

Research on the Path of Developing Philosophy and Social Sciences in Industry-featured Universities

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Abstract: Industry-featured universities play a crucial role in China's higher education sector and have made significant contributions to industry development and socio-economic construction. In the context of building a strong educational nation, enhancing the development of philosophy and social sciences is crucial for promoting comprehensive student development, meeting national strategic needs, and building a learning society. This article proposes suggestions for strengthening the construction of philosophy and social sciences in industrial characteristic universities through case studies of the development of philosophy and social sciences in well-known universities at home and abroad. Industry-featured universities should leverage their advantages by focusing on four aspects: enhancing the construction of the humanities institutes, developing a general education curriculum system, building new-type think tanks, and promoting high-quality development in continuing education.

Keywords: Industry-featured Universities; Philosophy and Social Sciences; General Education Curriculum System; New-type Think Tanks; Continuing Education

1. Introduction

Industry-featured universities refer to universities with industrial backgrounds, service orientations and corresponding disciplinary characteristics [1]. Among the 95 disciplines ranked first in the fourth round of discipline evaluation, industry-featured universities accounted for 83.2% [2]. They are a large group with wide coverage and plays an important role in the country's economic and social development.

In May 2016, the government put forward that

we should accelerate the construction of philosophy and social sciences. We should base ourselves on China, draw on foreign experiences, explore history, grasp the present, care for mankind, and face the future, and strive to build philosophy and social sciences. Colleges and universities are an important force among the "five armies" of philosophy and social sciences in China. Strengthening the work of philosophy and social sciences in colleges and universities is an important aspect of developing philosophy and social sciences. In May 2022, the Ministry of Education and relevant departments jointly issued the "Action Plan for the High-quality Development of Philosophy and Social Sciences in Colleges and Universities towards 2035", which made medium- and long-term plans for the high-quality development of philosophy and social sciences in colleges and universities and put forward clear requirements.

2. The Importance of Strengthening Philosophy and Social Sciences in Industry-Featured Universities

As an important part of the national higher education system, after reform and development, most industry-featured universities have developed into high-level comprehensive universities with traditional advantageous disciplines as their characteristics, possessing the academic and faculty conditions necessary for the development of philosophy and social sciences.

2.1 A Key Measure for Promoting Comprehensive Student Development

Universities hold a leading and pioneering role in the national education system and are the main front for talent cultivation. While imparting knowledge and skills to students is important, it is even more crucial to help them develop noble moral character and a sound

personality. Philosophy and social sciences play an essential role in cultivating hearts and nurturing personalities. They are irreplaceable in enlightening thoughts, refining sentiments, and enriching minds.[3] To promote students' comprehensive development in morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics, and labor, universities need to enhance their philosophy and social sciences work. This includes building and improving a general education model and curriculum system, improving the quality of general education teaching, and focusing on cultivating new talents who possess both scientific and humanistic literacy, embody lofty moral spirit and sound personality, and are capable of shouldering the great task of the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

2.2 A Key Approach to Supporting the Development of New-type Think Tanks

Philosophy and social sciences are crucial tools for understanding and transforming the world. In the dual exploration of theory and practice of China's modernization, philosophy and social sciences play an essential role in providing theoretical thinking and ideological guidance. The "14th Five-Year Plan for the Development of Philosophy and Social Sciences" proposes the creation of a number of new-type think tanks with significant decision-making influence, social impact, and international reach. Higher education institutions, which gather high-quality talent from various fields and have strong research capabilities, have a natural advantage in building high-level think tanks [4]. This is also a key aspect of universities fulfilling their societal service functions. Universities should actively align with national and social needs, promote interdisciplinary integration, innovate formats, and integrate resources to establish a number of trustworthy and usable new-type think tanks for the government. These think tanks will provide strong ideological and intellectual support for the comprehensive construction of a modern country.

2.3 An Effective Way to Contribute to the Building of a Learning Society

Universities are the main force in building a learning society, with higher continuing education being the most direct, primary, and effective way for universities to participate in

this endeavor. Philosophy and social sciences encompass various disciplines including history, economics, management, education, and culture. These disciplines play crucial roles: humanities and philosophy nurture personal integrity and soul, economics and management assist in governance, education fosters talent, and arts enhance human character. There is a significant demand for philosophy and social sciences in lifelong learning. To serve the construction of a learning society, universities need to enhance their philosophy and social sciences work. This involves adhering to the principles of "serving everyone, suitable for everyone," improving the professional setup of continuing education, enriching the curriculum and content, innovating teaching methods, and leveraging digital technology as a key engine for high-quality development in continuing education. Digitalization should act as a multiplier in resource sharing, model innovation, and ecosystem reconstruction, accelerating the transformation and upgrading of continuing education. This will contribute to improving the overall level of human resources in China and advancing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation through modernization.

3. Pathways for Developing Philosophy and Social Sciences in Industry-Featured Universities

In the current era, accelerating the construction of a strong educational nation and advancing the integrated development of education, science, and talents are pressing tasks. Philosophy and social sciences need to continue influencing the process of modernization and will inevitably face new development opportunities and prosperity in the comprehensive reform of the education system. Higher education institutions, especially those with industry features, should grasp the trends of the times, align with their transformation and development goals, and clarify their approach to advancing philosophy and social sciences to support the construction of a strong nation.

3.1 Enhance the Construction of the Humanities Institutes

Humanities Institutes are important parts of colleges and universities. The development level of humanities institutes has a serious

impact on the development level of university's overall disciplines and the realization of the university's connotation-type development goals [5].

3.1.1 Identify integration points for humanities and the university's advantageous disciplines

Establish a distinctive humanities research system by identifying the best integration points between humanities and the university's advantageous disciplines. This involves leveraging directives from the government related to industry fields and industry--featured higher education institutions to guide interdisciplinary research and develop a unique research system. Strengthening connections between teaching and research units and humanities institutes is essential for supporting humanities theoretical research.

3.1.2 Focus on the university characteristics and enhance the quality of course instruction

Many industry-featured higher education institutions are closely linked with the development of New China. Universities should integrate school history and the development history of New China into their course instruction, inheriting and promoting the spirit of school mottos. For example, China University of Geosciences (Beijing) has actively explored "Vivid China" courses since 2019. The course team, composed of academicians, the university president, and distinguished teachers, aligns with the university's development strategies in deep earth, deep sea, deep space, and deep time to narrate earth stories and educate students on the significance of geology to Chinese and global civilization, inspiring students to become pioneers and achievers in the new era.

3.2 Constructing a General Education Curriculum System

General education refers to the non-professional education in modern universities. It aims to prepare common foundations for students in any major. General courses are the main carrier of it. At present, strengthening general education has become one of the focuses of teaching reform in colleges and universities, and general education has become an important part of universities' training programs.

3.2.1 Leverage existing discipline resources to build a general education curriculum system

General education courses are crucial for

implementing general education. As industry-featured universities may lack the resources and faculty of comprehensive high-level universities, they should not simply replicate the general education model of comprehensive universities. Instead, they should integrate their unique characteristics, disciplinary features, and student needs to define appropriate general education goals. Strengthening the design and planning of the general education curriculum, and ensuring a connection between elective and compulsory courses is essential. Additionally, motivating teachers, especially outstanding ones, to offer general education courses by linking teaching workload with promotion and awards can help ensure curriculum quality [6].

3.2.2 Collaborate with nearby universities to share and exchange general education courses

Several comprehensive universities in China have made valuable explorations in this regard, which industry-featured universities can learn from. For instance, Tongji University and Fudan University reached an inter-university strategic cooperation agreement at the end of 2023, starting a mutual selection of undergraduate general education courses from the spring semester of 2024. This collaboration involves sharing courses and recognizing credits across institutions. Fudan University offers ten core general education courses, including topics on classical tradition, philosophical critique, civilization comparison, modern society, and scientific technology, to Tongji University students. Conversely, Tongji University focuses on courses like "Engineering Ability and Innovative Thinking," "Social Development and International Perspective," and "Scientific Exploration and Life Care," which are also available to Fudan students.

3.3 Building New-type Think Tanks

Since 2012, the state has made a series of important deployments on the construction of new-type think tanks, stressing that the construction of think tanks should be taken as a major and urgent task. Serving the major decisions of the state is one of the important missions of colleges and universities. At present, there is still a "loss of voice" phenomenon in serving the decision-making of the state by think tanks in colleges and universities in China, which is not

commensurate with the status that colleges and universities should have [7].

3.3.1 Strengthen interdisciplinary collaboration among researchers

The talent pool is a crucial component of new-type think tanks development, and assembling a high-level team with diverse disciplinary backgrounds has become a common practice in think tanks at foreign universities [8]. The Baker Institute for Public Policy at Rice University, ranked first globally among university think tanks, exemplifies the diverse academic backgrounds of its research team members. This includes experts in economics, environmental engineering, energy and transportation policy, geology, chemistry, and biological sciences. Similarly, think tanks should foster communication platforms for experts across various disciplines. This can be achieved through annual forums, group discussions, academic lectures, thematic forums, and regular seminars, bringing together interdisciplinary research teams, external experts, and business professionals to promote academic sharing and discussion. Industry-featured Universities can draw inspiration from the practice of the Baker Institute for Public Policy at Rice University and vigorously strengthen the exchange and cooperation among researchers in different disciplines through the construction of various platforms.

3.3.2 Enhance evaluation standards for interdisciplinary research outcomes

As a new type research institution within universities, think tanks have different forms of output from traditional colleges or research units. In order to fully mobilize the enthusiasm of think tank researchers, it is necessary to design unique achievements evaluation criteria that match the tasks of think tanks [9]. Columbia University's Earth Institute employs an "external peer review and practice committee" system to evaluate interdisciplinary research projects. Results are reviewed by a practice committee composed of 4 to 6 regular faculty members, as well as external evaluations from institutions such as Yale University, Google, and the University of Maryland's Environmental Science Center. The scope of evaluation includes not only published academic papers, books, and research reports but also academic activities, news reports, and seminars during the research

process. Renmin University of China has developed a distinct evaluation standard for think tank talent, focusing on broader criteria beyond just academic publications.

3.4 Promoting High-quality Development in Continuing Education

Actively developing continuing education is not only an inevitable requirement for constructing a lifelong education system and building a learning society, but also a social responsibility and obligation that colleges and universities must undertake. As an important part of universities, continuing education should take the initiative to adapt to the needs of social and economic construction and people's lifelong learning, and achieve transformation and development through reform and innovation.

3.4.1 Improve the continuing education curriculum system

Many Chinese universities have continuing education colleges, but with economic structural adjustments, continuing education faces challenges in quality, system, and concept [10]. In the U.S., continuing education is the fastest-growing and largest part of higher education. Universities have established flexible lifelong learning modules for various groups. For instance, California State University, Chico offers four types of courses: Test preparation courses like SAT, ACT, and GRE for those pursuing undergraduate and graduate degrees. Lifelong learning and senior education programs, including reading programs for children. Professional training courses in enterprise information management for state employees. International courses for cross-border projects. Industry-featured universities can draw on the experience of American universities and actively expand the continuing education of other groups such as retirees in addition to continuing to do a good job in the continuing education for industry personnel.

3.4.2 Advance the digital transformation of continuing education

Government emphasized that education digitalization is a key breakthrough for opening new avenues and shaping new advantages in educational development. The digital transformation of education is a necessary trend. Industry-featured universities should accelerate their adaptation to the new

trend of educational digitization and actively use digital means to promote the quality and efficiency of continuing education. For example, China University of Political Science and Law's continuing education college has implemented several digital practices: Utilizing "Internet + Education" to offer public legal learning courses and create popular thematic open courses around social legal issues. Collecting high-quality online and practical case studies to develop a high-quality curriculum combining online and offline, theory and practice, and professional fields with daily life. Building an integrated education and training platform to maximize the value of continuing education courses and faculty resources. Leveraging authoritative media like Learning Power, People's Daily, and CCTV's Social and Legal Channel to promote continuing education through a multi-channel approach.

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