

Vocational Education in China

When Li Liangyi started work in the Beijing General Internal Combustion Engine Plant (former the Beijing Agricultural Machinery Plant) in 1952, he had completed just six years of formal education. However, in 1977, he was promoted to factory director of the plant's No. 4 Foundry, and in 1980, officially became an engineer, after years of college study.

This rise in Li's education and career is due to a voca-

tional study program, one that is now receiving greater emphasis in the Chinese government. Taking all spare-time classes he completed junior (seventh to ninth grade) and

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senior (10th to 12th grade) middle school, and was able to qualify for a machine building class at the Beijing Machinery College in 1958. Li finished his college-level study in 1965, and

became an engineer after successful completion of a thesis in spare time and examination in 1980 following a 10-year suspension due to the chaotic 'Cultural Revolution'.

'A veteran worker should learn more theory if he wishes to make greater contributions to science and technology,' Li commented.

Many 'veteran workers' in this plant have been trained through vocational education programs organized by state

and industrial education departments. Beijing's one million factory workers are the target of a massive training and re-training plan, which is being emphasized this year. Throughout China, 20 per cent of the country's 100 million workers are participating in vocational training and studies. So far, 22 out of 29 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions have established committees in charge of workers' training.

500,000 workers in Beijing are now studying in sparetime (after work hours) schools and colleges, or through television or correspondence courses. Another 50,000 people are receiving full-time higher education in the universities and colleges, and most of these people will return to their original places of work after finishing their studies. The graduates will be entitled to work and salary equal to those who attended the regular universities and colleges.

All workers who take part in studies, whether part-time or full-time, will continue to receive full wages plus welfare benefits from their work units. As an added incentive to further their education, workers are paid according to a grading system composed of eight levels. Additional raises in grade, and therefore salary and

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A technician sent from the industrial city of Shanghai to the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, trains carpet pattern designers of Uygur and other minority nationalities.

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position, depend on work quality and education.

In line with China's push for modernization, the State Council set up the National Committee in Charge of Workers' Education in April, 1980. Yuan Puhua, the committee's chairman, believes that now is the best time to upgrade the educational level of China's workers, so vocational training has become a priority along with the modernization drive and economic readjustment. Yuan explained there will be an interval before large-scale economic development begins and that time should be fully utilized for education. To improve workers' education, the committee will organize training programs, create and guide local offices, and set policy.

The 10,000-worker Beijing

General Internal Combustion Engine Plant already has a comprehensive vocational education system. The plant runs full time secondary and higher-level schools, and its 12 associated factories are in charge of spare-or part-time elementary schools for their workers. Most of the 'students' are under 25 years of age, a group that accounts for half of the employees.

The plant emphasizes vocational training for this younger group. Eighty per cent of these people have completed primary school (through the sixth grade) and almost all have taken part in cultural and technical training classes held part time, spare-time and full-time. Overall, more than half of China's workers are under 30 years old. These people entered the work force, after the start of the 'Cultural Revolu-

tion in 1966, and were deprived of a proper education during the next ten years.

At the Beijing plant in 1980, there were 60 classes dealing with primary technical education including courses on the principle of metal cutting, electronic technology, hydraulic transmission and foreign languages. Under a plan drawn up by the educational department of the plant, by 1983, 3,450 workers will finish elementary and middle school. Before 1985, this department expects 20 per cent of those people currently below the junior middle school level to complete those grades, and 30 per cent of the present junior middle school graduates to complete senior middle school. In addition, some of the senior middle school graduates will go on to college.