

# The Path Exploration of Innovation-Driven Development of Private Colleges and Universities

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**Abstract:** *In the diversified development of higher education in China, private colleges and universities are in a critical period of transition. In the face of the continuous innovation of the education model, the status of private colleges and universities in the national education system has been increasingly elevated, and all the reforms and innovations have received extensive attention from all walks of life. However, due to the limitations of objective conditions, there still exists a certain gap between private and public colleges and universities, which largely restricts the improvement of teaching quality. In the face of the new era, private colleges and universities should take advantage of the power of the innovation to accelerate their own development, gradually narrow the gap with public colleges and universities, and dedicate themselves to the successful achievement of China's higher education reform goals. Based on this, the paper analyzes the inevitability of innovation-driven development of private colleges and universities, and gives a few points of innovation and development path on the basis of the reality of the dilemma for reference.*

**Keywords:** *private universities; innovative development; innovation drive*

## 1. Introduction

Since the beginning of reform and opening up, private colleges and universities have become an important supplement to the national education system, which broke the education model of state monopoly. The vigorous development of private colleges and universities has continuously expanded the boundaries of higher education, enriched educational resources, and provided a broader path for many students to pursue their studies. In the process of "transforming from a large education country to a strong education country", private colleges and universities have become an indispensable part of China's higher education system, and they promote mutually and prosper together with public education, which creates a healthy, diversified and stable education ecosystem. In order to promote the efficient achievement of sustainable development goals, private colleges and universities must continue to deepen the connotation development, improve the quality of education, promote their own leapfrog development with the help of innovation-driven power, and participate in the modernization process of national education with a new attitude.

## 2. The inevitability of innovation-driven development of private colleges and universities

### 2.1. Meeting the objective requirements of the development of higher education

In the era of knowledge economy, higher education has become an important symbol of national competitiveness, and the quality of education is the core indicator of its competitiveness. As an important part of the higher education system, private colleges and universities shoulder the historical mission of providing diversified educational resources, meeting social needs and promoting educational innovation.

In the field of global education, "connotation development" is a broad consensus. UNESCO has emphasized the importance of the quality of teaching and learning in its vision for the future of education. In fact, this concept has been widely popularized in developed countries such as Europe and the United States, and various innovative initiatives have been launched to promote the continuous improvement of the quality of higher education. Comparing with the international development trend, since China is still in the developing stage, it is still limited in many aspects, which are specifically manifested in the faculty strength, teaching resources and the use of scientific research results.

From a practical point of view, the connotation development of private colleges and universities needs to be promoted from multiple dimensions: First, the deepening of education and teaching reform. This includes the updating of the curriculum system, teaching methods, evaluation standards, and the application of educational technology. Then, the strengthening of the faculty. The teaching and scientific research ability of teachers should be improved and a high-level teacher team should be built. Next, the strengthening of scientific research and innovation. Teachers should be encouraged and supported to participate in scientific research projects for improving the conversion rate of scientific research results. Finally, the depth of school-enterprise cooperation and industry-teaching integration. Students' practical ability should be cultivated through school-enterprise cooperation, so as to improve their employment competitiveness.<sup>[1]</sup>

## ***2.2. Meeting the external requirements of economic and social development***

As the national economy enters into a new normal, China's economic growth mode has changed from "extensive" to "intensive", paying more attention to quality and effect. This change means that national construction and social development need to be supported by more excellent talents, and higher education, as the cradle of cultivating highly-educated talents, should take the initiative to shoulder the dual responsibility of talent cultivation and scientific and technological innovation. For this reason, private colleges and universities need to follow the footsteps of the country's economic development, take the market demand as the guide, actively adjust the educational institutions and professional settings, strengthen the synergy with the industry, and work together to cultivate innovative talents in line with the needs of the new era.

In addition, in the context of economic and social development, the driving force has changed from "investment-driven" to "innovation-driven", which puts forward new requirements for the talent model of higher education. Private colleges and universities need to improve their own teaching quality and scientific research level, and they can gradually form a recognizable educational brand through the creation of a more open collaborative scientific research platform, so as to better meet the diversified development needs of the economy and society.<sup>[2]</sup>

## ***2.3. The necessary choice for the survival and development of private colleges and universities***

Historical development experience tells us that the advantages of higher education institutions do not lie in the grand scale of schooling, but that it is more critical to have a unique philosophy of schooling, as well as the capital to maintain the characteristics of schooling. The characteristics of running a school need to be gradually formed through long-term practical experience, which brings together the cultural essence of the university, educational purposes and resource advantages, which are the foundations for the realization of sustainable development goals. Private colleges and universities want to seek a place in the competitive educational environment, so that they need take quality as the cornerstone, develop through innovation and shape a brand, and then they constantly accumulate practical experience, consolidate the brand advantage, and deal with many temptations with a calm attitude, so as to do something right.

For example, in the context of upgrading the local industrial structure, a private university has formulated a "small and refined" development route. Instead of pursuing a "high, large and comprehensive" feature, it chose to make deep efforts in tourism management, hotel management and other specialties, so as to match the prosperity of the local tourism industry. The university has established in-depth partnerships with local governments and high-quality enterprises. And through the creation of practical training bases, it provided students with a real workplace environment, so that they could be exposed to the atmosphere of the workplace in advance. This practice effectively improved the school's teaching quality, enhanced students to be more employable, allowed them to gain more employment opportunities in the job market, so the progressive characterized talent cultivation mechanism highlighted the brand advantages of private colleges and universities.<sup>[3]</sup>

## **3. The path of innovation-driven development in private colleges and universities**

### ***3.1. Talent cultivation mode driven by innovation***

Private colleges and universities should continue to strengthen the efficient integration between "experimental teaching" and "practical training teaching", and actively create an integrated talent

cultivation mode both inside and outside the school, so as to pave a seamless road for students from theory to practice and from classroom to workplace. In this process, private colleges and universities should establish close cooperation with local high-tech enterprises and scientific research institutions, and jointly build an innovative talent training platform. Private colleges and universities should learn from other colleges and universities' advanced education concepts, absorb high-quality educational resources, provide students with a good platform for growth, and enhance their innovative consciousness and practical ability.

In Henan Province, for example, many private colleges and universities have begun to practice the talent cultivation mode of "directed training". In line with the concept of innovation drive, they accelerate the deep integration between schools and enterprises. Among them, enterprises will be directly involved in the development and implementation of talent training programs, the current employment needs and future development direction to inform the school side, to help colleges and universities to effectively alleviate the problem of "divorce between learning and using ". In addition, private colleges and universities will also provide students with the opportunity to participate in internships, so that they can learn about the real workplace environment in advance, and get ready for their career choices and employment. The practice of talent cultivation mode of "directed training" can not only provide power support for the sustainable development of private colleges and universities, but also can provide quality talents for the construction of social economy, so as to consolidate the key position of private colleges and universities in the higher education system. <sup>[4]</sup>

### ***3.2. Innovation-driven scientific research operation mechanism***

First of all, private colleges and universities should actively develop new channels for obtaining teaching resources, and fundamentally solve the problems of "focusing on declaration but not on construction" and "focusing on input but not on output". The colleges and universities should start innovation from the management mechanism, operation mode and configuration program, and verify whether the current scientific research work matches the economic and social development needs, to ensure that the scientific research activities can keep pace with the development of the industry, and that the efficient docking can be promoted between the scientific research results and social productivity. Then, private colleges and universities should apply scientific research results to the talent cultivation model and transform them into characteristic educational resources. They should build industry-university-research cooperation bases with local governments and scientific research enterprises, and they should utilize the platform to promote the application of scientific research results on the ground and provide opportunities for school students to participate in real work. Finally, in the promotion of scientific research and innovation activities, private colleges and universities should build a incentive mechanism of market demand-oriented innovation. With the support of cooperative enterprises, private colleges and universities should form a technological innovation system with close integration of industry, university and research, so as to accelerate the transformation of scientific research results into productivity, and to play the own role in promoting regional economic and social development process.

Through the above measures, the ability of private colleges and universities to transform scientific research results has been significantly improved, and more excellent and innovative talents have been developed for regional economic development, which has been further recognized in society.

### ***3.3. Internet and education driven by innovation***

In the task of innovation-driven education reform, "collaborative education" has become a major trend in promoting education development. The core of this model lies in the use of Internet technology to break the time and space limitations of traditional teaching and realize the deep cooperation and resource sharing between schools and enterprises. Specifically, private colleges and universities should take advantage of Internet thinking to build an information service cloud platform. This platform can reflect the real business processes of enterprises in real time, so that students who are not graduated can have access to practical resources closely related to the future workplace, which greatly enhances students' practical ability and career adaptability. Through this innovative mechanism, classroom teaching is no longer limited to theory teaching, but combined with enterprise production practice to create a real career rehearsal.

In addition, the networked resource base under the school-enterprise cooperation mode provides rich Internet learning materials, and students can learn independently anytime and anywhere according

to their personal needs, which not only improves learning efficiency, but also cultivates students' independent learning and critical thinking skills. This "Internet plus education" model of collaborative education makes learning more flexible and personalized, and helps to strengthen students' lifelong learning ability.<sup>[5]</sup>

### ***3.4. Cultivation of backbone teachers driven by innovation***

It is the basic condition of improving the quality of education to cultivate key teachers. For this reason, private colleges and universities need to build out a multi-dimensional talent development system, recruit for the society, introduce and cultivate elite backbone teacher teams, so as to accumulate strength for the development of the disciplines of each specialty.

First of all, the colleges and universities can adopt the open recruitment method to introduce elite teaching talents with innovative spirit and international vision. At the same time, for experienced middle-aged teachers, the colleges and universities should provide them with systematic continuing education training and formulate career development plans, encourage them to play a guiding role in teaching and scientific research, and set up a learning example for young teachers.

Then, private colleges and universities should pay attention to the synchronization with the global development trend of higher education, and encourage teachers to participate in international cooperation projects to absorb international advanced education concepts and research methods. This not only promotes the improvement of teachers' personal ability, but also lays a solid foundation for the school's competitiveness in the field of international education. In the process, private colleges and universities should continue to explore and condense their own schooling characteristics. It includes the development of special majors, the construction of special teaching mode and the formation of special campus culture, so as to better adapt to the education service market in the new era and better cope with the challenges of globalization. Through these measures, private colleges and universities are able to serve the society and help the regional economic development, and at the same time, they can continuously improve their own education quality and obtain higher social recognition.

In conclusion, the innovation of cultivation strategy for backbone teachers should focus on optimizing the teacher structure, broadening the international vision, strengthening the professional ability, and highlighting the characteristics of the school, so as to occupy a place in the globalized education competition environment and cultivate innovative talents who can lead the future.

### ***3.5. Open and cooperative education driven by innovation***

In the face of internal financial and resource constraints, private colleges and universities must build up a new mechanism of complementary and win-win school running through cooperation with external entities. Specifically, open and cooperative education requires private colleges and universities to actively expand cooperation channels with enterprises, research institutions and even international educational organizations. Taking the practical experience of City University of Zhengzhou as an example, it, cooperating with local enterprises, jointly established professional colleges and training courses, introduced the dual tutor system of external teachers and enterprises, so as to effectively solve the problem of insufficient teacher strength and to smoothly meet the development needs of the local economy. This kind of open cooperation mechanism also eased the pressure on the school's resources and provided students with practical opportunities that met the market demand for employers. In addition, City University of Zhengzhou also actively used a number of innovative teaching methods, and it introduced the "flipped classroom" and "inquiry teaching" into the various professions, which greatly enhanced the vitality of classroom teaching and attracted students to actively participate in learning and practical activities. It was worth mentioning that, in the face of the current widespread popularization of the education mechanism of "Internet plus", the colleges and universities combined with the local policy to promote the teaching mechanism of "Internet plus e-commerce" and to accelerate the cross amalgamation of different disciplines, so that the students were cultivated into composite talents with both theoretical foundation and practical ability.

In the future, private colleges and universities need to put teaching quality in the first place in the process of practicing the open mode of school running. On the one hand, they should take the initiative to seek partners with strength and courage, and on the other hand, they should accumulate practical experience in the process of cooperation, optimize the service mechanism, promote the continuous optimization of the allocation of educational resources, show their own strength in running schools, and make greater contributions to the social and economic development.

#### 4. Conclusion

On the journey of innovation-driven development of private colleges and universities, we deeply understand that "innovation is the driving force, quality is the core, and cooperation is the key". The conclusion points out that private colleges and universities must establish the concept of innovation-driven development and adopt diversified reform strategies, such as formulating the talent cultivation model of "directed training", strengthening the integration of industry and education, promoting school-enterprise cooperation, and constructing an Internet-supported learning platform, so as to cultivate students' innovative ability and practical skills.

Looking to the future, private colleges and universities should take the initiative to adapt to the global education development trend, strengthen cooperation with international higher education institutions, and absorb advanced education resources and concepts from all over the world. In addition, in the face of increasing international competition, private colleges and universities should also pay attention to the cultivation of their own characteristics and the construction of their own brands, and constantly improve their competitiveness in the international education market. First of all, for scientific research innovation, private colleges and universities should establish a sound incentive mechanism for scientific research, encourage teachers and students to participate in scientific research projects, and promote the transformation of scientific research results. At the same time, private colleges and universities should construct a more open research platform, which not only serves academic research, but also stays close to the industry and market demand, so as to boost the development of regional economy with scientific and technological innovation. Then, in terms of faculty development, private colleges and universities need to create a favorable academic atmosphere and provide all-round support for faculty career development, especially in international exchange, academic research and teaching innovation. At the same time, through the introduction of excellent talents at home and abroad, the construction of the faculty is strengthened to ensure the effective implementation of teaching quality and educational innovation.

All in all, the innovation-driven development of private colleges and universities is a reform task that needs to be practiced for a long time. It requires private colleges and universities to realize the innovation of education mode through connotation construction and external openness under the premise of ensuring the quality of education, so that they can adapt to the new requirements of education development in the new era. Only by constantly pursuing innovation can private colleges and universities secure their position on the global education stage and cultivate more outstanding talents with international competitiveness for the society.

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