

Progressiveness and Collaboration: Cultivation Mode of Undergraduate Talent in Economics and Management

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Abstract

Economics and management majors have their own characteristics, and how to carry out distinctive undergraduate talent cultivation in economics and management based on these characteristics is one of the many challenges faced by university administrators and teachers. This article as a conceptual proposal analyzes the problems in the cultivation of undergraduate talents in economics and management from the perspectives of student needs and talent cultivation. On this basis, a step-by-step and collaborative undergraduate talent training mode for economics and management has been constructed. This mode includes: an educational system based on the integration of ideal beliefs and humanistic literacy, the progression of basic theories towards individual skills, and the coordination of basic courses both on and off campus; A system of cultivating humanistic literacy and professional ethics, advancing individual skills towards comprehensive abilities, and coordinating professional courses and projects both on and off campus; A professional ethics system that promotes dedication and comprehensive ability to practice, as well as a collaborative training and internship system both on and off campus; The execution system of comprehensive education and the feedback system of dynamic adjustment. The mode presented from extensive research can provide some reference for talent training in economics and management in regular colleges and universities.

Keywords

Progressiveness, Collaboration, Economics and Management Majors, Talent Cultivation Mode

1. Introduction

After decades of development, China's higher education has achieved brilliant

achievements, but it also faces many urgent problems that need to be solved. Deepening the reform of higher education and cultivating high-quality innovative talents is a major and urgent strategic task for universities (Xia et al., 2024). The five development concepts of innovation, coordination, green, openness, and sharing proposed by China are the new development concepts of China in the new era. Starting from the problem, innovating the talent training mode in universities is the specific implementation of the five development concepts in the field of higher education (Tang, 2016). It is particularly urgent to identify the current problems in talent cultivation from the perspectives of student demand and talent cultivation supply, based on the five development concepts and the characteristics of economics and management majors, and further innovate the talent cultivation mode of undergraduate economics and management majors.

2. Problems Analysis

The problems in the cultivation of undergraduate talents in economics and management can be analyzed from two perspectives: student learning and the talent cultivation mode of universities. The problems in student learning reflect the demand side of educational services, while the talent cultivation mode reflects the supply side of educational services.

2.1. Problems in Student Learning: Analysis from the Demand Side

From the perspective of students' learning demand, there are many factors that affect their academic performance, such as their family, social environment, network, and other external factors. But for newly enrolled undergraduate students majoring in economics and management, their psychological factors, study habits, and other internal factors may be the most critical among them. Insufficient psychological preparation may lead to insufficient emphasis or lack of interest in learning among students. The inherent study habits in high school may lead to students' learning styles that are not suitable for the study of various courses in university.

■ *Insufficient psychological preparation*

There are significant differences between economics and management majors and other categories of majors, and their most distinctive characteristics are as follows: firstly, compared with other professional categories, the courses in economics and management majors are significantly different from those in high school. They are not a continuation of the history of mathematics, physics, chemistry, and foreign languages in high school, and are almost unfamiliar to students as new courses; Secondly, the curriculum system and content of economics and management majors highlight the characteristics of "science in humanities, humanities in science, and compatibility between humanities and science". The outstanding characteristics of economics and management majors pose a great challenge to both first-time college students and students throughout the entire learning process, and many students are not fully mentally prepared for this.

Through extensive research such as questionnaire surveys and graduate symposiums, it has been found that student engagement and learning orientations present a proposed developmental pattern as follows. In the first or second semester of college, students continue to maintain the inertia of high school learning and attach great importance to curriculum learning. In the first or second semester of their sophomore year, students tend to think that the university curriculum is simple, and at this point, they tend to focus only on the arts but not on sciences. In the first or second semester of their third year of college, students have already shown a lack of emphasis or disdain. In the first or second semester of their fourth year of college, students feel that it is too late to study hard. As a result, the students' thinking that is compatible with both arts and sciences has not received the training they deserve.

Due to insufficient psychological preparation, students have shown a decreasing trend in their enthusiasm for learning courses in the field of management over time. Moreover, the interest in learning is not strong, and the enthusiasm for exploring unknown fields is not reflected. The learning efficiency of students is also not high, and the degree of integration between arts and sciences is not enough in the learning process. They have not been able to express things in words using mathematical reasoning, while those in mathematical reasoning can be expressed in words.

■ *Inappropriate learning style*

Behavioral learning theory emphasizes the connection of stimulus-response (S-R) in learning, which suggests that learners can predict or control their responses based on the provided stimuli. The goal of teaching is to help students form the connections of S-R, develop corresponding behavioral habits and skills (Banihashem & Macfadyen, 2021). In high school, students have clear learning goals, which are to be admitted to universities or good universities. The task of students is to continuously learn theoretical knowledge, constantly grind out questions, and not need to consider the practical application of knowledge more. At this stage, students form a good S-R connection.

But in college, due to the significant differences in the learning methods of courses between economics and management majors and other professional categories compared to high school, it is usually not the way teachers teach and students practice repeatedly, which makes students very uncomfortable and makes it difficult to establish a S-R connection. In addition, many courses in economics and management require complex social background knowledge, and students majoring in economics and management have difficulty or lack profound understanding due to their lack of social experience. Constructivist learning theory holds that the construction of knowledge is not only the processing of external information, but also implies a bidirectional and repetitive interaction between external information and existing knowledge. This theory divides learning into two stages: the primary learning stage and the advanced learning stage. In the primary learning stage, students mainly acquire some important concepts and facts.

In the advanced learning stage, students are required to grasp the complexity of concepts and flexibly apply them to specific situations (Watanabe, 2024; Bernstein, 2023; Li, 2024). The study of management courses belongs to the advanced stage of learning, so students may not adapt.

2.2. The Problems in Talent Cultivating Mode: Analysis from Supply Side

In order to cultivate students into well-rounded talents, universities will integrate various resources and provide educational services to students through a certain talent cultivation model. This model may have three drawbacks. Firstly, universities may place too much emphasis on professional abilities and overlook other qualities, such as the cultivation of students' ideals, beliefs, and humanistic literacy. Especially in the integration of ideal beliefs (IB), humanistic literacy (HL), and professional theories, it is still not enough. Secondly, there is a lack of clear characteristics and convergence in the cultivation of undergraduate talents in the field of economics and management at different universities. Thirdly, there is still a problem of insufficient synergy in the utilization of various teaching resources.

- *Insufficient integration*

The integration of IB, HL, and professional theory not only helps students form a sense of business ethics, improve their thinking and judgment abilities, and integrate professional knowledge, but also helps students form a confident, self-strengthening, graceful, and elegant temperament. The training program for talents in the field of economics and management in universities usually consists of several major sections, including general education courses, subject basic courses, professional basic courses, and professional elective courses. These sections include courses on IB and HL, as well as courses on professional theory. They comprehensively consider the needs of cultivating students' qualities and abilities, and seem quite complete. However, the cultivation plan has not been well resolved on how to integrate IB and HL into professional theory, as well as how to integrate professional theory into IB and HL. This means that each course section has not formed an organic whole well. In fact, these sections can be organically integrated without changing their structure.

Taking moral education that shapes IB as an example, relevant research suggests that there is an ecological crisis in moral education in universities. However, insufficient efforts have been made in terms of humanistic moral education concepts, collaborative moral education processes, artistic moral education methods, three-dimensional moral education evaluations, and lifelike moral education fields (Long et al., 2017). On the contrary, in terms of moral education research and practice, European and American moral education theory research is unprecedentedly active, forming various distinctive moral education theory schools, effectively guiding moral education practice (Shi, 2018; Swennen, 2022). There are not many courses offered to cultivate Confucian cultural spirit based on the advantages of traditional Chinese culture, and majors in economics and manage-

ment tend to focus more on cultivating employability, lacking truly effective traditional cultural influence (Ma, 2019). The cultural effect of higher education has not yet been fully demonstrated, and the establishment of cultural consciousness in higher education and the enhancement of national cultural soft power still need to be strengthened (Pu, 2018).

How to find a balance between humanities education and professional education, continuously improve the learning enthusiasm of undergraduate students in economics and management majors, achieve an interest based organic chain connection of “IB, HL, professional ethics (PE), basic theories, and comprehensive abilities”, and form an organic integration of IB, HL, and professional abilities is very important for the cultivation of undergraduate talents in economics and management majors.

- *Convergence phenomenon*

There is a convergence phenomenon in the cultivation of undergraduate talents in economics and management among different universities in China. After decades of development, higher education in China has evolved from elite education to mass education. In the elite education stage, although the similarity in talent cultivation models among universities is relatively high, due to the small enrollment scale, good quality of student sources, and the fact that universities also carry out customized talent cultivation to a certain extent, the drawbacks brought by the convergence of talent cultivation models are not obvious. However, in the stage of mass education, due to the expansion of enrollment scale in various universities, customized education faces constraints of insufficient resources, and the inertia in talent cultivation makes universities accustomed to simply continuing the effective talent cultivation model of the past. The direct disadvantage of this convergent talent cultivation model is that the personalized learning needs of students cannot be met, their learning interest decreases over time, their learning enthusiasm is not high, and the quality of talent cultivation cannot be effectively guaranteed.

The convergence of talent cultivation is reflected in the small differences in talent cultivation models among universities with different types of education, levels, development processes, resources, etc. There is a convergence in the content and methods of talent cultivation, especially in the curriculum design, which overly emphasizes the theoretical breadth and depth of the curriculum, lacks connection with practice, and lacks practical skills training (Weng et al., 2019). The development of inquiry based, research based, and project-based teaching modes is not common, and the proportion of rote and rote teaching modes is still relatively large. The innovation of teaching modes is a long and arduous task.

Fundamentally speaking, there is a deviation in the positioning of talent cultivation goals. Tool people have become the training goals of modern universities, and the individual needs of learners have not been given enough attention. The training goals of different universities tend to be consistent (Ciftci & Karadag, 2024; Huang & Zhang, 2022; Sigahi et al., 2023). Teacher centeredness is still the

mainstream mode of teaching in current universities (Murphy et al., 2021). The reform and innovation of talent cultivation models are still weak links in the development of higher education. With the advancement of the popularization process of higher education in China, the main contradiction of higher education has transformed, and the problem of education quality has become prominent (Bettonson et al., 2024; Krooi et al., 2024; Yu & Tang, 2024; Zhu et al., 2023). In recent years, the contradiction between the demand and supply of talents in the field of economics and management has become increasingly apparent, and employment has shown a structural imbalance. Talents trained by universities cannot adapt well to the needs of society and the market (Zuo et al., 2020).

- *Insufficient collaboration*

In the cultivation of undergraduate talents in economics and management, the degree of synergy in the application of teaching resources in universities is still insufficient. Some universities only engage in “school enterprise” cooperation, with a single cooperation model, insufficient cooperation content, and insufficient depth of cooperation, resulting in a significant gap between the graduates they cultivate and the actual job demands (Zhou et al., 2020). There is still a lot of room for improvement in cross disciplinary talent cultivation, curriculum design standards, and comprehensive intra and off campus collaboration in the field of economics and management (Cheng et al., 2019; Duque, 2014; Gartner, 2001; Giantari et al., 2022; Mang & Brown, 2013; Sarmiento Espinel et al., 2015). There has been no introduction of more available resources in talent cultivation, such as the lack of a more diverse collaborative education system for undergraduate talents in economics and management, such as universities, enterprises, and government. Not combining and coordinating the advantages of different scenarios, teams, management, and subcultures in various resources, in order to find a balance point and achieve complementary advantages (Lin, 2022). The degree of cooperation and collaboration in the formulation of training programs, curriculum development and textbook writing, construction of experimental and practical training venues, and sharing of teaching resources is insufficient. Cooperation has not been able to transform from low-level to high-level, from single cooperation to systematic cooperation, and from loose cooperation to close cooperation (Lin et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2019). Rich cooperation and collaboration have not been used as a powerful means to continuously improve students’ learning enthusiasm.

The humanistic learning theory believes that making full use of teaching resources to create a good environment for learners to perceive the world from their own perspective is an effective way to improve learning effectiveness. In terms of teaching implementation, it is necessary to provide both practical and relevant issues and environments related to the course being studied (Al Okla et al., 2023). Based on the analysis of humanistic learning theory, it is found that the current undergraduate talent cultivation model in the field of economics and management is not conducive to creating a realistic environment for students. The learning environment is more limited to the environment on campus and has not been well

utilized, or there is no rich and diverse collaborative education with the environment off campus. The comprehensive development of students is a common educational philosophy in both primary and higher education in China. At the micro level, this concept is manifested as promoting the comprehensive development of moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetics and labor education for every student (Furlong et al., 2003; van den Hoven, 2019; Li & Liu, 2024). When implementing the concept of comprehensive development, universities tend to prioritize knowledge theory over practical application, and the collaborative training of talents with various practical departments is still in a loose stage. As a result, the talent training model is not fully compatible with the demand for talent specifications in economic construction and social development (Villar-Aguilés & Muñoz-Rodríguez, 2024; Lee & Lee, 2024; Schuetze, 2024; Pan et al., 2020; Collins-Nelsen et al., 2024; Şahin et al., 2024).

3. Mode Construction and Target Detection

Behavioral learning theory believes that it is possible to predict or control learners' responses based on the stimuli provided, so a progressive talent training mode that connects each stage can be used, which will help students form stimulus-response connections (Nuha & Fithriyah, 2025; Luo, 2024). Constructivist learning theory holds that the construction of knowledge requires a bidirectional and iterative interaction between external information and existing knowledge (Jonassen & Rohrer-Murphy, 1999); therefore, the establishment of talent cultivation mode requires bidirectional iteration to form a closed loop. Humanistic learning theory believes that a good environment helps learners perceive the world, so collaboration on and off-campus experiences can provide diverse learning environments and improve learning outcomes (Underhill, 1989; Salim et al., 2025).

Based on this, to solve the problems in the learning and talent cultivation mode of undergraduate talents in economics and management mentioned earlier, it is necessary to start from the needs of students, construct a new undergraduate talent cultivation model in economics and management based on behavioral, constructivist, and humanistic learning theories, and at the same time propose a new objective evaluation system based on the newly constructed talent cultivation mode.

3.1. Progressive and Collaborative Mode

Based on the analysis of the main problems in the cultivation of undergraduate talents in the field of economics and management in universities, and according to the ideas provided by Lin et al. (2015), this article constructs a talent cultivation model for undergraduate talents in the field of economics and management that combines stepwise progression and internal and external collaboration (as shown in Figure 1), which involves the following four aspects.

- The first progressive and collaboration

The first progressive and collaboration is an educational system that integrates

IB and HL, progresses from basic theories to individual skills, and collaborates with basic courses both on and off campus. This system focuses on internalizing the cultivation of moral character and talent in all aspects and links of undergraduate talent cultivation in the field of economics and management. In the first, second, and third semesters, based on the characteristics of talent cultivation and professional ability requirements in the field of economics and management, scientifically and reasonably design ideological and political education content, and integrate ideological and political education in aspects and links such as classroom teaching, practical teaching, and the second classroom. Special emphasis is placed on the education of IB, organically integrating IB with HL, achieving the goal of leading by example, educating and educating students, and improving their ideological level, political consciousness, moral quality, and cultural literacy. The key to collaborative education is to break through the barriers between culture and fields, eliminate information asymmetry among collaborative stakeholders, build an effective collaborative communication platform, formulate detailed work tasks and goals for collaborative units, and collaborate to develop talent training plans, content, and forms. Professional education alternates between off campus enterprise cognitive training, on campus public and vocational basic course learning, and on campus course experiments to cultivate students' basic professional skills and achieve progression from basic theory to individual professional skills.

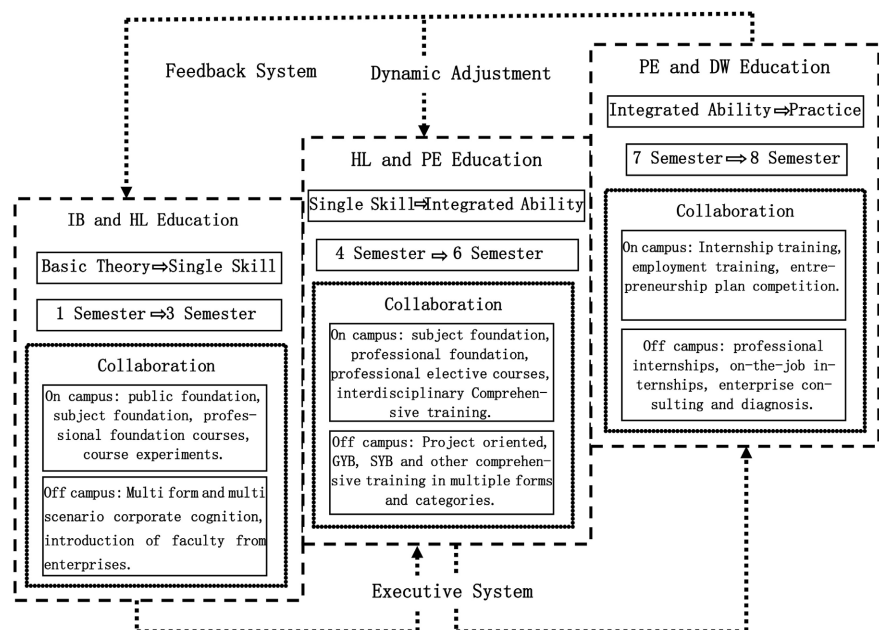


Figure 1. Framework for cultivating undergraduate talents.

The system is mainly implemented by the student management team, the public course teachers' team, and the basic course teachers' team. Its primary tasks include the formulation of the courses required by the system, the determination of student assessment indicators, the establishment of grading standards, and the implementation of assessments. The basic course teachers' team is the responsible

unit.

- *The second progressive and collaboration*

The second progressive and collaboration is an educational system that cultivates HL and PE, progresses from individual skills to comprehensive abilities, and collaborates with professional courses and projects both on and off campus. This system is based on the cultivation of PE through HL, promoting students to think critically about complex theoretical and practical problems, cultivating ethical awareness, and enhancing their sense of social responsibility. In the 4th, 5th, and 6th semesters, we will strengthen the progression of professional skills towards comprehensive abilities. The focus of collaborative education is on the sharing of theoretical knowledge, teaching skills, and practical knowledge between on campus teachers and off campus collaborative unit teachers. Off campus collaborative unit employees receive theoretical training from on campus teachers to supplement their theoretical knowledge, providing more competent human resources for off campus collaborative units. On campus teachers collaborate with off campus teachers to understand more industry development trends and cutting-edge information, collect materials, conduct case studies and problem discovery, and improve teaching and research levels. In terms of professional education, the focus is on guiding students to learn their majors, through alternating core courses within the school, cross disciplinary comprehensive experiments within the school, project-based special practices outside the school, GYB (Generate Your Business) and SYB (Start Your Business) training, etc., to enhance students' individual skills and cultivate their comprehensive abilities.

This system is mainly implemented by the team of public course teachers, the team of professional course teachers, and the team of professional course practice teachers. Its main tasks are the development of the courses required by the system and their connection with the previous system, the determination of student assessment indicators, the formulation of grading standards, and the implementation of assessments. The team of professional course teachers is the responsible unit.

- *The third progressive and collaboration*

The third progressive and collaboration is an educational system of PE promoting devotion to work (DW), comprehensive ability advancing towards practical ability and collaborative training and internships both on and off campus. This system is based on PE and focuses on employment and professional education, strengthening the progression of comprehensive abilities to practical abilities. It will be launched in the 7th and 8th semesters. The most important thing is to solve employment problems, provide employment and career education, and provide employment guidance and career planning guidance for students. Simultaneously carry out education on respecting teachers, loving schools, and being grateful, so that students can establish a mindset of hard work and DW. The key to collaborative education is for on campus teachers and off campus industry experts to jointly guide student work and professional practice, set up special job fairs for off

campus collaborative units, and provide consultation and diagnosis for the organizational development, transformation and upgrading of off campus collaborative units. Professional education carries out on campus internships and employment training, entrepreneurship planning competitions, and off campus professional internships and on-the-job internships. Maximize the improvement of students' practical abilities, cultivate their comprehensive professional abilities and qualities, and help them progress from prospective employees to formal employees.

The system is mainly implemented by the team of specialized course teachers, the team of professional practice course teachers, and the team of teachers from off-campus practice bases. Its main tasks include the formulation of courses required by the system, especially the formulation of comprehensive practice courses and their connection with the previous system, the determination of student assessment indicators, the establishment of scoring standards, and the implementation of assessments. The professional course practice teacher team and the off-campus practice base teachers are jointly responsible.

- *Execution and feedback system*

This system fully considers the connection mechanism between the first three systems and constructs a more optimized three comprehensive education execution system, which includes all staff education, full process education, and all-round education. At the same time, a feedback system for talent cultivation mode is constructed based on changes in student interests, advances in science and technology, and dynamic adjustments are made to the talent cultivation mode.

The system is jointly implemented by the student management team, the public course teacher team, the basic course teacher team, the professional practice course teacher team, the off-campus practice base teacher team, and the college leadership. Its main task is to establish a coordination mechanism for the first three systems' execution and to revise or change courses, collaborate on activities, or provide targeted student support. The system is managed by a group composed of college leaders and leaders from off-campus practice bases.

3.2. Target Detection

Based on the aforementioned talent cultivation model, the target detection of talent cultivation will include three aspects: process detection, stage detection, and final detection. Process testing will be based on the courses involved in the entire talent development program, including IB modules, HL modules, PE, professional theory modules, and professional skills modules. The assessment of each course consists of regular quizzes, mid-term and final exams. The quizzes and exams can be conducted through speeches, group discussions, analysis report writing, field research, written exams, etc. The content of the quizzes and exams integrates IB, HL, PE, professional theories, and professional skills.

The phased testing is carried out in three stages: the integration of IB and HL, the progression of basic theories to individual skills, and the coordination of on campus and off campus basic courses; the cultivation of HL and PE, the progres-

sion of individual skills to comprehensive abilities, and the coordination of on campus and off campus professional courses and projects; and the promotion of PE to love and dedication to work, the progression of comprehensive abilities to practical abilities, and the coordination of on campus and off campus training and internships. Each stage has its own focus, and its core idea is progression and integration. The final testing is mainly conducted through graduation internships, graduation theses, entrepreneurship plan competitions, and other methods. The results of target detection in three aspects will be input into the feedback system for talent cultivation, dynamically optimizing the undergraduate talent cultivation mode for economics and management.

4. Conclusion and Discussion

This article aims to address the problems in the cultivation of undergraduate talents in economics and management in universities. Guided by the educational concept of comprehensive student development, and with the goal of continuously enhancing the learning interest of undergraduate students in economics and management, combined with the practice of undergraduate talent cultivation in economics and management, a “step-by-step progressive, internal and external collaborative” model for undergraduate talent cultivation in economics and management is constructed. This model gradually increases the intensity of learning stimulation in stages, creates a collaborative learning environment both inside and outside the school, and meets the personalized, diverse, and dynamic learning needs of students, thereby improving the quality of undergraduate talent cultivation in economics and management.

What are the goals of talent cultivation in universities? Is it to guide students to become “instrumental” talents or “rational” people? The debate between “instrumentality” and “rationality” has led to the loss of talent cultivation goals (Geertshuis et al., 2024; Gill, 2018; Djiraro Mangué & Gonondo, 2021). In fact, adulthood and success are not contradictory in themselves. The core essence of talent cultivation lies in finding a balance between “instrumentality” and “rationality”. The undergraduate talent cultivation model proposed in this article takes improving students’ quality as the starting point, and achieves a balance between “instrumentality” and “rationality” in talent cultivation by organically integrating IB, HL, and economic and management professional theories.

The unique undergraduate talent cultivation model is not only the direction of the reform of talent cultivation models in universities, but also the source of their competitive advantages. In the reform of the training mode for economic and management talents, universities should set training goals based on their own advantages, educational level, and student quality, in line with national strategies and local economic and social development, break through the thinking inertia of traditional undergraduate education, and creatively construct an undergraduate talent training mode. This article constructs a stepped and progressive undergraduate talent training model for economics and management from the perspective

of continuously improving students' learning enthusiasm. It not only provides ideas for universities to solve the problem of convergence in training models, but also provides a path reference for universities to gain competitive advantages in talent training.

In the cultivation of undergraduate talents in economics and management, it is often observed that "indoctrination education" is more important than "learning and research-oriented education", and "content oriented and passive education" is more important than "project oriented and proactive education" or "ability oriented and research-oriented education". The core reason for this is the single utilization of resources and insufficient collaboration in talent cultivation. The talent cultivation model constructed in this article can effectively solve the problems of single resource utilization and insufficient collaboration in talent cultivation by expanding the "school enterprise" cooperation model and adopting deep collaboration between internal and external "university and enterprise and governance". At the same time, it helps to form a long-term mechanism for cooperation and collaboration.

In the cultivation of undergraduate talents, the execution of the teaching process and feedback on teaching quality are crucial. Whether the organization of teachers' classroom teaching is strong and the teaching order is orderly; Whether a newly added experimental practice project, a newly added course for teaching reform, etc. have effectively improved students' abilities and achieved the expected goals; Whether the interconnection of various teaching links is smooth, and whether the allocation and utilization of teaching resources are reasonable; Has the new talent cultivation model been effectively implemented; These issues require strong execution and timely feedback. The closed-loop execution and feedback system constructed in this article, which is characterized by a step-by-step progression and collaboration within and outside the school, is a good management tool for solving the problems of execution and feedback in talent cultivation.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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