Integrating Industry and Education in Higher Vocational Colleges: Practical Logic and Pathways for Fostering a Strong Sense of Community for the Chinese Nation

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Abstract: *The integration of industry and education provides higher vocational colleges with a unique 'embodied' practical field for fostering a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation. Drawing on a three-dimensional analytical framework of 'space–subject–carrier', and incorporating theories of embodied cognition and situated learning, this paper elucidates the intrinsic mechanisms through which industry-education integration facilitates the cultivation of this sense of community. The findings reveal that the threefold logic follows a progressive trajectory of 'cognitive anchoring–emotional deepening–behavioural transformation'. By bridging the three spheres of school, enterprise, and society, this approach embeds value identification throughout the entire chain of skills training. However, current practice is confronted with challenges such as inadequate synergy among educational fields, superficial collaboration among multiple stakeholders, and tokenistic curriculum and practical activities, with distinct manifestations across institutions in ethnic and non-ethnic regions. Accordingly, this paper proposes an optimised pathway encompassing 'field integration–stakeholder synergy–carrier development', with particular emphasis on digital empowerment and the construction of value-added assessment systems, aiming to organically embed the sense of community for the Chinese nation within the holistic process of cultivating technically skilled talent.*

Keywords: *industry-education integration; sense of community for the Chinese nation; embodied cognition; implementation pathways; value-added assessment*

Introduction

Fostering a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation constitutes the overarching principle of ethnic affairs governance in the new era and represents a core imperative for vocational education in fulfilling the fundamental mission of fostering virtue through education. As the primary arena for cultivating technically skilled talent, higher vocational education shoulders the dual responsibility of serving national strategies and promoting ethnic unity. Industry-education integration, as the foundational educational model and defining characteristic of vocational education, has become deeply embedded throughout the entire process of talent cultivation in higher vocational institutions. Nevertheless, in implementing education to foster a sense of community for the Chinese nation, higher vocational colleges commonly encounter issues such as insufficient integration with their distinctive industry-education features, unitary practical approaches, and weak school-enterprise collaboration. The educational outcomes tend to be superficial and tokenistic. How to integrate education for fostering a sense of community for the Chinese nation throughout the entire chain of school-enterprise collaborative talent cultivation within the framework of industry-education integration thus emerges as a pressing practical issue requiring urgent attention.

A review of extant scholarship reveals that academic research on fostering a sense of community for the Chinese nation has yielded substantial results. One strand focuses on value implications and pathway exploration, forming an analytical paradigm from value to predicament to pathway (Yan, 2026; Wang et al., 2026; Sun et al., 2026). Another strand attends to the particularities of higher vocational institutions, exposing practical bottlenecks such as superficial integration of educational philosophies, insufficient curriculum synergy, and disconnection in practical activities (Ren, 2026; Tan & Chen,

2026). Some empirical studies have further revealed mediating mechanisms among collaborative education, embedded efficacy, and sense of community (Song et al., 2026). However, the majority of these studies treat education for fostering a sense of community and vocational education as relatively independent systems, with limited research examining the cultivation of this sense of community in higher vocational colleges from the perspective of industry-education integration. This paper, grounded in the perspective of industry-education integration, seeks to address: by what practical logic can this integration empower the cultivation of a sense of community? What practical predicaments are encountered? And what implementation pathways ought to be constructed?

2. The Triple Practical Logic of Fostering a Sense of Community for the Chinese Nation in Higher Vocational Colleges from the Perspective of Industry-Education Integration

Practical logic refers to the internally generated schemas of action that actors dynamically develop in complex situations. In the context of industry-education integration, the practical logic for fostering a sense of community for the Chinese nation in higher vocational colleges involves leveraging the mediating mechanisms of industry-education integration to transform national identity, through students' deep interaction with school and enterprise environments, into professional competencies and technical ethics that are perceptible, actionable, and assessable. Drawing on theories of embodied cognition and situated learning, this paper elaborates on three dimensions—spatial logic, stakeholder logic, and carrier logic—corresponding respectively to the fundamental questions of where to cultivate, by whom, and through what means.

2.1 Spatial Logic: Industry-Education Integration Expands the Three-Dimensional 'School-Enterprise-Society' Practical Space

Spatial logic provides the field foundation for cultivation. Space is both a product of social relations and a shaper of the specific forms of social interaction that occur within it. Industry-education integration breaks the temporal and spatial boundaries of the traditional classroom, constructing a three-dimensionally linked practical space of school, enterprise, and society. These three spheres are not simply additive but manifest a progressive relationship from cognition to experience to internalisation.

The school field provides symbolic cognition through curriculum and campus culture, enabling students to understand the Chinese national community and establish a foundational knowledge framework. The enterprise field offers situated perception via internships and order-based training, allowing students to experience multi-ethnic collaboration in authentic work scenarios and deepen emotional resonance through task dependencies. The social field extends education to ethnic regions and social service frontlines through school-enterprise activities like voluntary services and rural revitalisation. Here, students perceive their connection to the Chinese national community through personal service, with the core function being behavioural transformation, accomplishing value internalisation from cognition to practice.

2.2 Stakeholder Logic: Industry-Education Integration Constructs a Multi-Stakeholder Interactive Collaborative Educational Community

Identification arises within social relations. The core advantage of industry-education integration is expanding educational stakeholders from teachers alone to include enterprise mentors and community workers, forming a collaborative educational community. This requires role transformation and functional upgrades from both schools and enterprises.

On the school side, mechanisms like dual-appointment enable teachers to conduct enterprise research, acquiring industrial technologies and accumulating educational materials from production realities. Organisational co-construction initiatives facilitate shared talent cultivation. On the enterprise side, master artisans should enter classrooms, evolving from technical instructors to value guides.

Industry-education integration provides a naturally embedded scenario for community cultivation, enabling collaborative educational synergy in shared practice. This shifts the process from one-way theoretical indoctrination to multi-directional interactive construction. The key is that identification grows organically within the shared productive and practical life of multiple stakeholders, not from external preaching.

2.3 Carrier Logic: Industry-Education Integration Provides Concrete Practical Educational Carriers

Industry-education integration embeds the cultivation of a sense of community within the 'learning by doing' skills training process, achieving resonance between value guidance and skill acquisition. At the curriculum level, ethnic unity education is incorporated into theory-practice integrated courses, enterprise practical courses, and skills training modules. The curriculum carriers enabled by industry-education integration allow students to naturally receive value edification through hands-on operations and collaborative production. At the activity level, community services, industry research, and other practical forms combine value education with professional practice. At the evaluation level, educational outcomes are incorporated into school-enterprise cooperation quality assessment and student comprehensive competence evaluation, transforming the cultivation of a sense of community from a soft requirement to a hard constraint.

These three logics together constitute the normative framework for cultivating a sense of community for the Chinese nation in the context of industry-education integration. Spatial logic addresses the question of where to cultivate, expanding the educational field from the enclosed classroom to open society; stakeholder logic addresses the question of who cultivates, expanding educational forces from single-sourced faculty to multi-stakeholder synergy; carrier logic addresses the question of by what means, shifting educational methods from theoretical indoctrination to practical immersion. These three logics mutually support and reinforce one another, providing a comprehensive practical framework for cultivating this sense of community.

3. Practical Predicaments in Fostering a Sense of Community for the Chinese Nation in Higher Vocational Colleges from the Perspective of Industry-Education Integration

While industry-education integration empowers the cultivation of a sense of community in higher vocational colleges, current shortcomings in curriculum and instructional design, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and depth of practical education remain pronounced. These predicaments manifest in the following three aspects.

3.1 Insufficient Utilisation of Educational Fields and Lack of Progressive, Interlocking Collaborative Design

First, cognitive biases in top-level design. Some institutions prioritise explicit indicators like employment rates, treating community education as an unassessable soft requirement. In non-ethnic regions, many deem it irrelevant to enterprise practice, leading to neglected planning for enterprise and social fields.

Second, insufficient environmental support in the school field. Campus spaces lack those carrying Chinese cultural symbols. Ethnic activities remain superficial like song-and-dance, lacking deep participation design, leaving students as spectators without authentic identification.

Third, severe weakening of the enterprise field's educational function. In internships, enterprises focus solely on skills training. Students' experiences of multi-ethnic collaboration are neither guided nor elevated to community awareness. Mentors' responsibilities and assessment tools lack elements for ethnic unity, losing valuable educational moments.

Fourth, limited practical opportunities in the social field for vocational students. Furthermore, the three fields lack interlocking design. School cognition, enterprise experience, and social internalisation operate in isolation, failing to form a complete chain from cognition to behaviour or establish feedback mechanisms.

3.2 Insufficient Collaboration Among School-Enterprise and Intra-Institutional Multi-Stakeholder Educational Actors

The multi-stakeholders involved in cultivating a sense of community include not only school and enterprise parties but also on-campus value education teachers, subject teachers, and student affairs staff. Currently, goal conflicts between school and enterprise stakeholders are pronounced. Enterprises are primarily oriented towards production efficiency and economic returns, lacking intrinsic motivation for educational investment in cultivating a sense of community that does not directly generate economic returns. Mechanisms such as school-enterprise organisational co-construction remain

tokenistic in some institutions, with no substantive activities after signing and inauguration. Teacher enterprise research remains shallow, largely at the level of site visits, failing to genuinely integrate into production processes and acquire vivid educational materials.

The structural contradictions among on-campus teaching staff are prominent. Value education teachers generally lack practical experience in ethnic region industries, making it difficult for their theoretical explanations to connect with authentic production scenarios or effectively address students' practical concerns from internships. Subject teachers hold entrenched skills-first orientations and lack curriculum-based value education competence, with value-oriented elements often awkwardly imposed, creating a disconnect from professional skills training. Student affairs staff, positioned at the frontline of students' daily interactions and ideological guidance, have not received systematic specialised training in ethnic unity education, lacking sufficient knowledge of ethnic policies and cultural competence.

3.3 Curriculum, Practical, and Cultural Carriers Remain Superficial, with Limited Educational Efficacy

The 'two skins' phenomenon in curriculum carriers is conspicuous. Value education theory courses emphasise theoretical deduction and grand narratives, with classroom instruction still predominantly lecture-based, lacking industry frontline cases and systematic design, resulting in low student engagement. Curriculum-based value education in subject courses lacks systematicity, with individual disciplines yet to form models for integrating community elements that align with their specific industrial characteristics. The stories of shared ethnic endeavour and innovation across industries are awkwardly inserted. General education school-based courses are severely lacking, with insufficient provision of school-based teaching materials and digital learning resources adapted to higher vocational student profiles and integrated with local industrial characteristics.

Practical carriers suffer from narrow coverage and low professional integration. Enterprise internships focus solely on individual skills training, lacking guidance components for ethnic unity awareness and corresponding evaluation indicators. Existing practical activities largely remain at the level of superficial cultural and recreational events, with few projects that deeply integrate professional skills. The absence of debriefing and reflection sessions after activities leaves students' sensory experiences unable to be elevated into rational identification.

Cultural carriers emphasise form over substance. Activity planning is task-completion oriented, rarely following the transformation trajectory of 'cognition–emotion–identification', lacking pre-activity needs assessment and post-activity effectiveness evaluation. Students gain little intrinsic fulfilment amid the lively spectacles, and identification fades as soon as activities conclude, failing to generate sustained psychological effects.

The orienting function of evaluation carriers is severely lacking. Competencies related to the Chinese national community have not been systematically incorporated into student comprehensive competence assessment, school-enterprise cooperation quality evaluation, or teacher performance appraisal, with clear dimensional indicators and operational definitions absent at all levels.

4. Implementation Pathways for Fostering a Sense of Community for the Chinese Nation in Higher Vocational Colleges from the Perspective of Industry-Education Integration

The key to overcoming practical predicaments lies in translating the boundary-spanning advantages of industry-education integration into tangible effectiveness for implementing education to foster a sense of community for the Chinese nation. This paper constructs an optimised pathway from three dimensions: 'field integration–stakeholder synergy–carrier development'.

4.1 Field Integration: Bridging the 'School-Enterprise-Society' Educational Fields and Expanding Practical Space

The primary reason for the lack of linkage among educational fields is that existing industry-education integration processes have not established a progressively layered cognitive cultivation system. School-based enlightenment, enterprise perception, and social practice remain disconnected, lacking a unified articulation starting point, real-time feedback mechanisms, and a sustained, deepened integrated cultivation chain.

First, incorporate the cultivation of a sense of community for the Chinese nation into the programme-level objectives of talent cultivation schemes. In formulating professional teaching standards and internship programmes, beyond technical proficiency requirements, competency objectives such as multi-ethnic collaboration capacity and cultural understanding and respect should be specified and decomposed into observable, assessable indicators.

Second, the enterprise field should be expanded from a purely skills-training space to an educational space. Enterprise mentors' responsibilities should extend from singular skills instruction to guiding students' understanding that multi-ethnic collaborative production itself constitutes a micro-level manifestation of the Chinese national community. Utilising existing work procedures such as team meetings and internship journals, thematic reflection nodes should be established, requiring students to record and reflect on their specific experiences of collaborating with multi-ethnic teams to complete production tasks, thereby transforming everyday sensory experiences into rational identification with the Chinese national community.

Finally, social field practical activities should form an organic loop with professional learning. Before students depart for technical assistance or industrial research in ethnic regions, there should be thematic course introductions to establish corresponding knowledge preparation and problem awareness. Throughout the activities, there should be joint guidance from school teachers and enterprise mentors. After the activities conclude, debriefing, reflection, and outcome presentations should be organised, guiding students to abstract rational understandings of state-nationality relations from concrete experiences.

4.2 Stakeholder Synergy: Building a Multi-Stakeholder Educational Community Through Industry-Education Integration

Addressing insufficient multi-stakeholder synergy requires transforming the school-enterprise relationship from a loose cooperative partnership into a closely-knit educational community, while simultaneously breaking down collaboration barriers among different on-campus faculty groups.

First, in programmes such as order-based classes, modern apprenticeships, and industry colleges, when schools and enterprises jointly formulate talent cultivation schemes, competencies such as patriotism and collaborative spirit should be written into training specifications and transformed into observable indicators in graduate competency checklists. Enterprise mentors' evaluation dimensions should be extended beyond technical aspects to encompass students' performance in teamwork and professional attitudes. Mentors' responsibilities should include, in addition to technical indicators, guidance on students' professional attitudes and collaborative spirit, with relevant performance incorporated into internship assessments.

School value education teachers and subject teachers should proactively engage with enterprise contexts. Value education teachers should transform authentic stories from enterprises in ethnic regions and multi-ethnic entrepreneurial teams into classroom teaching cases through enterprise research and case collection. Subject teachers, through enterprise practice, should identify materials on ethnic interaction embedded in the transmission of professional skills within their disciplines.

The institution's humanities and social sciences faculty should take the lead in establishing a joint teaching and research system, regularly organising collective lesson preparation among value education teachers, subject teachers, student affairs staff, and enterprise mentors, mining educational elements by professional category, and transforming collaboration from sporadic voluntary behaviour into routine working arrangements.

4.3 Carrier Development: Constructing Deeply Integrated Distinctive Educational Carriers

From the four aspects of curriculum, practice, culture, and evaluation, systematically develop educational carriers with vocational education characteristics, enabling education for fostering a sense of community to be tangible, perceptible, and effective throughout the entire chain of industry-education integration.

Curriculum carriers should be project-based. Value education courses can design teaching projects that integrate professional skills,Subject courses should systematically identify community elements by discipline cluster, replacing awkward insertion with authentic cases of shared ethnic endeavour from industry and enterprise history, allowing value guidance to occur naturally alongside skills acquisition.

Practical carriers should be professionalised. Relying on industry-education integration platforms such as industry colleges, master artisan studios, and training bases to expand practical opportunities, incorporating community competency requirements into training manuals and assessment standards. Social practices such as technical assistance and intangible cultural heritage innovation should adopt systems of joint guidance by school teachers and enterprise mentors, with outcome presentation, enabling students to genuinely perceive the contemporary pulse of shared ethnic development through serving society.

Cultural carriers should be life-oriented. Activities such as traditional festivals and ethnic craft workshops can be embedded in professional skills learning. For example, culinary programmes could incorporate exchanges on the food cultures of various ethnic groups; design programmes could engage in creative practice with shared cultural symbols, enabling students to engage with diverse cultures through professional interest, avoiding superficial activity-for-activity's-sake.

Evaluation carriers should be rigid and digital. A multi-dimensional evaluation system encompassing 'process + outcome + development' should be constructed. At the student level, participation in ethnic region services and collaborative performance in mixed-group projects should be incorporated into comprehensive competence assessment. School-enterprise cooperation quality evaluation should include internship bases' educational contributions and the integration of community-related materials as observation points. At the teacher level, the development of relevant teaching cases and guidance of student practical activities should be credited as performance.

On this basis, particular emphasis should be placed on digital empowerment and the introduction of value-added assessment. On the one hand, virtual reality (VR/AR) technologies can be employed to recreate major construction scenes in ethnic regions, or big data analytics can be used to analyse students' interaction, exchange, and integration data during internships, achieving visualisation and precision of the educational process. On the other hand, a 'value-added assessment' system should be constructed, using pre- and post-test comparisons not only to examine students' current performance but also to evaluate whether their identification with the Chinese national community has significantly improved through industry-education integration internships, thereby scientifically measuring educational effectiveness.

5. Conclusion

This paper based on the triple logic of 'space–subject–carrier'. The research demonstrates that industry-education integration forms a unique mechanism for cultivating this sense of community by expanding the three-dimensional practical space of school-enterprise-society, rallying multiple educational stakeholders, and providing concrete practical carriers. However, in reality, insufficient linkage among the three educational fields, superficial collaboration among school-enterprise and intra-institutional stakeholders, and the surface-level nature of the four types of carriers—curriculum, practice, culture, and evaluation—prevent these logics from being effectively implemented. Accordingly, this paper proposes an optimised pathway of 'field integration–stakeholder synergy–carrier development', aiming to embed education for fostering a sense of community throughout the entire chain of industry-education integrated talent cultivation. By adopting the analytical perspective of industry-education integration, this paper reveals the intrinsic correlative mechanisms between fostering a sense of community and vocational education, enriches the theoretical framework for fostering a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation, and provides an actionable operational plan for higher vocational colleges to implement such education within the framework of industry-education integration.

Acknowledgments

This work was supported by the 2026 Jiujiang Social Science Foundation Project (Special Project for Fostering a Strong Sense of Community for the Chinese Nation) under Grant Nos. 26ZLZX056 and 26LJZX057.

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