

# Research and analysis of hot topics in graduate education in 2023

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## Abstract

**2023 is the first year to comprehensively implement the learning spirit of higher authorities, the year of striving to comprehensively build a socialist modern country and comprehensively promote the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation with Chinese path to modernization, the year of practicing the official basic education policy, promoting the priority development of education, realizing the basic, strategic position and role of education, and solidly promoting the development of a powerful education country. Therefore, it is necessary to organize and analyze the hot topics of graduate education in 2023, to provide action guidelines for future reform and innovation work.**

## Keywords

**Graduate education, Education powerhouse, High-quality.**

## 1. Introduction

The year 2023 for graduate education is extremely extraordinary. Building an education powerhouse, graduate education is the leader and leader; Vigorously promoting the spirit of educators and serving as an action guide for graduate supervisors; Strengthen basic research and achieve the cultivation of innovative talents; Building digital education and promoting the digitization of graduate education; Adhere to the characteristics of openness and inclusiveness, and build a world important education center; Promote the reform of graduate education classification evaluation and construct a diversified evaluation system; Accelerate the construction of China's independent knowledge system; Optimization of graduate disciplines and corresponding adjustment of degree authorization points; The National Teaching Achievement Award has been released, and for the first time, a separate National Teaching Achievement Award has been established for graduate students; The draft of the Degree Law, including the improvement of China's degree system, has become a focus of attention for ten hot topics in graduate education.

## 2. Hot topics in graduate education in 2023(Part 1)

### 2.1. Building an educational powerhouse, with graduate education as the leader and leader

"To build an education powerhouse, higher education is at the forefront"<sup>[1]</sup>. To promote the construction of an education-strong country, it is necessary to pay close attention to the leading role of higher education, especially graduate education, and closely adhere to the three fundamental dimensions of the comprehensive leadership, the effectiveness of moral education, and the original mission of education. We should play the role of building a strong foundation and soul, and solidly promote the construction of an education-strong country.

What kind of people to cultivate, how to cultivate them, and for whom to cultivate them are the fundamental issues of education, and also the core issue of building an educational powerhouse. To build a strong education country, we need to cultivate new generations who bravely shoulder the great task of rejuvenation, strengthen ideological casting and value guidance, and focus on cultivating top-notch innovative talents. We need to accelerate the construction of a

high-quality graduate education system, accelerate the construction of characteristic first-class universities and advantageous disciplines, strengthen the construction and optimization of "strong foundation, innovation, and integration" disciplines, stimulate new driving forces for sustainable economic and social development through high-quality education development, and promote the integration of education, science, and technology, and talent in a coordinated manner, to consolidate and release a strong driving force for serving high-quality development. To drive the systematic improvement of higher education through reform and innovation, and to promote equity and evaluation reform in higher education as internal requirements and guidance, to stimulate the internal vitality of higher education development.

In October 2023, the first "Higher Education Power Index" was released, which showed significant regional differences in global higher education development. The United States led with absolute strength, and although China was leading in the second round, there was still a considerable gap with the United States. The "Higher Education Power Index" showed that the United States scored 100 points, while China only scored 58 points [2].

## **2.2. Promote the Spirit of Educators and serve as an action guide for graduate supervisors**

We must vigorously promote the Spirit of Educators and make new and greater contributions to the great cause of national rejuvenation in building a strong country. The key to talent cultivation lies in teachers. The Spirit of Educators systematically explains the value core and action plan of the Spirit of Educators from six aspects: ideal beliefs, moral sentiments, educational wisdom, benevolence, attitude towards cultivation, and pursuit of education. It points out the direction for promoting the social trend of "respecting teachers and valuing education" and the development goal of "cultivating the teaching world and building a strong country with myself" for graduate supervisors in universities.

Strong education requires strong teachers first. Teachers are the foundation of education and the source of strong education. The Spirit of Educators is the wisdom of generations of educators in China to promote and practice education, and it is the spiritual embodiment of Chinese cultural confidence and common educational values. The strength of higher education calls for the strength of teacher education in universities. The Spirit of Educators should be integrated into the entire process of achieving practical results in university work and should be integrated into the construction of the university teacher team, ideological and political education, and teacher ethics and style. We should adhere to the fundamental direction of the moral education responsibility of university educators, which is to establish oneself with morality, establish learning with morality, and teach with morality. We should guide graduate supervisors to handle the internal relationships between "classics and teachers", "moral education and talent cultivation", and "moral education and guidance", and cultivate top-notch innovative talents. We should be a "great teacher" and "guides" with "words as principles and behavior as models", and "cultural and cultural education".

## **2.3. Strengthen basic research and achieve the cultivation of innovative talents**

Basic research is the foundation of science, the source of development and innovation, a key component of a country's core competitiveness, and the main way to enhance original innovation and form innovation confidence. Strengthening basic research is an urgent requirement for achieving high-level technological self-reliance and self-improvement, and is the only way to build a world science and technology powerhouse. Faced with a new round of technological revolution and industrial transformation, we need to take basic research as the bottom and source of breakthrough, stabilize the "steering wheel", "gas station", and "talent pool" of basic research, firmly grasp the original innovation ability, grasp the forefront of technological competition, seize technological autonomy breakthroughs, solve key

technological bottlenecks, firmly grasp the "discourse power" of technological frontiers, become international academic "leaders", and always climb the "new peak" of technological innovation. Graduate education should be guided by the cultivation of talents in basic disciplines and promote the cultivation of academic innovative talents.

We need to strengthen basic research in universities, lay out and construct cutting-edge science centers, and develop new research-oriented universities. To strengthen basic research, we need to have a forward-looking layout, reform mechanisms, build platforms, build teams, cooperate extensively, and innovate ecosystems. We must adhere to the path of independent talent cultivation, guided by the great spiritual lineage forged by generations of scientific and technological workers, cultivate high-level talent teams and reserve forces for basic research, and effectively promote the high-quality development of basic research services in graduate education.

#### **2.4. Building digital education and promoting the digitization of graduate education**

Digitalization of education is an important breakthrough for China to open up a new track of educational development and shape new advantages in educational development. The rapid development of artificial intelligence in 2023 has brought new opportunities for graduate education governance, with digital education and educational digitization becoming new directions for development. Advocating for the organic integration of higher education and artificial intelligence has become a new goal. The construction of digital education and the realization of educational digitization are important paths to promote the innovation and development of education as a strong country, enhance the new driving force of education modernization, and build new advantages in high-quality development. Digitization has become an inevitable trend in leading graduate education to accelerate its adaptation to the new round of technological industry revolution and to build a new quality productivity of education that is oriented towards innovation, international development, and the future.

Further promote digital education to provide effective support for personalized learning, and lifelong learning, expanding the coverage of high-quality educational resources, and modernizing education. From a practical perspective, China has built the world's largest higher education smart education and online teaching system, with significant achievements in online education and MOOC construction. It can be said that this digital transformation is stirring up new digital impetus and industry revolution for high-quality development of graduate education in various aspects such as top-level design, learning exploration, teaching and research, teacher development, governance services, educational ecology, communication and cooperation, and educational equity.

#### **2.5. Adhere to the characteristics of openness and inclusiveness, and build a world-important education center**

We need to improve the strategy of opening up education to the outside world, coordinate the two major articles of "bringing in" and "going out", effectively utilize world-class educational resources and innovative elements, and make China an important education center with strong influence in the world. China should leverage the advantages of graduate education and promote the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind through high-level education opening up to the outside world.

In 2023, the leaders replied to the Central Asian international students from China University of Petroleum (Beijing), the international students from the Master's program in auditing at Nanjing Audit University, and the teachers and students of the Confucius Institute at Durban Institute of Technology in South Africa, encouraging them to inherit and promote friendly relations between the two sides, understand China's development, strengthen cultural

exchanges, tell the story of China well, act as ambassadors of friendship and bridges of cooperation, and jointly contribute to the realization of a community with a shared future for mankind. We should actively participate in global education governance, vigorously promote the construction of the "Study Abroad in China" brand, tell the story of China well, disseminate China's experience, voice China's voice, and enhance the international influence and discourse power of China's education. We must adhere to the characteristics of openness and inclusiveness, strengthen the "four confidences", promote the opening up of education to the outside world through graduate education as the "greatest of the country", and implement the work of "bringing in" and "going out" in practice. At present, most universities in China have established and improved the concept and strategy of opening up education to the outside world, gradually improving the development guarantee mechanism, and achieving rapid and steady development in international exchanges, cooperative education scale, and expanding educational support.

### **3. Hot topics in graduate education in 2023(Part 2)**

#### **3.1. Promote the reform of graduate education classification evaluation and build a diversified evaluation system**

Education evaluation is related to the direction of education development and the success or failure of building a strong education country. In September 2020, the "Overall Plan for Deepening the Reform of Education Evaluation in the New Era" was issued, which made overall requirements for breaking the "five only" evaluation reform, to fully exert the effectiveness of the education baton. In May 2023, the Ministry of Education issued the "Plan for Deepening the Evaluation Reform of Higher Education Institutions in the New Era", proposing a classification guidance and evaluation model of "using evaluation to promote strength and strive for excellence", "using evaluation to promote reform and keep the bottom line", and "using evaluation to promote construction and service development", while emphasizing the guidance of national major strategic needs and the value of third-party professional evaluation. In November 2023, the Ministry of Education issued the Opinion on Deepening the Classification Development of Academic Degree and Professional Degree Graduate Education, promoting the classification cultivation of academic and practical innovative talents, and providing stronger support for accelerating the construction of an education, technology, and talent-strong country. Deepen the reform of education evaluation in the new era, and build an education evaluation system with diverse subject participation, in line with China's actual situation, and at the world level. The fifth round of subject evaluation is guided by the values of "quality, effectiveness, characteristics, and contribution", and strengthens the evaluation of social service contributions. At the same time, many universities continue to promote scientific evaluation and distinctive development, adhering to the comprehensive improvement of the quality of talent-independent training through classified training and integrated development. They highlight the quality of achievements and contribution-oriented classification evaluation system in organized scientific research, teacher evaluation, professional title evaluation, and talent team construction, ensuring the fairness, personalization, and differentiation of classification evaluation, and constructing a comprehensive and diversified evaluation system that integrates process evaluation, quality evaluation, performance evaluation, contribution evaluation, and innovation evaluation.

#### **3.2. Accelerate the construction of China's independent knowledge system**

Accelerating the construction of philosophy and social sciences with Chinese characteristics ultimately boils down to the construction of China's independent knowledge system. In April 2023, under the active initiative and leadership of Renmin University of China, a discipline

system, academic system, and discourse system of philosophy and social sciences with China's independent knowledge system as the core was constructed. Various disciplines of philosophy and social sciences united and collaborated to jointly establish the "University Alliance for Building China's Independent Knowledge System". In the spring and autumn of this year, two achievement conferences were held to showcase and promote the latest research results in the fields of philosophy and social sciences such as new structural economics, law, regional economics, and historical anthropology.

The construction of China's independent knowledge system is an important driving force for the construction of an educational powerhouse, and graduate education is an important content for promoting the construction and leading development. Accelerating the construction of China's independent knowledge system is an inevitable requirement for high-quality innovative development of graduate education, a national development strategy, and a noble mission of educators. We must firmly adhere to the "Four Confidences", take China as the perspective and the times as the perspective, adhere to the combination of China's development characteristics and practical experience, adhere to independent innovation, knowledge innovation, theoretical innovation, method innovation, and practical innovation, solidly promote the coordinated development of material civilization and spiritual civilization, and support the construction of an education strong country and the sustainable development of national innovation.

### **3.3. Optimization of graduate disciplines and corresponding adjustment of degree authorization points**

Disciplinary majors are the core pillar of the graduate education system and the fundamental platform for talent cultivation. In 2022, the second round of Double First Class University construction emphasizes the construction of disciplines as the key foundation, optimizes the adjustment of disciplines and majors, promotes the cultivation of first-class talents, and serves the national strategic needs. The construction of disciplines and majors provides strong support for serving high-quality development.

In 2023, the Ministry of Education and five other departments issued a notice on the "Reform Plan for Adjusting and Optimizing the Setting of Disciplines and Majors in General Higher Education", proposing to improve the setting, adjustment, and construction of disciplines and majors in universities. In 2022, the Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council and the Ministry of Education issued the "Catalogue of Graduate Education Disciplines (2022)" and its management measures. To achieve a smooth transition and integration of the catalog, the Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council issued a corresponding adjustment list for degree authorization points in 2023. Starting from 2024, the Catalogue of Graduate Education Disciplines will be adjusted according to the corresponding adjustment list. Currently, the enrollment of graduate students, doctoral students, and subsequent training in universities in 2024 has been carried out by the latest Catalogue of Disciplines and Disciplines. The moderate optimization of graduate disciplines and the corresponding adjustment of degree authorization points provide a prerequisite for the renewal and development of graduate education.

### **3.4. The National Teaching Achievement Award has been released, and for the first time, a separate National Teaching Achievement Award has been established for graduate students**

The National Teaching Achievement Award for Higher Education is the highest in the field of education and teaching in China, selected every four years. In July 2023, the Ministry of Education issued a decision on approving the award-winning projects of the 2022 National Teaching Achievement Award. It is particularly noteworthy that the 2022 National Teaching Achievement Award for Higher Education has established a separate category for higher

education (graduate) for the first time, resulting in 284 award-winning achievements, including 1 special prize, 35 first prizes, and 248 second prizes. A large number of excellent achievements that closely meet the national strategic needs and serve economic and social development have emerged.

Carrying out teaching achievement reward activities nationwide is an important measure to accelerate the construction of an education-strong country and implement the fundamental task of moral education. It is also a review and display of the achievements of school talent cultivation and education and teaching reform. At present, many universities are conducting a series of achievement exhibitions, aiming to play a leading role in demonstrating achievements and strengthening the promotion, promotion, and application of achievements. In December 2023, the New Era Graduate Education Teaching Reform Symposium and the National Teaching Achievement Award Exchange Seminar for Higher Education (Graduate) were held, and the first "Outstanding Young Graduate Mentor Award Fund" award ceremony was held. This award aims to strengthen the construction of the graduate supervisor team in the new era, improve the level of the youth supervisor team, accelerate the cultivation of high-level talents urgently needed by the country, and inspire young mentors who have made outstanding contributions to graduate talent cultivation in the "four aspects" and other aspects. A total of 20 young mentors from 20 universities were selected.

### **3.5. Draft Degree Law to Improve China's Degree System**

The degree regulations are the legal basis for the development of graduate education and the guarantee of the degree awarding process. They are closely related to the degree system, subject level, and talent evaluation reform of graduate education, and are an important part of the high-quality development of graduate education. In August 2023, the draft of the Degree Law was submitted for initial review at the 5th meeting of the 14th National People's Congress Standing Committee. The draft adapts to the direction and practical requirements of higher education reform and development and makes provisions and legal space reserves around improving the degree management system, refining and clarifying the conditions and procedures for degree awarding<sup>[3]</sup>. In particular, it will provide effective legal protection for accelerating the construction of a strong graduate education country in terms of the main responsibilities of degree management, the approval of degree awarding rights, the autonomy of degree awarding units, and the resolution of degree awarding disputes.

The Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Academic Degrees, as the first education law in China, have provided important legal support for the cultivation of high-level talents and the development of graduate education since its implementation in 1981. However, with the continuous institutionalization and standardization of degree authorization and management in our country, the emergence of new concepts, new situations, and new problems, the trend of revising, improving, and reforming the degree system, and meeting the increasingly urgent needs of high-quality talent cultivation. Although the Degree Law has not yet been finally promulgated, the legislative system will be reshaped and improved from the Degree Regulations to the Degree Law. It is not only a further construction and improvement of the legal system, division of rights and responsibilities, and even dispute resolution, but also normative guidance for the protection of scientific research and creation, academic freedom, and the right to study and award in degree management. It can be said that the Degree Law will be formulated based on the current Degree Regulations, providing strong legal protection for regulating degree awarding and management activities.

## **4. Conclusion**

Facing new strategic opportunities, graduate education should firmly establish confidence in the development path of socialist education with Chinese characteristics, play a leading role,

accelerate education reform and innovation, accelerate the construction of a high-quality graduate education system, and contribute to the modernization of education and the construction of an education strong country, effectively answering the question of "building a strong country and what education is", and promoting high-quality development of education services.

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