



To Adapt or to Lead: The Relationship between Higher Education and Society Revisited

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ABSTRACT

Higher education should not only adapt to the development of society but also lead to the development of society. This paper argues that higher education leading the development of society is conducive to promoting the realization of the dream of a strong higher education country, the construction of the integration of industry-university-research, the return of high-end talents and the construction of universalized higher education with Chinese characteristics.

Keywords: leading higher education, social development

Higher education is a product of social economy and is subject to the constraints of social economy, but it also has its own relative independence and is not an appendage of social economy. Higher education is the soul of national development, the vein of cultural inheritance, the support of scientific and technological innovation, and the driving force of social advancement^[1]. It has an important role in the development of society. For example, Yang Changyong has proposed that "adaptation" and "transcendence" are a set of "symmetrical" and "progressive" concepts from the perspective of basic adaptation and transcendence theory. "The development of education, society and human being is realized in the dynamic process of mutual adaptation and transcendence^[2]"; Dong Zefang and Zhang Jiping, starting from the social responsibility of higher education research in the period of social transformation, believe that higher education research should not just adapt, but should be very insightful, visionary, able to predict the future, able to transcend the status quo and lead the development of society in the process of transcendence^[3]; After discussing the leading role of higher education in the construction of harmonious culture, Li Jun believes that higher education should play an important leading role in the construction of socialist harmonious culture by inheriting cultural ideas, guiding cultural directions, spreading cultural concepts and integrating cultural conflicts^[4]. However, the views of these scholars have not yet reached a consensus, which shows that it is especially important to deal with the relationship between the two for the development of higher education and society, and for this reason, it is necessary to discuss this again. From the perspective of ten years of trees and one hundred years of people and the current social background of competition for innovative talents, we believe that higher education should not only adapt to the development of society but also lead to the development of society, the main reasons of which are mainly reflected in the following four aspects.

1. The Development of Higher Education Leading Society is Conducive to the Realization of the Dream of a Strong Higher Education Country

With the rapid development of science and technology and the rapid changes in society, the position of education in the comprehensive national power gradually moved high. To realize the strategic turn from a large human resource country to a strong human resource country, the 19th Party Congress report pointed out that "building a strong education country is a fundamental project for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, education must be given priority, education modernization must be accelerated, and education that satisfies the people must be run." This is a solemn promise made by the Party Central Committee with

Comrade Xi Jinping as the core of the whole nation, and the proposal of an educational power has pointed out the direction for the cause of higher education in China. An educational power is also necessarily a higher education power, and building a higher education power is the main theme, the strongest voice and the ambitious goal of higher education in China today, and it is an important strategic initiative to serve the construction of human destiny community^[5]. As the leader of education at all levels, higher education has abundant human resources. For this reason, higher education should constantly improve its own connotation, practice internal skills, lead the development of society, and optimize all elements such as philosophy, ideology, system, scale, structure, equity and quality, so that higher education can lead the development of society by cultivating forward-looking and innovative senior professionals, providing the rapidly changing society, reserve excellent talents in advance, conduct cutting-edge scientific research, break the core technology in key fields, promote higher education to look into the future in talent training and scientific research, and promote the realization of the dream of a strong nation in higher education.

As an outlet for cultivating talents in society, higher education can directly cultivate the excellent human resources needed by society. By leading society and cultivating high-level talents with foresight and innovation, higher education ensures that the excellent talents can be fit for purpose and provides important human support for the innovative development of various industries. On the one hand, the new epidemic has changed the global pattern and operation of higher education, the in-depth development of information technology has led to rapid innovation in knowledge and technology, the economic and industrial structure is constantly being adjusted and upgraded, the demand for talents is diverse, and the employment prospects of practitioners are full of uncertainties and challenges. Therefore, the development of higher education must be flexible and changeable, the talents provided by higher education must meet the ever-changing and increasingly diversified needs of today's society, and higher education must not follow in the footsteps of society. In the process of leading the society, higher education should continuously explore the type, structure and mode of human resources to be cultivated, and promote the development of higher education with special features, so as to cultivate graduates with emergency thinking, practical ability and extensive knowledge. On the other hand, because higher education is a long-term project of ten years of trees and a hundred years of people, our universities have high-level innovation teams and national key laboratories, engineering centres and other scientific and technological innovation platforms, which have injected a strong impetus for the innovation development of economy and society, but due to the lagging characteristic of higher education, it takes a long time for the talents cultivated to be put into concrete practice, which leads to the fact that China is still "stuck" by other countries in some key areas and the core technology is restricted by others. However, due to the lagging characteristics of higher education, it takes a long time for the talents cultivated to be put into concrete practice, which leads to the current situation that China is still "stuck" by other countries in certain key fields and the core technology is restricted. The root of the "neck" problem lies in the weakness of basic research, the results of basic research often take a long time to bear fruit and generally do not directly produce economic benefits, while the existing evaluation system of higher education often points to quantifiable results, outputs and benefits, so that researchers tend to

seek some high-efficiency and high-output research, resulting in scientific research demonstration. leading to scientific research demonstrations. General Secretary Xi Jinping proposed that "our universities should take up the heavy burden, release the potential of basic research, scientific and technological innovation in universities, focus on national strategic needs, target key core technologies, especially the 'neck' problem, and accelerate technological research." Therefore, in this situation, higher education should look at the whole situation, look high and far, try to get rid of the drawbacks caused by lagging, study the new situation, make new plans, reform the scientific research evaluation system, reserve talents for the country in advance, and constantly play the role of higher education in supporting and leading the socio-economic development. If education policymakers foresee in advance that certain disciplines and technologies will achieve rapid development, and offer specific courses and improve the efficiency of core technology output for them, when faced with the new domestic and international development pattern, then our competitive advantage in talents and core technology attack can be met.

2. The Development of Higher Education Leading Society is Conducive to the Promotion of the Integration of Industry, Academia and Research

The integration of industry-university-research refers to the mutual cooperation and joint development of the modern production sector, higher education and scientific research, and it is an important initiative to promote the country through science and education in China. In order to promote the in-depth development of the integration of industry-university-research, to cope with the fierce international scientific and technological competition and industrial revolution, and to cultivate innovative applied talents, our government has been making efforts in this regard, for example, the "National Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020)" clearly proposes to give preferential policies to the education of industry-university-research cooperation, and in 2011 For example, the National Medium- and Long-term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020) explicitly proposed preferential policies for industry-university-research cooperation in education, and in 2011, the "Plan for Improving Innovation Capability of Higher Education Institutions" was proposed. The implementation of industry-university-research integration is conducive to reflecting the production sector's experience in product development and market development, giving full play to the advantages of higher education in training senior talents and renewing the expertise of scientific research institutions in applied research, so as to pool the advantages of all parties, make the value of innovation achievements timely tested by the market and promote the transformation of scientific research achievements. The policy of integration of industry-university-research is a national expectation for higher education. Higher education research should transcend society, create an environment that enables the timely transformation of research results, and allow scientific research to be carried out by focusing on the frontiers of society and studying the problems that will be revealed in the future in the process of leading society so that higher education research has a forward-looking and predictive character, thus promoting relevant results to take root in the real society We will also deepen the cooperation between industry, academia and research, and promote the high-speed operation of society and the country as a whole.

Higher education should not only adapt to the society and serve the society, but also lead society. Our current higher education always waits until social problems appear before research, following the society to do post-complementary or validation interpretation, resulting in the final content of higher education research and market demand decoupling, scientific and technological achievements and product conversion disconnect, therefore, higher education research should focus on the responsibility of leading the society. On the one hand, the integration of industry-university-research requires higher education to progress together with the development of society, instead of following in its footsteps. In Russia, the integration of education, science and production is strongly emphasized, and the close ties between universities and enterprises have led to the formation of synergies between universities, institutes of the Russian Academy of Sciences, research centers in specialized fields and enterprises, and the use of university research and human resources to solve key scientific and technological problems in the development of enterprises is an important way for Russian universities to serve the economy and society. Stavropol State Agricultural University is one of the oldest universities in the south of Russia. The integration of education, science and production has led to the formation of a highly developed organizational structure of the Stavropol State Agricultural University, which also provides a pool of available personnel for the innovative development of local enterprises^[6]. It can be seen that higher education leading social development can take the initiative to transform social achievements, so that the results of industry-university research can be truly implemented, providing society, research departments and enterprises with truly forward-looking and innovative practical talents, thus driving the internal development of higher education and the high-speed operation of society. On the other hand, higher education research should not only pay attention to the social hot issues that have emerged in the society, but also pay attention to the issues that will emerge or deserve attention in the future, otherwise, it will lead to the situation that some achievements of industry-university research, after a long time of research and development, are no longer adapted to the market demand, or have been gradually eliminated by the society. Higher education should not only adapt to the society, but also seek to break through the social constraints, make rational criticism of the society, continuously lead the society, break through the limitations of the society, and surpass the development of the society. If the scientific research results of higher education always wait for the social environment to mature before sowing, then higher education will miss the critical period for the transformation of results, resulting in the waste of good scientific research results. Therefore, higher education should create its own environment that can adapt to the transformation of scientific research results, actively pay attention to the frontier of society, research new problems and technologies, create new teaching, establish a new evaluation system, innovate new talents, lead the new development of society, and lead and promote the integration and innovation of industry-university-research in the new environment.

3. Higher Education Leads the Development of Society in Favor of Promoting the Return of Talent

The competition between countries boils down to the competition for outstanding talents, and all countries have always taken cultivating high-end talents as an important strategic

policy. With the development of the market economy and the expansion of the functions of higher education, the international flow of top talents has become more and more frequent, promoting the scientific and cultural exchanges between China and other countries. However, in the process of international exchange of higher education, there is the phenomenon of talent outflow in China, such as outstanding young people have emigrated, young doctors, staying in developed countries for development, etc. In March 2020, in a press conference held by the State Council Joint Prevention and Control Mechanism, according to Liu Jin, Director of the Department of International Cooperation and Exchange and Director of the Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan Office of the Ministry of Education, there are about 1.6 million overseas students in China. The continuous outflow of outstanding college graduates, especially top scientific and technological talents, will inevitably pose a serious threat to the speed of China's economic development, the innovation of scientific and technological talents and the enhancement of international competitiveness. The main reason for this phenomenon is the lack of an excellent environment for retaining talents in China, the current higher education is not more on leading the society, but focusing on learning the frontier of science and technology and advanced technology, but higher education has the function of scientific research if higher education only learns and ignores the creation, it makes the cultivated talents do not have innovative thinking, so higher education should cultivate talents, Therefore, higher education should combine talent training with scientific research, pay attention to the future competition of society, have a far-sighted vision, focus on science and technology frontier research, make domestic science and technology innovation technology at the forefront of the world, strive to provide suitable soil for outstanding talents, and attract the outflow of senior professionals to return to the country for development.

Hutchins argues that the university should first and foremost fulfil its unique social function of thinking independently and critically about society. He demands that the university must be independent of society, seeking to transcend it, to become a guiding force in society, rather than simply adapting to it, otherwise higher education would lose its proper "perfection"^[7]. Therefore, in the process of leading the society, higher education should practice its internal strength, look high and far, improve the quality of higher education, expand the connotation of higher education, focus on improving the quality of higher education, attract more and more people to receive education in the country, promote the return of senior professionals, so as to improve the prestige of higher education in the international community, make higher education the center of society, attract the outside world to invest in higher education. Attracting the return of talents. Only by combining talent training with scientific research can higher education better cultivate a group of innovative talents, and if higher education has a forward-looking vision, its teaching will also focus on innovative research, and the talents cultivated will also be innovative. Nowadays, higher education always focuses on the quality of cultivating talents, but the improvement of the quality of talents cultivation mainly lies in the aspect of innovation, if higher education just adapts to the development of the society and sets up any specialities according to what the society needs, the final cultivation can only be a kind of instant talents, but with the arrival of the intelligent era, the society is changing rapidly and full of uncertainty and challenges. This kind of instant talent is likely to lag behind the development of the times when facing

employment, then higher education will also lag behind the development of the times. For example, some years ago, China paid more attention to cultivating foreign language talents, but now we have enough talents who are proficient in foreign languages to meet the needs of the market, and now our country needs a group of talents with Chinese needs and Chinese characteristics, so higher education should surpass the development of society and anticipate the talents needed for the development of society, and higher education should also be forward-looking and reflective, like At present, majors such as computer and telecommunication are especially popular, but in the future, with the continuous development of the information age, whether these majors will remain popular is still a question worthy of deeper investigation, but higher education can predict some majors that can lead the development of society according to the trend of the times, such as intelligent robotics, etc. For this reason, higher education should be positioned for the future in terms of professional settings, curriculum reform and talent training objectives, and should reflect foresight for future society, both in terms of scientific research and teaching.

4. The Development of Higher Education Leading Society is Conducive to the Construction of Universal Higher Education with Chinese Characteristics

In early 2019, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued "China Education Modernization 2035", which drew a grand blueprint for the development of education and put forward the important task of developing higher education with high quality and universality^[8]. In 2020, the gross enrollment rate of higher education in China will reach 54.4%, and the world's largest higher education system will be established. However, it is worth mentioning that Martin Trow's theory of higher education development stage is based on the higher education of developed countries, but there are many obvious differences between our higher education and the higher education of developed countries. The universalization of higher education in our country is realized on the basis of the characteristics of higher education development formed in our country for a long time, and it is the universalization of our country's characteristics, which should be different from other countries, and it does not completely transplant the characteristics and advantages of the universalization of western countries but has our country's characteristics. For example, some people advocate that our country should abolish the college entrance examination like foreign countries, and select and cultivate talents in a lenient and strict way, but in such a large unified and harmonious social environment as China, our higher education will be obstructed by human relations, and cannot do "strict" well, and the government's financial investment is limited, so it can't guarantee that all high school students in China will have a good chance to enter the college. The government's financial investment is limited, and it cannot guarantee "lenient entry" for all Chinese students. Therefore, in building a universal higher education with Chinese characteristics, we must have a futuristic vision, pay attention to the development of Chinese society in the process of cultivating talents in higher education, grasp the characteristics of Chinese higher education and the national conditions of China, and build an unconventional universal higher education.

It is a common concern how China's higher education will be characterized as it enters the universalization stage. The differences in scale, speed, system and culture in China

constitute many characteristics of the universalization of higher education in China^[9]. The goal for higher education in China Education Modernization 2035 is to build a modern education system of lifelong learning for all by 2035, so that the global competitiveness of higher education can be significantly enhanced, with specific content including establishing a view of higher education talent quality that is both diverse and contemporary, focusing on regional education equity, and building a talent growth channel for lifelong learning. This shows that China is gradually paying attention to the internal development of higher education and the development requirements for lifelong learning for all. However, our adult education in China is very backward. The development of adult education in foreign countries mainly relies on community colleges, which are social groups based on a certain geographical area, with the basic elements of a certain geographical area, a certain group of people, a certain form of organization, and various service facilities that can meet the material and spiritual needs of members, and community colleges in the United States are one of the more ideal models of higher education, while China's Adult education, however, relies on the expansion of elite schools to absorb talent for learning, which shows that our community colleges are very bad, and our community colleges specifically refer to the areas within the activities of urban street offices or resident committees^[10]. Most of the community colleges in China have been set up in name only, and have even lost their focus. In terms of actual operation, community colleges are in a dilemma and have become a collection of community literacy sites, senior centers, youth palaces and other activities^[11]. Therefore, higher education should lead the development of society, look forward to the vision of community college development in China, position community colleges into the function of vocational and technical colleges, make vocational and technical colleges become educational institutions with the nature of higher education open to the community and even the whole society, integrate educational resources to the maximum extent, lead the society to build a learning society of lifelong learning, and form a universal society with the participation of all people. The construction of community colleges should also include education for the elderly. Today, the life of the elderly in China is relatively monotonous, mostly based on entertainment and leisure, and in contrast to other developed countries such as Japan, the retirement age in China is relatively early, yet most of the retirees rarely take the initiative to serve their country after retirement. The Japanese government has fully anticipated the difficulties and challenges posed by the future development of higher education and ageing, and has formulated the 2040 Planning Report, which explores issues such as the diversified education that can be provided by higher education institutions at different levels and the financial investment in higher education, and has also taken some countermeasures, such as expanding the scope of higher education enrollment, increasing the social workers and international students The 2040 Plan also includes measures to expand the scope of higher education enrollment, increase the size of enrollment for social workers and international students, reshape the functions of universities, refocus state, public, and private universities, and build a "regional cooperation platform," etc^[12]. For this reason, in the process of leading the society, higher education should relate to the actual situation in China, lead people to establish a sense of worry and struggle, and also take into account the diversified social situation in China, for example, in the context of the increasingly serious phenomenon of ageing, higher education should pay

more attention to the education of older groups, guide us to lifelong learning, so that society can more comfortably cope with the phenomenon of ageing, and more conducive to promote the universal development of higher education with Chinese characteristics.

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