources in the cooperation. Such formalized cooperation diminishes educational quality, failing to enhance students' vocational skills effectively.

**Lack of Corporate Ethical Responsibility:** Enterprises often neglect their ethical responsibility in school-enterprise cooperation, disregarding how their actions promote the long-term development. Enterprises need to recognize that CSR brings not only social recognition but also long-term development.

## **3. Reflections on School-Enterprise Cooperation from the Perspective of Economic Sociology**

### **3.1 Embeddedness Theory and School-Enterprise Cooperation**

**Social Embeddedness:** The behavior of enterprises isn't entirely market-driven but also influenced by social relations. In school-enterprise partnerships, enterprises serve as providers of technology and resources and contributors to societal progress and educational innovation. For instance, by providing technology, funding, and curriculum support, enterprises not only train skilled staff, but also encourage the up-to-date development of educational content, thus influencing the future labor market development.

**Market Embeddedness:** Enterprises are also inevitably affected by the market economy. Enterprises' motivation is often closely related to industry demand and market trends. As to satisfy their demand for skilled workers, enterprises help schools update their educational content, so that student can adapt to industrial needs. This market-driven mode of cooperation facilitates the interaction between education and industry, but may lead to enterprises focusing more on short-term needs rather than long-term social responsibilities.

### **3.2 The Role of Social Capital in School-Enterprise Cooperation**

**Trust and Cooperation:** Trust is the basis of successful school-enterprise cooperation. Initially, partnerships may face uncertainties and information asymmetries, but trust grows as cooperation deepens. This trust enhances resource sharing, information exchange, and joint curriculum development, facilitating more effective partnerships. Additionally, the accumulation of trust provides more collaboration opportunities, promoting educational innovation and technological advancement.

**Long-Term Effects of Social Capital:** Prolonged partnerships between companies and schools further accumulate social capital. This social capital not only enhances the sense of responsibility of both partners, but also promotes mutual cultural exchange and value recognition. By building trust and sharing resources, enterprises and schools form a more stable cooperative relationship, which promotes the training of skilled workers and facilitates technological innovation and industrial development. The accumulation of social capital brings about more cooperation opportunities, such as joint research and development of new technologies and industrial training, promoting school-enterprise cooperation to a deeper level.

### **3.3 Economic Sociology Reflections on Corporate Ethics and Social Responsibility**

Shifting from Economic Rationality to Social Ethics: Traditionally, enterprises engaged in school-enterprise cooperation for economic motives, aiming to access low-cost labor and short-term gains. However, growing awareness of CSR has led more enterprises to view CSR as an integral part of their long-term strategies. By participating in vocational education, enterprises can train skilled personnel for society and strengthen their sense of responsibility and credibility, which is important for their long-term development.

Corporate Ethical Responsibility: In school-enterprise cooperation, the ethical responsibility of enterprises requires them not only meet market demands, but also have a positive impact on education, society and the future labor market. Enterprises should recognise that taking social responsibilities helps to increase brand value, promote the quality of education and the overall progress of society.

## **4. Strategies to Enhance Corporate Social Responsibility in School-Enterprise Cooperation**

### **4.1 Strengthening Policy Guidance and Incentives Mechanisms**

Policy Design: The government should clarify the responsibilities of enterprises in school-enterprise co-operation through the formulation of policies and regulations, and promote the long-term participation of enterprises in the education process.

Incentive Mechanisms: The government can encourage enterprises to assume more social responsibility in school-enterprise cooperation through economic incentives such as tax breaks and financial subsidies. Moreover, setting CSR rating and reward and penalty mechanisms could increase the enterprises' participation.

### **4.2 Building Multi-Party Cooperation Mechanisms**

Government, Enterprise, and School Collaboration: By leveraging government policy and resource support, enterprises and schools can deepen partnerships, ensuring that educational content is aligned with industrial needs and promoting the long-term cooperation.

Role of Social Organizations and Industry Associations: Social organisations and industry associations can ensure that enterprises take their social responsibilities in cooperation through monitoring and coordination, and provide innovative resources and information support to enterprises and schools.

### **4.3 Optimizing Benefit Distribution and Cooperation Mechanisms**

Balancing Short-Term and Long-Term Interests: The government could establish special funds to encourage sustained investment, with periodic evaluations to ensure cooperation depth.

Establishing Long-Term Cooperation mechanism: The signing of long-term cooperation agreements can clarify the division of responsibilities, ensure the continuity and stability of cooperation, and promote the deep integration of vocational education and industrial.

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