

Exploration of Talent Cultivation Objectives and Approaches in Open Education in the New Era

Nina Yang

Anshan Open University, Anshan, 114000, China

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Abstract: With China's socioeconomic development transitioning from rapid growth to high-quality development, the innovation of talent cultivation methods and educational systems has become particularly critical. The Fourth and Sixth Plenary Sessions of the 19th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China both emphasized the importance of building a learning society and deepening educational reforms. Particularly against the backdrop of accelerating technological revolutions and industrial transformations, open education, as an important component of higher education, carries the responsibility of cultivating application-oriented talents to meet the demands of the new era. This study conducts a comprehensive exploration of the objectives and approaches of talent cultivation in open education in the new era, analyzes the current state of open education, identifies issues such as unclear talent cultivation objectives and an imperfect education system, and proposes corresponding improvement strategies. This provides theoretical and practical support for implementing more effective educational reforms in open education and promotes the comprehensive improvement of educational quality.

1. Introduction

In today's world, where the global economic structure and innovation landscape are undergoing significant reconstruction, China faces a critical period of transitioning from rapid development to high-quality development. This transformation poses new challenges and demands for the educational system, especially in terms of talent cultivation models. Open education, as a flexible educational model, has become an important tool for enhancing national education levels and building a learning society. This study aims to explore the talent cultivation objectives and practical paths of open education in the context of the new era, responding to the national call for the strategy of revitalizing the country through science and education. By deepening educational reforms and optimizing the allocation of educational resources, it seeks to better meet the needs of economic and social development.

The Fourth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee explicitly proposed "to build an educational system that serves lifelong learning for all and to construct a learning society." The Sixth Plenary Session also pointed out that "the current new round of technological revolution and industrial transformation is restructuring the global innovation landscape and reshaping the global economic structure. We must focus on eliminating the stubborn maladies of the 'five-only' approach and

comprehensively deepen educational reform and innovation. We should actively explore and vigorously promote innovation in talent cultivation." The report of the 20th National Congress also suggested "to implement the strategy of revitalizing the country through science and education, strengthening the talent support for modernization construction." In the context of China's socioeconomic development shifting towards high-quality development, Jing Degang, president of the National Open University, also stated: "Open universities must target trends, grasp laws, and tackle difficulties in order to take the lead in the new round of higher education competition and maintain an unbeatable position." Open education, as an integral part of higher education, carries an important historical mission and also shoulders the responsibility of improving national quality and providing and cultivating application-oriented talents in the new era. How to redefine the objectives of talent cultivation and how to innovate the pathways for talent cultivation have become urgent issues to be discussed and researched in open education.

2. Current Status of Talent Cultivation Research in Open Education

Open education falls under continuing education and, together with regular higher education and vocational higher education, constitutes China's higher education system. These three types of education play different roles in the national talent cultivation system, sharing commonalities and complementarities. Globally, the "talent cultivation in open education" research has been notably successful in the case of the UK Open University, which matches any other British university in academic standards and learner satisfaction. Its talent cultivation model has become an exemplar of adult education worldwide. However, a search on domestic databases for "open education" and "talent cultivation" shows that academic research in this area had gaps in the past but has been increasingly mentioned in the last two years, indicating growing academic interest[1]. Current studies on the operational systems of open education reveal issues such as unclear institutional positioning, incomplete understanding of learners and societal needs, and an imperfect cultivation system.

2.1. Clarification of Talent Cultivation Objectives Needed

For a long time, many scholars in the field of education have had limited understanding of the objectives of talent cultivation. They tend to believe that traditional universities should primarily cultivate academic talents oriented towards theory and research, while vocational and technical colleges should focus on cultivating applied talents with practical skills. This categorical thinking considers academic talents as higher-level talents, while applied talents are seen as lower-level. However, this dichotomy no longer meets the complex demands for talent in modern society, which clearly shows the diversity and comprehensiveness required for talent. Therefore, open education needs a profound rethinking and adjustment in setting talent cultivation objectives. Talent cultivation should be placed within a diversified and participatory open system to adapt to and promote socioeconomic development. This system not only responds to the broad societal demand for various types of talents but also better reflects the unique educational characteristics of open education. Through this approach, open education can cultivate composite talents who possess both theoretical depth and practical problem-solving capabilities, aligning more closely with the broad and diverse needs of society.

2.2. Improvement Needed in the Talent Cultivation System

Talent cultivation is a complex educational project that requires participation from multiple sectors. The completeness of the talent cultivation system directly affects the quality of teaching and educational outcomes[2]. Currently, several issues have been identified in the development and

improvement of the talent cultivation system in open universities:

Lack of intrinsic value orientation in training programs. Past training schemes, considering learners as adults, tended to focus only on cultivating knowledge and skills, emphasizing the learners' external educational orientation and neglecting the internal educational orientation, including the cultivation of spiritual levels and professional ethics. This resulted in course settings that are heavy on theory but light on practice, leading to a disconnect between teaching and actual application.

Need for improved teaching staff quality. The quality of teaching staff is a core element and key to the future development and growth of a university. President Xi once pointed out that high-quality teachers are essential for high-quality education. Therefore, the quantity and quality of the teaching staff directly impact the results of talent cultivation. Currently, open universities face issues such as insufficient number of teachers, unreasonable structure, traditional teaching concepts, and lack of innovative practical abilities.

Traditional teaching models. Current teaching methods have not fully adapted to modern educational needs. Traditional teaching models, overly focused on theoretical instruction, lack interactive and practical components that integrate with real applications. This model limits the cultivation of students' innovative thinking and practical abilities, fails to fully stimulate students' learning motivation and interest, and leads to educational outcomes that deviate from societal needs[3].

Incomplete teaching evaluation system. The existing evaluation system tends to emphasize outcomes over processes, focusing more on academic performance while neglecting students' comprehensive abilities and personal development. This quantitative-oriented evaluation system often overlooks students' creative thinking and practical skills, failing to truly measure and promote the comprehensive development of students' abilities. Moreover, the evaluation methods are uniform, lacking in assessments of students' creative thinking and practical skills, which is not conducive to a comprehensive evaluation and enhancement of students' true capabilities. Therefore, the teaching evaluation system needs further innovation and diversification to better reflect and promote the comprehensive growth of students.

3. Directions and Objectives of Talent Cultivation in Open Education in the New Era

3.1. Clarify the Characteristics and Needs of the Talent Cultivation Group in Open Education

The primary group for talent cultivation in open education consists of adults, predominantly those who are employed. Through surveys and interviews, we have summarized the prominent characteristics of today's open education learners: First, learners have clear learning objectives and strong motivation. Most open education learners aim to improve their academic qualifications (for job changes or promotions), while others seek to enhance their professional skills. Typically, learners in open education engage with real needs and the goal of solving work-related problems, hoping to apply what they learn directly. Second, the majority of learners have considerable practical and social experience, which serves as an excellent foundation for learning theoretical and professional knowledge. Third, learners' studies are influenced by the conflict between work and education, with limited time and space for learning, often prioritizing learning efficiency[4].

3.2. Establish the Objectives of Talent Cultivation in Open Education in the New Era

Moral education is the fundamental task of talent cultivation. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, General Secretary has focused on what kind of people to cultivate, how to cultivate them, and for whom, emphasizing the fundamental task of moral education in a series of important statements on educational reform and development. In the process of talent cultivation

in open education in the new era, the aim is not only to build a higher-level knowledge system but also to cultivate and strengthen the ideological and moral construction of learners, producing high-quality talents needed by society.

The motto of the National Open University is "Respect for learning, benefit for all, education without distinction": "Respect for learning" reflects the traditional cultural respect and expectation for learners; "benefit for all" is about the nobleman's creed to "enrich one's virtue internally and grace externally, with a sincere heart and a benevolent intention." "Education without distinction" signifies that education is accessible to everyone, and unlike other types of higher education institutions, the National Open University serves the mission of facilitating lifelong learning for all, breaking barriers of time and space to share quality resources and embrace social responsibility to promote educational equity. Open education should be learner-centered. In the new stage of rapid development of socialist construction in China, the demand for quality education is increasingly urgent. It must meet individual developmental needs and adapt to societal demands. The objectives of talent cultivation in open education should lean towards being more scientific, practical, and application-oriented. Open education, aimed at the general public, ensures that every learner wishing to improve their academic qualifications or skills can receive equal education, thus the goals of talent cultivation should avoid homogenization with regular and vocational higher education institutions[5]. The objectives of open education should focus on making learners understand that only through "lifelong learning" can they continuously update their knowledge and enhance their skills, preventing obsolescence by the tides of time. Cultivating the concept of "lifelong learning" in learners, continuously improving their overall qualities, and producing application-oriented talents needed by society are crucial.

4. Exploring Paths for Talent Cultivation in Open Education in the New Era

4.1. Enriching Curriculum Design

In the context of open education in the new era, the richness and practicality of the curriculum setup become critical factors in improving educational quality. To realize learner-centered and objective-oriented educational principles, open education institutions should draw on the successful experiences and teaching philosophies of open universities both domestically and internationally. In the early stages of curriculum design, course experts and instructors should be invited to participate in in-depth discussions and exchanges on course content to ensure its foresight and adaptability. Additionally, the initial course design should include comprehensive research on the employment standards of enterprises and market demands, combined with survey results of learners, taking into account their learning characteristics and objective conditions to develop a curriculum system that meets both societal and individual developmental needs.

In the curriculum setup, there should be active promotion of curriculum content reform, integrating ideological and political education elements to enhance learners' sense of social responsibility and historical mission. Elective courses should implement a mechanism for learners to choose autonomously, meeting the personalized needs of different learners and thus enhancing the attractiveness and practicality of the courses. Moreover, the addition of short-term training programs and the issuance of completion certificates can better serve special groups and the cultivation of application-oriented talents, enhancing the flexibility and coverage of the courses and providing more opportunities and conveniences for learners' professional development. Such a curriculum setup not only responds to the actual needs of the market and society but also demonstrates the capability and determination of open education to adapt to the demands of the new era.

4.2. Strengthening Faculty Resources

In the open education system, strengthening the faculty is key to achieving educational objectives. Especially in the context of the new era, the quality and professional capability of the teaching staff become decisive factors in the quality of education and the effectiveness of talent cultivation. To optimize the faculty structure, educational institutions need to adjust and optimize the composition of the faculty to meet the characteristics of open education and the needs of learners. This includes introducing part-time teachers with rich industry experience and experts in educational technology and online teaching methods. Through interdisciplinary collaboration, experts from various fields are invited to join the teaching team, aiming to enhance the comprehensiveness and foresight of the teaching content, thereby directly improving the quality of instruction.

To further enhance teachers' professional capabilities and teaching effectiveness, educational institutions should regularly provide professional development opportunities for teachers, such as participating in domestic and international educational seminars, workshops, and short courses. Additionally, teachers are encouraged to participate in research on educational innovation practices and promote exchanges and cooperation with enterprises and industries to enhance their practical experience and modern teaching methods. Educational institutions should also provide training in modern teaching methods for teachers, including blended learning, flipped classrooms, and online education technologies. Through workshops and practical seminars, teachers become familiar with the latest educational technologies and teaching tools, thus enhancing the interactivity of teaching and learner engagement[6].

Furthermore, establishing effective incentive mechanisms and career development pathways is an important strategy for maintaining the stability of the teaching staff and enhancing their teaching motivation. Educational institutions should enhance teachers' enthusiasm and loyalty through teaching awards, research grants, and career advancement opportunities. A fair and transparent teacher performance evaluation system should also be established, regularly assessing teachers' teaching quality, student feedback, and their contributions to research and social service. Through systematic feedback and evaluation, teachers are motivated to continuously improve their teaching methods and content, ensuring the efficiency and quality of educational activities. These measures will collectively form a professional and efficient teaching staff, meeting the challenges and needs of open education in the new era.

4.3. Optimizing Teaching Models

In the cultivation of talents through open education in the new era, optimizing teaching models is particularly crucial. This not only pertains to enhancing the quality of education but also to improving educational efficiency. Considering the specific needs and characteristics of adult learners, open education should adopt more flexible and varied teaching strategies to ensure that educational content is closely integrated with practical application. The core of this approach is to integrate online and offline teaching resources, fully utilizing the advantages of digital technology and internet platforms to create an autonomous and flexible learning environment. Through online courses, learners can study independently according to their own schedules, while arranged face-to-face teaching sessions enhance interaction between teachers and students, improving the specificity and effectiveness of teaching.

Furthermore, introducing a project-based learning model is also a crucial strategy for optimizing teaching models. This model encourages learners to acquire new knowledge and skills by participating in projects that solve real-world problems, not only enhancing learners' practical abilities but also stimulating innovative thinking. Project-based learning makes the educational process closer to the actual work environment, more likely to motivate learners and increase the practicality of

learning. Through this teaching method, learners can directly see the integration of theory and practice, thereby better understanding and applying new knowledge.

Optimizing teaching models should also include designing personalized learning paths and career-oriented teaching strategies. By developing intelligent learning systems based on learners' past records, interests, and career goals, personalized learning suggestions can be provided to help learners effectively achieve their dual goals of career development and personal interests. Additionally, integrating career planning and development into the teaching process, offering courses and practical opportunities closely related to future professions, and collaborating with industry experts ensures that course content keeps pace with industry developments, enhancing learners' competitiveness and market adaptability. Through this comprehensive teaching model, open education can better meet the needs of adult learners and help them succeed in their careers.

4.4. Perfecting the Teaching Evaluation System

Establishing a comprehensive and diversified teaching evaluation system is fundamental to ensuring teaching quality and continuous improvement. Firstly, formative evaluation should become an important component of the teaching evaluation process. This method emphasizes continuous assessment throughout the process and provides timely feedback on learners' progress and issues through assignments, discussions, and group projects. Formative evaluation not only helps teachers and learners understand actual performance during the learning process but also aids in promptly identifying and addressing difficulties, promoting continuous development and skill enhancement of learners.

Secondly, summative evaluation, conducted at the end of a course or learning phase, is a comprehensive assessment of the knowledge and skills learners have acquired over a certain period. Through exams, project reports, or assessments of overall performance, summative evaluations not only measure learners' outcomes but also serve as an important test of teaching methods and effectiveness. This method ensures the achievement of learning objectives and suggests improvements for teaching content and methods.

Finally, to enhance the interactivity and self-driven nature of the evaluation system, learners should be encouraged to participate in peer evaluation and self-assessment. This peer and self-assessment not only enhances learners' critical thinking and self-reflection skills but also increases their engagement and autonomy in the learning process. Additionally, establishing an effective feedback mechanism is crucial, ensuring unimpeded communication among learners, teachers, and administrators. Teachers and administrators should regularly collect and review this feedback to adjust teaching strategies and improve the teaching environment, better meeting the needs and expectations of learners and promoting the efficient and high-quality development of teaching activities.

5. Conclusion

This study has conducted an in-depth analysis and discussion of the current shortcomings in the cultivation of talents through open education and has proposed measures such as enhancing the faculty team, enriching course content, optimizing teaching methods, and establishing a robust evaluation system to improve the quality and efficiency of teaching. Future research should further explore the best practices and innovative models of open education globally, especially in terms of enhancing the informatization and technologization of education. It should explore more effective learning tools and platforms to better adapt to the future challenges and needs of education.

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