

# The development and transformation of local universities in hunan province, china: basis for an enhanced strategic management system

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**Abstract:** Currently, local undergraduate universities are generally facing the task of transitioning towards an application-oriented approach. In the process of transformation of local undergraduate universities, it is necessary to follow the requirements of the National Medium and Long Term Education Reform and Development Plan (NMLERDP), strive for financial support from the government, establish a good team of applied teachers, reform teaching concepts, update teaching methods, strengthen school enterprise cooperation, establish evaluation, incentive, and supervision mechanisms guided by promoting transformation and development, and mobilize the enthusiasm and initiative of employees to cultivate applied talents.

**Keywords:** development and transformation; NMLERDP; strategic management system

Currently, higher education in China has entered the stage of popularization. The transformation and development of local undergraduate universities is an urgent requirement for the transformation of economic development mode and the upgrading of industrial structure. In this context, The Outline of the National Medium and Long Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020) clearly states in Chapter 7, Article 22 Focus on expanding the cultivation scale of applied, compound, and skilled talents, promoting universities to have their own characteristics, establishing a university classification system, guiding universities to position themselves reasonably, overcoming homogenization tendencies, forming their own educational philosophy and style, developing their own characteristics and fields at different levels and fields, and striving to be first-class.

By studying the effective measures and reform approaches taken by some local undergraduate universities in Hunan Province, China in the process of implementing national policies, we can obtain general experience and rules for the transformation of such universities, and provide practical reference for university managers.

## 1 Current Status of Applied Transformation Research in Local Undergraduate Universities in China

In 1998, scholar Gong Zhenwei (1998) first proposed the concept of “applied undergraduate education” in China. In traditional undergraduate education, students have learned a lot, but school education is divorced from reality and practice. Although the author did not provide a thorough explanation of the connotation and characteristics of the concept of “applied undergraduate education”, this concept has attracted the attention of the academic community and relevant government departments.

After 2000, some academic organizations in China have also conducted theoretical exploration on applied universities. For example, in 2001, some local engineering colleges held

a “Seminar on the Training Mode of Applied Undergraduate Talents” in Changchun, discussing issues such as the positioning of training objectives, design of talent models, training methods and approaches, and evaluation standards for applied undergraduate graduates. As a national research institution under the guidance of the Higher Education Department of the Ministry of Education, the National Teaching and Research Center of Higher Education undertook the national key projects of the National Education Science “Tenth Five Year Plan” from 2002 to 2005, including “Applied Talents in Chinese Higher Education Institutions in the 21st Century” and “Innovation and Practice of the Training System”. It has held multiple seminars in Nanjing, Harbin, and Beijing, We invited leaders from dozens of universities across the country, heads of functional departments, and relevant experts to jointly discuss the “cultivation of applied talents in Chinese universities”. There has been in-depth and extensive discussion on the establishment of this system, and some important results have been achieved. In 2009, the well-known journal “China Higher Education Research” under the China Association of Higher Education also opened an academic exchange column on applied undergraduate education issues. The efforts of the higher education community have laid a solid foundation for the research of local applied universities in China. In recent years, with the accelerated transformation and development of local undergraduate colleges, there has been a significant increase in relevant research literature.

As of April 2023, researchers searched CNKI under the theme of “Applied Undergraduate Universities” and found 13985 academic journal papers, 245 master’s and doctoral theses, 190 academic conferences, and 168 books.

From the perspective of types, research topics show a trend of diversification. According to the search results, relevant research includes applied talent cultivation, positioning of applied universities, theoretical research, social services, development planning, drawing on international experience, student employment and management, and faculty building.

For example, Li Jiabin (2015) believes that strengthening the construction of applied universities in China should combine “pursuing practicality” with “adhering to ideals”, and combine “keeping up with the times” with “maintaining characteristics”. Combining “open education” with “harmony and inclusiveness”, Pan Maoyuan (2017) proposed constructive suggestions on what an applied undergraduate program is, believing that applied undergraduate programs mainly focus on cultivating applied talents, undergraduate students, prioritizing teaching, and facing the local community. Zhou Qi and Sun Hejuan (2017) believe that people’s vague understanding of applied universities and the lack of relevant systems are important factors affecting the transformation of local universities in China. Zhu Jianxin (2019) believes that starting from the system, innovating government supporting systems, market normative systems, and the subjectivity system of local universities are effective strategies for transformation.

While exploring its laws and characteristics, there are still some shortcomings in the research on applied universities in China. Firstly, theoretical research urgently needs to be further enriched. The construction and development of applied universities are gradually advancing in practice. Most of the relevant research results are exploratory, with some studies being relatively shallow and lacking systematic and in-depth research.

## 2 A Survey and Research on the Transformation and Development of Five Local Undergraduate Universities in Hunan Province

Research methods and data analysis. This study selected five local universities in Hunan Province as the research subjects, represented by ABCDE. The mixed research method of quantitative research and qualitative research is adopted. A total of 40 survey subjects were selected, including 20 management personnel and 20 professional teachers on the teaching front line. A data questionnaire was constructed and interview themes were designed to understand the current situation, transformation paths, challenges, and countermeasures of the transformation and development of these five universities.

Two sets of survey questionnaires were designed. The first survey questionnaire measures the degree of consistency between local universities and the new Medium and Long Term Education Reform and Development Plan (NMLTERDP). The second questionnaire was designed with four variables, namely talent cultivation quality, academic research, higher education structure, and social service ability. The researchers described these four variables based on the planning outline, and then the respondents rated them based on the relevant descriptions. Taking the first questionnaire as an example:

**Table Level of Alignment of Local University Status**

measurement item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
The philosophy and objectives of universities perform the important task of cultivating high caliber professionals.	3.13	1.067	Satisfactory Aligned

The impact of policy guidance and resource allocation guide higher education institutions to position themselves properly in the higher education system.	2.83	1.010	Satisfactory Aligned
Reform in classroom instruction and student learning is deepened and students are urged to participate in scientific research.	2.60	1.105	Satisfactory Aligned
University governance is improved, competitive mechanisms introduced, performance evaluation conducted and dynamic management is carried out.	3.05	1.131	Satisfactory Aligned
Degree programs of the university are accredited by the Academic Degree Committee of the Ministry of Education.	2.68	1.163	Satisfactory Aligned
Average Weighted Mean	2.86		Satisfactory Aligned

**Legend: 1.00- 1.75 Needs Alignment; 1.76- 2.50 Moderately Aligned; 2.51- 3.25 Satisfactory Aligned; 3.26- 4.00 Very Much Aligned.**

Through descriptive statistical analysis of the above five measurement questions, the average score of the five measurement questions is between 2.60 and 3.13, and the standard deviation of each data is around 1, indicating a small degree of dispersion, a relatively uniform response from the subjects, and high reliability.

The philosophy and objectives of universities perform the important task of cultivating high caliber professionals obtained a weighted mean of 3.13 (Satisfactory Aligned) indicating that local undergraduate universities have truly set the cultivation of high-quality professional talents as their educational goal and have achieved good results. China’s rapid development cannot be separated from the support of talent. Since the reform and opening up, the decades of rapid economic development in China have coincided with the rapid development of higher education. It is precisely the large number of high-quality professional talents trained by Chinese universities that provide guarantees for national construction.

As to the impact of policy guidance and resource allocation guide higher education institutions to position themselves properly in the higher education system, the weighted mean for this item is 2.83 which is also Satisfactory Aligned. In China, universities are greatly influenced by policies, and the construction and evaluation systems of universities need to be influenced by policies. At the same time, most of these systems are designed around resource allocation. Only universities that closely follow national policies can enjoy more resource allocation and continuously improve their educational strength.

The reform in classroom instruction and student learning is deepened and students are urged to participate in scientific research, got a weighted mean of 2.6, which is Satisfactory Aligned which is the lowest among the 5 items. At present, classroom teaching reform is still an area that local undergraduate universities need to improve. The teaching methods of teachers need to adapt to the transformation, and the learning methods of students also need to change, from passive acceptance of knowledge to active acquisition of knowledge, which is a process of change. At the same time, the participation of students in scientific research at local undergraduate universities is generally insufficient, and some universities have

already introduced new policies to encourage students to participate in teachers' research projects.

Whether University governance is improved, competitive mechanisms introduced, performance evaluation conducted and dynamic management is carried out, the score for this item is 3.05 still in the category of Satisfactory Aligned, the highest mean of all the 5 indicators. Within the university, teachers' income has long been linked to their performance, in order to promote their teaching and research enthusiasm. The competition mechanism is widely used, and various disciplines, majors, and secondary colleges need to obtain more funding through competition. It is precisely the existence of these benign competitive mechanisms that have promoted the rapid development of the entire higher education.

With the weighted mean of 2.68 interpreted as Satisfactory Aligned, the indicator degree programs of the university are accredited by the Academic Degree Committee of the Ministry of Education implies that there is still a lot of potential for certification work to be tapped. On the whole, these universities have all passed the undergraduate teaching evaluation of the Ministry of Education. However, as for professional certification, such as teacher training professional certification and engineering professional certification, each university's progress is not the same. For example, University A only had its first major approved by teacher training professional certification last year. Professional certification plays a significant role in promoting the professional construction of universities, which is a current trend and also a direction that these universities need to strive for. As a whole, with the average mean of 2.86, it can be surmised that the level of alignment of the local universities' status is satisfactory vis-à-vis the National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (NPMLERDP) of China.

By 2020, the structure of higher education shall become more balanced and distinctive, and it shall also go up a notch in talent or professional cultivation, scientific research and social service as a whole.

Construction of crucial college research and innovation bases and sci-tech innovation platforms shall be stepped up. Mechanisms for innovation- and quality-oriented evaluation of research results shall be ameliorated. A program for boosting college studies in philosophy and social sciences shall be carried out in depth. (NMLERDP Strategic Plan, 2010-2020)

Through the same survey method, the second survey questionnaire indicates that the quality of talent cultivation, academic research, higher education structure, and social service capabilities are the main concerns for the transformation and development of local undergraduate universities. The central position of talent cultivation in university work has become a

common consensus, and the importance of teaching work is increasingly prominent. In academic research, greater emphasis is placed on cooperation with research institutions and enterprises, breaking the closed scientific research status of universities. In terms of institutions, attention should be paid to optimizing the layout of disciplines and better serving talent cultivation. At the same time, every university wants to create its own characteristics, which of course has certain difficulties. In terms of social services, with the transformation and development, universities have realized that seeking development through service and better serving society can obtain support from society and the government, promoting the rapid development of the school. This is undoubtedly a win-win outcome for universities and local society.

Among the 40 participants in the questionnaire survey, 10 were selected for interviews. The main purpose is to explore the problems and concerns of applied education in local undergraduate universities by understanding the views and experiences of different types of teachers on university applied education. The interviewees mainly discussed that the strategic management system should be designed around the cultivation of applied talents, including professional titles, scientific research, performance management, reward and punishment systems, and ultimately establish an evaluation, incentive, and supervision mechanism oriented towards promoting transformation and development, mobilizing the enthusiasm and initiative of everyone and all university staff.

### 3 Conclusion

Currently, the application oriented transformation and development of local undergraduate colleges in China have obvious characteristics of the times. Transformation is of great significance in serving local economic and social development and improving the quality of student employment. The experience of running applied universities in five universities indicates that reforming the training mode of applied talents, collaborating with enterprises, and transforming management systems are the only way to build local applied universities. From the perspective of influencing factors, government support, financial investment, changes in educational concepts, and institutional guarantees are important variables. Starting from institutional innovation, establishing a strategic management system with a focus on cultivating application-oriented talents, transforming educational and teaching concepts, reforming educational and teaching methods, and establishing application-oriented evaluation mechanisms as the main content, deepening school enterprise cooperation, and serving society are effective strategies for China's local universities to transform into application-oriented universities.

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