

Enhancing Applied Talent Development through the “Five Creatives” and “Five-in-One” Integration Model: A New Era of Education Reform

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Abstract

In the pursuit of educational excellence, universities have begun adopting innovative models that integrate creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship, collaboration, and application into the talent cultivation process. This paper introduces the Five-in-One Talent Cultivation Model that aligns with the educational reforms within Chinese higher education, focusing on applied talent development, industry collaboration, and regional service. Specifically, it examines the rapid growth of student participation in national and provincial competitions, the alignment of academic programs with national and regional strategies, and the establishment of collaborative industry-academia research platforms. The paper also discusses the dynamic development of smart education systems and the structural optimization of professional courses to create highly skilled and market-ready graduates.

Keywords

Five Creatives; Applied talent development; Industry-academia collaboration; Innovation; Education reform; Regional service; Smart education

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1. Introduction

In recent years, the Chinese higher education system has undergone profound reforms aimed at enhancing the quality of talent cultivation. The integration of the “Five Creatives” (creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship, collaboration, and application) has become a cornerstone of this transformation. This integrated approach supports the development of students who are not only academically proficient but also prepared to contribute to the industries

and regions they serve. As part of these efforts, universities are dynamically optimizing their academic structures to meet the growing demands of a rapidly changing world^[1,2].

This paper explores how the “Five-in-One” talent cultivation model contributes to the creation of a highly competent, applied talent pool, focusing on how the integration of academic disciplines with industry needs, innovation, and smart education shapes the future workforce. By examining case studies, institutional

strategies, and educational practices, this study highlights the significant advances made in the application of these educational reforms ^[3].

2. The “Five-in-One” talent cultivation model

The “Five-in-One” talent cultivation model is a progressive framework designed to foster holistic talent development by combining five essential components: creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship, collaboration, and application. This integrated model enables universities to create versatile graduates capable of addressing real-world challenges across various industries ^[4]. For instance:

- (1) Creativity: Creativity lies at the heart of innovation. By fostering an environment that encourages students to think outside the box, universities help cultivate original ideas that drive societal change ^[5];
- (2) Innovation: Innovation is the application of creativity to solve real-world problems. It involves developing new solutions, products, and services that can transform industries ^[6];
- (3) Entrepreneurship: Entrepreneurship involves not only developing new ideas but also the ability to turn those ideas into viable businesses or solutions, fostering a business-oriented mindset among students ^[5];
- (4) Collaboration: In today’s interconnected world, interdisciplinary and inter-institutional collaboration is essential. This element focuses on the value of teamwork, both within academic settings and between universities and external industries ^[7];
- (5) Application: Application emphasizes the practical use of knowledge, connecting academic learning with real-world issues. It ensures that students are prepared to tackle problems in various sectors upon graduation ^[8].

3. The impact of the “Five-in-One” model on talent development

The integration of the “Five-in-One” talent cultivation model has led to significant improvements in the quality

of student achievements and their capacity to address regional and national challenges. Here, we examine key developments that highlight the success of the model ^[9].

3.1. Achievements in student competitions

One of the key indicators of success in this integrated approach is the significant increase in the number of awards students have received in national and provincial academic competitions. In 2024, compared to 2022, the number of awards in national and provincial-level competitions surged by more than 13 times, showcasing the improved academic prowess of students. Notably, students have won numerous gold medals in prestigious competitions such as the “Challenge Cup” and the China International College Students Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition, demonstrating their ability to excel in high-level, competitive environments ^[10].

3.2. Aligning academic programs with national and regional strategies

Dynamic optimization of academic structures is another cornerstone of the “Five-in-One” approach. Universities are adapting their academic offerings to meet the specific needs of the regional economy and national strategic priorities. For example, the university is strengthening its focus on new engineering, new business, new medical, and new liberal arts programs. These fields directly align with China’s long-term goals for technological innovation and economic development, particularly in regions like the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area ^[11].

3.3. Industry collaboration and regional service

A significant achievement in this area has been the collaboration with over 30 industry partners, including prominent companies such as Zhongliang, Huazhu, and ZTE Communications. Together, these entities have helped establish six industry-based schools within the university. These industry-academia partnerships provide students with practical training and exposure to the real-world demands of their future careers. In 2024, nearly 1,000 graduates secured positions with top-tier companies within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, further reinforcing the model’s effectiveness in aligning education with industry needs ^[12].

4. Advancements in smart education and collaboration with other institutions

4.1. Smart education and the “Walk into AI” initiative

The university has also embarked on the “Walk into AI” initiative, which focuses on creating a smart education environment. By gradually implementing intelligent technologies in classrooms, teaching, and management, the institution is enhancing the quality of education and improving the efficiency of administrative operations ^[13]. This approach will lead to a more personalized learning experience, optimizing both teaching and student performance.

4.2. Inter-institutional and cross-regional collaboration

The collaboration does not stop at industry partnerships. The university has also established joint research projects with institutions such as Southwest University and Chongqing Three Gorges Vocational College, focusing on areas like educational theory and vocational training. These cross-institution and cross-regional initiatives facilitate the sharing of resources, knowledge, and research capabilities, contributing to the advancement of both education and regional development ^[14].

5. Teacher development and research integration

The “Three-Year Action Plan for Faculty Development”

has also been successfully implemented, with 29% of the faculty holding senior academic titles and 85% having a master’s or doctoral degree. This focus on high-quality faculty ensures that the teaching staff is well-equipped to foster creativity and innovation in students ^[15]. Furthermore, the university has built seven research innovation platforms, such as the Pig Industry Research Institute and the Beibu Gulf Plant Ecology and Landscape Research Center. These centers serve as a hub for research and talent development, directly addressing regional industrial needs and providing students with hands-on research opportunities.

6. Conclusion

The “Five-in-One” talent cultivation model represents a dynamic and multifaceted approach to educational reform in Chinese universities. By integrating creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship, collaboration, and application into all aspects of education, universities can create highly skilled professionals capable of driving regional and national development. The model’s success is evident in the achievements of students, the alignment of academic programs with industry needs, and the development of a smart, collaborative educational ecosystem. This approach not only enhances the quality of education but also ensures that graduates are equipped with the skills necessary to succeed in today’s rapidly changing world.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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