

Construction of the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Talent Training System in Higher Vocational Institutions

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ABSTRACT

The construction of an innovation and entrepreneurship talent training system in higher vocational institutions is an important measure to cope with the current economic transformation, and promote technological innovation and industrial upgrading, and is also a key path to promote the deep integration of vocational education with the economy and enhance students' employability. Under this background, higher vocational institutions are required to strengthen the practicality and forward-looking nature of innovative and entrepreneurial education, and integrate the cultivation of innovative spirit and entrepreneurial ability with professional courses. However, the current research and practice show that some higher vocational institutions face problems such as imperfect curriculum systems, insufficiently close school-enterprise cooperation, and inadequate practical platforms when conducting innovative and entrepreneurial education. Therefore, higher vocational institutions can start from improving the curriculum system, deepening school-enterprise cooperation, and strengthening a comprehensive guarantee mechanism, to gradually build an all-round innovation and entrepreneurship talent training system covering knowledge, ability and quality.

KEYWORDS

Higher vocational institutions; Innovation and entrepreneurship; Talent training; System establishment

1 Introduction

Promoting mass entrepreneurship and innovation is an important support for in-depth implementation of the innovation-driven development strategy and a crucial way to further advance supply-side structural reform. The "Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035" states that it is necessary to implement "the employment-first strategy" and "establish mechanisms to promote employment driven by entrepreneurship and flexible employment through multiple channels". Promoting "mass entrepreneurship and innovation" requires the fundamental support of a modern vocational education system^[1]. As an important part of vocational education, higher vocational institutions bear the responsibility of cultivating high-quality skilled talents. For higher vocational institutions, constructing an innovation and entrepreneurship talent training system that meets the requirements of the new era is an urgent need to enhance students' comprehensive quality and a key link in promoting the implementation of the national innovation-driven development strategy. Based on this, this paper will start from the necessity of constructing an innovation and entrepreneurship talent training system in higher vocational institutions, and deeply analyze the current problems faced by higher vocational institutions in carrying out innovation and entrepreneurship education and how to build an innovation and entrepreneurship talent training system, in order to cultivate more high-quality interdisciplinary talents with innovative spirit through the construction of a scientific education system, and inject more vitality and impetus into social development.

2 The Necessity of Constructing an Innovation and Entrepreneurship Talent Training System in Higher Vocational Institutions

2.1 Meet the Requirements of the Times of Industrial Transformation and Regional Development

In the current context of rapid changes in the global industrial pattern, especially with the emergence of new technologies, new business forms and new industries, the demand for talents in traditional industries and emerging industries is becoming increasingly diversified and sophisticated. As the main position for training technical and skilled talents, higher vocational institutions must adapt to the demands of industrial transformation and improve the quality of talent cultivation. The previous single-skilled talent training model in higher vocational institutions has been unable to meet the current market's demand for interdisciplinary talents, and especially the actual needs of regional economy and industry development. There is often a significant mismatch between these needs and the single-skilled students cultivated by higher vocational institutions. Building an innovation and entrepreneurship talent training system is precisely the crucial measure to address this contradiction. By introducing innovative thinking and entrepreneurial spirit

into professional education to cultivate students' practical abilities, higher vocational institutions can effectively align students' abilities with market demands. They can also provide a steady stream of talent support for the transformation and upgrading of regional economies by integrating local industrial resources and innovation capabilities, so as to enable students to better integrate into future industrial development. In addition, the differences in regional economic development and the diversity of industrial structures also require higher vocational institutions to strengthen flexibility in talent cultivation. Therefore, the innovation and entrepreneurship education of higher vocational institutions should not only closely consider local industrial characteristics, but also flexibly cope with the shortage of talents and structural contradictions during the process of industrial upgrading.

2.2 The Key Path to Achieving Sustainable and High-Quality Employment for Students

The employment environment in modern society is becoming increasingly complex. Especially under the circumstances of rapid economic restructuring and profound changes in occupational forms, students' employment concepts also need to undergo transformation. With the social development, especially in the context of innovation-driven development, simple employment has gradually failed to meet the needs of students for the realization of their own value, and students now need to possess the ability to create "job opportunities". Specifically, students should be able to establish new careers and assume new social roles in the new economic situation. Therefore, the training objectives of higher vocational institutions cannot merely focus on students' employment rates, but pay attention to the quality of students' career development and long-term career planning. At this point, the construction of an innovation and entrepreneurship education system in higher vocational institutions can help students shift from "finding jobs" to "creating job opportunities"^[2]. Supported by this system, students can acquire some necessary knowledge and skills for entrepreneurship, and develop their soft skills such as critical thinking, teamwork ability, innovation consciousness and social responsibility. At the same time, during this process, students can also cultivate some abilities such as identifying market opportunities, undertaking entrepreneurial risks, and integrating resources. In the future, whether students start their own businesses or seek employment, applying these skills in various workplace environments will help stimulate their innovative potential in traditional positions, and ultimately greatly increase the possibility of achieving job innovation or intrapreneurship, thus promoting the further development of enterprises and industries.

2.3 The Core Engine for Promoting the Connotative Development and Characteristic Breakthrough of Higher Vocational Institutions

The establishment of an innovative and entrepreneurial talent training system is of great significance for the development and transformation of higher vocational institutions. According to the survey data of the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, as of June 20, 2024, there are 1560 higher vocational colleges in China, and a large number of these institutions are confront with intense competition. If higher vocational colleges want to establish their own characteristics and brands in the fierce education market, they should build a systematic innovative and entrepreneurial education system. This system can not only enhance students' innovative and entrepreneurial abilities, but also promote comprehensive reforms in curriculum setting, teaching methods, faculty quality, and research projects of the institutions, thereby promoting the institutions' connotative development, establishing a distinctive educational brand, and laying a solid foundation for the institutions' future development.

3 Current Issues in Innovation and Entrepreneurship Education in Higher Vocational Colleges

3.1 The Disconnect between Educational Concepts and Practices, and The conflict between the "Elitist" Tendency and the Inclusive Goal

In many higher vocational institutions, the implementation of innovation and entrepreneurship education is influenced by the "elitist" tendency, with educational resources and attention concentrated on a few student teams that already have certain project foundations or potential for competitions. This approach that prioritizes competitions and awards leads to a serious disconnection between the innovation and entrepreneurship education process and the actual needs of most students. When innovation and entrepreneurship education in higher vocational institutions is limited to a small number of students, it will cause most students to become onlookers and fail to gain practical inspiration and growth. The existing "competition-driven" trend will cause the objectives of innovation and entrepreneurship education in higher vocational colleges to be not inclusive, focusing only on the display of results while neglecting the cultivation during the process. This situation not only deviates from the core goal of innovation and entrepreneurship education, but also deprives students of the opportunity to cultivate their innovation abilities^[3]. Additionally, some higher vocational

institutions have a limited understanding of innovation and entrepreneurship education. Many institutions still regard innovation and entrepreneurship education as an additional course, with an overemphasis on enabling students to obtain visible results (such as competition awards) in a short term. Such an educational concept of “prioritizing competitions over popularization” leads to a significant reduction in the effectiveness of innovation and entrepreneurship education, and severely restricts the cultivation of students’ specific innovative spirit and practical abilities.

3.2 Insufficient Integration of Curriculum Systems with Professional Teaching, and Unstable Support

In many higher vocational colleges, innovation and entrepreneurship education has not been effectively integrated with professional course teaching, and the current curriculum system mostly presents a fragmented state. Innovation and entrepreneurship education often exists as an independent module, which is neither closely combined with professional courses nor truly becoming a part of students’ occupational quality education. Specifically, the innovation and entrepreneurship courses in higher vocational colleges are usually offered as isolated public elective courses or in the form of lectures and training sessions. Such curriculum arrangements and designs lack integration with specific professional skills, industry development, and job innovation, and cannot meet students’ needs for innovative thinking and entrepreneurial abilities in practical work. Even though some institutions have begun to attempt to integrate innovation and entrepreneurship content into professional courses, most of these efforts remain superficial and lack systematic arrangements and practical support. Meanwhile, the teaching methods are also relatively monotonous, resulting in students rarely acquiring the comprehensive abilities required for innovation and entrepreneurship in their professional studies.

3.3 An Unformed Closed-loop Support System for Innovation and Entrepreneurship Education

At present, the construction in some aspects is obviously lagging behind in many higher vocational institutions, and these institutions are unable to provide students with a comprehensive environment for innovation and entrepreneurship education. Specifically, the teachers engaged in innovation and entrepreneurship education in some institutions lack genuine entrepreneurial experience and industry practice, and their knowledge structures and practical experience are disconnected from the industry operations, making it impossible for them to effectively impart the practical skills and thinking methods required for innovation and entrepreneurship. In particular, there are a lack of “dual-qualified” teachers, which further limits the improvement of teaching quality. In addition, there are many problems in the construction and operation of practical platforms. Although many higher vocational institutions have established incubators, maker spaces and other hardware facilities, the operation and management of these platforms are not mature, without sufficient practical resources and service support. Most platforms have a low utilization rate, so that they fail to truly play their due roles and provide students with opportunities to directly connect with enterprises and the market. Moreover, innovation and entrepreneurship education in many institutions places more emphasis on hardware construction, while insufficient attention is paid to the deepening of the actual functions and services of the platforms, resulting in some valuable entrepreneurial resources not being transformed into effective educational support. Furthermore, the linkage between the institutions and external resources such as government, enterprises, industries, and investment institutions is also poor, and there is a lack of in-depth collaboration and cooperation mechanisms between the innovation and entrepreneurship education system in institutions and external innovation resources. This results in inadequate financial support, industry experience, and market information for the innovation and entrepreneurship education in institutions, thereby limiting the effectiveness of the education^[4].

4 Construction Paths for the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Talent Training System in Higher Vocational Institutions

4.1 Reconstruct the Curriculum System to Solidify the Knowledge Foundation of Innovation and Entrepreneurship Talents

Higher vocational institutions can attempt to establish a curriculum system that combines “professional education, entrepreneurship and innovation general education, and interdisciplinary practice”. They should develop modular and project-based course resources, break the singularity of the original courses, incorporate cutting-edge industry technologies and innovative methodologies into professional courses, and integrate “innovation and entrepreneurship general education” courses while retaining the basic professional courses, in order to cultivate students’ business awareness, entrepreneurial spirit, and innovative thinking. At the same time, institutions should introduce

interdisciplinary practice modules to enable students to encounter and solve complex problems from different industries and fields, and cultivate their comprehensive problem-solving abilities. Moreover, higher vocational institutions can implement an integrated teaching model of “courses+certificates+ competitions” to encourage students to participate in various innovation and entrepreneurship competitions, and combine practical learning with certificate certification.

4.2 Build a Hierarchical and Progressive Practice Platform to Connect the Full-chain Ability Development

Innovation and entrepreneurship education needs to combine theory with practice through various practical platforms. In this regard, higher vocational institutions can establish a hierarchical and progressive practical teaching carrier of “basic training+specialized incubation+market practice”, which runs through the entire process from idea generation to project incubation for students, helping students systematically enhance their practical abilities^[5]. In the basic training stage, institutions can build interdisciplinary innovation workshops and virtual simulation laboratories to help students master basic innovation and entrepreneurship skills, and cultivate initial practical abilities and teamwork spirit. Then, in the specialized incubation stage, institutions can collaborate with enterprises, governments and other partners to establish innovation platforms such as industrial colleges, maker spaces and accelerators to provide students with authentic project incubation and entrepreneurial opportunities. Simultaneously, in this stage, students can enhance their project management and marketing promotion abilities by participating in entrepreneurship competitions and simulated roadshows organized by higher vocational institutions. After entering the market practice stage, institutions can encourage students to actively cooperate with enterprises in depth, and invite industry experts and entrepreneurs to participate in project evaluation and guidance to help students verify their entrepreneurial ideas in the real market environment and continuously adjust and improve their entrepreneurial plans through practice.

4.3 Improve the Multi-party Collaborative Guarantee Mechanism to Activate the Endogenous Motivation for the Operation of the Talent System

Higher vocational institutions should establish a tutor team combining “full-time and part-time teachers”, reform the teacher assessment and evaluation system accordingly, give greater weight to innovative practice, and promote close cooperation between teachers and the business community through dual incentives of achievement transformation and academic research, thus creating a favorable atmosphere of school-enterprise collaborative education. At the same time, institutions should actively create a campus culture that encourages exploration and entrepreneurship, and tolerates failure, to encourage students to be bold in taking risks and excel at trying during the entrepreneurial process. To this end, institutions can set up an innovation and entrepreneurship fund to finance outstanding entrepreneurial projects, and strive for fairness and transparency in achievement transformation and benefit distribution, thus further stimulating students’ innovative potential and entrepreneurial enthusiasm. In addition, institutions should also focus on internal and external linkage. Internally, institutions should strengthen the interdisciplinary integration of various disciplines. Externally, they should actively cooperate with enterprises, industrial parks, local governments and other subjects to form a diversified support network, therefore promoting the penetration and implementation of innovation and entrepreneurship education in all majors.

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