

# **Research on Optimizing Pathways for Talent Cultivation Models in Applied Universities Guided by the Five-Pronged Approach to Education Research on Optimization Pathways**

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**Abstract:** The "Five-fold Education Approach" represents a crucial concept for advancing talent cultivation in higher education institutions during the new era. Applied universities constitute a vital component of China's higher education system, bearing the significant responsibility of nurturing applied talents. In implementing this approach, applied universities face challenges including unclear cultivation objectives, deficiencies in certain educational environments, monotonous teaching models, and imperfect evaluation systems for nurturing talent. Through analysis of these issues, this paper proposes pathways for optimizing talent cultivation models in applied universities.

**Keywords:** Five-fold Education; Applied Universities; Talent Cultivation; Multidimensional Challenges; Optimization Pathways

## **1. Introduction**

The educational policy for the new era calls for "cultivating well-rounded builders and successors who excel in moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education, advancing educational modernization, building a strong education nation, and delivering education that satisfies the people[1]." The integrated development of moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education represents a new requirement for higher education in the new era. Universities across the country are conducting in-depth research and implementing educational reforms in talent cultivation within this framework[2]. The integrated development of moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education represents the new requirements for education in the new era. Establishing a holistic educational system that integrates these five

dimensions within higher education institutions is an intrinsic imperative for cultivating new generations suited to the times. Applied universities serve as the main force in nurturing high-caliber applied talents, bearing the mission of serving regional economic and social development alongside industrial transformation and upgrading. Guided by the philosophy of "integrated development of moral, intellectual, physical, esthetic, and labor education," reflecting on and reconstructing the talent cultivation model of applied universities, overcoming practical challenges, exploring the integration of these five dimensions, and promoting students' holistic growth and adaptation to future society represent the core issues and urgent tasks for deepening reforms and enhancing quality in applied universities today.

## **2. The Contemporary Requirements and Value Implications of "Five-fold Education" for Applied Talent Cultivation**

The "Five-Pronged Approach to Education" defines the fundamental standards for builders and successors in China across moral, intellectual, physical, esthetic, and labor education. Against the macro backdrop of higher education's intrinsic development in the new era, it serves as the strategic guide for constructing a high-quality education system in China. The fundamental mission of applied universities lies in cultivating outstanding applied talents who can confront industrial transformation and solve complex practical problems. The "Five-Pronged Approach" is the inevitable choice in response to this era's demands. It aims to guide applied talent cultivation toward a fundamental shift from "tool-making" to "person-cultivating," laying a solid and broad foundation for students' lifelong development and adaptation to societal changes.

Therefore, the "Five-fold Education Approach"

holds profound value for talent cultivation in applied universities. It expands the scope of talent development from a "technology-centric" to a "personality-centric" orientation, clarifying that applied talents should be well-rounded individuals of the new era, possessing both moral integrity and professional competence. Furthermore, it integrates the five aspects of education systematically throughout the entire process of cultivation plans, curriculum systems, teaching practices, and campus culture. Its guiding role provides applied universities with conceptual principles and an action framework, serving as the core theoretical engine and practical guide for enhancing the quality and efficiency of talent cultivation models and driving their substantive transformation.

### **3. The Multidimensional Challenges Faced by Applied Universities in Implementing the Five-fold Education Approach**

Applied universities constitute a vital component of China's higher education system, bearing the responsibility of cultivating applied talents for the nation[3]. In implementing the "five-fold education" approach, applied universities primarily face the following challenges:

#### **3.1 Unclear Educational Objectives**

The fundamental purpose of education demands the all-round development of talents in moral, intellectual, physical, esthetic, and labor education. The "five-fold education" approach constitutes the core element of educational objectives, determining how well universities align their talent cultivation with national strategies and societal needs. Some applied universities, when formulating their educational goals, place excessive emphasis on professional skill training while insufficiently integrating the essence of moral, physical, esthetic, and labor education. Consequently, their advancement of the "five-fold education" objective remains unclear. Many aspects of education lack clear quantitative standards and scientific feedback mechanisms. Educational outcomes are often measured by activity frequency, participation numbers, and perceived impact, deviating from the principle of student-centered development. This leads to an implementation that prioritizes form over substance and quantity over quality, making it difficult to enhance educational effectiveness and address students'

developmental challenges.

#### **3.2 Shortcomings in Certain Educational Segments**

The "five-fold education" approach has elevated educational standards, yet the gap between students' aspirations for quality education and the imbalance and inadequacy in certain educational segments persists. From the perspective of "five-fold education," some applied universities exhibit notable shortcomings in their curriculum design and specific educational components. The development of the five educations is uneven. Labor education courses are absent in some universities, with efforts primarily relying on student affairs offices and volunteer activities, resulting in inadequate cultivation of students' work ethic and awareness. Physical education courses receive insufficient attention and are inadequately offered, with both in-class instruction and extracurricular activities lacking quality. The subtle, pervasive influence of moral education is not fully realized, failing to play its role throughout the entire talent development process. Some universities lack a deep understanding of aesthetic education, advancing it solely through art education activities without sufficiently exploring the essence of "aesthetic education."

#### **3.3 Monotonous Teaching Modalities**

With the advancement of the new era, the educational environment and its participants are constantly evolving, heightening the sense of timeliness in education. Currently, many applied universities rely on traditional lecture-based teaching methods for talent cultivation. Instructors primarily deliver theoretical courses through PowerPoint presentations and oral instruction, leaving limited opportunities for students to engage deeply in practical activities or actively process information. Learning remains largely observational and receptive, with low levels of classroom participation. This singular teaching model fails to meet the aspirations of students in the new era for high-quality education. The era of mobile internet, artificial intelligence, and big data has heightened students' demand for "online education." Therefore, universities must keep pace with the times, shift their mindset, update educational content and delivery methods, and adopt student-centered teaching approaches that

leverage students' initiative and engagement. Simultaneously, as the primary agents implementing the "five-fold education" approach, university faculty require enhanced capabilities in instructional design, implementation, monitoring, and research. Traditional teaching methods often lack appeal, engagement, and relevance, failing to meet student needs. Only well-rounded educators can cultivate well-rounded students; teachers must therefore lead by example in advancing the five-fold education framework.

### **3.4 Incomplete Evaluation System for Education**

The implementation of the "five-fold education" approach requires close coordination across all stages and integrated advancement. Applied universities are not mere factories for technical skills, and the evaluation of their educational quality should not be confined to a simplistic, intellectually-oriented system. Currently, the assessment of educational quality in applied universities remains one-sided, primarily focusing on the three dimensions of "moral, intellectual, and physical education," while neglecting evaluations of esthetic education and labor education. The evaluation methods are also limited. While questionnaires are commonly used for their efficiency, they predominantly feature closed-ended questions that restrict respondents' answers, leading to the omission of many deeper insights. If respondents are uncooperative or unsupportive, the evaluation results may be inaccurate.

### **4. Exploring an Optimized Pathway for Talent Development in Applied Universities through Deep Integration of the Five Educational Dimensions**

In China, applied undergraduate institutions are numerous and play a significant role. These institutions have become an integral part of China's higher education system, and reforms to their talent cultivation models are crucial to the overall high-quality development of higher education[4]. To effectively advance the implementation of the "five-fold education" approach in applied universities, systematic efforts must be made across four dimensions: deepening conceptual understanding, establishing institutional frameworks, innovating methodologies, and fostering systemic coordination. This will create an

organically interconnected, comprehensive talent development pathway.

#### **4.1 Deepening Educational Philosophy and Expanding the Contemporary Significance of the Five-Fold Education Approach**

To establish a talent development system that comprehensively cultivates moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education, a thorough understanding of the essence of each of these dimensions is essential[5]. The specifications for cultivating applied talents position them as technical professionals bridging the gap between academic scholars and skilled technicians. Their fundamental components comprise knowledge, competencies, and qualities[6]. Applied universities should transcend a mechanical understanding and simplistic collage of the "Five Educations," instead centering on "cultivating virtue and nurturing talent" as the guiding principle. Each education should be viewed as an integral part of shaping students' holistic character and comprehensive qualities. Driven by both technological transformation and societal demands, we must redefine the intrinsic connections among moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education, endowing the "Five Educations" with new contemporary significance. Schools can adopt integrated and decentralized approaches, combining individual and collective efforts with theory and practice, to organize faculty and students in studying national policy documents and grasping the contemporary significance of integrating the Five Educations. Through practical application, deepen understanding and expand the scope of each education: Physical education should build robust bodies while fostering healthy lifestyles and resilient character; aesthetic education should elevate aesthetic literacy and cultural creativity, not merely emphasize artistic skills; labor education should impart professional skills, cultivate work habits, and foster a spirit of service and dedication. Through conceptual guidance and reflective practice, the five educations can achieve mutual integration and collaborative nurturing.

#### **4.2 Reconstructing the Educational System to Achieve Systematic Integration of Objectives, Implementation Plans, and Evaluation**

Education is a social activity that cultivates individuals under the guidance of national

educational policies, transforming natural persons into social persons[7]. The quality of talent cultivation hinges on the organic integration of objectives, programs, and evaluation. The rationality of the education system directly impacts the knowledge, skills, and overall quality structure of talent[8]. Guided by the principle of “integrated development of moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education,” we should reconstruct the talent cultivation objective system. This involves clarifying specific developmental standards for each discipline across moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education dimensions, and embedding these “five-education” requirements into the curriculum system and teaching processes. This ensures seamless integration across courses, practical training, and assessment. At the goal level, efforts should address deficiencies in labor education, elevate the status of aesthetic and physical education, and establish a comprehensive framework for moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education. This framework must enhance adaptability to societal needs and national strategies while fostering coordinated mechanisms for admissions, training, and employment. At the program level, systematic and phased training plans should be designed based on disciplinary characteristics and student development patterns, emphasizing integrated “five-education” course modules and practical components. Regarding evaluation, the diagnostic and feedback functions of assessment should be strengthened. A comprehensive evaluation system combining qualitative and quantitative measures should be established to cover the competencies of the “five educations,” forming a routine and dynamic mechanism for monitoring and improving educational quality.

#### **4.3 Innovating Educational Methods to Advance the Modern Transformation of Teaching Platforms and Models**

In light of the characteristics of post-2000 students and advancements in information technology, educational approaches must evolve with the times. We should promote the modern transformation of teaching platforms and methodologies, fully leveraging technologies such as artificial intelligence and big data to build intelligent educational environments. On one hand, we should drive the deep integration

of online and offline education, actively utilizing new media platforms to expand educational spaces while enhancing the quality and appeal of content delivery. Concurrently, we must strengthen the development of teachers' digital teaching capabilities to cultivate a professional online educational workforce. On the other hand, efforts should focus on reforming classroom teaching to establish a student-centered pedagogical paradigm that synergizes diverse teaching methods. Flexibly employing contextual, inquiry-based, and interactive approaches will promote the organic integration of knowledge transmission, competency development, and value guidance, transforming classrooms into primary battlegrounds for holistic education that integrates all five aspects of education.

#### **4.4 Strengthening Collaborative Education to Promote Holistic Coordination among Educational Entities and Processes**

The talent development model emphasizing the five-fold education approach integrates students' comprehensive development with individual growth[9]. Talent cultivation is a systematic endeavor that requires strengthening the coordinated collaboration among various educational stakeholders and processes. Schools should establish a coordinated mechanism for the “five educations” to promote the deep integration of moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education. Specifically: - Moral education should integrate ideological and political education into curricula, daily activities, and cultural development; - Intellectual education should foster research-informed teaching and the application of theory to practice; - Physical education should be embedded in curricula, activities, and cultural cultivation; aesthetic education should emphasize cultural cultivation and nurturing through immersion; labor education should be integrated with professional education and innovation/entrepreneurship practices. Concurrently, a shared development community for faculty and students should be built, highlighting students' central role in education to foster mutual growth and shared prosperity. Through continuous interaction and feedback, this approach achieves systematic enhancement in talent development quality.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Applied universities serve as the primary institutions for cultivating high-caliber applied talents nationwide, bearing the crucial responsibility of nurturing talent for the nation. To fully implement this policy, higher education must adhere to the “five-fold education approach,” treating it as the core pathway for fulfilling the fundamental mission of fostering virtue through education and achieving talent development objectives. Upholding the “five-fold education” approach is not only an active response to the educational policy but also a crucial measure for cultivating talents suited to the needs of the new era. It focuses on shaping the core competencies and comprehensive abilities that support students' lifelong development and align with contemporary demands. This approach drives the intrinsic development of schools, ensuring the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education is effectively implemented and yields tangible results.

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