

# Exploring the Abilities-Cultivation Model for Students in Undergraduate Academies in China

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## Abstract

Based on the external impetus of social development and the internal demand for universities to return to the cultivation of abilities, modern universities are actively exploring the reform of the academy system, constructing high-quality ability-cultivation models, doing “addition” in the process of learning and living, and doing “subtraction” in the evaluation of the results of cultivation, achieving certain educational results. However, at the same time, the construction of academies is also facing difficulties in changing concepts, allocating quality resources, and the realistic dilemma of collaborative education between “academy” and “college”. The bottleneck of academy development should be addressed by actively exploring the school’s distinctive model, optimising top-level design, and enriching its spiritual culture. Facing the wave of reform in the academy system, universities should promote the localisation of the academy system in an orderly manner through deliberate thinking.

**Keywords:** modern university academy; undergraduate education; the tutorial system in the academy; personnel training; student development



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## Introduction

Promoting high-quality development of higher education is the main strategic task of higher education development (Liu 2021). For a hundred years, the focus of university evaluation as well as the standard on which first-class universities are based has been ability cultivation (Yuan 2023). In recent years, reforms related to teaching and ability cultivation in universities have been continuously deepening and becoming a key topic of concern in the academic community (Yuan, Zhang, and Wu 2022). Undergraduate education, as a crucial step in ability cultivation in universities, often determines the upper limit of university development. The academy system is a major reform and innovation in the ability-cultivation mode of undergraduate education, and has been widely applied in the field of higher education in China in recent years. As of July 2020, more than 90 universities in China have established over 300 academies (Han 2020). Compared to 2017, the number of universities in China with academies has increased by 60, an increase of 162% (Gong 2021). It can be seen that the exploration of the academy system in China's undergraduate education has reached a certain scale. From the perspective of world history, China has borrowed the model of academies from other countries. In China, it is necessary to pay attention to the inevitability and irreplaceability that made academies a rational choice for higher education reform, the practical difficulties faced in their implementation, and how to fully leverage the advantages of academies in abilities cultivation.

## The Logic of the Emergence of Modern Chinese University Academies

The implementation of the modern academy system in Chinese universities can be traced back to 1949 when the New Asia Academy was founded by Qian Mu and Tang Junyi in Hong Kong. Subsequently, Chung Chi Academy was founded in 1951 and the United Academy of Hong Kong was formed by the merger of five private academies, Guangqiao, Guangxia, Huaqiao, Wenhua and Pingzheng Accounting Academy, in 1956. These three academies merged to form the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1963. Compared to the residential college system of British universities, the two paths of formation are the establishment of academies alongside universities, and seeing universities as a "collection" of these academies, both of which are essentially based on a federal organisational model, with each academy having extremely high autonomy. China's modern university academies, as a new organisational model, are embedded in the existing ability-cultivation system. Starting from the establishment of the four major academies of Fudan University in 2005, namely Zhi De, Teng Fei, Ke Qing, and Ren Zhong, as well as the Wenzhi Garden of Xi'an Jiaotong University, the establishment of the Asia Pacific Academies Alliance in 2014 marked the official wave of Chinese universities building academies. Since the start of the new century, the rapid development of the modern academy system has been the result of a combination of internal and external forces.

## **The Promotion of Social Development**

The relationship between education and society has always been a fundamental clue to the development of education. The socio-economic and political system determines the content, structure, and management system of education, as well as the direction of educational reform in terms of whom to cultivate and for whom to cultivate people. At the same time, education also has a social development function, promoting the development of politics, economy, and culture. The contradiction between social development needs and existing ability training standards is increasingly prominent. On the one hand, the rapid development of the social economy places greater emphasis on cultivating high-quality innovative abilities, and universities should “strive to cultivate abilities that meet the needs of future competition” (He and Liu 2019, 80). On the other hand, only by cultivating higher quality innovative forces can we promote the transformation of productivity and accelerate scientific and technological innovation. The original specialised ability-training model has become difficult to adapt to the updates and changes in science and technology. Overemphasising specialised training makes it difficult for students to have a comprehensive theoretical foundation, as it is always limited to a narrow major, leading to the extinction of innovation and individuality.

## **The Inherent Need for University Development**

The primary function of higher education is to cultivate abilities. The fundamental mission of higher education is to cultivate individuals with comprehensive development in morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics, and labour. Undergraduate education, as the starting point for cultivating top-notch innovative abilities, has accumulated drawbacks for a long time, and still faces the problem of the “body” entering popularisation, the “brain” entering universalisation and “habits” still being elitist (Wu 2021).

In terms of cultivating objectives, universities have gradually deviated from their educational orientation. The first step in cultivating top-notch innovative abilities is to cultivate students’ complete personalities. Modern universities are still exploring various ability-cultivation models to meet society’s demand for high-level composite abilities, but essentially neglect the cultivation of students’ personalities. In terms of the cultivation process, there is a strong utilitarian colour, and the inherent ideal concepts of universities have been completely lost. Students learn in order to obtain a better job, while teachers teach in order to impart various practical professional skills. Both are essentially constantly catering to the judgement standards of successful individuals in society. As Qian Liqun pointed out at the Ideal University Symposium held by President Liu Daoyu in 2012, “Some universities in China, including Peking University, are cultivating some ‘exquisite egoists’” (Liu and Liu 2012, 2). Based on the above reflection and criticism of university ability cultivation, educators have begun to attempt to break away from the original tinkering reform and to explore new ability-cultivation models.

## Practical Principles for Exploring the Reform of University Academies

Modern university academies have developed various models, which can be divided into full staff and elite types based on their student numbers, full process and stage types based on their coverage of time, and life management, general education, and mixed types based on their functions. Overall, various models of the academy system are essentially undergraduate education ability-cultivation models and student management systems, relying on students' living spaces and attempting to expand this living space into the field of education and teaching. Many universities that carry out modern academy system reform have taken the path of endowing students with educational functions in their living spaces (Zhang and Fang 2016). In particular, in the current situation of distorted evaluation, competition failure, and individual loss of independence in universities, the academy system is a beneficial attempt to seek knowledge and ability (Yuan and Wei 2022). On the one hand, university academies add to the learning and life processes to better guide the development of students' abilities. On the other hand, subtraction is applied in the evaluation of the training results, focusing on the cultivation of students' personality and utilising unique "algorithms" to fully utilise the educational function.

### **Adding to the Process of Learning and Living**

Among the 17 top universities in China, almost all the academies have organised teaching designs, and each has its own independent public ceremonial space (Cheng and Gong 2016). Among them, student dormitories are the most utilised living spaces. In this expanded living space, comparing the construction plans of academies in various universities, some commonalities can be found.

One is the "addition" of general education. Each university regards academies as an important site for general education, emphasising the cultivation of students' humanistic literacy and theoretical perspectives. According to the ability-cultivation model of professional colleges, the curriculum system for undergraduate students can be basically divided into three categories: professional education courses, general education courses, and development direction courses. The general education conducted under the original college system mainly relied on the general education courses offered, which had a relatively singular focus. Moreover, among the various general education courses offered, due to limited high-quality educational resources, most of the general education courses are undertaken by teachers with insufficient teaching experience or teachers with job burnout, resulting in unclear curriculum training objectives and uneven course quality. Meanwhile, due to students' utilitarian pursuit of a high grade point average (GPA) or their lazy goal of only completing credits, the criteria for selecting a certain course tend to be more focused on whether the course assessment method is simple and how the teacher scores it, rather than on the quality of the course or their learning interests. The phenomenon of teachers not valuing a course and students not studying it is very common, and various "water courses" are constantly emerging, making it difficult to implement general education effectively. The academy system has

effectively broadened the channels for ability cultivation and provided general education from multiple perspectives. The general education system of the Chinese University of Hong Kong Academy is very comprehensive, and includes comprehensive education, general education courses, weekly meetings, weekly activities, and support from the General Education Resource Center (Chung Chi Academy of the Chinese University of Hong Kong n.d.). Both Fudan University and East China Normal University academies emphasise the need for comprehensive development of second classrooms in academies, providing comprehensive education to students through lectures, organising reading activities where the classics are read, and other forms of activities. The main body of general education courses has shifted to academies, and due to the different cultural characteristics of different academies, each course has more targeted training objectives. For example, students from various academies of Xi'an Jiaotong University are required to take five comprehensive courses, focusing on, among others, improving students' expression ability, international perspective, Chinese cultural literacy, and critical thinking, to cultivate students' broad interests and enable them to conduct scientific career planning (Pengkang Academy of Xi'an Jiaotong University n.d.) and to promote students' comprehensive development in all aspects of morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics, and labour.

Secondly, another commonality is the addition of practical activities. Each university centres around the student community and regards the academy as an important platform for various practical and academic activities, emphasising the cultivation of students' academic literacy and problem awareness. Fudan University Renzhong Academy holds an intermittent academic training camp, encouraging students to participate in various academic forums. Northeast Normal University Yuanhui Academy regularly organises training courses, academic competitions, and other activities to enhance students' academic literacy. The implementation of various academic activities not only broadens students' theoretical research horizons, but also stimulates their potential, enhances their sense of self-achievement, generates interest in knowledge, and promotes their independent learning. In addition, student management organisations and various student clubs in academies are important practical platforms for cultivating students' abilities, such as mutual learning and care among students. Pengkang Academy of Xi'an Jiaotong University has organised students to participate in social practice, with practical topics covering various aspects such as history and culture, social livelihood, basic education, and ecological protection (Pengkang Academy of Xi'an Jiaotong University n.d.). The implementation of various social practice activities is conducive to cultivating students' problem awareness, combining theory with practice, and transforming "dead knowledge" into "living knowledge". It is also conducive to cultivating students' social responsibility and dedication.

Thirdly, there is the "addition" of guided learning construction. Each university has equipped the academy with a professional team of mentors, achieving individualised teaching and assisting in the personalised cultivation of students. Before the construction of the academy system, China's undergraduate education had already

begun to try the tutorial system as a mode of education. However, due to insufficient teaching staff and high student-teacher ratios, the implementation was not ideal and gradually became formalised. However, this does not mean that there is no possibility of implementing the tutorial system in undergraduate education in China. The academy system provides this institutional environment, and its core is the tutorial system. For example, the Academy of BeiHang University has established a “guidance ecosystem” of collaborative education among ideological and political advisors, academic advisors, peer mentors, and social mentors. The teacher-student ratio for older mentors can reach 1:6, and the peer-mentor ratio can reach 1:4 (Beihang University Academy n.d.). The mentor system of Meng Xiancheng Academy at East China Normal University includes four categories: life mentors, student mentors, social mentors, and part-time homeroom teachers, with a teacher-student ratio of 1:8 for student mentors (Meng Xiancheng Academy of East China Normal University n.d.). By introducing peer mentors and social mentors to expand the mentoring team, a complete mentoring system has been formed, which to some extent solves the problem of high student-teacher ratios. Various mentors leverage their strengths to help students achieve personal growth. For example, peer mentors can become close friends due to their age, making it easier to understand students’ psychological confusion; academic mentors are more inclined towards resolving academic confusion and providing academic guidance; part-time homeroom teachers tend to focus on students’ daily life management, while social mentors mainly provide guidance on students’ career development plans and life development directions. From this, it can be seen that under the ability-cultivation system of academies, the tutorial system has played a role in cultivating and guiding students’ academic, psychological, and lifestyle habits, making it possible and feasible to teach students according to their aptitude.

Overall, modern university academies have made many additions to general education, practical activities, and guidance construction compared to the ability-cultivation models of previous professional colleges. In terms of space, they establish a community life, and dormitory buildings are no longer just places to sleep and rest, gradually becoming a home for students to learn and grow healthily. In terms of time, various extracurricular activities are carried out, such as the second classroom, general education courses, academic lectures, and related social practice activities in the academy. Compared to the professional core courses offered by the college, students’ time is fully utilised, and students immerse themselves in it, creating a stronger sense of belonging to the academy. In the process of studying at the academy, students can be more influenced by university knowledge and culture. The goal of this series of “additive” measures is to help students break out of the professional learning system on the basis of constantly broadening their horizons, clarifying their self-awareness through continuous experimentation, guiding them to constantly ask themselves what kind of person they want to be, and continuously enriching their meaningful university life.

## **Subtract the Evaluation Results**

Modern university academies are not only doing “addition”, but also “subtraction”. The essence of a series of “additive” measures is also doing “subtraction” for the results. This is mainly reflected in the student evaluation and ability development goals of the academy. However, it should be clear that “subtraction” does not mean not valuing it, but rather a relatively intensive focus.

In terms of the student evaluation system, the academy system places more emphasis on process evaluation and value-added evaluation, rather than relying solely on the final examination results. This multidimensional evaluation method can highlight the potential and plasticity of student development. For example, the comprehensive quality evaluation of Zhixing Academy at BeiHang University emphasises students’ rational thinking and critical abilities, good scientific and humanistic literacy, cross-cultural communication and communication skills, teamwork and innovation abilities (Beihang University Academy n.d.). The Xinhua Academy and Guangwen Academy of Taizhou University adopt an honour credit management model, which comprehensively evaluates students by participating in four module activities: “Wenxin” courses (general education courses), cultural activities (including quality development), social practice, and task achievement every year. The total accumulated credits must meet the honour credit requirements of the academy (Taizhou University 2021). The transformation of the evaluation system has reduced students’ professional learning pressure and provided them with ample time to enrich themselves. From the changes in evaluation methods and content, it can also be seen that academies place more emphasis on the cultivation of students’ abilities and qualities. By organically combining it with the cultivation of knowledge and qualities in professional colleges, they can better promote the comprehensive development of students.

In terms of ability-cultivation goals, academies place more emphasis on cultivating students’ diverse abilities, rather than emphasising the superposition of various knowledge and skills. This “subtraction” may appear to be a relaxation of students’ academic requirements, but in essence, it is a refined cultivation of students’ comprehensive development. As proposed by Pengkang Academy of Xi’an Jiaotong University, the goal of ability cultivation is to cultivate academy students who are honest and trustworthy, who have a sense of social responsibility and a sense of democracy, as well as overall situation awareness and creative ability (Pengkang Academy of Xi’an Jiaotong University n.d.). The Yuanhui Academy of Northeast Normal University aims to cultivate research-oriented reserve abilities with noble ideological and moral character, a strong sense of social responsibility, a broad international perspective, a solid theoretical foundation in education, good educational research ability, lifelong learning ability, practical ability, and innovative spirit. After proposing the goal, the results need to be evaluated. For students, the gains in the academy may not necessarily be explicit or immediately effective, and they may not even feel that they have gained skills and knowledge, but in fact, they have grown under the subtle influence of the academy environment. Taking the evaluation of the University of Macau

Accommodation Academy after it had been established for two years as an example, it was found that academy students performed significantly better than those who are not included in the academy model in terms of physical activity, art, culture, leadership skills, and peer relationships, especially in terms of cultural and artistic appreciation abilities (Cheng and Gong 2016). By utilising the explicit curriculum system and implicit cultural education environment, the academy has been very effective in cultivating students' various abilities, including the unity, co-operation, and innovation abilities gained through frequent and close exchanges in the academy, the international cognitive and analytical abilities, as well as rational thinking and critical abilities gained in the second classroom of the academy, and the good political direction, ideological and moral values gained through regular teacher-student exchanges in the academy.

The “subtraction” of the academy system focuses on comprehensive development in morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics, and labour. Focusing on the fundamental function of educating and cultivating people, it addresses the drawbacks of modern education that places too much emphasis on the cultivation of professional skills while neglecting character education, and that places too much emphasis on the cultivation of innovative abilities while neglecting the cultivation of students' complete personalities. Reducing the number of “cultivation goals” will reduce the burden caused by too many goals. In short, “subtracting” the results, combined with a series of “additive” measures, is ultimately aimed at promoting the maximum development of students' abilities, that is, helping them explore their interests and advantages. Essentially, they are all aimed at better building a high-quality higher education ability training system, with a greater emphasis on cultivating students' complete personalities.

## The Realistic Dilemma of the Construction of University Academies

As an important system for ability cultivation in many world-class universities, the academy system has achieved certain educational advantages in localisation exploration, using unique “algorithms”. However, currently, the construction of the academy system in China is mostly concentrated in top-tier key undergraduate academies, with relatively few regular academies, private colleges, and vocational colleges. In the first round of “double first class” construction of universities, 36 have established academies. In addition, due to issues such as insufficient innate conditions and weak development, the effectiveness of academic education has not yet been fully realised, and there is an urgent need to break through various practical difficulties.

### **Difficulty in Changing Ideological Concepts**

The most fundamental thing is to carry out ideological transformation, which is the starting point of institutional transformation. The transformation of many educational systems ultimately boils down to the transformation of educational concepts and ideas.

On the one hand, it is to adhere to the concept of professional education. Since the establishment of the People's Republic of China, China's higher education has followed



the Soviet Union's model of specialised education and adjusted departments. Comprehensive universities have been re-organised to establish various professional colleges, and the training paths for various high-level specialised abilities have been planned from top to bottom, providing precise career positioning for everyone. This specialised and one-sided development of education is inevitably difficult to adapt to the rapid development of the economy and the need for technological changes and updates, and it is also difficult to promote personal comprehensive development. This concept of professional education has continued to this day and conflicts with academies' concept of comprehensive development, which hinders the full play of the educational function of academies. On the other hand, it adheres to the ideological concept of valuing "management" over "education", neglects the dominant position of students, and still focuses on teacher-led planning. Colleges and universities actively carry out the construction of the academy system, divide various activity spaces, and equip their hardware very well. However, the various activities carried out lack depth and breadth, and their adaptability to student needs is relatively low. A mentor may be another term for a counsellor. In the eyes of managers, academies may only be seen by students as a professional college that "changes the soup without changing the dressing", or it may not be significantly different from regular dormitories. While being formalised, it can also cause various administrative institutions to become bloated. It is difficult for this top-down planned system construction to take root. The fundamental reason for the "empty slate" still lies in the difficulties in updating and transforming educational concepts, giving students a true dominant position, and the strict restrictions on various activities of students by various managements; the position of professional education is still difficult to shake.

### **Difficulty in Allocating High-Quality Resources**

In the context of the popularisation of higher education, the shortage of high-quality educational resources is becoming increasingly prominent. The first reason for the construction of the academy is the lack of sufficient financial resources to ensure the daily activities of the academy, such as inviting various experts to hold lectures. School funding is the primary resource that restricts the operation and development of universities (Fu and Ma 2020). Abundant educational funds may not necessarily lead to the construction of a good academy, but without sufficient funds, it is impossible to run a good academy. In recent years, while the proportion of China's higher education financial funds to gross domestic product (GDP) has been increasing year by year, inter-school and regional differences have become increasingly apparent. Some undergraduate colleges and universities in underdeveloped areas often face financial constraints, making it even more difficult to support the reform of academies. Secondly, there is a lack of sufficient material resources to meet the needs of the academy for sufficient activity space and various supporting facilities. Thirdly, there is a lack of high-quality human resources, with a shortage of mentors and mentors whose quality is a cause for concern. There are very few mentors and counsellors who have received professional training, making it difficult to meet the personalised development needs of students. In short, many universities are in a state of resource scarcity, which further

leads to a lack of necessities for the construction of academies, such as the tutorial system and credit system. In terms of internal allocation of resources, each academy has a different size. Simply distributing resources evenly will inevitably lead to a certain waste of resources. How to co-ordinate the allocation of resources between different academies to maximise the utilisation of limited resources is also a very important and thorny issue, which universities are still actively exploring.

### **Difficulties in Collaborative Education between “Academies” and “Colleges”**

Unlike the generation path of Western universities, modern Chinese university academies are embedded within universities from the outside. This external embeddedness will inevitably break the path dependence of a series of organisational systems, the most direct of which is the breaking of the original organisational structure based on colleges, resulting in changes in the division of functions between academies and colleges. The relationship between academies and professional colleges in universities is generally parallel. For example, the Renzhong Academy of Fudan University covers the departments of philosophy, history, tourism, and management. Students from each academy have different professional training programmes and also receive the same ability-training programme from the academy. The ideal functional division is generally a matrix organisational structure. The academy is responsible for student life management, general education, and the second classroom. The academy is responsible for professional teaching and related academic affairs of the subject. For example, Zhaoqing Academy proposed the guiding ideology of the “subject professional academy system” and the “life community academy system”. The department of the Chinese University of Hong Kong is responsible for “subject-based” teaching, and the academy is responsible for “student-based” education.

However, the premise for this matrix-based functional division to be effective is that each functional department is independent of each other and does not overlap. Due to the overlapping of some functions, a rough division of labour between colleges and academies will inevitably lead to unclear division of labour and unclear functional positioning, which may lead to disharmony between the two. For example, regarding the division of responsibilities between academy teachers, college mentors, and counsellors, what specifically needs to be done by academy mentors? The main responsibilities of these teachers are to provide student guidance in the academy or scientific research and teaching in the college, and to be responsible for student management issues. Some universities, in order to clarify the relationship between academies and colleges, have divided their functions too finely, resulting in bloated and complex administrative institutions, further exacerbating the contradiction between academic and administrative power. In addition, the collaborative development between academies and colleges is also reflected in the connection between the first and second classrooms, as well as between professional education and general education. In fact, all aspects of student development are a continuous whole, and the relationship between professional education and general education is not completely separated. They are

managed separately by different educational entities, which to some extent is not conducive to the comprehensive development of students.

## Reflections on the Problems Faced by the Undergraduate Academy Model

Undergraduate academies are an ability-cultivation model actively explored by various universities, which combines the old and the new. The “new” lies in its being a new form of institutional organisation that effectively expands the educational space of traditional classrooms and points out a new path for solving the current dilemma of ability cultivation in undergraduate education. The “old” lies in its revival of the spiritual and cultural tradition of the ancient Chinese academy system, introducing the spirit of ancient academies’ learning for academic purposes and pursuing personal perfection, and drawing on the educational methods of teachers and students “living together, leisurely traveling through mountains and rivers, questioning difficulties, and mutual inspiration” (Guo 2013, 77). Therefore, the academy model is essentially a modern and innovative ability-cultivation model and student management system developed on the basis of inheriting the spirit of ancient Chinese academies and borrowing from the Western form of the accommodation college system. Focusing on the current situation, how to better promote the localisation of the academy system and leverage the effectiveness of academy education is a problem that various universities are jointly exploring.

### **Establishing Correct Cognition and Exploring School-Based Models**

First, universities must establish a correct understanding of what academies require. One is to recognise the practical difficulties that constrain the construction of modern university academies, in order to determine whether the necessary conditions to promote the model of academic education are present. In the wave of the “academy craze”, not every university is suitable for applying this educational model. Chinese universities cannot rush forward and seek quick success and instant benefits; it is a long process of exploration (Gao 2012). The academy system only provides a possibility for diversified choices, and there are also various possibilities for reforming ability-cultivation models to explore and innovate. Second, universities must establish the concept of student-centred education; the ultimate goal of the reform of the academy system is to provide a supportive community learning environment (Liu 2017) that enables students to participate in various activities related to the construction of the academy and immerse themselves in the learning and life of the academy. The construction of the academy system should always revolve around students’ learning and life, guide students to participate in the construction and management of the academy, create an atmosphere of learning freedom and democracy, and ultimately promote students’ comprehensive development. Third, the functional positioning of the development of academies must be clarified. Whether the construction of academies is based on a student management model or an ability-cultivation model, universities need to accurately position themselves based on their situation. With a clear understanding of the above three

points, the construction of the academy system in universities will at least not deviate from the track. Each university has different educational goals and cultural concepts. If it decides to implement the academy system, it should also actively explore the school-based model of the academy system based on its unique conditions. Universities should not blindly transplant the foreign residential college model or the mature academy construction model existing in Chinese universities due to institutional inertia. Instead, they should leverage their strengths and avoid weaknesses, fully utilise their advantages, and explore school-based academy models that are in line with their reality.

### **Breaking Path Dependencies and Optimising Top-Level Design**

In terms of the reform of the university system as a whole, the construction of the academy system will inevitably involve a series of institutional adjustments and reforms, such as ability-cultivation concepts, incentive and evaluation systems, and logistics support systems, rather than just a simple separation and re-organisation of the functions of academies and colleges. If we simply introduce the academy system without timely adjustments to the relevant systems, always confined to the same institutional framework for repair and supplementation, and the ability-cultivation model has not undergone fundamental changes, then the academy will merely become another nickname for students' living space, reduced to a simple and one-sided student management system, without touching the foundation. Therefore, the reform of the academy system must break the path dependence of the original system and optimise the top-level design.

To establish an efficient organisational structure for the academy, the first step is to continuously improve the tutorial system, which is the core of the construction of the academy. The key to implementing the tutorial system lies in quantity and quality. In terms of quantity, it is necessary to build a diversified tutorial system, to introduce peer mentors and extracurricular co-operative mentors, and to continuously expand the tutorial team. In terms of quality, it is necessary to further strengthen the professional training of mentors, to make them experts in different fields, in order to provide more targeted solutions to students' various problems. At the same time, in order to fully mobilise the enthusiasm and autonomy of mentors, the original research and teaching-oriented teacher incentive evaluation system should also be adjusted accordingly, and the proportion of student training and evaluation indicators should be strengthened. Secondly, it is necessary to integrate the existing student management system of professional colleges to avoid the awkward situation of unclear responsibilities and overlapping functions. Using systematic thinking to design the system as a whole, the "double institutes" should maintain internal consistency in ability-cultivation goals. Finally, the construction of academies cannot be separated from the guarantee of a resource allocation system. In the social allocation of higher education resources, the government should continuously increase investment in higher education, with certain policy preferences for underdeveloped areas and schools, to ensure the high-quality and balanced development of higher education. In the internal allocation of resources, schools should also provide sufficient resource guarantees for the development of the

academy, with the goal of maximising resource utilisation. For example, a certain amount of special development funds can be allocated, and special funds can be applied for according to different projects of the academy.

### **Strengthen Connotation Construction and Enrich Spiritual Culture**

Cultural life often determines the style of a university and affects the character of students. As an important “battlefield” for cultivating students’ character, the cultural concepts of academies will inevitably have a subtle impact on students’ personality development, becoming an important component of their cultural personality. There are two institutional sources for modern Chinese university academies, namely the traditional Chinese academy system and the residential college system of Western universities. In the West, taking the University of Cambridge as an example, there are currently 30 academies, with 30 styles of sentiment. Indeed, the academy is the soul of Cambridge (Jin 2008). Academies have become a central component of university culture with their spiritual core. At the same time, as a unique form of educational organisation in ancient China, academies may represent a school of thought and a culture. For example, the Bailudong Academy and the Songyang Academy emphasise the dissemination of Neo-Confucianism, and some academies advocate the spirit of reading, lecturing, and patriotism, actively participating in various political activities.

### **Conclusion**

It can be seen from this that regardless of the source of the system, the construction of academies cannot only remain at the level of material systems; it is more important to form its own spiritual and cultural core, which is vital to modern university academies to achieve sustainable development. For example, at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, each academy focuses on different cultural developments. New Asia Academy focuses on sincerity and intelligence and the development of traditional Chinese culture, while Chung Chi Academy aims at the pursuit of excellence and the inheritance of Christian culture. Strengthening the connotation construction of academies mainly lies in inheriting the classics and shaping the new. Firstly, it is necessary to inherit the precious spiritual traditions of ancient Chinese academies. In the history of ancient Chinese culture and education, academies and imperial examinations are two unique aspects (Liu 2011). It retains many humanistic principles such as a concern with value and the academic spirit of the pursuit of knowledge (Zhu 2011). We should inherit and develop excellent traditional culture through various educational activities and enhance students’ cultural confidence. Secondly, it is necessary to integrate the spirit of the academy with modern university concepts so that the academy can ultimately form a unique cultural core, promote the resonance of the spirit of the university academy with the spirit of the times, and cultivate the “soul” of the university culture. However, culture is a product of historical accumulation. The establishment of accommodation colleges in Western universities began in the late 19th century and only took shape in the 1920s and 1930s, forming their cultural characteristics. It can be seen that modern Chinese university academies still have a long way to go to form rich cultural

connotations and spiritual systems, and still have broad development space. Countries around the world should also establish university academies with their cultural characteristics.

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