

Research on the Reform of Graduate Training Mode in Applied Economics from the Perspective of "Three News"

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Abstract: The emergence of the "Three News" development concept poses new challenges to the training of graduate students in applied economics. This article assesses the current state of postgraduate education: efforts are underway to optimize the training mechanism, yet instructional methods remain traditional. There is a holistic approach to fostering comprehensive skills, but the nurturing of innovative capacities falls short. There is a strong emphasis on cutting-edge instruction, but the effectiveness of such instruction is less than satisfactory. While faculty strength is continually augmented, the quality of student education is declining. Grounded in this reality, the article delves deeply into the root causes of these issues: the training mechanisms are not fully implemented; management assessment systems are overly quantitative; there is a dearth of advanced educational resources; and there is an excessive number of postgraduate students being trained. In light of these challenges, we propose a talent-training model under the "Three New" perspectives, which includes optimizing team structures and emphasizing experiential learning; consolidating educational resources and fostering innovative paradigms; adjusting curriculum to stay abreast with the latest trends; and developing an assessment framework to perfect the evaluation system. This approach aims to refine the structure of applied economics talent training, promote effective employment, expand international exchanges, and elevate the global standards of talent cultivation.

Keywords: Three News; Teaching Reform; Training Mode; Mode Reform

1. Introduction

The new development stage, new development

concept, and new development pattern (referred to as "three new") have put forward new requirements for the cultivation of higher education talents, and economic development has also imposed stricter requirements on the quality of higher education talents. The central government issued "China's Education Modernization 2035", proposing to create world-class high-level education, implement education policies that are more in line with the needs of China's social development, create a new pattern of postgraduate education, and comprehensively improve postgraduate learning, scientific research and practical capabilities. The "three new" proposals mean changes in the development pattern of higher education, and put forward higher requirements for the quality of higher education talents. The training of graduate students is of great significance.

Previously, scholars have analyzed graduate training models from different perspectives. For instance, Zhao conducted a comparative analysis of the old and new training models for foreign language graduate students in the context of the new era. The analysis identified shared ideas and goals, aiming to explore bottlenecks and challenges faced in talent cultivation reforms for foreign language disciplines, providing reference paths for high-level talent cultivation reform in this field [1]. Wu et al. using Qingdao Agricultural University as an example, analyzed the reform of the graduate training model in veterinary medicine research and application under the backdrop of innovation and entrepreneurship. They examined reforms in teaching content, objectives, methods, ideological and political education, course assessment, research innovation, and innovation-driven entrepreneurial talent incubation systems [2]. Xiao et al. and Li et al., against the backdrop of the "Double First-Class" education construction, respectively analyzed the reform

paths for talent cultivation programs in cartography and geographic information systems and outstanding energy-related postgraduate studies. Their analyses emphasized considerations in curriculum design, teaching methods, and training models, aiming to provide high-level talents that adapt to the practical development needs from these three aspects [3-4].

However, there is currently limited research on the graduate training model in applied economics, with only four journal articles available. Among them, Xu and Zhao conducted research and analysis on the admission selection, course assessment, and thesis defense of doctoral candidates in applied economics. They found that the training model for applied economics doctoral students was gradually becoming stable and systematic [5]. Sun et al., focusing on Chongqing Technology and Business University, pointed out problems in China's graduate training model in applied economics, such as its singular nature, lack of innovative education, homogeneous teaching team structure, and insufficient collaboration between universities and industry-research partnerships. They proposed corresponding improvement measures based on these issues [6-7], using Chongqing Technology and Business University as a case study, analyzed the effectiveness of the "Six Five Engineering" applied economics talent cultivation model. They discovered that this model had successfully achieved a combined theoretical and practical teaching effect and used textbooks as a platform for improvement, resulting in substantial educational reform achievements [7]. Zhang et al. proposed a reform plan for the graduate training model in applied economics based on the "Five Coordinated Elements": training plan, curriculum model, faculty mechanism, practical base, and talent pool. This plan provided theoretical recommendations for the deepening reform of the graduate talent cultivation mechanism [8].

Currently, scholars have laid the foundation for the study of graduate training models, constructing corresponding research frameworks. However, there is room for improvement: (1) Research on the graduate training model in applied economics is scarce, and the higher education talent cultivation model under the "Three News" perspective is

still incomplete. (2) In terms of research content, existing case studies have highlighted the value of improving the graduate training model in applied economics. However, the chosen case study institutions are relatively limited, failing to achieve universally applicable conclusions. Additionally, there is a lack of research on the graduate training model in applied economics from the "Three News" perspective, necessitating updates in research content and perspectives.

2. Analysis of the Current Status of Graduate Training Models in Applied Economics

In recent years, the development of applied economics has garnered increasing attention and continuous optimization efforts. However, a series of issues have emerged, including traditional teaching methods, insufficient student innovation capabilities, and suboptimal outcomes in cutting-edge education.

2.1 Striving to Optimize the Training Mechanism, yet Retaining Traditional Teaching Methods

Applied economics, by definition, involves the application of economic principles to analyze, research, and explore economic activities and relations in various sectors of the national economy. It entails analyzing their development patterns and effects. While universities actively promote an applied talent cultivation philosophy in line with the principles of applied economics and its integration with local economic development, practical implementation of graduate training in applied economics has not yet fully broken away from traditional teaching methods. This has led to a mismatch between the skills of graduates and the demands of society. This issue is mainly manifested in two aspects:

(1) Excessive Theoretical Courses: The curriculum often consists of numerous theoretical courses in applied economics, broadening students' knowledge base. However, this approach tends to spread knowledge thin rather than deep, resulting in students lacking in-depth understanding and expertise.

(2) Insufficient Practical Training: Practical exercises and hands-on teaching methods are often allocated minimal emphasis in the curriculum. Consequently, students' practical

and real-world application skills are underdeveloped, leading to a disconnect between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Graduates of such a model lack distinctive professional characteristics and personal traits, possess an inadequate knowledge structure, lean towards theory over practice, and struggle with problem-solving capabilities, failing to meet the demands of the market economy's talent development needs.

2.2 Comprehensive Skill Development, yet Inadequate Cultivation of Innovation Abilities

Universities emphasize the comprehensive skill development of graduate students, and the existing training models encompass research abilities, learning capabilities, organizational skills, and coordination skills. Students generally perform well in these aspects. However, the cultivation of innovation capabilities falls short, evident in the following:

(1) Limited Independence in Topic Selection: Students often lack the initiative to explore independently when selecting research topics, a pivotal stage for fostering innovation. This deficiency in exploration and superficial contemplation hampers students' ability to innovate in their chosen topics.

(2) Lack of Innovation in Research Methods and Tools: Innovation in research approaches, methods, and tools is a determinant of academic innovation. However, innovation in research approaches is scant in the domestic sphere. This has led to a weak sense of innovation among applied economics graduate students, incomplete development of their innovation capabilities, and a tendency to accept readily available knowledge without cultivating novel academic viewpoints or producing substantial innovations.

2.3 Prioritizing Cutting-Edge Education, yet Achieving Subpar Results

Cutting-edge education aims to actively disseminate disciplinary forefront knowledge in teaching. Applied economics graduate students need to be well-versed in and insightful about the forefront issues of the discipline. Although educators consciously incorporate cutting-edge knowledge dissemination in teaching, the outcomes are not as remarkable as desired. This is primarily because:

(1) Insufficient Allocation of Cutting-Edge Concepts: The concept of integrating scientific frontiers into the graduate curriculum is still underrepresented. The current graduate curriculum and training process inadequately emphasize the popularization of cutting-edge scientific issues, leading to a deficiency in students' ability to track and grasp the latest developments in the field.

(2) Challenges in Facing Cutting-Edge Scientific Problems: Students sometimes exhibit apprehension when confronting cutting-edge scientific problems, owing to inadequate mastery of cutting-edge knowledge. In research, thought processes, methodologies, and other aspects, applied economics graduate students still lag behind, unable to present innovative perspectives or insights. This situation does not contribute to the enhancement of the quality of graduate training.

2.4 Strengthened Faculty Team, yet Decline in Student Education Quality

To achieve high-quality development in graduate education, universities must possess a high-caliber faculty team. A faculty of this caliber is a prerequisite for graduate education. Through the recruitment of various high-level talents, including Ph.D. holders and academicians, the teaching team has been continuously strengthened. However, there has been a decline in student quality, resulting in students who possess rich knowledge but lack wisdom, exhibit strong desires but lack corresponding abilities, hold advanced degrees but lack depth of understanding. This decline is evident in:

(1) Expansion of Enrollments: To alleviate employment pressures, universities have been expanding graduate admissions. As a consequence, the quality of incoming students has deteriorated. Students' ultimate study goal becomes mere passing, resulting in a lack of motivation.

(2) Weak Fundamentals: Students' inadequate grasp of fundamental knowledge makes them ill-equipped for market demands. Many graduates are unable to secure suitable jobs promptly. The decline in student quality is reflected in the scarcity of high-quality papers, inability to meet employment requirements, and other challenges, presenting a formidable problem in graduate education.

The current state of graduate training in applied economics reveals both areas of improvement and the need for alignment with the demands of the "Three News" development concept. Efforts to enhance teaching methods, foster innovation capabilities, optimize cutting-edge education, and improve student education quality are essential to address these challenges.

3. Analysis of the Causes of Issues in the Current Graduate Training Model in Applied Economics

3.1 Inadequate Implementation of Training Mechanisms

The persistence of a predominantly teaching-centered approach, stemming from the traditional teaching culture, can be attributed to the inadequate implementation of training mechanisms. This is manifested as follows:

(1) **Imbalance in Faculty Composition:** The quantity and quality of practical-oriented instructors have not been adjusted in a timely manner to meet the demands. Among graduate advisors, the number of academic research-oriented advisors significantly surpasses that of practical-oriented advisors, emphasizing theory over practice. Although applied economics stresses the need for a strong theoretical foundation, a combination of theory and practice is essential to cater to practical development and employment requirements.

(2) **Lack of Innovation in Teaching Methods:** Some educators still employ traditional teaching methods, rendering the content overly theoretical and outdated. The integration of content with cutting-edge concepts is not sufficiently tight, resulting in unsatisfactory teaching outcomes.

3.2 Excessive Quantification in Management and Assessment Mechanisms

Institutions' management and assessment models have overly quantified processes, contributing to the inadequacy in cultivating innovation capabilities among applied economics graduate students. This is evident through:

(1) **Quantitative Evaluation of Academic Research:** The emphasis on quantitative evaluations, such as the quantity of published papers, to assess the level of academic research does not consider the essential

prerequisite of innovation—accumulated academic experience. Applied economics, as a field of humanities and social sciences, requires long-term academic research and accumulation to generate innovative research outcomes in stages. This quantitative management approach, driven by "tool-based rationality," tends to prioritize quantity over quality, hampering students' focus on research, hindering academic accumulation, and inhibiting the comprehensive development of their innovation capabilities.

(2) **Research-Oriented Faculty Incentives:** Faculty members' recruitment, promotions, positions, mentor selections, awards, tenure assessments, project applications, and annual performance evaluations place excessive emphasis on research, quantifying these aspects. As a result, educators' motivation to engage in student training diminishes, leading to weaker innovation capabilities among students.

3.3 Scarcity of Cutting-Edge Educational Resources

Cutting-edge education relies on financial support. Limited access to funding, particularly in non-prominent universities, hampers the sharing of cutting-edge knowledge and achievements between educators and students. The primary reasons for the scarcity of cutting-edge educational resources are:

(1) **Financial Constraints:** Regional universities often face inadequate economic strength, resulting in insufficient research infrastructure and funding. Students struggle to participate in research due to a lack of adequate research conditions within schools.

(2) **Overextended Resources:** Recent expansion policies to alleviate employment pressures have led to an increase in applied economics graduate student enrollment [9]. The influx of students has strained available resources, making it challenging to meet the extensive research demands of these students. A lack of funds and inefficient resource allocation have consequently limited the cultivation of innovation capabilities among students, leading to a decline in the quality of talent development.

3.4 Excessive Graduate Student Enrollment

Current graduate student enrollment has

surged significantly, creating a chain reaction of increased application numbers, acceptances, and graduates. Between 2012 and 2022, over 800 graduate education institutions nationwide produced over 600,000 doctoral graduates and 6.5 million master's graduates for socioeconomic development. The surge in graduate student numbers stems from:

(1) **Employment Pressures:** Increasing employment pressures due to the pandemic and evolving job market conditions have prompted university students to pursue higher education to enhance their employability, broaden job options, and alleviate job-seeking stress.

(2) **Policy Changes in Graduate Entrance Examinations:** Since 2017, professional graduate programs have been included in the standardized entrance examination, prompting professionals to pursue graduate studies for career advancement opportunities. The growing demand for high-level talents in response to socioeconomic development, coupled with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, has led to an increase in graduate student enrollment. However, the resulting excess in graduate student numbers has affected the quality of education.

The cumulative impact of these factors has contributed to the shortcomings within the current graduate training model in applied economics. Addressing these causes is pivotal to rectifying the identified issues and elevating the quality of graduate education.

4. Construction of Applied Economics Training Model in the Context of the "Three New" Development Perspective

Exploring and implementing a training program that aligns with the characteristics and trends of the discipline and adheres to the laws of talent growth is crucial for cultivating top-tier innovative talents. In the era of "Three New," a model for training graduate students in applied economics should focus on consolidating theoretical foundations, fostering innovative spirit, enhancing practical skills, and broadening international perspectives.

4.1 Optimize Team Structure and Emphasize Practical Teaching

Insufficient implementation of the training mechanism ultimately results from a lack of practical-oriented instructors and outdated

teaching methodologies. To address this issue, under the "Three New" perspective, the applied economics training model should prioritize addressing the shortage of practical-oriented instructors and outdated teaching methods. Recommendations include:

(1) **Balancing talent introduction and cultivation,** attracting outstanding professionals through various channels, and providing comprehensive training for high-level talents. Creating spaces conducive to the growth of young full-time teachers, establishing pathways for their growth, and strengthening ties with enterprises and industries to expand students' practical and internship opportunities.

(2) **Balancing course relevance and progression,** aligning theoretical teaching and practical teaching with local economic and industrial development. Collaborating deeply with graduate student talent development in line with the dominant industries and emerging industries in local development, thus integrating theoretical and practical teaching.

4.2 Integrate Teaching Resources and Foster Innovative Concepts

Cross-disciplinary collaboration and integration of disciplines resonate with societal needs in the new era and represent a new trend in talent cultivation. Currently, universities and research institutions operate independently, hindering the creation of opportunities for complex talent cultivation. To offer more research opportunities for applied economics graduate students and broaden their career prospects, it is suggested to break down the barriers of traditional disciplines and institutions and establish cross-disciplinary or cross-institutional collaborative training models. Recommendations include:

(1) **Breaking down disciplinary barriers and integrating teaching resources.** This involves combining the frontiers of different disciplines to cultivate top-tier talents and creating cross-disciplinary research platforms. Integrating teaching and research resources across disciplines to leverage their complementary strengths.

(2) **Encouraging graduate students in applied economics to actively participate in various academic conferences and forums,** fostering academic exchange, expanding their research horizons, and broadening their research

perspectives [10].

4.3 Adjust Course Content to Keep Pace with Cutting-edge Trends

In the era of "Internet +," where knowledge rapidly evolves, the content of courses for applied economics graduate students needs timely adjustments and updates to keep pace with societal and international economic developments. To deepen the content's depth, recommendations include:

(1) Avoiding obsolescence in course content by staying at the forefront of academic developments. Teachers should incorporate current financial news, current events, and political situations into their teaching, guiding students to focus on the frontiers of their field and keeping abreast of new research findings and trends.

(2) Emphasizing research-oriented course content that reflects the latest ideas and trends in the economic field. Introducing policy regulations in fields like fiscal and finance, societal hot topics within the economic realm, and controversial issues in management and economics, thus promoting collision and understanding of academic viewpoints.

4.4 Establish an Evaluation System and Improve Assessment Mechanisms

The quality evaluation system is a key tool for measuring educational achievements in universities. It plays a significant role in supervising and motivating educational quality. Therefore, constructing a comprehensive evaluation system and establishing scientifically sound management and assessment mechanisms are essential. Recommendations include:

(1) Incorporating external societal evaluations into the evaluation of applied economics graduate students, involving academic groups, intermediary organizations, and relevant industry institutions in assessing and supervising graduate education quality.

(2) Developing a diverse evaluation system that combines the university's self-evaluation, societal evaluation, and the evaluation process to provide a comprehensive assessment framework. This ensures the positioning and implementation of graduate student innovative capacity development methods are reasonable.

5. Conclusion

In order to further enhance the competitiveness of talents, universities must focus on cultivating talents in various fields from the perspective of practical societal needs, individual student development, and alignment with job requirements. Each university should consider social conditions, institutional context, and the needs of the students in formulating specific regulations for graduate education, encompassing training philosophies, program types, and academic standards. Under the framework of the "Three News" perspective, reforming the training model for graduate students in applied economics should emphasize the renewal of educational concepts and the clarification of training objectives. This involves reforming the evaluation mechanisms to incentivize training initiatives, optimizing the structure of talent cultivation to promote effective employment, expanding international exchanges to enhance the global quality of education. By embracing the integrated approach of the "Five-in-One" principle, a comprehensive and high-quality system for graduate student training can be established.

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