

To cite this article: Pengbin Gao, Xue Li, Chunjia Hu* (2026). Cultivation Model for New Business Talent in China: A Multi-case Study based on the Grounded Theory. International Journal of Education, Business and Economics Research (IJEBER) 6 (4): 240-254

CULTIVATION MODEL FOR NEW BUSINESS TALENT IN CHINA: A MULTI-CASE STUDY BASED ON THE GROUNDED THEORY

Pengbin Gao, Xue Li, Chunjia Hu*

School of Economics and Management, Harbin Institute of Technology,
No.2 Wenhua West Road, Weihai 264209, China

<https://doi.org/10.59822/IJEBER.2026.6413>

ABSTRACT

The construction of new business disciplines represents an important strategic response by Chinese higher education to the transformation of the digital economy era. However, the systematic understanding of its practical form and internal logic in academia is still insufficient. This study uses literature on the cultivation of new business talents from 46 universities as the data source, and employs the procedural grounded theory method to identify twenty initial concepts through open coding and aggregate them into seven subcategories. The seven subcategories are classified into four main categories through main axis coding: goal orientation system, support guarantee system, path implementation system, and evaluation feedback system. Finally, the core category of four-dimensional synergy is condensed through selective coding. The research results indicate that the cultivation of new business talents presents an integrated logic of “concept guidance, resource support, path driving, evaluation closure”, which is essentially a complex adaptive system that achieves value co-creation through continuous interaction of multiple subjects and factors. Based on this, this study constructs a theoretical model of four-dimensional synergy for the cultivation of new business talents, revealing the synergy mechanism and evolution law between various elements, and proposing classified implementation path suggestions based on the practical differences of different types of universities. This study provides an integrated framework for the theoretical deepening and practical innovation in new business talent cultivation.

KEYWORDS: New Business Education, Talent Cultivation Model, Grounded Theory, Four-dimensional Synergy.

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Published Online: August 2026

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The accelerated iteration of digital technology is reshaping the fundamental landscape of the global business ecosystem. From e-commerce and sharing economy to live streaming e-commerce and metaverse commerce, new technologies have not only given birth to new formats and positions, but also fundamentally changed the ability demand structure of enterprises for business talents.

The deepening development of the digital economy is also reshaping the higher education landscape. The widespread penetration of new generation information technologies has not only given rise to new formats, models, and positions, but also posed fundamental challenges to the knowledge structure, competency profile, and mindset of business talents. The traditional business education model, characterized by function-oriented training and disciplinary silos, increasingly reveals a structural mismatch with social demands and technological progress. In 2018, the Chinese Ministry of Education proposed that higher education should strive to develop new engineering, new agriculture, new medicine, and new humanities. Against this backdrop, the concepts of new business and new business talents are about to emerge.

Since the formal introduction of the “New Business” concept, Chinese universities have conducted extensive and in-depth explorations around talent cultivation models. However, a thought-provoking question is whether the innovation of talent cultivation models in universities with different educational positioning, disciplinary endowments, and regional environments follows some underlying common laws? Answering this question is of great significance for deepening the theoretical understanding and practical guidance of cultivating new business talents. From a theoretical perspective, current research mostly focuses on the experience description of a single university or the exploration of specific dimensions of reform, lacking systematic comparison and theoretical refinement of diverse practices. From a practical perspective, universities face similar challenges in the exploration process, and the solution to these common problems urgently requires systematic knowledge beyond individual case experience. Therefore, this study will take the practice of cultivating new business talents in universities as a sample, and use the grounded theory method to attempt to answer the following core question: What are the diverse forms of new business talent cultivation practices in different universities? Is there a common structural logic behind these diverse practices? How to construct a theoretical framework that can explain diverse practices and guide future exploration?

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

2.1 Literature Review

Based on existing literature, the research on new business education can be summarized into four parts: connotation definition, talent cultivation mode reconstruction, curriculum and teaching innovation, and teacher construction and quality assurance.

Firstly, scholars discussed the connotation of new business education. The "novelty" of new business is reflected in the integration of multiple aspects. Research suggests that new business education is a comprehensive discipline that integrates management and technology, an innovative model of industry education collaboration, and business education in the Chinese context [1]. The study explains the logical basis of the new business education from three dimensions of

"ideological empowerment, professional empowerment, and technological empowerment"[2], and analyzes the transformation path of Chinese business education under the dual pressure of catching up and transformation [3].

Secondly, scholars have emphasized the talent cultivation of new business disciplines. Some research have emphasized the mechanism path, such as proposing a composite structure of "major+", "technology+", and "entrepreneurship+", and emphasizing the curriculum system of "business+technology+thinking"[4], constructing a collaborative education mechanism of "four in one, four-dimensional integration"[5], analyzing the goals, challenges, and paths of building a business major group [6], constructing a two-way empowerment mechanism of "management industry integration", and proposing a path of "horizontal cross integration, vertical multi connectivity"[7], pointing out that new business education has problems such as single teaching mode, lagging curriculum, and shallow cooperation between schools and enterprises [8], as well as analyzing the reform path of vocational undergraduate training [9]. Scholars have highlighted the characteristics of integration, such as proposing a "professional+entrepreneurship" integrated education system and emphasizing the multidimensional integration of curriculum, practice, and faculty [10], proposing the cultivation of innovative and entrepreneurial talents through the "cross disciplinary integration, cross school collaboration, cross domain interaction, and cross-border communication" four cross model [11]-[12], proposing the integration of entrepreneurship education and new business education [13], proposing that the internationalization strategy of new business should expand the communication map, strengthen school enterprise collaboration, and develop cloud business platforms [14], proposing a deep integration strategy of subject competitions and classroom teaching from the perspective of "competition education integration"[15], and exploring the seven dimensional path of AI empowering the modernization of innovation and entrepreneurship education [16]. Scholars have also emphasized the cultivation of abilities, such as building a professional curriculum system for "ideological guidance and technological guidance" based on the "three pronged education"[17], focusing on advanced compound and comprehensive innovation abilities, emphasizing critical thinking and entrepreneurial innovation [18]), proposing that the cultivation should focus on improving digital transformation capabilities and constructing digital teaching resource platforms [19], as well as comparing STEAM education in China and abroad, and proposing policy suggestions for optimizing teacher training, curriculum development, etc. [20].

Thirdly, scholars have paid attention to the curriculum and teaching reform of new business disciplines. Scholars have focused on redesigning the business curriculum system and textbooks, such as proposing a loose leaf textbook development approach that integrates theory, reality, and virtuality [21], exploring theme based vertical and horizontal teaching models, and promoting the integration of humanities and sciences in digital courses [22], constructing a textbook development method based on project-based learning[23], using project-based learning, modular teaching, and deliberate practice theory to construct a sustainable teaching model [24], and using tax law courses to reveal the problems in new business teaching [25]. Scholars also pay attention to practical teaching, including building a practical teaching framework of training centers around the six elements of Internet commerce [26], designing a hierarchical practical teaching system and virtual simulation platform [27], constructing a four link system of experimental data assets [28], and

integrating digital technologies [29]. In addition, scholars also pay attention to the construction of ideological and political education in the curriculum, proposing a four dimensional ideological and political construction path of ideal beliefs, core values, Chinese culture, and professional ethics [30], and proposing an ideological and political integration path led by innovative ideas, ecological concepts, and coordinated concepts [31].

Lastly, scholars also have analyzed the teacher construction and quality assurance. Scholars have used the AHP to reconstruct the static and dynamic dual dimensional quality index system for new business teachers [32], and explored how vocational new business teachers should enhance their teaching abilities from three aspects: strengthening training, improving assessment, and building communication platforms [33].

The above research enriches the theoretical landscape of new business talent cultivation from different perspectives, but there are also obvious limitations: most studies are limited to case analysis of a single university, lacking cross case comparison and synthesis; Theoretical construction often remains at the level of empirical summary, lacking systematic theoretical abstraction; There is still a lack of in-depth exploration of the inherent connections and common logic between different practical models. This is exactly the academic gap that this study attempts to fill.

2.2 Theoretical Foundations

This study draws on three theoretical perspectives to provide conceptual sensitization tools for grounded theory analysis. Firstly, ecosystem theory inspires us to focus on the interactive and symbiotic relationships between various cultivation elements. Secondly, the triple helix theory emphasizes the collaborative evolutionary relationship between government, universities, and enterprises in knowledge production and transformation. Finally, the theory of value co-creation emphasizes that value is not created by a single entity, but rather jointly generated through the interaction of multiple entities. The above theories provide an analytical perspective for this study, but existing theories focus on explaining a certain dimension (such as subject relationships and ecological elements), lacking an integrated explanatory framework for the entire process of talent cultivation. This is precisely the theoretical breakthrough space for this study.

3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Sample Selection and Data Sources

This study follows the theoretical sampling principle of grounded theory, using information richness and theoretical contribution potential as the sample selection criteria. A fuzzy literature search was conducted in the CNKI database using new business and talent as keywords. From January 2018 to July 2026, a total of 480 Chinese literatures were retrieved. The screening of sample literature is mainly based on the following two principles: firstly, selecting literature with research topics closely related to the current research topic can clearly extract the required keywords. The second is that the selection of literature must be based on the talent cultivation practice of a certain university as the theme. Through a preliminary study of the writing elements such as titles, abstracts, and keywords of the collected literature, 46 articles closely related to the research topic of this article were ultimately selected as case studies for this study.

The 46 universities included in the final analysis cover different types of educational institutions and regional distributions. Firstly, they cover different types of universities, including 6 research-oriented universities, 28 applied undergraduate colleges, and 12 vocational colleges(as shown in Table 1); Secondly, it covers different regions, including universities in the eastern (such as Jiangsu, Guangdong, Shanghai), central (such as Anhui, Hubei), and western (such as Guizhou, Shaanxi) regions; The third is to balance mature cases with exploratory cases, including both universities with a long history of reform and those in their early stages.

There are two types of data sources: one is academic literature, mainly consisting of 18 core journal articles, covering authoritative journals in the field of higher education such as China Higher Education, Exploration of Higher Education, and Teaching in Chinese Universities; The second is public reporting and official materials, including special reports from mainstream media such as China Education Daily and Xinhua News Agency, as well as cultivation plans and reform updates released on the official websites of various universities. The two types of information mutually confirm each other, forming a relatively complete data chain.

Table 1: Distribution of research subjects by type

<i>University Type</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Representative Universities</i>
Research Universities	6	South China Normal University, Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, Hainan University
Application-Oriented Undergraduate Institutions	28	Jiangsu Ocean University, Anhui Xinhua University, Hechi University, Yancheng Teachers University, Guangxi University, Anqing Normal University, Guangzhou City Institute of Technology, Qingdao University of Technology, Anhui Normal University, Taizhou University, Xi'an Technological University, Zhanjiang University of Science and Technology, Shanghai Lixin University of Accounting and Finance, Guizhou University of Commerce, Xi'an Fanyi University, Jinling Institute of Technology, Nanjing Xiaozhuang University, Chongqing College of Mobile Communication, Zhongyuan Institute of Science and Technology, Zhejiang Sci-Tech University, Hebei Agricultural University, Fujian Business University, Hunan Mass Media Vocational and Technical College, Shaanxi International Trade College, Shanxi Agricultural University College of Information, Sichuan Chemical Vocational and Technical College, Ji'an Vocational and Technical College, Nanning University

Higher Vocational Colleges	12	Wuxi Institute of Commerce, Hunan Vocational College of Commerce, Guangdong Women's Vocational College, Guizhou Vocational College of E-Commerce, Wuhu Institute of Technology, Huzhou Vocational Education and Adult Education Research Center, Suzhou Vocational University, Shenzhen Polytechnic, Shandong Foreign Trade Vocational College, Sichuan Chemical Vocational and Technical College, Liuzhou City Vocational College, Yunnan Energy Vocational College
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3.2 Analytical Methods and Coding Procedures

This study employs the three-level coding approach of procedural grounded theory [34]. The reasons for choosing grounded theory are as follows: First, New Business talent cultivation is still in a phase of diversified exploration, with significant differences in practical paths across universities and no unified prior theoretical framework, making it suitable for using a qualitative method that lets theory emerge from the data. Second, grounded theory systematically abstracts empirical materials into concepts and categories through a standardized coding procedure, effectively handling the diverse and heterogeneous data from 46 universities. Third, procedural grounded theory has clear operational steps and quality inspection standards, facilitating rigor in the research process.

The study strictly followed the operational specifications of procedural grounded theory. First, all materials were read line-by-line, and key statements related to new business talent cultivation were marked to form a coding corpus. Second, two researchers trained in grounded theory independently coded, with constant comparison throughout—comparing new codes with existing concepts and comparing codes across cases—until theoretical saturation was reached. Disagreements were resolved through discussion. The Cohen's kappa coefficient for coding was 0.83, indicating good reliability. Finally, concepts, categories, and theoretical models were gradually refined through the three-level coding process.

4.0 CODING PROCESS AND CATEGORY EXTRACTION

4.1 Open Coding

Open coding process breaks down, compares, and conceptualizes the raw data. Through line-by-line analysis of the practice texts from the 46 universities, this study extracted a total of 136 raw statements, condensed them into 20 initial concepts, and further aggregated them into 7 sub-categories. The 7 sub-categories identified through open coding are: Concept Guidance (A1-A3), Goal Positioning (A4-A6), Faculty Development (A7-A9), Platform Resources (A10-A12), Curriculum System (A13-A15), Practice and Innovation (A16-A18), and Evaluation Assurance (A19-A20). The detailed coding process is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Results of open coding

<i>Sub-Category</i>	<i>Initial Concepts (Exemplary Raw Statements)</i>
B1 Concept Guidance	A1 Cross-boundary integration concept (Break down professional barriers and strengthen all-round industry-university-research cooperation); A2 Digital-intelligent empowerment concept (Integrate big data, AI and other new technologies into business courses); A3 Moral education concept (Integrate curriculum ideological-political education throughout the whole cultivation process)
B2 Goal Positioning	A4 Interdisciplinary talent (Cultivate composite business talents with interdisciplinary knowledge and cross-domain capabilities); A5 Applied talent (Cultivate high-quality applied talents who can quickly adapt to enterprise positions); A6 Innovative talent (Cultivate new business talents with innovative thinking and entrepreneurial spirit)
B3 Faculty Development	A7 Dual-qualified teachers (Teachers should not only have theoretical teaching competence but also practical enterprise experience); A8 Teaching team building (Build cross-disciplinary and cross-specialty teaching teams); A9 Teacher development mechanisms (Enhance teacher capabilities through enterprise placements and overseas visits)
B4 Platform Resources	A10 University-industry cooperation platforms (Jointly build industry colleges and practical teaching bases); A11 Laboratory and training platforms (Build virtual simulation labs and big data laboratories); A12 Digital resource platforms (Build online courses and teaching resource repositories)
B5 Curriculum System	A13 Interdisciplinary courses (Offer integrated courses such as Business + Big Data and Business + AI); A14 Modular curriculum (Construct general education modules, professional modules, and directional modules); A15 Course-certificate integration (Embed professional certification content into courses)
B6 Practice and Innovation	A16 Industry-education integrated training (Bring real enterprise projects into the classroom and training); A17 Discipline competition training (Promote learning and teaching through competitions); A18 Innovation and entrepreneurship practice (Innovation and entrepreneurship training programs, business incubation)
B7 Evaluation Assurance	A19 Multiple evaluation mechanisms (Combine process evaluation and outcome evaluation); A20 Quality assurance system (Establish talent cultivation quality monitoring and feedback mechanisms)

4.2 Axial Coding

Axial coding aims to discover the logical relationships among sub-categories, revealing the paradigmatic model of “causal conditions—phenomenon—context—intervening conditions—action strategies—consequences”. Through in-depth analysis of the internal connections among the 7 sub-categories, this study summarized them into 4 main categories, which is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Results of axial coding

<i>Main Category</i>	<i>Sub-Categories</i>	<i>Relational Connotation</i>	<i>Typical Relational Paradigm</i>
C1 Goal Orientation System	B1 Concept Guidance B2 Goal Positioning	Concepts provide the value premise for goals, and goals are the concretization of concepts	Concept → Goal (guidance)
C2 Support Guarantee System	B3 Faculty Development B4 Platform Resources	Faculty and platforms are the foundational conditions for goal realization	Goal → Support (guarantee)
C3 Path Implementation System	B5 Curriculum System B6 Practice and Innovation	Curriculum and practice are the core carriers and core methods of cultivation	Support → Path (driving)
C4 Evaluation Feedback System	B7 Evaluation Assurance	Evaluation provides the basis for closed-loop system optimization	Path → Evaluation → Goal (feedback)

Axial coding reveals a progressive relationship among the four main categories: Goal Orientation System (C1) answers “what kind of talents to cultivate”—this is the logical starting point of talent cultivation; Support Guarantee System (C2) answers “on what basis to cultivate”—this is the foundational condition for realizing the goals; Path Implementation System (C3) answers “how to cultivate”—this is the core transformation mechanism from goals to outcomes; Evaluation Feedback System (C4) answers “how well are they cultivated”—this is the closed-loop link for continuous optimization. The four systems form a closed-loop evolutionary chain of “goal orientation → support guarantee → path driving → evaluation feedback → goal optimization”.

4.3 Selective Coding and Construction of the Model

Selective coding is the process of distilling the core category from the main categories and constructing theory through a storyline. By repeatedly comparing the relationships among the four main categories, this study identified Four-Dimensional Synergy as the core category (shown in Figure 1), whose connotation includes four dimensions: (1) Synergy in the Goal Dimension. Value guidance and competence cultivation are not dichotomous but achieve the unity of moral cultivation and talent development through the deep integration of curriculum ideological-political education and professional education; (2) Synergy in the Resource Dimension. Faculty, platform facilities, and digital resources are not isolated from each other but form a resource integration effect through bringing enterprises into education and university-enterprise co-construction ;(3) Synergy in the Path Dimension. Curriculum teaching, industry-education integration, and practice innovation are not pursued in series but realize collaborative education through the integration; (4) Synergy in the Actor Dimension. Multiple actors—government, universities, enterprises, industry associations,

students—are not in a master-servant relationship but achieve win-win outcomes through value co-creation.

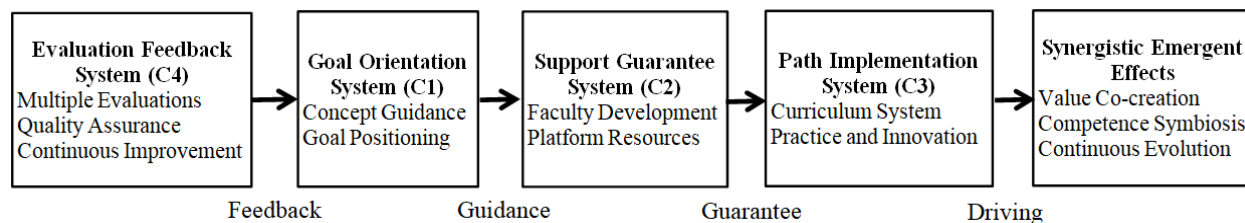


Figure 1: The Four-Dimensional Synergy Theoretical Model of New Business Talent Cultivation

The core operational logic of this model is: under the continuous monitoring of the Evaluation Feedback System (C4) and the return of information, the Goal Orientation System (C1) establishes the cultivation direction, the Support Guarantee System (C2) provides basic conditions, and the Path Implementation System (C3) transforms cultivation goals into practical outcomes; through the interactive mechanisms of “guidance—guarantee—driving—feedback” among the four systems, synergistic operation is achieved, ultimately giving rise to the systemic effects of value co-creation, competence symbiosis, and continuous evolution.

5.0 SYNERGISTIC MECHANISMS AND MODEL CONDENSATION

5.1 Intrinsic Mechanisms of Four-Dimensional Synergy

The intrinsic mechanism of four-dimensional collaboration is mainly reflected in the following aspects: (1) Dual-Drive Logic of the Goal Orientation System. The Goal Orientation System consists of two sub-dimensions: concept guidance and goal positioning. From the practices of the 46 universities, New Business talent cultivation goals exhibit a “dual-drive” characteristic: on one hand, driven by industrial demand—enterprises undergoing digital transformation urgently need composite talents who are both proficient in business operations and possess digital-intelligent skills; on the other hand, driven by educational principles—higher education must adhere to the fundamental task of fostering virtue and cultivating people, developing students’ sense of social responsibility and professional ethics. The synergy between the two is reflected in the fact that most universities incorporate both “value guidance” and “competence development” into their cultivation goals. (2) Resource Integration Mechanism of the Support Guarantee System. The core function of the Support Guarantee System is to transform dispersed resources into effective cultivation capabilities. The key to faculty development lies in dual-qualification and dual-competence, which means that teachers have both theoretical teaching abilities and practical guidance abilities. The key to platform resource construction lies in breaking the boundaries between on-campus and off-campus resources. (3) Co-evolutionary Characteristics of the Path Implementation System. The Path Implementation System comprises three sub-paths—curriculum, industry-education integration, and practice—which are not linearly sequential but co-evolve. Curriculum reform provides the knowledge foundation for industry-education integration; industry-education integration provides real-world scenarios for practice innovation; practice innovation, in turn, tests and drives curriculum reform. Notably, the synergy in the Path Implementation System exhibits distinct phased characteristics: the primary stage is dominated by curriculum reform; in the intermediate stage, the main goal is to achieve the integration of industry and education; in the advanced stage, a multidimensional and interconnected ecosystem is formed. (4) Closed-Loop Optimization Function

of the Evaluation Feedback System. The core function of the Evaluation Feedback System is to form a closed loop of “cultivation—evaluation—feedback—improvement”.

5.2 Comparative Analysis of Four Typical Models

Based on the Four-Dimensional Synergy model and combined with the resource endowments and institutional positioning of each university, this study further identifies four typical models of new business talent cultivation (shown in Table 4): (1) The Cross-boundary Integration Model is represented by Jiangsu Ocean University’s “Four-Cross Integration” and Anqing Normal University’s “The concept of Five Actions” concept. Its core lies in breaking multiple boundaries (disciplinary, regional, industrial) to integrate elements within a broader resource network. Its applicable condition is that the university inherently possesses certain comprehensive disciplinary advantages or location advantages to support cross-disciplinary and cross-border resource flow. (2) The Industry-Embedded Model is represented by Wuxi Institute of Commerce’s “Double High Plan” practice and Hunan Vocational College of Commerce’s “industry-education integration—university-industry cooperation—course-competition integration” integrated platform. This model emphasizes the deep embedding of real industrial needs throughout all links of talent cultivation, from cultivation plan formulation to curriculum content selection, from training project design to graduation evaluation standards, with active enterprise participation. It is suitable for universities with distinctive industry characteristics or a strong tradition of university-industry cooperation. (3) The Competition-Driven Model is represented by Hechi University’s “post-course-competition-certificate + ideological-political integration” and Zhongyuan Institute of Science and Technology’s “five-in-one” model. This model uses discipline competitions and innovation-entrepreneurship as the core drivers of competence development, forming a virtuous cycle through “promoting learning, teaching, and reform through competitions.” It is suitable for universities with a strong atmosphere of student innovation-entrepreneurship and solid discipline competition foundations. (4) The Government-University Synergy Model is represented by Guangdong University of Finance and Economics’ “government-university-enterprise trinity” and Hainan University’s “triple helix” framework. This model emphasizes the co-evolution of government, universities, and enterprises in talent cultivation: government provides policy guidance and resource support, enterprises provide demand pull and practice platforms, and universities provide the core supply of talent cultivation. It is suitable for regions where local government attaches great importance to industry-education integration and where policy resources are abundant.

Table 4: Comparison of Four Typical Models of New Business Talent Cultivation

<i>Model Type</i>	<i>Typical Cases</i>	<i>Core Characteristics</i>	<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Applicable Conditions</i>
Cross-boundary Integration Model	Jiangsu Ocean University; Anqing Normal University	Breaking multiple boundaries, integrating resources across disciplines, regions, industries, and borders	High comprehensiveness, broad student horizons	Universities with comprehensive disciplinary strengths or cross-border geographical advantages

Industry-Embedded Model	Wuxi Institute of Commerce; Hunan Vocational College of Commerce	Deeply embedding industrial needs into curriculum, training, evaluation throughout the whole process	Precise job alignment, high employment quality	Universities with clear industry backgrounds and strong university-industry cooperation foundations
Competition-Driven Model	Hechi University; Zhongyuan Institute of Science and Technology	Using discipline competitions and innovation entrepreneurship as drivers of competence development	Stimulates student initiative, outstanding innovation capabilities	Universities with active student participation and strong competition culture
Government-University Synergy Model	Guangdong University of Finance and Economics; Hainan University	Government policy guidance, university talent cultivation, and enterprise demand alignment working together	Strong policy support, broad resource integration scope	Regions where local government places high importance on industry-education integration and has abundant policy resources

5.3 Phased Laws of Model Evolution

Through comparing universities at different development stages, this study finds that the construction of new business talent cultivation models does not happen overnight but follows a phased evolutionary law of “point—line—area—body”: (1) Phase 1 (Point Exploration) : Reform breaks through from a single course or a single link, such as offering 1-2 digital-intelligent courses or organizing one enterprise site visit. The characteristics of this phase are limited reform scope and low risk, but no systemic effect has yet been formed. Most newly established undergraduate institutions are at this stage. (2) Phase 2 (Line Connection) : Based on earlier piloting, systematic reform is advanced along the main line of talent cultivation, such as restructuring the curriculum system or establishing industry-education integration mechanisms. The characteristics of this phase are that reform extends from “points” to “chains”, with curriculum, training, and internships becoming preliminary connected. Anhui Xinhua University’s “five wholes” in its New Business Experimental Class exemplify this feature. (3) Phase 3 (Area Coverage) : Reform covers all elements and all links of talent cultivation, forming a systematic cultivation model. At this stage, the goals, paths, resources, and evaluations form synergistic relationships, and the four systems in the Four-Dimensional Synergy model are basically established. Hechi University and Jiangsu Ocean University are at this stage. (4) Phase 4 (Body Ecosystem): Reform transcends the boundaries of a single university, forming a talent cultivation ecosystem with multiple participating

actors and multiple flows of resources. The hallmark of this stage is that university-industry cooperation upgrades from “project-based cooperation” to “platform-based sharing and government-university-enterprise-industry form a value-creating community. The evolution of Yancheng Teachers University’s cooperation with Beijing Huike Group from intentional cooperation to deep cooperation illustrates the progression from Phases 2-3 toward Phase 4.

6.0 DISCUSSION

6.1 Theoretical Contributions

The theoretical contributions of this study are mainly threefold. First, it constructs the “Four-Dimensional Synergy” theoretical model of new business talent cultivation. This model goes beyond the limitation of “single-dimensional reform discourse” in existing research, revealing the synergistic mechanisms among the four systems—goal orientation, support guarantee, path implementation, and evaluation feedback—and providing a systematic analytical framework for understanding New Business talent cultivation. Second, it identifies four typical models and their evolutionary phases of new business talent cultivation. Existing research has mostly focused on individual case analyses, lacking theoretical attempts to compare and integrate different models. Through cross-case comparison, this study distills four models—cross-boundary integration, industry-embedded, competition-driven, and government-university synergy—and reveals the “point-line-area-body” phased evolutionary law, providing theoretical references for different types of universities to choose appropriate reform paths. Third, it deepens the understanding of the intrinsic mechanisms of industry-education integration in collaborative education. This study finds that the depth of industry-education integration is positively correlated with the quality of new business talent cultivation, but integration is not simply “enterprise participation in teaching”. Rather, it is realized through deep integration across four dimensions—goal synergy, resource synergy, process synergy, and evaluation synergy. This finding refines the theoretical connotations of industry-education integration and responds to the practical dilemma of shallow university-industry cooperation.

6.2 Practical Implications

Based on the findings, differentiated recommendations are proposed for different types of universities. (1) For research universities, they should fully leverage their comprehensive disciplinary advantages and research resource advantages, with a focus on advancing the cross-boundary integration model. On one hand, they should break down barriers among economics, management, data science, and artificial intelligence to build a “Business + X” interdisciplinary curriculum system; on the other hand, they should transform high-level research into high-quality teaching resources, driving students’ innovation capability development through research projects. (2) For application-oriented undergraduate institutions, they should base themselves on local industrial needs and select 1-2 models among the four as their main direction. Institutions with obvious location advantages and relatively complete disciplinary coverage may draw on cross-integration model. Institutions with solid university-industry cooperation foundations may advance the industry-embedded model by building industry colleges and promoting order-based training. Institutions with outstanding student innovation capabilities may develop the competition-driven model. (3) For higher vocational colleges, they should take the industry-embedded model as the core path, aligning with industry standards and job requirements to construct an integrated

curriculum system. At the same time, they should emphasize the construction of digital training platforms, compensating for the shortage of real training resources through technologies such as virtual simulation.

6.3 Research Limitations and Future Directions

This study has the following limitations. Firstly, this study mainly relies on published literature as the primary data source, with insufficient coverage of first-hand interview data from some universities, possibly missing tacit knowledge that is not articulated in practice. Future research could select typical universities for in-depth ethnographic studies to reveal the micro-mechanisms of model operation. Secondly, although grounded theory excels at theory construction, it cannot test the quantitative relationships of the theoretical model. Future research could develop an evaluation scale based on the “Four-Dimensional Synergy” model and conduct empirical testing through large-sample questionnaire surveys. Lastly, current new business reforms are still in an exploratory phase, and the models summarized in this study may adjust with technological iteration and policy changes. Future research should continuously track new trends in talent cultivation, especially the deep impact of artificial intelligence on business education.

7.0 CONCLUSION

New Business talent cultivation is a systematic project for higher education to respond to the transformative changes of the digital economy era. Through grounded theory analysis of practices from 46 universities, this study constructs the “Four-Dimensional Synergy” theoretical model, revealing the four-dimensional synergistic logic of “goal orientation—support guarantee—path driving—evaluation closure” in new business talent cultivation, and condensing four typical models and the “point-line-area-body” phased evolutionary law. The findings show that the essence of new business talent cultivation is not simply curriculum addition or method improvement, but the holistic reconstruction and co-evolution of the goal system, resource system, path system, and evaluation system. Only by breaking down disciplinary barriers, crossing organizational boundaries, integrating multiple resources, merging value education with competence development, and building a closed-loop mechanism for continuous improvement can we truly cultivate high-quality new business talents suited to the digital economy era.

Acknowledgments

This research was supported by the Shandong Province Undergraduate Teaching Reform Research Project (M2023333), National Economic Management Teaching and Research "14th Five Year Plan" 2025 Annual Project (JGJKZD-25002; JGJKZD-25003); Research Project on Empowering Higher Education with Artificial Intelligence in Shandong Province (WL-AIGJ25003); Undergraduate Education and Teaching Reform Research Project of Harbin Institute of Technology (XJG2024018); Teaching Reform Research Project of Harbin Institute of Technology (Weihai) (2025CZZ08; 2025ZZZC04).

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