

## Giving Full Play to Advantages of Local Colleges and Universities to Promote Local Economic Development

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**Abstract:** As China's socialist modernization enters a new era, China's economic development is facing new requirements and challenges brought about by transition. Local colleges and universities, as an important force in local social and economic development, should give full play to their advantages in teaching and scientific research and make greater contributions to local economic development. This paper introduces the significance of making use of the advantages of local colleges and universities to facilitate local economic development, analyzes relevant problems, expounds the working principles, and puts forward some strategies for reference.

### 1. Introduction

With China's socialist modernization entering a new era, the country's economic development is facing new requirements and challenges brought about by transition. The report delivered at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China clearly pointed out that "China's economy has evolved from high-speed growth to high-quality development, and is now in a key period of transforming development model, optimizing economic structure and changing growth driver." Local colleges and universities, as an important force in local social and economic development, should give full play to their advantages in teaching and scientific research and make greater contributions to local economic development. It is required in the report mentioned above that "we should improve vocational education and training system and deepen the integration of production and education as well as the cooperation between universities and enterprises." This is both a direction and goal of local colleges and universities in the new era. It is a key task of common concern for local governments, colleges and universities to closely connect local higher education with local economic development, foster a sound atmosphere of mutual supplement and good interaction, and give full play to the potential of local colleges and universities in promoting economic development.

### 2. Significance of leveraging the advantages of local colleges and universities to advance local economic development

Local colleges and universities contributing to local economic development is a systematic work featuring wide coverage, long-term efforts, detailed projects and high technologies. The core is that local colleges and universities should, according to the condition and needs of local economic development, make full use of their advantages in personnel training, knowledge and theory, as well as technological research while doing well in education, scientific research and school running. In this way, they can provide targeted technologies and talented people, and cultural and intellectual support for local economic development.

This is a mutually beneficial and win-win process for the development of colleges, universities and local economy. For local colleges and universities, high-quality talented people fostered by them serve as a driver for local economy; their achievements in scientific research are a propeller for local economy. What is worth noticing is that China now suffers from unbalanced regional economic development, leading to characteristics and problems of economic development varying from one region to another. In particular, some regions are experiencing a low-level development,

which can be shown by their lack of talented people, technologies and innovative capacity, and difficulties in transformation. This requires strong support from local colleges and universities. In addition, local economic development will in return facilitate the development of local colleges and universities in various aspects. Local development will not only enable colleges and universities to obtain more funds and hardware support, improve their popularity in the society, and enhance employment rate of graduates; but also help their scientific research achievements become more practical and applicable, and continuously improve their teaching and research capabilities. At the same time, boosting local economy itself provides an opportunity for revising and improving the education system. The integration of different majors with local industries is also a perfect chance, rational examination, and practical and comprehensive analysis of the reform in colleges and universities.

### **3. Problems faced by local colleges and universities in advancing local economic development**

(1) The efforts of local colleges and universities are not in line with the needs of local economic development, and there is a big gap. In fact, restricted by China's traditional education system, local colleges and universities have long been relatively isolated, with little interaction with the society. They have developed their own system in terms of curriculum, majors and goals, without fully taking into account changes in the needs of social and economic development. In particular, education is not related to local economic development, and thus is not targeted. Therefore, advantages in theory, scientific research and talented people are divorced from local economic development and cannot solve specific development problems. This leads to a common phenomenon that it is difficult for students to get employed and for scientific research achievements to be applied.

(2) The idea of running schools of local colleges and universities is not clear enough, and their awareness of facilitating local economic development needs to be improved. The idea of running a school is critical to education quality of all kinds of colleges and universities at all levels. Only when we have proper ideas can we clearly define educational goals and direction of schools, and provide suitable courses and professional teachers. However, at present, some local colleges and universities are not clear when it comes to how to run a school. They blindly evolve themselves from vocational schools into colleges or universities, or increase the number of majors without considering their actual needs. Nowadays, building comprehensive colleges and universities has become a trend. This has led to such problems as imbalance between educational capabilities and school development, unsatisfactory quality of teaching and scientific research, and unsuitable majors in terms of the needs of local economy, thus influencing the role of local colleges and universities in boosting local economic development.

(3) The ability of teachers in local colleges and universities need to be strengthened. First of all, at present, teaching staff in local colleges and universities has great mobility, especially young and middle-aged teachers, who are the new force in teaching and scientific research. Many scientific research projects for local economy often fail halfway due to personnel mobility. Second, local colleges and universities are relatively weak in terms of the scale of schools, social reputation, benefits, and majors, which makes them difficult to attract high-quality talented people and results in an aging teaching team. Meanwhile, teaching ability varies from one person to another. Third, compared with prestigious universities, teachers in local universities engage in lower-level communications, receive poorer training, gain fewer opportunities, and lag behind in learning cutting-edge theories, resulting in insufficient innovative capabilities. In addition, backward hardware restricts progress in teaching and research.

(4) Local colleges and universities, instead of having their own characteristics, are faced with the problem of homogenization. However, characteristics are an important competitiveness. At present, some local colleges and universities do not pay attention to creating their own characteristics; rather, they blindly expand the scale of their schools and introduce all majors that are popular in the society, which makes them similar to each other. Therefore, education cannot integrate with local social and economic development, and majors and scientific research projects that meet local needs are not

prioritized. All these have affected the effectiveness of local colleges and universities in promoting local economic development

#### **4. Principles of local colleges and universities in advancing local economic development**

(1) Practicality. Local colleges and universities should first have a thorough and comprehensive understanding of the actual needs of local economic development. They should take the initiative to carry out investigations and researches and make regular visits of experts and teachers to local places an institution, so as to know the latest developments of economic development and use this information as an important basis for education and scientific research. In this way, theories can be combined with practices and the timeliness and practicability of work can be proved.

(2) Coordination. Local colleges and universities promoting local economic development, which cannot be simply regarded as cooperation between universities and enterprises, is a systematic social work. Therefore, this effort should be integrated into the overall management of the government. The government should carry out macro-regulation and coordination of various work as well as schools and enterprises, to ensure the overall progress of local colleges and universities in economic development. Besides, in holistic management, the government can serve as a bridge between universities and enterprises to make their communications smoother, and government supervision can ensure standardized and orderly efforts of local colleges and universities, which will improve work efficiency and quality.

(3) Innovation. Actually, there is no fixed model for local colleges and universities to refer to. We must be innovative, given great differences in various colleges and universities and diverse needs of local economic development. Local colleges and universities should take full advantage of academic freedom, try to innovate and to be good at innovation, actively explore new ideas and ways, and provide strong intellectual support for local economic development.

#### **5. Strategies for local colleges and universities to advance local economic development**

(1) Local colleges and universities should change their school-running concepts and set a clear direction. In addition to concept changing, they should strengthen the awareness of serving the society, leverage the advantages in teaching and scientific research, and combine educational objectives with the needs of talented people. What they also should do is to introduce majors and targeted education on the basis of specific conditions of local economy. At the same time, teachers should be open-minded, know more about the society and enterprises, strengthen cross-industrial communications, and accelerate the application of scientific research achievements in colleges and universities.

(2) Local colleges and universities should optimize the structure of majors. In terms of majors and curriculum, they should, while being practical and far-sighted, analyze and take into consideration the actual and long-term needs of local economic development. It is necessary to reflect local economic characteristics in majors, take enterprises as an expansion of teaching resources by actively getting in touch with local enterprises, and enrich teaching contents and methods. Besides, it is imperative to improve the correspondence between teaching practices and local economic development and make greater efforts in fostering practice-oriented personnel.

(3) Local colleges and universities should enhance the capacity of teaching staff. This is a priority for improving school-running level and also a key to enhancing the effectiveness in universities' efforts to facilitate economic development. Colleges and universities should pay attention to current conditions of their own schools and take practical and effective measures, such as recruiting new teachers, increasing staff benefits and offering targeted and professional training for teachers, so as to solve existing problems including great mobility of teachers, aging staff and lack of high-quality, compound teachers. By attracting talented people and helping them stay willingly and do well, we can surely improve education quality and enhance the ability of boosting local economic development.

(4) Local colleges and universities should proactively strengthen their cooperation with

enterprises. Actually, school-enterprise cooperation is a common and ideal model. It enables schools to make educational goals of colleges and universities more targeted through obtaining direct feedback from enterprises and combining with market orientation. Meanwhile, this model also promotes resource sharing between universities and enterprises. In particular, enterprises can help reduce running cost of schools by offering sites, equipment and internship opportunities. Therefore, effective school-enterprise cooperation is a win-win model. There are several common ways: universities and enterprises jointly build training bases to help students experience actual working environments and work together to provide relevant courses to make education more targeted and practical; enterprises place some R&D or production projects in universities to combine students' theoretical study with practice; and universities and enterprises offer courses for each other and pursue common development, which means staff in enterprises impart practical experience to students and teachers from universities teach theories for enterprise staff.

(5) Local colleges and universities should directly participate in local economic development. Given advantages in talented people, technologies and information, universities can set up affiliated enterprise entities to provide, for the society, such services as technology R&D, consultation and business training. By doing so, colleges and universities can broaden channels for cooperation with enterprises and make local economic development more vibrant; besides, they can also create more practical opportunities for teaching, which is beneficial to fostering students with both skills and degrees.

(6) Local colleges and universities should attach importance to school-running characteristics. They should, on the basis of local cultural heritage and regional features, as well as competitive and leading industries, create their own characteristics, develop competitive majors and set proper research directions, so as to provide unique services and advance economic development.

Giving full play to the advantages of local colleges and universities to promote local economic development is a powerful measure to leverage social functions of schools, solve difficulties facing local economic development and promote sustained and stable economic development for China as a whole. In practice, the government should do well in organization and management, and local universities and enterprises should take the initiative to participate in this process to get better results.

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