

# Value Orientation of Higher Education and Path Choice of Institutional Innovation

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**Abstract:** *Value orientation is an important concept in the philosophy of axiology. There is a natural close connection between higher education system and value orientation. The construction and selection of innovation mode of higher education system must be based on the promotion and guidance of certain value orientation. The value orientation of domestic higher education has mainly gone through two stages of "social standard" and "economic standard". Entering the new era, the innovation of higher education system should establish a "people-oriented" value orientation, clearly take the modern university spirit as the value pursuit, and take the university concept as the value source.*

**Keywords:** *higher education; higher education system; value orientation; institutional innovation; path selection*

## 1. Introduction

Higher education has three major functions: talent training, scientific research and social service, and is an important basis and power source for national and social development. It can provide a steady stream of human resources and intellectual support for the national prosperity, democracy, harmony and stability and the sustainable and healthy development of social economy. Higher education system is an institutional relationship system formed in the operation process of higher education. It is an internal decisive factor restricting and influencing the development of higher education, and can promote the development of higher education system. Therefore, the innovation of higher education system can be regarded as the driving force for the optimization and the source of high-quality development. Among them, different values and orientations provide diversified choice paths for the construction and innovation of higher education system. [1] To clarify the connotation and relationship between the value orientation and institutional innovation of higher education is of great benefit to meeting the needs of socialist modernization, constructing a high-quality higher education system in the new era and building a strong education country. [2]

## 2. The relationship between value orientation and higher education system innovation

The so-called "value" is a philosophical concept and proposition that represents the category of relationship, and refers to the degree of relationship that the subject needs to be satisfied by the object. Value orientation is an important concept in the philosophy of axiology, which refers to the basic attitude and personal position of the subject based on his own value pursuit, value positioning and value expectation when the subject is faced with complex relationships, contradictory choices and conflict scenarios.

Interpreting "system" from the perspective of etymology generally has two meanings: one is the rules, regulations and codes of conduct that require everyone to act according to certain procedures and abide by them; the other is the institutional system formed under specific conditions, such as politics, culture, economy, legal and educational systems, etc. The meaning of "system" in ancient Chinese is basically the same as that of modern words. For example, it is mentioned in "Zuo Zhuan, Xianggong 28 Years", "If the man is rich, such as cloth and silk has a wide range. It is the system, so that there is no relocation". Both "system" and "institution" in English include the meaning of "zhidu", among which "system" includes the meanings of "xitong", "zhidu", "tizhi", "tixi", ect.; "institution" evolved from the etymology "instuere" of Latin, including the meanings of "gonggong jigou", "zhidu", "fengsu" and "guanli", etc. [3] Combining the meanings in Chinese and English, "system" can be understood as the system and rules of an institution or organization, which can restrict and coordinate various relationships between institutions

or organizations and within them. Institutions cannot remain the same; there will always be changes or transformations. [4] In the new institutional economics, institutional change is called institutional change, which refers to the process and result of a new system with higher efficiency producing and replacing and substituting the old system, during which behavioral rules will occur. [5] Substitution, transformation and innovation, therefore, institutional change is often referred to as "institutional innovation". [6] A domestic scholar pointed out that in the field of education, the frequency of using "institutional innovation" is much higher than that of "institutional change". [7] There is no doubt that the system cannot be equal to the value, but the system can refer to a certain value symbol and can be used as the carrier of value. [8]

That is to say, any system contains corresponding values and orientations, and vice versa, any value concepts and orientations must have corresponding objective systems. Therefore, there is a natural and close relationship between the higher education system and the value orientation. The construction and selection of the innovation model of the higher education system must be based on the promotion and guidance of a certain value orientation.

### **3. Evolution and reflection on the value orientation of domestic higher education**

As mentioned above, the value orientation plays an important role in promoting and guiding the development of higher education. The value orientation of higher education is the criterion for judging and evaluating the legitimacy of the development and reform of higher education, and plays a powerful role in various activities in the field of higher education. It has the functions of direction, regulation and domination. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, due to the mistakes and biases in the value orientation of higher education, the development of domestic higher education has gone through hardships, leaving indelible lessons and pains. Today, reviewing and reflecting on the evolution of the value orientation of higher education from the founding of China, summarizing the achievements and experiences, and reflecting on the conflicts and causes, will undoubtedly have both important theoretical value and significance realistic meaning for promoting the high-quality development of the higher education system in the new era.

#### ***3.1. "Society-based" higher education value orientation (1949-1976)***

In the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China, there were many things waiting to be rebuilt. In September 1949, the "Common Program" clearly stipulated that the main task of the national cultural and educational work was to "improve the cultural level of the people and cultivate talents for national construction". Therefore, under this situation, higher education is faced with the important task of cultivating a large number of professionals from all walks of life for the economic construction and recovery of New China. In 1952, the Ministry of Education passed the nationwide adjustment of colleges and departments, focusing on the development of industrial colleges, especially single-subject professional colleges, and cultivated a large number of high-level professional and technical personnel for industrial construction, resulting in rapid economic and social development. The education system has achieved initial innovation, but there have also been problems such as too much utilitarian value orientation and difficulty in developing students' personalities.

In September 1958, according to the general line of economic and social development of "achieve greater, faster, better and more economical results", the "Instructions on Educational Work" put forward a leap-forward higher education development goal, and established and developed a large number of "labor universities" through unconventional methods. Work-study colleges have enabled rapid growth and expansion of the number and scale of colleges and universities in a short period of time, and to a certain extent contributed to the formation of scientific research teams and the improvement of scientific research strength, but more importantly at the same time, it led to the disorder development of teaching work and slide in teaching quality. [9]

In September 1961, the "Sixty Articles of Higher Education" reaffirmed the training of specialized talents and the improvement of teaching quality, and pointed out the direction of higher education reform and development and value orientation reconstruction, thus creating a healthy and favorable institutional environment for higher education. The work of institutions of higher learning has been gradually adjusted and improved. However, the mistakes in the value orientation from 1966 to 1976 made the development of higher education helplessly deviated from the normal track and presented a situation that was difficult to sustain.

### **3.2. "Economy-based" higher education value orientation (1978-2000)**

The Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee held in 1978 shifted the focus of the national work to economic construction. The "three aspects" put forward in the early stage of reform and opening up restored the normal order of higher education and began to develop rapidly.[10]

In 1985, the "Decision on the Reform of the Education System" released and broke the shackles of higher education's passive adaptation to economic construction, making it back to the normal track, training a large number of specialized talents for socialist construction, and also drawing attention to the humanistic value of education.

In 1992, the establishment of the goal of "establishing a socialist market economic system" and the clarification of education as a "tertiary industry" indicated that promoting social and economic development has also become a yardstick and criterion for judging the reform and development of higher education. In 1993, the "Outline of China's Education Reform and Development" proposed that education should be consciously obeyed and limited to the center of economic construction.

On the whole, the value theory and orientation of higher education at this stage clearly demonstrated the bias of "economic standard", and the economic value trend of marketization and industrialization of higher education has been widely disseminated, and has become a part of higher education system construction and institutional innovation guidelines.

## **4. Value Orientation in the New Era and Path Selection of Higher Education Institutional Innovation**

Undoubtedly, value always have a corresponding subject, [11] and it is no exception for higher education with diverse types and structures. [12] Therefore, the organizers, managers and educators of higher education obviously also have multi-oriented value propositions. [13] From the above, the development of higher education is deeply influenced by value orientation, and the model construction and path selection of higher education system innovation are obviously closely related to it.

Higher education in the new era is facing complex relationships, new opportunities and challenges. All higher education entities must establish a correct value orientation and insist on innovating and optimizing all aspects of higher education systems. [14] Only in this way can a new era of higher education be created and completed. A socialist educational power has laid a solid foundation for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

### **4.1. "People-oriented" is the value orientation of higher education system innovation**

"People-oriented" is the soul and essence of contemporary higher education, which is of great significance for building a high-quality higher education system and building a socialist modern education country with Chinese characteristics and world-class level. [15] Facing the new education environment in the era of knowledge economy and big data, the innovation of higher education systems and systems requires a comprehensive understanding and continuous adherence to the regularity of student-oriented education, and the establishment of a "people-oriented" value orientation and education concept. Actively learn and learn from the effective innovative models and paths of the higher education system in developed countries, thereby comprehensively expanding the development space of domestic higher education, effectively optimizing the pattern and system of higher education, and continuously improving the overall strength and level of higher education.

Adhering to the value orientation of "people-oriented" higher education system innovation, we must follow the philosophy of humanism, resolutely oppose utilitarianism, and instead focus on people's internal needs and development, in the implementation of talent training, scientific research and social development in higher education. In the process of serving, it truly takes people as the object and center, as the purpose and standard, and implements the idea of "people-oriented" throughout all aspects of the operation of colleges and universities. [16]

In September 2018, the Ministry of Education issued the "Opinions on Accelerating the Construction of High-level Undergraduate Education to Comprehensively Improve Talent Cultivation Ability", making "teaching and educating people" the focus of attention in domestic higher education theory and practice. Therefore, adhering to the value orientation of "people-oriented" higher education system innovation must also pay attention to the era connotation of "teaching and educating people". "Teaching

and educating people" mainly means that in the teaching process, teachers should not only impart scientific and cultural knowledge, but also actively guide and influence students to establish a correct world outlook, values and outlook on life, so that the process of students becoming talents can also be realized the goal of as "people".

It must be noted that "teaching and educating people" includes two main bodies: teachers and students. So if adhere to the value orientation of "people-oriented" higher education system innovation, we should take into account the relationship between "teacher-oriented" and "student-oriented". "Teacher-oriented" is the basic principle that should be followed in the operation process of higher education institutions, which requires the administrators of higher education to establish the concept of "serving teaching", fully affirm the importance and main body status of professional teachers, actively and voluntarily play the role of server and assistant of teachers' teaching. Only in this way can professional teachers establish a sense of ownership, mobilize their enthusiasm, dynamism and innovation, and urge them to devote themselves to their own work in talent training and scientific research, and complete high-quality talents and high-level scientific research task. "Student-oriented" should always put students in the main position. In all related work of higher education, we strive to achieve "everything for students, everything of students, and every students", comply with the objective laws of students' physical and mental development, and fully considering the power and individuality of students, we should strive to train students to become builders and successors of socialist modernization with all-round development in moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, labor and other aspects.

#### ***4.2. The modern university spirit is the value pursuit of higher Education system innovation***

The university spirit is a unique temperament and a symbol of the times precipitated in the reform and development of higher education, and plays an immeasurably important role in creating a higher education development environment that advocates science and institutional harmony. The university spirit belongs to the invisible spiritual level, while the institutional innovation is located at the concrete operational level, which is the leading direction of the reform and development of higher education in various countries. University spirit is the value pursuit of higher education system innovation, as well as the value concept, intangible force and inexhaustible driving force for promoting higher education institutions. However, due to the decline of the traditional university spirit in China, the system innovation of higher education and the construction of the modern university system have appeared in the dilemma of lack of motivation and taking care of one thing and another. The university spirit keeps pace with the times, so it has the characteristics of tradition, modernity and future. The inheritance of the modern university spirit also requires the cultivation and protection of the higher education system. [17] The higher education system generally refers to two meanings: one is the external macro school-running system, that is, the relationship between the government, the university and the society; the other is the internal micro-level of university management system and operation mode.

At present, in the new stage of socialist modernization, we should vigorously promote the spirit of modern universities, reshape the independent and critical spirit of universities, and strive to coordinate the relationship between universities, government and society, as well as the relationship between academic power and administrative power. So that the demonstration of the modern university spirit has become the proposition and requirement of the new era, creating a good ecological environment for the innovation of the higher education system model.

#### ***4.3. The concept of university is the source of value for higher Education system innovation***

The idea of a university is people's rational understanding and reflection on a series of philosophical issues such as the function and nature of the university. Different countries have different cultural traditions and modes of thinking, thus forming different philosophical systems and university concepts. John Newman in Britain, Karl Jaspers in Germany, Clark Kerr in the United States and Emile Durkheim in France, who has conducted in-depth and systematic thinking on the concept of university and left a thought-provoking masterpiece.

Ideas are the forerunners of the system, and the system can be the guarantee of the idea. The concept of modern universities has been continuously enriched in line with the development of the situation and the changes of the times. It has the characteristics of the times, systematization, innovation and forward-looking, as well as quite deep and rich connotations, including university autonomy[18], presidents governing the universities, professors' academic research, moral education first, all-round development, nurturing the society, running a university with characteristics, personality development, etc. Advanced

university concepts are the source of value for higher education system innovation, [19] which can spawn and achieve a number of outstanding universities and create a glorious era of higher education. Looking back at the history of higher education, we can find that every major innovation in higher education is directly related to the change in the concept of universities. Therefore, the innovation of the higher education system in the new era must adhere to the value orientation and pursuit of "Chinese characteristics" and "new era". Among them, "Chinese characteristics" is the direction, ideal and standard of domestic higher education system innovation, which can refer to the prosperity and characteristics of ancient traditional academies, and draw useful lessons and inspiration from them; "new era" is the value orientation of higher education system innovation and orientation. The orientation are the direction and guidance for implementing the virtues and cultivating people, promoting fairness and justice in education, and cultivating socialist builders and successors. [20]

## 5. Conclusions

Nowadays, there are many problems in the school-running model and school-running system of the university, and these problems should arouse the common concern, attention and solution of the government, universities and society. After the founding of New China, the value orientation of higher education had experienced from "social standard" and "economic standard", [21] which greatly affected the talent training function of higher education. [22] Today, based on the social and economic development foundation of higher education, adhering to the "people-oriented" value orientation of the new era, the model of the higher education system has been continuously innovated, and the structure and level of higher education have been continuously optimized. Under the guidance, promotion and regulation of this higher education concept and value orientation, the grand goal of building a high-quality higher education system and a socialist modern education power will be achieved as soon as possible.

## Acknowledgements

**Funding:** This research was supported by Humanities and Social Sciences Research Program of Ministry of Education of China (18YJC880149), Educational Science Planning and Research Project of Guangdong (2017GXJK182).

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