

Original Research Article

# Innovative pathways and mechanism optimization of higher education institutions in serving rural revitalization

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**Abstract:** Rural revitalization has become a core policy for promoting comprehensive rural development in China. As an essential force for knowledge innovation, talent cultivation, and technology promotion, higher education institutions play a key role in this process. However, the current service models employed by universities face challenges such as inadequate path innovation, disconnection from local needs, imperfect cooperation mechanisms, and weak internal management systems. These issues result in inefficient and delayed service outcomes. This paper analyzes these problems and, drawing from domestic and international successful experiences, proposes countermeasures for optimizing path innovation and mechanism construction.

**Keywords:** higher education institutions; rural revitalization; talent cultivation

## 1. Introduction

Since the introduction of the Rural Revitalization Strategy in 2017, it has become the core policy for promoting the comprehensive development of rural areas in China. As the socio-economic development enters a new normal, rural revitalization is no longer just about the modernization of agricultural production. It also involves the diversification of the rural economic structure, optimization of rural social governance, cultural revival, and ecological improvement. In this process, higher education institutions, as carriers of knowledge innovation, talent cultivation, and technology promotion, bear significant responsibilities. However, despite the increasing importance of higher education institutions in rural revitalization, they still face numerous challenges in providing effective services. Thus, the innovation of service pathways and optimization of service mechanisms are pressing issues that need to be addressed.

## 2. Main problems in universities serving rural revitalization

### 2.1. Insufficient path innovation and single service model

Currently, most universities focus their services for rural revitalization primarily on agricultural technology promotion and rural talent cultivation. Although these elements are crucial, the scope of rural revitalization is much broader. As the strategy progresses, rural development needs have become increasingly diverse. Relying solely on traditional models of agricultural technology promotion and talent training is insufficient to drive comprehensive rural development. Some universities still adopt traditional models such as expert visits to rural areas and technical poverty alleviation, which, while beneficial in the short term, lack sustainability and fail to address other critical issues such as social governance, cultural development, and ecological protection.

### 2.2. Disconnection between universities and local needs; imperfect cooperation mechanisms

Currently, the involvement of universities in rural revitalization often fails to accurately grasp local needs, leading to a mismatch between services provided and local development requirements. Many universities' service plans and technological measures do not fully consider the actual conditions of rural areas, resulting in poor effectiveness of technology promotion. Additionally, cooperation mechanisms between universities, local governments, and rural enterprises are not well-established. Universities tend to rely on single cooperation models, lacking long-term and stable cooperation frameworks. Although some local governments encourage

university participation in rural revitalization, the lack of effective communication and coordination limits the depth and breadth of cooperation. University-local government-enterprise collaboration often remains superficial, with poor resource sharing and information flow, resulting in low overall service effectiveness.

### **2.3. Incomplete management mechanisms in universities serving rural revitalization**

Many universities have not established dedicated teams or institutions responsible for rural revitalization services, leading to a lack of systematic and targeted approaches. Resource allocation within universities is often unreasonable, and the effective conversion rate of scientific research resources is low, meaning that many research outcomes are not transformed into practical, actionable technologies or services, thus reducing the impact of services for rural revitalization. Moreover, many universities suffer from fragmented management mechanisms. While some universities have conducted rural revitalization-related research projects, most of these projects lack coordinated implementation and management, leading to resource waste and inefficient service delivery.

### **2.4. Insufficient social service awareness and low participation of universities**

Although universities possess abundant resources and capabilities, many institutions do not view serving rural revitalization as an important social responsibility. Some universities focus more on academic research and the completion of scientific projects, neglecting the needs of social service and local development. As a result, universities' social service awareness is generally weak, and their enthusiasm for participating in rural revitalization is low. This is particularly evident in some academic fields, where there is excessive focus on academic outputs while neglecting the practical application and transformation of research outcomes.

## **3. Lessons from domestic and international experiences**

### **3.1. Domestic experiences**

#### **3.1.1. Zhejiang university and collaborative innovation in rural revitalization**

Zhejiang University, as one of China's prominent comprehensive universities, has consistently promoted deep integration of industry, academia, and research, especially in providing technological support for rural revitalization. The university established the Rural Revitalization Research Institute, dedicated to rural development research and technology promotion. By transforming agricultural research results into actionable production technologies, the university has helped farmers improve agricultural productivity. The success of this model lies in the establishment of a university-local government cooperation platform, breaking away from traditional one-way service models and fostering collaborative innovation between universities, local governments, and farmers. This ensures that research results from universities directly address rural needs.

#### **3.1.2. Jiangsu agricultural university's regional cooperation model**

Jiangsu Agricultural University, leveraging its expertise in agricultural technology and rural development, has played an essential role in rural revitalization. The university provides on-site training and technical support to local farmers, helping them master modern agricultural techniques. In addition, the university participates in the formulation of rural planning and policies, driving the adjustment of rural economic structures and increasing farmers' income. The success of Jiangsu Agricultural University highlights that universities' involvement in rural revitalization should not be limited to technological promotion but should also include in-depth cooperation with local governments to improve the precision and relevance of services.

### **3.2. International experiences**

#### **3.2.1. Cornell university's agricultural innovation**

Cornell University in the United States has made notable contributions to agriculture and rural revitalization. The university established the Agricultural Technology Innovation Center to provide technical support for rural areas and promote the modernization of agriculture. Cornell University has collaborated with local governments, agricultural enterprises, and farmers to conduct agricultural research and innovation, promoting the application of new technologies and varieties. The collaboration plan has enabled farmers to not only improve productivity but also participate in higher-value production chains, enhancing their income levels. This experience demonstrates that universities can play a crucial role in agricultural innovation and help farmers achieve income growth

through comprehensive service models.

### **3.2.2. The university of tokyo's rural development program**

The University of Tokyo has adopted a collaborative approach to rural revitalization, working closely with local governments, agricultural cooperatives, and farmers to promote rural development. The university focuses on interdisciplinary research to provide innovative theoretical support for rural revitalization, particularly in promoting rural tourism to develop rural areas' unique resources. This experience offers valuable insights for Chinese universities, especially in promoting the diversified development of rural areas and leveraging rural characteristics for tourism growth.

## **4. Path innovation and mechanism optimization**

### **4.1. Establishing a diversified service system**

To address the lack of path innovation, universities should innovate service pathways and establish a diversified service system based on the multifaceted needs of rural revitalization. Universities should enhance industry-university-research integration, promote the transformation and application of technological achievements, and collaborate with local governments, rural enterprises, and research institutions. This collaboration should span across rural economic, social, and cultural development, driving technology innovation that closely aligns with rural needs. Furthermore, universities should adopt a comprehensive social service model that extends beyond agricultural technical support to include social governance, cultural development, and ecological protection, providing holistic services for rural areas' comprehensive development.

### **4.2. Strengthening cooperation mechanisms and internal management**

To effectively promote rural revitalization services, universities should establish long-term, stable cooperation frameworks with local governments and rural enterprises, forming a collaborative model that emphasizes resource sharing and complementary advantages. Universities should establish dedicated institutions to coordinate rural revitalization-related activities, ensuring that service projects are implemented effectively. Additionally, universities should adjust internal resource allocation to improve the transformation rate of scientific research achievements, enhancing their service effectiveness in rural revitalization. Furthermore, universities need to strengthen their social service awareness and recognize their responsibility and obligations in contributing to rural revitalization.

### **4.3. Policy support and financial guarantees**

Governments play a crucial role in supporting universities' involvement in rural revitalization. They should establish special funds to support universities' research, education, and technology promotion efforts related to rural revitalization, ensuring that universities receive the necessary policy backing. Governments should also encourage local governments and universities to establish deep cooperation mechanisms in rural revitalization, supporting universities' contributions with relevant policies. Additionally, governments can introduce incentive policies to encourage universities to transform research outcomes into service projects that contribute to rural revitalization, further boosting universities' support for rural social development.

## **Fundings**

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