Research on Employment Challenges and Talent Cultivation Mechanisms for Applied Undergraduate Management Students in the Context of New Quality Productivity

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Abstract: With the introduction and implementation of the concept of new-quality productivity, China's industrial structure and employment market are undergoing profound transformations. Against this backdrop, applied undergraduate management students face unprecedented employment challenges and opportunities. This paper delves into how new-quality productivity reshapes demands for management talent, revealing practical dilemmas such as structural employment contradictions, competency gaps, and outdated training models among applied undergraduate management students. Drawing on the practical case of Guangzhou Huali College, This paper systematically analyzes the employment challenges faced by management students under the new quality productivity paradigm, explores innovative pathways for talent cultivation mechanisms, and provides theoretical references and practical insights for reforming management programs at applied undergraduate institutions.

Keywords: New Quality Productivity; Applied Undergraduate Education; Management Students; Employment Challenges; Talent Cultivation Mechanisms

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1.Introduction

General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized: “We must optimize the disciplinary structure and talent cultivation models of higher education institutions in light of new trends in scientific and technological development, cultivating urgently needed talents for developing new-quality productive forces and promoting high-quality development.” As the primary battleground for scientific and technological innovation and talent cultivation, universities possess advantages such as a concentration of talent, comprehensive disciplines, vibrant intellectual activity, and a solid foundation. Looking ahead, universities must better fulfill their responsibilities and missions by advancing education, science and technology, and talent development in an integrated manner, thereby making greater contributions to developing new-quality productive forces. To support this endeavor, universities must focus their efforts on scientific and technological innovation. On one hand, they should proactively adapt to technological trends by optimizing disciplinary structures, clarifying academic development directions, and striving to build distinctive disciplinary systems. They should break down disciplinary barriers to create platforms conducive to interdisciplinary integration; strengthen foundational disciplines by recognizing their characteristics—high investment, slow returns, and long cycles—optimizing resource allocation to drive more original breakthroughs in fundamental research. On the other hand, innovation capability stems from the synthesis of multiple competencies. Beyond enhancing students' specialized knowledge and research skills, universities must cultivate their innovative spirit, creative thinking, and teamwork abilities to elevate their overall capabilities. [1]

2.Current Market Demand for Management Talent in the Context of New Quality Productivity

Against the backdrop of rapid development in new quality productivity, traditional management models and talent cultivation mechanisms face severe challenges. As key institutions for training grassroots management personnel, applied undergraduate universities' management programs confront an awkward reality: on one hand,

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enterprises struggle to find management talent suited for digital transformation; on the other, employment difficulties for management graduates continue to grow. According to the Employment Trends Report for Applied Talent in New Quality Productivity, the national demand for "purple-collar talent" in the intelligent manufacturing sector reached approximately 25 million in 2022. By 2035, this demand is projected to exceed 31 million, accounting for nearly a quarter of the total labor demand in manufacturing. However, a significant disconnect exists between the current training models of university management programs and industrial needs, leaving graduates unable to meet the talent requirements for new quality productivity development. [2]

As one of China's largest undergraduate enrollment disciplines, management studies serve as the primary source of high-caliber talent for various management and service positions. Yet in recent years, management majors have faced multiple employment challenges. First, significant unemployment rates persist. With digital advancements enabling AI to perform many tasks, management disciplines have been impacted. Second, low employment rates prevail. Enterprises show limited preference for management graduates, resulting in low employment rates for students from the School of Management at Guangzhou Huali University. Third, prominent issues like low monthly incomes persist. This phenomenon reflects a deep-seated mismatch between current management talent cultivation models and the evolving demands of the new development paradigm.

3.Shifting Demand for Management Talent in the Context of New Quality Productivity

The core of new quality productivity lies in innovation-driven development, manifested through innovative allocation of production factors and profound industrial transformation and upgrading. This transformation profoundly impacts the demand for management talent, primarily in the following aspects:

3.1 Digital Intelligence Capabilities Become Market Requirements

With the widespread application of technologies such as big data, artificial intelligence, and the Internet of Things in enterprise management, digital intelligence capabilities have become the core competitiveness for management professionals. Companies urgently need versatile talents who understand management theory while also mastering digital technologies. [4] A survey by a university in Hubei Province revealed that management students with digital literacy enjoy a distinct advantage in the job market. Their employment rate exceeds that of ordinary management students by over 15%, with salary growth reaching 35%-45% within three years of graduation. This data indicates that digital and intelligent capabilities not only influence employment opportunities but also directly impact students' future career advancement prospects.

3.2 Growing Demand for Interdisciplinary Knowledge Structures

The development of new-quality productive forces has driven business model innovation and blurred industry boundaries, rendering single-discipline knowledge insufficient for addressing complex management challenges. Enterprises increasingly favor management talent with interdisciplinary backgrounds who can organically integrate management knowledge with technological applications. [5] Analysis of recruitment data from major internet companies by a Shandong-based institution reveals that over 85% of management positions require candidates to integrate technical and operational management competencies. This underscores that under the demands of new-quality productive forces, interdisciplinary knowledge structures have become imperative for management professionals.

3.3 Heightened Emphasis on Innovation and Practical Skills

The emergence of new, high-quality productive forces speeds up technological advancement and industrial change while also placing greater demands on management professionals' capacity for creativity and practical application. Six core competencies are required of applied talents in new-quality productive forces, according to research from a Beijing university: innovative learning and initiative, integration of diverse technologies, interpersonal communication and influence, efficient business drive, acceptance of new-quality technologies, and

core value leadership. These competencies highlight the comprehensive ability to solve real-world problems rather than just the accumulation of knowledge. [6]

3.4 Transformation of Professional Roles and Positioning

The professional roles of management talent are changing significantly under the new productive forces paradigm, with many new roles emerging. While “purple-collar talent” is quickly becoming a new occupational group, the traditional lines separating “white-collar” and “blue-collar” workers are becoming increasingly hazy. These experts are frequently found in smart manufacturing positions such as technicians and quality inspectors. They must be able to innovate and solve real-world problems in addition to having advanced operational skills. Due to the change in occupational requirements, management talent development objectives and training direction must be repositioned.

4.Analysis of Employment Challenges for Applied Undergraduate Management Students

4.1 Structural Mismatch Between Talent Supply and Demand

There is currently a significant structural mismatch between the demand and supply for management talent. While there is a shortage of talent for new digital management roles, the demand for traditional management roles is also decreasing. For management graduates, this mismatch directly worsens job quality and increases employment challenges. There are two main ways that the mismatch appears: First, the program design is out of date; university management programs have been largely dependent on traditional training models and have not been able to quickly adapt to management changes in the digital economy era. Second, the training scale is unbalanced, with too many students enrolled in popular majors while there is a talent shortage in emerging fields. In addition to wasting educational resources, this structural contradiction increases the pressure on students to find employment.

4.2 Inadequate Digital and Intelligent Capabilities Fall Short of Market Demands

Digital and intelligent skills are now crucial for management students as corporate digital transformation picks up speed. Applied undergraduate schools today, however, fall far short in this regard. Students are unable to acquire the fundamental skills that society demands because of outdated management curricula and course development that lags behind the most recent developments in knowledge and skills. The School of Management at Guangzhou Huali University only provides one computer course and lacks a framework for the systematic development of digital and intelligent capabilities. The digital literacy of students and business needs diverge significantly as a result. According to a Hubei university survey, management students who do not receive systematic, intelligent, and digital training only attain a 65% proficiency rate in the use of digital technology. However, following systematic practical training, this rate increases to 92%. This suggests that students' employment competitiveness is greatly impacted by their insufficient development of digital and intelligent capabilities.

4.3 Weak Practical Training and Insufficient Innovation Capabilities

Despite the fact that management is a practical discipline, many applied undergraduate institutions only offer management programs that lack sufficient practical training components, which leaves students unable to solve problems in the real world. These days, poor training platforms, a lack of real-world teaching resources, and a lack of links to business realities are common problems for management programs in higher education institutions. Students’ lack of industry-relevant skills and insufficient capacity for innovation are directly caused by this lack of hands-on training. Innovation and entrepreneurship education in management programs at Guangzhou Huali University’s School of Management frequently stays at the surface level and does not change the one-track training model. Outdated training software, a general lack of goal-oriented focus, and a disconnect from the skills that the modern market requires are all present. This makes it impossible to precisely match the needs of society in the real world. As a result, students find it difficult to satisfy the demands for practical business skills and creative management abilities needed in the context of new productive forces.

4.4 Insufficient Practical Experience Among Faculty

A key component of developing talent is the faculty. On the other hand, management professors at applied undergraduate schools typically have theoretical expertise but little real-world experience. It was challenging to combine theory and practice because many of them started teaching as soon as they graduated, lacking practical experience in corporate or industry management. According to research, many faculty members in management programs at many universities have never conducted research, worked on projects that address the needs of the government or business management, or received training through corporate practice. The quality of management talent development at applied undergraduate institutions is directly impacted by this faculty structure shortfall.

5.Building Management Talent Cultivation Mechanisms in the Context of New Quality Productivity--Guangzhou Huali University's Practice and Exploration

Applied undergraduate institutions must expand reforms and develop innovative management talent cultivation mechanisms to meet the opportunities and challenges presented by the emergence of new quality productivity. The following paths have been followed by Guangzhou Huali University:

5.1 Launching Micro-Majors in Digital Specializations

Guangzhou Huali University acquired new software—a micro-major development platform—from high-tech enterprises to build specialized micro-major curricula. It has established the management-focused micro-major "Business Artificial Intelligence Applications (AI+Business)," encompassing courses such as: Machine Learning and Business Decision-Making, Intelligent Marketing and Consumer Behavior Analysis, Supply Chain Optimization and Smart Logistics, FinTech and AI Risk Management, and AI-Driven Talent Management in Human Resources. The second micro-specialization, "Fintech," includes: Fintech Studies, Financial Big Data Analysis, Blockchain Technology and Applications, Fintech Platform Practical Training, Python Programming/AIGC Large Model Applications, Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, Fintech Innovation and Regulation, and Quantitative Investment and Risk Control. Low-Altitude Economy Management, the third micro-specialization, builds strong relationships with top businesses in the low-altitude economy (e.g., airspace management agencies and drone logistics delivery companies). By creating a curriculum system focused on real industry needs, it creates a cooperative education mechanism involving government, businesses, and universities. This gives students a hands-on experience that is in line with industry trends, promoting the growth of adaptable low-altitude economy management skills that satisfy local economic development needs. According to the educational philosophy of "theoretical foundation, practice-driven empowerment, and innovation-driven development," the program emphasizes a tripartite training approach that integrates "technology-management-business." It focuses on essential job requirements across the whole low-altitude economy value chain. By closely combining technical subjects like drone technology, airspace planning, and policy regulations with management-focused subjects like low-altitude logistics management, project operations, and market development, the curriculum transcends disciplinary boundaries. "Online theory (≤40%) + offline practice (≥60%)" is the blended format used in the teaching model. Students are assisted in converting theoretical knowledge into problem-solving skills for industry challenges through hands-on drone training, low-altitude logistics scenario simulations, and real-world project development. In the end, this develops applied low-altitude economy management specialists with a comprehensive industry-chain viewpoint, interdisciplinary teamwork abilities, and creative thinking. Guangzhou Huali University allows students to enroll according to their career aspirations and personal interests. Micro-specialization instruction is incorporated into regular academic operations and is consistently scheduled in accordance with institutional teaching requirements. The software for the micro-specialization platform combines instruction, tests, certification, contests, and employment. In addition to accessing educational resources like e-books and course videos, students can also take practice tests and assignments, earn pertinent certifications, compete in online skill contests, and look for internships related to their field. The platform offers comprehensive job and internship listings from market businesses, allowing

for customized recommendations based on each student's unique situation. This strategy addresses the low employment rate among management students while developing enterprise talent that satisfies market demands.

5.2 Building Digital Smart Courses

52 of the 100 smart courses Guangzhou Huali University has invested 10 million yuan in have already been finished. Fifteen of these are business and management courses that incorporate data-driven methodologies, intelligent technology, and a comprehensive, student-centered, personalized educational ecosystem. In order to develop talent fit for the digital age and intelligent society, these courses radically alter the teaching, learning, assessment, and management processes through technological empowerment. Academic databases, real-time industry data, and extensive open online resource libraries are all connected to course content. Students apply knowledge and refine skills while resolving complex, real-world problems through collaborative design, project-based learning (PBL), and simulated decision-making exercises. While AI teaching assistants offer automated Q&A support to lessen repetitive tasks for instructors, Learning Pass, an integrated smart teaching platform, creates digital resources and virtual simulations. Intelligent instruction is made possible by AI teaching assistants, which also implement blended learning reforms and create digital resource repositories that include real-world enterprise case studies, virtual simulation experiments, and micro-lecture videos.

5.3 Revising Talent Development Programs—Redesigning Digital Intelligence Curriculum Systems

Theoretical knowledge was prioritized over practical employment skills in earlier management talent development programs. Although there were some hands-on training programs available, they were out of step with the demands of the modern market and used antiquated training materials that were out of step with industry standards. A curriculum system focused on digital and intelligent capabilities is established by the recently updated talent development plan. In particular: To strengthen students' foundations in digital and intelligent technology, the public foundation module will incorporate the general education course "Artificial Intelligence Application Technology." - Deep integration between technology and business disciplines will be promoted by the interdisciplinary module's digital course clusters, which include "Digital Product Operations Management," "Digital Business Ethics Practice," and "Data Analysis and Visualization." Specialized courses that closely match industry digital and intelligent application scenarios, such as AI Customer Service and Management, Digital Business Models, Digital Innovation and Entrepreneurship Management, and Digital New Media Marketing, should be included in the professional core module. To improve practical skills, professional core skill operation guides and the Smart Office and Business Reporting course should be included. An orientation internship should be implemented for practical courses in order to expose students to actual business operations. Internet Marketing Practitioner, Digital Management Specialist, E-commerce Specialist, and AI Trainer are among the new certification preparation courses. Courses on quality enhancement, such as Digital Transformation, Business AI Applications, and AI Ethics, have been added to extracurricular activities. The experience of Guangzhou Huali College shows that promoting students to earn pertinent certifications through these courses guarantees that the instruction is in line with industry standards, successfully bridging the gap between conventional curricula and employment demands.

5.4 Establishing Industry-Academia-Research Integration Practice Bases

In order to create practice bases that integrate science, industry, and education, Guangzhou Huali College has inked agreements for industry-academia-research cooperation with a number of businesses. Businesses give students hands-on training opportunities, and corporate staff members assist in cultivating industry-specific skills as well as entrepreneurship and innovation. After that, internships are made available to students so they can experience the real market. A university-enterprise cooperation agreement has been signed between Guangzhou Huali University and Guangdong Space Computing Group. This partnership establishes industry-specific colleges, builds artificial intelligence labs, enables collaborative applications of research projects at the provincial level, and incorporates digital technologies into curriculum development. In order to improve students' operational competencies, more

sophisticated training software is purchased concurrently for practical courses. For each grade level, a progressive development plan is created: the first and second years emphasize interest stimulation and cognitive development; the third year stresses skill development and project practice; and the fourth year encourages research and achievement transformation. This guarantees that students' abilities develop gradually. In order to develop dual-qualified faculty, mechanisms such as "industry professors" are put in place, which require specialized instructors to regularly participate in hands-on training at partner businesses. A cooperative "campus mentor + industry mentor" project guidance system is established by integrating corporate mentors as well. In order to establish integrated teaching and project guidance units, Guangzhou Huali University creatively established interdisciplinary "dual-qualified, dual-mentor" teams by bringing together elite campus faculty with business technical leaders and research institutes.

6.Recommendations and Outlook

6.1 Accelerate Digital and Intelligent Transformation to Reshape Management Talent Development Paradigms

Undergraduate applied management programs will place a greater emphasis on the in-depth integration of digital technologies and intelligent tools as technology advances. Digital resource libraries, virtual simulations, and AI teaching assistants will all become commonplace in education. In order to guarantee that students acquire cutting-edge knowledge and skills, universities must constantly update their curricula to include cutting-edge technological tools and management concepts. Future managers must be "technology-empowered" decision-makers who can grasp complex business problems using digital tools, master data, and comprehend intelligent algorithms in the age of the digital economy. Therefore, deep integration and comprehensive innovation in applied undergraduate management education—from teaching strategies to core curriculum content—will be fueled by the rapid digital and intelligent transformation. The foundation of management curricula must be dynamically updated content supported by intelligent tools and digital technologies. The ultimate objective is to develop business professionals who can maintain a competitive edge in the increasingly competitive talent market by fusing digital proficiency with managerial acumen.

6.2 Deepening Interdisciplinary Integration to Build Multi-Skilled Management Talent

More intersections between management disciplines and disciplines like data science and the humanities and social sciences will result in more comprehensive competency matrices and knowledge networks. For applied undergraduate programs to give students a wider range of knowledge frameworks, disciplinary barriers must be removed and adaptable interdisciplinary teaching structures must be established. For example, resources from management schools, business schools, computer science departments, and engineering colleges could be directly integrated into micro-majors in business data analytics, technology management, and innovation. Create a number of interdisciplinary certificate modules outside of core management courses, like "Digital Supply Chain," "Fintech," and "Behavioral Economics and Business Applications," that let students mix and match modules according to their interests and future goals.

6.3 Building an Education Ecosystem Spanning the Entire Career Lifecycle

One-time education will transform into lifelong learning in response to a rapidly changing external environment. Universities and businesses will continue to work together to develop talent, building a system of education that covers the whole career path. By creating a multi-tiered, modular, and cumulative curriculum system akin to a flyover bridge, applied undergraduate programs must go beyond traditional degree education: Micro-Certificate → Certificate → Advanced Training Program. Introduce micro-specialization certificates that allow learners to "plug and play" and access content whenever they need it, such as "Digital Marketing," "Mini-MBA," "Digital International Supply Chain Operations Management," and "Digital Intelligence Marketing Innovation & Entrepreneurship." In order to guarantee that the teaching material is in line with state-of-the-art methods,

universities should simultaneously aggressively seek out faculty members who possess both substantial industry experience and in-depth academic knowledge, as well as create vibrant industry mentor pools. In order for learning acquired during internships to receive academic recognition, businesses should make real projects, case studies, and data available as teaching resources. This will encourage credit recognition between "workplace learning" and "formal education."

In conclusion, universities, businesses, the government, and society must work together to address the employment issues management talent faces in the context of new, high-quality productive forces and to develop the digital intelligence professionals that the modern world demands. We can only develop exceptional management talent that can both lead future development and adapt to transformative changes through multi-party collaborative innovation and deep integration. This will provide strong human capital support for superior socioeconomic advancement. The only way we can successfully address the employment issues facing management students and develop top-notch management professionals who are in line with the demands of new, high-quality productive forces is by implementing significant educational reforms, creating a new talent cultivation mechanism that is led by digital intelligence, propelled by industry-education integration, and protected by multi-stakeholder collaboration.

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