

# Exploring the Training Mode of Rural Versatile Talents from the Perspective of Continuing Education-Taking Sichuan Agricultural University as an Example

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**ABSTRACT.** The report of the 19th Communist Party of China Central Committee puts forward the strategy of rural revitalization. In the transformation of agriculture upgrade, the reformation of agricultural supply-side structure, the modernization of agriculture and rural areas, and the development of the China's Rural Vitalization Strategy, there will be higher requirements and greater demands for rural talents. Continuing education, as an important part of the construction of China's lifelong education system in the new period, plays the key role in rural residents' cultural literacy. Based on the role of continuing education in agricultural universities, this article deeply explores the path of cultivating rural versatile talents, and proposes effective strategies for rural residents' continuing education in Sichuan Province.

**KEYWORDS:** agricultural universities, Continuing education, Rural versatile talents, Cultivation model

## 1. Introduction

The rural revitalization strategy proposed in the report of the 19th Communist Party of China Central Committee has drawn a grand blueprint for the development of agriculture and rural areas in the new era. With the implementation of the rural revitalization strategy and the deepening of rural reforms, Chinese rural areas still need a large number of rural versatile talents with professional knowledge and management skills. As an important part of social talent training, continuing education is the main source of lifelong education in China. In the context of the rural revitalization strategy, continuing education is responsible for the training mission of Chinese rural versatile talents. Based on the role of continuing education in agricultural universities, this article deeply explores the path of cultivating rural versatile talents, and proposes effective strategies for rural residents' continuing education in Sichuan Province.

## 2. The Role of Continuing Education in Agricultural Universities

### 2.1 It is Conducive to the Cultivation of Various Talents in Various Industries in Rural Areas

Talents are the key resource for realizing the development of modernization of agriculture and rural areas. Regarding the "Three Rural" issues: agriculture, rural areas, and rural residents, the first problem needed be solved is the shortage of agricultural talents. Education development is the priority solution to alleviate poverty, is the important aspect for the whole poverty alleviation development project, is the fundamental way of blocking the intergenerational transmission of poverty [1]. Based on the continuing education function of agricultural universities, with the support of modern information technology and various methods, such as remote education, the overall quality of rural representatives, new professional farmers, new industrial professionals and other talents in different fields, can be improved. This will allow them to understand theoretical knowledge, agricultural technology, and market information profoundly.

### 2.2 It is Conducive to Forming the Concept of Lifelong Learning

Lifelong education is the educational philosophy of continuing education to cultivate the talents needed by the society [2]. Continuing education in agricultural universities is to promote the use of modern science and technology to

solve agricultural problems, to improve the farmers' overall ability so as to improve agricultural production. It will accelerate the vitalization of rural areas and urban-rural integration [3]. In rural areas, residents are generally less educated. Through the effective intervention of continuing education in agricultural universities, through independent learning and traditional reception learning, it is conducive to the formation of lifelong learning atmosphere, thus building a lifelong learning system.

### ***2.3 It is Conducive to the Implementation of Rural Vitalization Strategy***

The Rural Vitalization Strategy is a new way of thinking to adjust and sort out the "Three Rural" issues since China Reform and Opening-up. It is the refinement and sublimation of previous rural development strategies of the Communist Party of China. Without the development of "Three Rural", the rural areas cannot be revitalized [4]. Agricultural universities have natural advantages as a cultivation base of agricultural scientific and technological talents, providing innovation and extension of new agricultural technologies, farmer vocational skills training, and rural governance system improvement [5]. Therefore, agricultural universities shoulder the great responsibility of scientific and technological support, development training and social services.

## **3. Definition and Cultivation of Rural Versatile Talents**

### ***3.1 Definition of Rural Versatile Talents***

According to the National Rural Vitalization Strategy and Poverty Alleviation Project, the development of rural versatile talents is focusing on improving and transforming the traditional method of new rural residents cultivation by adopting "Sichuan Province Rural Vitalization Strategic Plan" and "1+6+N" county village vitalization planning system and "10+3" Sichuan agricultural industry development requirement on academic qualifications, knowledge update, skill training and other methods. This is to cultivate the spirit of patriotism, good ideological and political qualities, physical and mental health; to foster a certain level of policy making, professional ethics, professional qualities; to have a strong desire for employment and entrepreneurship services in rural areas, determined to contribute on agricultural modernization; to possess basic theoretical knowledge and practical experience in planting, breeding, agricultural product processing, laws and regulations, marketing management; to be equipped with certain information technology and have strong extension promotion and practical work ability; to enhance the job capabilities of those who are willing to upgrade their academic qualifications or obtain a second academic qualification.

### ***3.2 Characteristics of Rural Versatile Talents***

#### ***3.2.1 An Extension and Development of New Occupation Farmers***

The new occupation farmers are engaged in agriculture as a new type of permanent job. The traditional cultivation method for new occupation farmers is the only training method. Based on the foundation of new occupation farmers' cultivation, the rural versatile talents are cultivated through academic qualifications, skill training and continuing education methods. The cultivation emphasizes dealing with the relationship between theoretical knowledge and practical ability, so as to stimulate motivation and inspire creativity.

#### ***3.2.2 Emphasize The Concept Of Green Development Of Agriculture***

Rural versatile talents cultivation emphasizes the cultivation of a group of talents who understand agriculture and love rural areas and residents for China's agricultural technology innovation and rural vitalization. In this process, they attach importance to the cultivation of new concepts and new skills, especially the concept of green development. Green development is an inevitable choice for agricultural development and the only way from "quantitative change" to "qualitative change" for agriculture. As the driving force for rural vitalization, rural versatile talents must establish a green development concept, master theoretical development instructions and technical skills, found a development foundation for a green way of agricultural production, and promote urban-rural integration and the sustainable development in agriculture and rural areas.

#### ***3.2.3 Take Cultivate Versatile Talents, Who Adapt to Agricultural and Rural Development, as the Fundamental Goal***

According to the demands of the National Rural Vitalization Strategy for talent capability, synergizing the modern agriculture development trend, talent training goal must be restructured. The versatile talents must understand the professional knowledge and skills of modern agricultural production, love rural management, determine to devote in lifting the farmers out of poverty. This cultivation process will help enhance talents' abilities and raise their service

awareness, which can serve the agriculture, rural areas and rural residents better.

### **3.3 Cultivation Path**

By drawing support from academic specific disciplines and majors, the cultivation project is determined to serve for the local economy and rural development and focus on the demands for agricultural talents, such as rural development. By integrating social resources, new cultivation methods must be innovated. Through the cultivation ways of academic education and Non-degree Education, versatile talents will be able to adapt the modern agriculture development and provide better service to the “Three Rural”.

## **4. Exploration and Practice of Continuing Education of Rural Versatile Talents in Sichuan Agricultural University**

### **4.1 The Construction of Sichuan Agricultural University Continuing Education System**

Sichuan Agricultural University is a national “Project 211” and “Double First-class” university featured with agricultural technology and coordinated development of multiple disciplines. Continuing education is an important part of talent training system in Sichuan Agricultural University, also is to serve the community and the society, especially offering new education opportunities for urban and rural labour forces. Currently, the continuing education of Sichuan Agricultural University consists of two parts: Continuing Education with Academic Qualification and Non-degree Education. Continuing Education with Academic Qualification includes Online Higher Education, Adult Higher Education and Self-Taught Higher Education Examinations, while Non-degree Education mainly includes various trainings, researches and advanced studies.

### **4.2 Cultivation Methods and Contents**

The cultivation mainly adopts the form of Non-degree Education and Continuing Education with Academic Qualification (Online Higher Education, Adult Higher Education and Self-Taught Higher Education Examinations). Following the features of adult learning and the regularity of agricultural production, the cultivation may integrate offline and online teaching and learning to meet the needs of academic qualifications and technology and knowledge improvement. In order to cultivate versatile talents that meet the requirements of rural development, the cultivation must be based on the agricultural development and focused on production and management skills. Centralized training, visit and practice are combined in one industrial cycle, so as to improve the planting, breeding, processing, selling and managing ability.

### **4.3 Cultivation Path**

#### **4.3.1 The Model for Continuing Education with Academic Qualification**

##### **(1) Background and significance of the model construction**

In order to achieve the social needs, the university is moving forward to enrich and innovate the rural versatile talents training model by optimizing structure, taking advantage of disciplines and improving education quality. Through giving full play to the disciplinary characteristics and advantages of the university’s biotechnology and agricultural science and technology, the university is cultivating a group of talents, that understand agriculture and love rural areas and residents. They could provide support and resources to the rural vitalization, new rural construction, industrial transformation and upgrading of the “Three Areas and Three Prefectures” (including Tibet, Tibetan areas of four provinces, four prefectures of Southern Xinjiang, Prefecture Liangshan of Sichuan Province, Prefecture Nujiang of Yunnan Province and Prefecture Linxia of Gansu Province) and poverty alleviation. Hence, improving the university’s ability of public service.

##### **(2) Building a basic framework for Continuing Education with Academic Qualification cultivation model**

According to the agricultural talents demands on Rural Vitalization Strategy and trends and characteristics of modern agriculture development, the talent cultivation project should focus on major scientific and technical issues in the field of agriculture modernization, and rely on the university’s advanced Continuing Education with Academic Qualification. Moreover, key disciplines related to agriculture and two-level cultivation framework which includes junior and undergraduate courses should also be constructed and strengthened.

### (3) Implementation of cultivating versatile talents by Continuing Education with Academic Qualification

#### a. Talent cultivation plan

Sichuan Agricultural University has practically integrated the resources of Online Higher Education, Adult Higher Education and Self-Taught Higher Education Examinations, to innovate and reform the rural applied talent cultivation model. Besides that, the university continuously explored a “Four-chain Collaboration” cultivation model, which improved the cultivation quality of rural versatile talents. In the development of talent cultivation plan, it should be in line with national strategies such as the Rural Vitalization Strategy, by optimizing the General, Basic, and Major Curriculum system to strengthen practical teaching and learning. The curriculum content, teaching methods and teaching staff should be developed according to the curriculum system and talent cultivation goal, in order to meet the requirement of Rural Vitalization Strategy in talent cultivation and adapt to the development of agriculture and rural areas.

#### b. Cultivation organization

The Remote and Continuing Education School of Sichuan Agricultural University is the representative to coordinate university resources in continuing education development. The school is responsible for cultivation plan review, student registration management, test management, certification management and teaching quality monitoring. The teaching institutes are responsible for developing cultivation plan, selecting teaching staffs, formulating curriculum and examination syllabus, teaching materials selection, organizing learning courses and etc.

#### c. Cultivation implementation

The curriculum teaching implementation is knowledge points oriented, mainly based on student’s self-study and supplemented by teacher guidance. Learning materials include course introduction, syllabus, multimedia courseware, exam outline, case study, textbooks and bibliography. Teachers provide guidance through analysis of key and difficult points, topic discussions, course forums, online question and answer. While student’s self-study learning progress can be assessed through courseware, self-test exercises, and homework assessment.

#### d. Assessment and recognition

After completing all the courses and practice specified in the cultivation plan, passing all examination and completing the academic graduation, students will be issued a nationally recognized online education graduation certificate. The undergraduates who reach the degree standard will be awarded adult education diploma based on application. This is complying with the educational regulations of the Ministry of Education on online education and adult education, and the degree and the diploma will be registered online and will be recognized by the nation.

### (4) Analysis of the existing problems and reasons of the cultivation model of Continuing Education with Academic Qualification

The problem of adopting the academic cultivation path to cultivate rural versatile talents is mainly manifested in that academicity is stronger than practicality. The curriculum system and teaching content always follow the contents of full-time undergraduate. Most of the teachers are lack of industrial training and practical teaching experience. In addition, this kind of model is lack of platform to integrate the industry and teaching. The Business Innovation is in vacant.

Due to the low literacy of the targeting cultivation group, it restricts the grasp and application of general theoretical knowledge. Moreover, the students’ education background, working experience and willingness to learn are completely different, so it is difficult to educate them at the right level. Also, organizing teaching is difficult. Continuing Education with Academic Qualification adopts online teaching, in which the teaching content, teaching location, and learning schedules are flexible. It aims to meet different students’ needs. However, most students are agricultural frontline workers and engage in family farms or cooperation. There are many other priorities that need them to be dealt with urgently. Therefore, it is impossible to completely study in accordance with the requirements of the university, which leads to greater difficulty in organizing teaching. Hence, the quality of teaching is difficult to guarantee.

#### **4.3.2 Non-Degree Continuing Education Cultivation Model**

##### (1) Background and significance of Non-degree Continuing Education cultivation model construction

According to major national strategies and decisions such as the new rural construction, poverty alleviation, and rural vitalization, important instructions from President Jinping Xi to the development of Sichuan and the diverse learning needs of the people, the university combined own development with serving “Three Rural” proactively, and explored and innovated new service mechanisms and methods constantly. The cultivation model highlighted the speciality and practicality on cultivation of versatile talents with certain professional qualities and business skills to meet the sustainable development of agriculture and rural areas and developed Sichuan as an agricultural talent training

centres to help Sichuan transform from a big agricultural province to a powerful agricultural province.

(2) Building a basic framework for Non-degree Continuing Education cultivation model

Non-degree cultivation adopts the teaching methods of “lecture, practical teaching, seminar, problem inquiry and online learning”. By offline learning sections, such as public elementary courses, specialized subject courses, innovation and entrepreneurship, and seminars, it aims at improving overall quality of rural residents, enhancing problem-solving skills, improving professional skills, updating knowledge and inspiring visions. Then a group of talents who study and love agriculture will be cultivated.

(3) Implementation of Non-degree Continuing Education cultivation model

a. Talent cultivation model

The talent cultivation goal should be based on the Rural Vitalization Strategy. The cultivation model should be farmer and demands oriented, remote education, independent learning, resource sharing, and achievements multiplied in the context of the university development, to activate the development vitality and innovation of agriculture and rural areas.

b. Teaching methods

Through the integrated application of teaching methods such as “Mentorship, Online Learning, Entrepreneurship Tour, Business Incubator”, the harmonious unity of teaching and learning is advocated to promote “independent, cooperative and exploratory” learning. “Mentorship” is a specific solution to the personalized problems of students. “Online Learning” develops courseware on demand and online live broadcast through online training platform, resolving the conflict between work and study, overcoming the time and space barriers, and providing a flexible and convenient learning method. “Entrepreneurship Tour” creates mobile classroom tours and develops various themed tours through practical teaching. “Business Incubator” selects exemplary and pioneer agricultural science and technology institution agricultural, agricultural leading companies as practical teaching bases, to strengthen the awareness of innovation and entrepreneurship and enhance the ability of agricultural entrepreneurship.

c. “345” Teaching Quality Assurance System

With accumulating practical experience in the cultivation process, Sichuan Agricultural University has already constructed a “345” Teaching Quality Assurance System (Three Groups, Four Mechanisms and Five Links). The “Three Groups”, referring to class advisers, teacher and students, are the three basic elements in the cultivation process. The “Three Groups” should be managed and served well to innovate the “Four Mechanisms”, which referring Standardized Management Mechanism, Team Construction Regulated and Operation Mechanism, Standardized Supervision and Restraint Mechanism, and Normalized Self-examination and Evaluation Mechanism. Through the interaction of the mechanisms, the three groups will be well managed, served and mobilized in turn, to ensure the quality and effectiveness of cultivation. In the process of teaching, the “Five Links”, referring to Supply and Demand Docking Link, Curriculum Development Link, Learning Service Support Link, Service Management Link, and Evaluation and Assessment Link, should be well controlled. According to the demands of talent cultivation, the management and service for versatile talents should be classified and strengthened to improve the teaching and learning quality.

d. Assessment and recognition

The assessment of rural versatile talents consists of learning process evaluation, final examination and practice or exercise. In the process of assessment, it is mainly based on the learning performance, courses participation, discussion and program completion. After the learning process, the students will be arranged to participate final examination, consisting of theory test and case analysis. Finally, through on-site practice or scene drilling on basic agricultural knowledge, industry market survey and agricultural production and operation management, talents will be assessed based on their response to the change in market demand, resource allocation, team building, internal institution setting, and effective market portfolio.

(4) Existing problems and reasons of the cultivation model by Non-degree Continuing Education

Due to the training target is not specific, that results in waste of training resources and ineffective training. The research on training needs is in absent. Most of the training programs are just waiting for opportunities rather than searching for targeted group. The main reason is that on one hand, due to the institutional mechanism and lack of market-oriented guidance, the program promotion is restricted; on the other hand, because of the lack of initiative and marketing experience, it restricts the branding and program promotion of the university cultivation program. There are also reasons caused by lacking of systematicity and coordination in the overall planning and resource allocation of training. In addition, the integrated planning and systematic solutions for system construction, training objectives, curriculum setting and teaching mode are deficient. The lacking of a complete quality assessment system affects the improvement of non-degree cultivation quality.



#### **4.4 Suggestions**

##### ***4.4.1 Respond to National Development Strategy and Continuously Improve Social Service Capability.***

Serving the national strategy is the education tenet and value pursuit of Sichuan Agricultural University continuing education. The university is guided by social demands, deeply implements the path, principles and policies of the Communist Party of China, actively carries out social research, and focuses on the national strategy, especially the rural policies and demands. In the university's top-level design, serving national strategy is taken as the first priority, and it runs through the entire process of university development. The university takes proactive actions to continuously improve the service for the local economic and social development.

##### ***4.4.2 Insist on Quality First and Develop Innovation-Drive on Talent Cultivation Model***

The talent cultivation models of Continuing Education with Academic Qualification and Non-degree Continuing Education should be customized on demands and be innovation-driven to promote the development of high-quality talents cultivation. In the development of talent cultivation planning and model, the combination of course teaching and practical teaching should be strengthened to make the cultivation project satisfy the needs of industry, trades, and society. The professional curriculum system and Non-degree cultivation model should be optimized by focusing on the development of capability, innovation and practical ability. At the same time, the evaluation system of Continuing Education with Academic Qualification and Non-degree training also need to be innovative. Hence, the quality of continuing education on rural versatile talents will be improved.

##### ***4.4.3 Integrate Advantageous Resources, and Actively Promote the Integration of Industry and Education, and University-Enterprise Cooperation***

Strengthen the exploiting and development of cultivation resources. Relying on the university's professional and disciplinary advantages, the university could integrate the teaching resources and expand multi-channel Non-degree Continuing Education programs to continuously increase the social influence. Besides, the integration of industry and education, and university-enterprise cooperation should be actively promoted. Diverse training programs, such as cadre training, science and technology training, agricultural frontline workers training, and professional manager training, should be developed to highlight the agriculture science and technology talent cultivation program, agricultural high-tech innovation and promotion, and the skill cultivation of rural residents.

##### ***4.4.4 Establish a Complete Scientific and Effective Evaluation System to Improve the Quality of Continuing Education***

From the perspective of government, the legal and regulation system of evaluation management should be established and improved, based on the law of the high education and the "Four Return" from Ministry of Education, which is "Return to Common Sense, Return to Duty, Return to Conscience, and Return to Dream", to force the standardization and institutionalization of continuing education. While on the perspective of the university, they should establish evaluation index system in accordance with national policies and regulations, and build a top-level design to increase institutional efficiency and the quality of talent cultivation.

##### ***4.4.5 Optimize the Practical Teaching and Enhance the Practical Ability***

In the Continuing Education with Academic Qualifications, the process of agricultural teaching should be optimized and the practical ability should be enhanced. Especially in the talent cultivation program, specific requirements and regulations are put forward for the cultivation of practical ability in the teaching process, training objectives, curriculum setting, and faculty construction. Moreover, the education of the awareness of innovation and entrepreneurship should be strengthened to improve the ability to solve practical problems in agricultural production. In Non-degree Continuing Education, it is encouraged to establish more talent cultivation bases to improve the practical ability of talents, and continuously supply high-quality talents for the development of modern agriculture and Rural Vitalization Strategy.

#### **5. Conclusion**

It is a new journey in the new era. In the process of building a moderately prosperous society and building a great socialist modernization country, agricultural universities should follow the social development strategies and policies to fulfil the mission endowed by the Communist Party of China and the country. They must adhere to be connotation construction oriented, foster virtue through education as their fundamental task, serve the national strategies as their demands. Continuously strengthen the research and application of modern education technology, accelerate the construction of teaching resources, and actively explore and innovate the talent cultivation model and modern remote

education management system to support the implementation of the Rural Vitalization Strategy

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