

# Research on Deepening the Reform of Higher Education through the Connotative Development Path with Quality Improvement as Its Core

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**Abstract:** The connotative development of higher education has different meanings in specific historical periods and environmental backgrounds. In the new era, the connotative development of higher education in China is fundamentally based on improving the quality of education. Intensive development focuses on improving the quality of education and is fundamentally committed to "human development", which can be seen as a higher stage of higher education development. The action direction of connotative development in higher education will be based on talent cultivation, positioned with advantageous characteristics, supported by structural optimization, and broken through through institutional reform, outlining a beautiful vision for achieving connotative development in higher education. Strengthening the guiding function of internal governance in universities and clarifying the main responsibilities will help universities further clarify their educational philosophy and development direction. It is a direction sign for deepening higher education reform and pursuing a connotation based development path centered on improving quality. As an opportunity for the development of higher education, connotative development puts forward higher requirements for higher education and ultimately needs to be implemented in talent cultivation, among which general education plays a crucial part in connotative development of talent cultivation. This article analyzes the current situation of higher education reform and studies the connotative development path centered on improving quality.

## 1. Introduction

Higher education is a significant combination of technology as the primary productive force and talent as the primary resource. It is a significant indicator of a country's developing level and latent capacity. Therefore, the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China proposed to push the connotative development of higher education and improve the quality of education and teaching around "connotative development" [1]. As the construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics enters a new era, the reform development in the field of higher education, which has been ongoing for many years, has also opened a new chapter [2].

At present, China's higher education is in the period of mass development. How to further improve the quality of higher education and achieve the connotative development of higher education has become a significant issue in higher education reform [3]. Although China's higher education teaching reform has made some progress, the learning status and quality of university students still need to be improved. In the traditional quality assurance of universities, China mostly implements policy documents such as top-down standardization and monitoring for the quality assurance and management of universities, lacking bottom-up cultural construction and management, and neglecting the guidance and construction of cultural concepts for university personnel management. The self-management of universities and the participation of teachers and students are relatively insufficient [4]. University students are the main body and object of talent cultivation in universities, and their level of learning and development is the core reflection of the quality of talent cultivation, as well as a significant cornerstone of the connotative development of higher education [5]. The problem of valuing teaching over education and valuing theory over practice in higher education in China is quite common, which has led to a lack of strong learning atmosphere among students, a prominent aversion to learning, as well as weak willpower, withdrawal when facing difficulties, excellent exam results but mediocre work abilities, high

intelligence and low emotional intelligence. This has partly affected the improvement of education quality and the cultivation of qualified talents. Negative emotions and inefficient learning behaviors in learning will affect the comprehensive growth of university students, reduce the quality of university education, and hinder the construction and development of China's education industry. The transformation of connotative development in higher education has made it difficult for traditional specialized education to satisfy people's development demands, and this crisis has sparked people's questioning of the essence of talent cultivation in universities [6].

The quality assurance of higher education should not only include top-down management, but should become a collective consensus of higher education institutions and rise to a shared responsibility and values of the university collective. All members, including students and teachers, should participate in it and work together to improve the quality of higher education [7]. Realizing the connotative development of higher education is the only way to improve the level and quality of China's higher education development. This is also the clear direction and new mission assigned by the Party Central Committee and the State Council to the development of China's higher education. Grasping the connotation of the New Deal, strengthening the guiding function and main responsibility of internal governance in universities, will help universities further clarify their educational philosophy and development direction, establish a harmonious and unified campus culture, and deepen higher education reform. It is the direction indicator for pursuing a connotation based development path centered on improving quality.

## **2. Current Situation of Higher Education Reform**

### **2.1. The Current Situation of Basic Course Teaching in Universities**

To improve the quality of education and cultivate diverse talents, the first step is to reform and innovate the teaching mode of basic courses [8]. However, the current situation of basic course teaching is not optimistic. In practical work, due to social factors and the evaluation guidance of relevant departments, there is a common phenomenon in Chinese universities that emphasizes scientific research and social services, while neglecting education and teaching. Each professional department does not attach enough importance to basic courses, and the class hours are constantly compressed with the goal of only completing tasks. Due to reasons such as low attention and heavy teaching tasks, basic course teachers often overlook "teaching and educating", and many teachers believe that "educating" is the job of management and counselors, and has nothing to do with basic course teaching. In the specific evaluation and assessment of teachers in universities, scientific research indicators are listed as the most significant position. This orientation allows university teachers to spend most of their time and energy on scientific research and social services, while maintaining a coping attitude towards teaching, one of the main functions of higher education, resulting in an imbalance between teaching and research functions, which to some extent affects the quality of talent cultivation in Chinese universities [9].

The classroom teaching methods are single, students' learning enthusiasm is not high, and the internal motivation of teachers and students is not fully explored [10]. In modern educational concepts, students are no longer passive recipients of knowledge transmission or simply consumers of educational services, but independent learners. To fundamentally change the current situation, it is necessary to change our mindset, break free from the constraints of traditional teaching models, and integrate emotional intelligence education into basic course teaching. We should not only focus on imparting knowledge, but also strengthen systematic training in emotions, discovery, creativity, and willpower, and cultivate diverse and innovative talents with sound personalities.

### **2.2. Analysis of the Theme Evolution of Higher Education Policy Text**

According to a survey, the five themes of talent cultivation system, teaching reform, educational informatization, technological innovation, and exam enrollment can partly reflect the main focus of higher education policies. Table 1 shows the distribution of theme intensity of China's higher education policies from 2018 to 2020.

Table 1 Distribution of theme intensity of China's higher education policies from 2018 to 2020

Theme	2018	2019	2020
Personnel training system	0.06	0.06	0.07
Teaching reform	0.07	0.07	0.09
Educational Informationization	0.06	0.06	0.09
Technological innovation	0.05	0.07	0.08
Examination enrollment	0.06	0.08	0.08

From the table, it can be seen that the talent cultivation system is a relatively stable and popular theme, and teaching reform and exam enrollment have received a certain degree of attention from higher education policies in various years. The intensity of educational informatization and technological innovation themes has significantly increased since 2018. In the process of connotative development transformation, whether it is strengthening subject construction or improving teaching quality, the aspects that need to be put into practice must ultimately be implemented on the same target - students. The innovation and reform of education and teaching methods, the continuous improvement of talent cultivation mechanisms, the effective expansion of enrollment scale, the deepening of informationization in higher education, and the widespread application of scientific and technological innovation achievements can be seen from this. It can be seen that the development plan of the Chinese government in the area of higher education has shifted from being relatively general and universal at the beginning to being highly targeted and comprehensive.

### 3. An Effective Approach to Intensive Development

#### 3.1. Improving the Quality of Talent Cultivation

Talent is the key to competition among countries around the world in the future, and it is also the primary resource of education. The level of talent construction affects the process of connotative development of higher education. After entering the stage of popularization and popularization of higher education, the quality of education has become a hot spot of concern for the government and society. The realization of the goal of connotative development in higher education requires the cultivation of talents as a significant prerequisite and foundation. Talent construction is the first resource for the reform and development of universities. In the process of reform and development in Chinese universities, we have always pursued the construction of a high-level teaching staff with noble professional ethics, advanced business, and reasonable structure. Talent cultivation is the basic function of universities. As the largest and most significant group of students in universities, internal governance of universities must take into account the dominant position of students. People-oriented education must be based on the growth needs of students as independent individuals and members of society, condensed in the learning process of active engagement and exploration, and reflected in the comprehensive improvement of students' lifelong learning ability and development potential.

When developing theoretical courses, universities should closely connect with practice and offer corresponding practical courses according to practical needs, establishing a close relationship between practical courses and theoretical courses. Universities should create a good academic institutional environment and scientific research atmosphere for outstanding talents, who have independent and spontaneous research power, and promote the joint efforts of scientific teams and talents. As newly grown adults, university students may have some immature aspects in terms of ideological consciousness and conceptual form, but they have their own methods and attitudes. Without violating the school's various rules and regulations, granting students the power of independent management is in line with the law of students' growth. Establishing a comprehensive quality perspective, the goal of connotative development in higher education is to train men for profession that meet the needs of national and social construction, and more importantly, to cultivate people with comprehensive development.

### 3.2. Improve the Allocation Mechanism of Higher Education Resources

In the past, there were many problems in the allocation of higher education resources in China. In order to effectively promote the connotative development of higher education, allocate higher education resources reasonably, balance the interests and demands of various stakeholders such as the government, educational leadership agencies, and universities, and continuously improve the mechanism for allocating higher education resources is the key. In the process of local university governance, local government, society, and schools are three significant roles, and the current interaction between higher education and stakeholders is a "unitary" relationship, as shown in Figure 1.

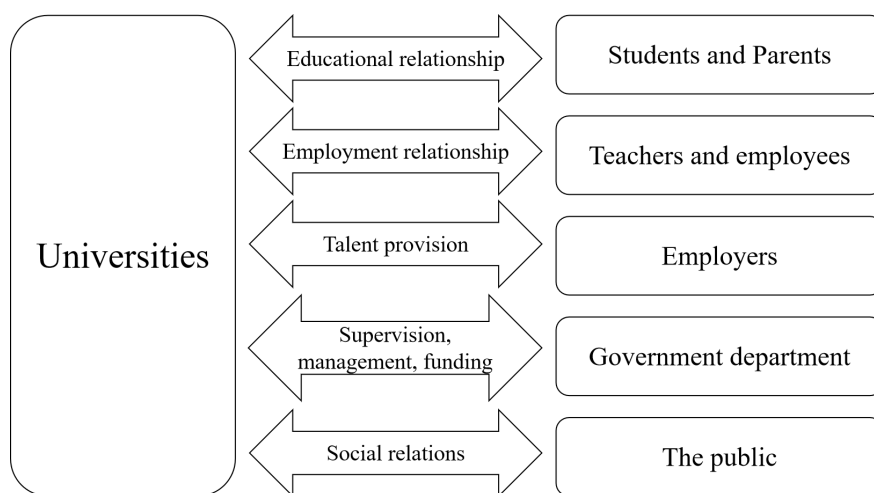


Figure 1 Relationship between universities and stakeholders

Local governments are the possessors and allocators of various resources, providing direct resource distribute and indirect institutional underpinning. Therefore, it is imperative to gradually delegate power from the central government to the local government and from the government to universities, enhance the ability of local governments to coordinate higher education resources, appropriately constrain the government's power in the allocation of education resources, and accelerate the pace of streamlining administration and delegating power. Social organizations include for-profit industry enterprises and non for-profit social institutions, who are the immediate or mediate influencers of the resource income and benefits of local universities. Schools are the executing entities with subjective initiative. Each university actively promotes educational reform and establishes a mechanism for coordinating interests. In order to respect and protect the legitimate interests of educational stakeholders and optimize the distribute of higher education resources, it is necessary to adjust the existing interest pattern, establish a mechanism for interest coordination, improve the mechanism for allocating higher education resources, and balance the interests and demands of higher education stakeholders such as the government, educational leadership agencies, and universities.

### 4. Conclusions

Realizing the connotative development of higher education is the fundamental path for the high-quality development of higher education in China. The essence of the connotative development of higher education is to pay more attention to human growth. Universities should grasp the direction of students' growth, provide them with multifaceted support, cultivate their ability to learn by analogy, so that they can quickly integrate into society. China's higher education reform and development are entering a new period of strategic opportunities. Only by firmly grasping the core of improving quality, establishing a scientific concept of higher education quality, accelerating the construction of a quality assurance system, and effectively and comprehensively improving the quality of higher education, can we create a new situation for the scientific development of higher education. In the new era of historical growth, it is even more imperative to

always achieve the strategic goal of "connotative development of higher education", improve the quality of higher education, follow and integrate the actual demands of the times and the internal laws of university development, strengthen the essence of connotation construction, and aim to "create first-class disciplines and build first-class universities". Universities should innovate and develop with high quality in the construction of "Double First Class", and fulfill their historical mission and era responsibility in serving the national and regional economic and social development. China should firmly follow the path of connotative development in higher education, in order to improve the quality of higher education, strengthen the discourse power of Chinese higher education in higher education worldwide, and achieve the development goal of becoming a strong country in higher education.

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