

China looks to UK's vocational system

China is learning from the United Kingdom's vocational education system as it moves to improve the skills of its talent pool.

On Friday, a delegation from the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference National Committee visited City of Westminster College, a leading British vocational school, with the goal of incorporating best practices into China's education system.

"British vocational education experiences can be directly applied to help China improve the skills of its population," said Gan Yisheng, vice-chairman of the proposals committee within the CPPCC National Committee.

"In particular, we are interested in the way British vocational schools work intensively with businesses to create and implement the courses, so that students gain the most valuable skills and experiences," Gan said.

City of Westminster College has 7,000 students. Over the years, it has collaborated with many businesses, including food company United Biscuits UK, Harrods, the BBC and engineering consultancy Atkins.

Gan said the British government's recent initiatives to encourage businesses to invest in training apprentices might also work well in China.

Since April, the British government has required all businesses with a payroll exceeding 3 million pounds (\$3.9 million) to pay an apprenticeship levy, which they can claim back by investing in training apprentices. The plan reinforces the British government's efforts to fund 3 million new apprentices by 2020.

The vocational education sector has grown quickly in recent decades, and China now has 12,300 vocational schools, collectively hosting nearly 27 million students and annually recruiting 9.3 million new students.

Despite the growth, Chinese education specialists note that the sector still faces challenges such as a lack of adequate government funding and policy support, while vocational qualifications so far do not have the same value as other qualifications.

"The sector would benefit from policies that give the same treatment to students with vocational and university degrees, and by allowing vocational courses to attract more talent," said Luo Xiaoming, the former executive president of Beijing Geely University, a vocational school founded in 2000.

Luo, who visited City of Westminster College last year, said China needs policy incentives that encourage businesses to invest in training new talent, alongside schools. In particular, they should be encouraged to share their cutting-edge technology with schools, so students are capable of working with the most advanced technology immediately upon starting work.

Keith Cowell, CEO of the United Colleges Group, of which City of Westminster College is a member, said he believes there will be many opportunities to work with Chinese vocational schools, such as by becoming certifying partners for courses, or by hosting teacher or student exchange programs.

[Roads, rails transform lives in the west](#)

[unable to retrieve full-text content]For centuries, the only connection between Mashuping village and the outside world was a narrow, meandering path deep in the mountains. Now, a highway has ended its isolation.

[Air Force set on long-range mission](#)

The Chinese Air Force will continue to transform from a territorial air defense unit into an extended arm capable of protecting national interests wherever they exist, according to its new commander.

Lieutenant General Ding Laihang said that as China becomes stronger and security challenges continue to emerge, the military is striving to ensure it can safeguard national interests anywhere in the world.

“In the past, our strategies and guidelines focused on territorial air defense. Now we have been shifting our attention to honing our ability in terms of long-range strategic projection and long-range strike,” he told China National Radio for an article published on Sunday.

“A strategic force must go out,” he said. “We will continue to carry out long-distance training over oceans.”

Ding’s predecessor, General Ma Xiaotian, who stepped down in late August, had earlier said the Air Force “cannot simply guard on land and not fly out” in response to questions on Japan’s concerns about the People’s Liberation Army’s “increasing activities” over the Sea of Japan.

Ma said it is normal for the PLA Air Force to conduct training exercises over the sea, adding that “the Sea of Japan is not Japan’s sea”.

Not long after Ma’s comments, six Chinese H-6K bombers flew through the Miyako Strait between the islands of Okinawa and Miyako in the East China Sea and approached the Kii Peninsula. This was the first time the PLA Air Force

had flown that route, Japanese media reported.

In Sunday's article, Ding pledged that the Air Force will intensify its realistic aerial combat drills and continue to carry out exercises with foreign militaries.

Wang Yanan, editor of Aerospace Knowledge magazine, said the Air Force will have two priorities as it moves toward becoming a capable strategic force.

"First, as a lot of new aircraft have been delivered, it must figure out how to make these new planes combat-ready as soon as possible and how to maintain them, as they are different from the old types," he said.

"For instance, the Air Force now has Y-20 heavy-lift transport jets, but it needs to design methods and gain experience when it comes to airdropping armored vehicles," he said. "Owning advanced weapons doesn't equate to being able to use them well."

The second priority is that the Air Force must improve its capabilities in coordinating different types of aircraft and air defense missiles in an operation, and also nurture joint operation capabilities with other services, like the PLA Navy and Rocket Force, Wang added.

Citing the new-generation strategic bomber that is under development, Wang suggested the Air Force start studying the plane's usage in future warfare and work closely with designers to make sure the engine and flight-control system are good and reliable.

[Beijing opens hospital helipad](#)

A helipad for transferring patients in emergency cases was put into service on Aug 29 at a top hospital in downtown Beijing, which is often congested by traffic.

The helicopter apron, which is atop a newly built four-story car park at the China-Japan Friendship Hospital, is the only one specially for medical services in the capital's urban area that integrates aviation and land rescue.

Using the facility, the hospital will be able to cooperate much more frequently with emergency rescue centers to save patients in critical condition from more than 500 kilometers away, said Wang Chen, president of the hospital.

"Based on the experiences of developed countries, transferring patients by helicopter can increase their survival rate by 25 percent," he said.

The helipad, which has a diameter of 20 meters, is designed to handle

helicopters up to 17 meters in length and with a maximum takeoff weight of 8 metric tons.

“We launched the facility to improve healthcare services, especially to facilitate patient transfers, which have been impeded due to heavy traffic congestion around the hospital,” said Ying Jiaoqian, head of the hospital’s medical affairs department.

Ying said there are a few hospitals in Beijing that are equipped with similar apron facilities, but the one at China-Japan Friendship Hospital is the only one in the central urban area.

She said a middle-aged man was flown from Shenyang, Liaoning province, to Beijing for medical treatment by helicopter on Wednesday, making him the first patient to benefit from the new facility.

The patient, who suffered multiple bone fractures after falling from a building, was first transported to the China-Japan Friendship Hospital in a flight that lasted under two hours and then sent by ambulance to Beijing Jishuitan Hospital, which specializes in bone injuries.

Ying said the patient, who paid for the transfer, is now in stable condition.

Hospitals around China have been urged to improve services for patients during the new round of medical reforms, aimed at universal coverage of healthcare services.

Most major public hospitals in Beijing have opened online or mobile registration services, so patients can make appointments using smartphones rather than having to wait in long lines in hospitals.

In October, 132 major hospitals in Beijing and neighboring Tianjin and Hebei province started to recognize 27 clinical test results, such as cholesterol level and hepatitis B, so patients do not have to pay for repeat testing at different hospitals, according to the Beijing Health and Family Planning Commission.

[College dorms launch facial recognition technology](#)

All the dormitories have installed facial recognition system in Beijing Normal University, reported the Beijing News on Sept 4.



A student at Beijing Normal University has her facial information input into a new facial recognition security system. [Photo/bjnews.com]

The Beijing Normal University greeted 2,626 freshmen on Sunday, aged 14 to 28, who need to register with the facial recognition system to enter the dormitories.

The system requires the facial information from all the new comers—they need to stand in front of the machine for two seconds to register.

The campus first tried facial recognition system in May and later installed it in every dorm.

It is said there're three ways to launch the system. Students can swipe their campus card, shout out their name, or put in last four digits of campus card passwords to enable the system to proceed with facial recognition.

The system can identify 26 kinds of dialect when students use voice to launch the system.

It is reported 62 percent of the new comers were born in 1999, with the youngest born in 2003 and the oldest in 1989.

It is the first time that those born in 2000s are entering college.