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The Core Logic and Practical Pathways for AI-Driven Deep Transformation in Higher Education

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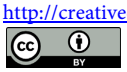

Abstract

Amid the wave of digital intelligence, artificial intelligence (AI) technology has emerged as the core engine driving high-quality development in higher education, reshaping its developmental ecosystem and operational logic with transformative force. This study addresses the contemporary imperative for AI-higher education integration, grounded in the policy orientation of the Outline of the National Education Development Plan (2024-2035). It delves into the core elements and interrelationships of AI-driven innovation in higher education, systematically elucidating its intrinsic mechanisms. It then explores practical pathways for AI-empowered deep transformation in higher education across three dimensions: constructing a "dual-circulation" practice approach, fostering a multi-dimensional collaborative development model, and establishing a comprehensive risk prevention and control mechanism. This study aims to provide theoretical references and practical guidance for the digital transformation of higher education and the advancement of educational modernization, thereby supporting the development of education-strong provinces and the implementation of the national strategy for building an education powerhouse.

Keywords

Artificial Intelligence, Higher Education, Deep Transformation, Factor Coupling, Implementation Pathways

1. Introduction

In the era of digital intelligence, where the digital economy and intelligent technologies are deeply integrated, the iterative advancement of artificial intelligence

(AI) technologies is driving systemic transformations across all sectors. As a vital arena for talent cultivation, scientific research, and social service, higher education's convergence with AI has become an inevitable choice for educational modernization. The Outline of the Plan for Building China into an Education Powerhouse (2024-2035) explicitly advocates leveraging artificial intelligence to transform education. This national strategic initiative establishes AI's central role in higher education development, charting the course for deep integration and providing policy guidance. It signifies that AI-driven innovation in higher education has become both an imperative of our times and an inevitable trend.

As the core vehicle of higher education, universities shoulder the vital mission of cultivating high-caliber talent, conducting cutting-edge research, and delivering high-quality social services. Artificial intelligence technology is profoundly reshaping the core elements and operational logic of higher education by redefining teaching objectives, optimizing curriculum systems, innovating instructional methods, and adjusting evaluation frameworks. Currently, China's higher education system is undergoing a critical transition from "scale expansion" to "quality enhancement." While numerous beneficial initiatives have been launched in cultivating applied talents, optimizing educational resource allocation, and implementing personalized teaching, persistent challenges remain: traditional teaching models struggle to meet individualized learning needs, educational resources are unevenly distributed across regions and institutions, and evaluation systems disproportionately emphasize outcomes over processes (Xiang, 2026).

The advancement of artificial intelligence technology offers novel practical pathways to address these developmental challenges. Its application in personalized learning content recommendations, intelligent management of teaching processes, precise evaluation of educational outcomes, and digital sharing of high-quality educational resources can effectively compensate for the shortcomings of traditional higher education, thereby enhancing teaching quality and management efficiency. Simultaneously, the deep integration of AI and higher education can drive a comprehensive transformation: shifting from "one-way indoctrination" to "two-way interaction," from "uniform teaching" to "personalized cultivation," and from "outcome-oriented evaluation" to "comprehensive process assessment." Therefore, thoroughly exploring the core elements, underlying mechanisms, and practical pathways of AI-driven deep innovation in higher education not only enriches theoretical research on the digital transformation of higher education but also provides actionable practical solutions for institutional teaching and learning reforms, holding significant theoretical value and practical significance (Yan & Zhou, 2026).

2. Definition of Core Concepts and Overview of Research Methods

2.1. Core Concept Definition

1) In-depth innovation: non-technical surface application is a systematic recon-

struction of higher education teaching, management, evaluation, and integration of production and education, and the implementation results of personalized teaching and data management can be observed; 2) Factor coupling: the four core elements are dynamically coordinated and empowered with each other, and the linkage changes such as observable technology meeting needs and evaluation feedback technology can be observed; 3) Dual cycle: the closed loop of teaching management and evaluation in the school (internal) and the linkage of the school and real estate industry (external) can observe the actual effect of resource allocation and school-enterprise cooperation in the school; 4) Education industry: an education service complex including universities, education enterprises, and industry associations. Practices such as industry-education integration projects and industry talent standard input can be observed.

2.2. Overview of Research Methodology

Research determines four core elements through structured literature comprehensive policy analysis, incorporates core literature, national/provincial policies, excludes single technology applications, non-core scattered data, and ensures that the framework can be repeated; Factor coupling follows the logic of input → process → output → feedback: with educational demand as the input direction and information technology as the support, the education industry connects supply and demand, the evaluation system process monitoring, and after the innovation results are output, the evaluation results feed back the optimization of each element, forming a dynamic closed loop.

3. Core Element Coupling and Internal Mechanisms Driving AI-Powered Innovation in Higher Education

The profound transformation of higher education through artificial intelligence is not merely a superficial technological overlay or the isolated effect of a single factor. Rather, it constitutes a systemic process rooted in the mutual coupling of core elements and the dynamic reconfiguration of internal mechanisms. Four core elements—information technology, educational demand, the education industry, and evaluation systems—form a synergistic, mutually supportive organic whole. Through deep integration and dynamic adaptation among these elements, higher education achieves comprehensive, profound transformation. Its underlying mechanism exhibits layered characteristics of foundational, guiding, practical, and pioneering roles, alongside synergistic effects (Cao & Han, 2026).

3.1. Reconstructing the Operational Mechanisms of Higher Education with Information Technology as the Foundational Support

An information technology system centered on machine learning, natural language processing, and big data analytics—supplemented by technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR)—serves as the fundamental ele-

ment driving AI-powered innovation in higher education (Liu, 2026). It provides the underlying technological support for reconstructing the operational mechanisms of higher education. Machine learning enables deep mining and intelligent analysis of massive educational datasets, precisely identifying students' learning patterns, cognitive characteristics, and knowledge gaps while capturing shortcomings in teaching practices. Through algorithmic optimization, it facilitates personalized content recommendations and dynamic adjustments to instructional strategies, directly propelling teaching and learning from traditional "one-way transmission" to "two-way interaction and precision adaptation."

Natural language processing technology breaks down barriers in human-machine interaction. Through applications like intelligent Q&A systems, speech evaluation tools, and automated grading platforms, it enables real-time and effective teaching interactions. Students gain instant access to learning support and guidance, Teachers are freed from repetitive, mechanical tasks, allowing them to focus more on core responsibilities like instructional design, critical thinking guidance, and skill development. This shifts the teacher's role from a mere knowledge transmitter to a learning facilitator and growth companion. Big data analytics enables comprehensive data collection, real-time monitoring, and in-depth analysis across the entire teaching-learning process. Covering dimensions such as student learning behaviors, teaching practices, and course implementation outcomes, it provides precise, holistic data support for shifting educational evaluation from "outcome-oriented" to "process-oriented" approaches. This establishes a closed-loop educational system encompassing "data collection—analysis and assessment—feedback and optimization." Furthermore, the deep integration of VR/AR technology with teaching scenarios breaks the temporal and spatial constraints of traditional classrooms. It creates immersive, experiential learning environments that effectively address issues such as insufficient practical resources and limited practical scenarios in traditional teaching. This enriches the forms of teaching scenarios and expands the connotations and boundaries of educational spaces.

3.2. Activating Core Momentum for Mechanism Innovation with Educational Demand as the Internal Catalyst

The dual-demand system formed by macro-level societal development needs and micro-level individual development needs serves as the intrinsic driving force propelling higher education innovation. It coordinates the synergistic efforts of core elements such as information technology, the education industry, and evaluation systems, injecting core momentum into AI-driven mechanism innovation in higher education. At the societal demand level, amid digital transformation, industries increasingly urgently require composite technical talents. The market demands high-caliber professionals who not only master core specialized knowledge but also possess AI application capabilities, interdisciplinary integration skills, and innovative practical abilities. This demand directly propels higher education's training objectives to shift from traditional "knowledge transmission" toward

"competency cultivation and capability enhancement." It compels universities to break down disciplinary barriers and advance the interdisciplinary integration of curriculum systems (Guo, 2026).

Taking Henan Province as an example, it is currently in a critical phase of vigorously advancing industrial transformation and upgrading, accelerating the construction of Digital Henan, and building a strong province in digital intelligence. The rapid development of emerging industries such as intelligent manufacturing, the digital economy, and artificial intelligence creates an especially urgent demand for applied and multidisciplinary talents. This requires universities within the province to ground their efforts in regional development realities, proactively align with industrial needs, leverage artificial intelligence technology to drive educational reform, strengthen the cultivation of applied and multidisciplinary talents, and provide talent support and intellectual assurance for regional economic and social development. At the individual level, as "digital natives" who have grown up alongside digital technology, contemporary university students exhibit distinct digital characteristics in their learning habits and cognitive approaches. They strongly demand personalized, autonomous, and diverse learning experiences, no longer satisfied with uniform teaching content and fixed instructional models. The application of artificial intelligence technology can precisely capture individual differences in student needs. By developing intelligent learning platforms and formulating personalized learning plans, the educational ideal of "teaching according to individual aptitude" becomes a reality. This, in turn, reconstructs the interactive logic of teaching and learning, empowering students to become the main actors in their own learning journey.

3.3. Strengthening Practical Implementation of Mechanisms through Education Industry Engagement

The deep involvement of the education industry and the comprehensive advancement of industry-education integration serve as crucial practical foundations for AI-driven innovation in higher education. This collaboration builds a bridge for the deep integration of technology and education, providing essential practical support for implementing the intrinsic mechanisms of higher education reform. As core entities within the education industry, corporate partners in university-industry collaborations engage in deep cooperation with universities across technology R&D, resource co-construction, practical training base development, and talent cultivation. They integrate industry's practical demands, cutting-edge technologies, and job-specific operational standards into higher education curricula. This facilitates precise alignment between university education and industry development needs, propelling higher education beyond the "ivory tower" toward seamless integration of industry, academia, and research (Li, Wei, & Li, 2026).

In talent cultivation, industry-academia collaboration partners can provide universities with advanced technical equipment, practical platforms, and training resources. This helps institutions build intelligent practical teaching bases, address-

ing the shortage of hands-on learning resources. Students gain real-world industry experience, enhancing their innovative practical skills and job readiness. Simultaneously, corporate involvement in curriculum design and content development drives the transformation of course materials toward practicality, contextual relevance, and cutting-edge applications. By integrating industry-leading technologies, real-world corporate case studies, and job-specific requirements into instruction, this approach effectively resolves the disconnect between academic learning and professional practice inherent in traditional higher education. Under this industry-education integration model, the education chain, talent chain, industrial chain, and innovation chain achieve organic alignment. This not only increases the weight of practical skills and job readiness in educational evaluation systems while refining competency-based assessment mechanisms, but also provides practical scenarios for enhancing teachers' smart teaching capabilities (Xun & Chen, 2026). It enables educators to stay abreast of cutting-edge industry technologies and industrial development trends, thereby elevating their practical teaching competencies.

3.4. Guided by the Evaluation System to Drive Continuous Optimization and Upgrading of Mechanisms

As the "command baton" of education and teaching, the educational evaluation system plays a core guiding role in the coupling of elements driving AI-powered innovation in higher education. Through its own innovation and optimization, it propels the continuous refinement and efficient operation of higher education innovation mechanisms. Traditional evaluation systems, centered on knowledge assessment, exhibit characteristics of singularity, outcome-based focus, and standardization. They struggle to comprehensively evaluate students' overall literacy, innovative capabilities, and practical skills, nor can they accurately reflect teachers' instructional processes and teaching effectiveness. Consequently, they fail to meet the demands of talent cultivation in higher education for the new era. In the digital era, AI-empowered educational evaluation systems exhibit core characteristics of diversity, process-orientation, and precision. Their guiding role permeates the entire process of higher education innovation, directing the collaborative adaptation and optimization of other core elements.

In terms of assessment content, the new evaluation system breaks away from the traditional single-dimensional focus on knowledge assessment. It places greater emphasis on evaluating students' comprehensive qualities and innovative capabilities, encompassing multiple dimensions such as interdisciplinary application skills, scientific and technological ethics literacy, problem-solving abilities, and innovative practical skills. Simultaneously, it incorporates teachers' instructional design capabilities, smart teaching application skills, and pedagogical innovation abilities into the faculty evaluation framework. This approach guides the transformation of higher education's training objectives and curriculum systems toward cultivating competencies and enhancing capabilities. Regarding evaluation methods, the

new system emphasizes integrating formative and summative assessments with quantitative and qualitative evaluations. Leveraging technologies like big data analytics and AI monitoring, it enables real-time tracking and comprehensive evaluation of both student learning processes and teaching practices. This approach prioritizes growth and progress over final outcomes, facilitating timely issue identification, feedback delivery, and strategy optimization. Regarding evaluation stakeholders, the new system establishes a multi-participant framework involving teachers, students, and intelligent systems. This promotes objectivity and comprehensiveness in assessment while providing precise feedback for teaching and learning, thereby enhancing the operational efficiency of the entire reform mechanism (Fu et al., 2024).

4. Practical Approaches and Implementation Strategies for AI-Driven Deep Transformation in Higher Education

Based on the core elements and intrinsic mechanisms of AI-driven innovation in higher education, and in alignment with the practical demands and contemporary requirements of higher education's digital transformation, this approach promotes the deep integration and synergistic development of AI and higher education. This is achieved by establishing a "dual-cycle" practical framework, fostering a multi-dimensional collaborative development model, and implementing a comprehensive risk prevention and control mechanism. These measures collectively drive profound innovation and high-quality development within higher education.

4.1. Establishing a Dual-Circulation Practical Approach to Promote Synergistic Development of Substance and Form Innovation

Based on the intrinsic logic and practical demands of higher education reform, we will establish a dual-circulation practical approach combining "internal circulation + external circulation" to drive the synergistic development and mutual empowerment of substantive innovation and structural transformation in higher education. The domestic cycle approach focuses on strengthening the substance of higher education. By addressing the diverse needs of students, faculty, industry, and government, it implements targeted reforms to solidify the core foundation of higher education innovation. Regarding student needs, leverage artificial intelligence to build personalized learning platforms and intelligent tutoring systems. These capture students' learning requirements with precision, enabling personalized recommendations for learning content and pathways to meet differentiated learning demands. For faculty development, strengthening the training system for digital teaching competencies by offering courses in AI applications and intelligent instructional design to enhance educators' ability to integrate AI into teaching and research. For industry needs, optimizing mechanisms for matching industry-education integration demands and establishing a dynamic feedback sys-

tem for industrial requirements to enable universities to adjust program offerings and curriculum content based on evolving industry trends. For government guidance, reinforcing policy support and resource coordination by introducing complementary policies for AI-higher education integration, increasing fiscal investment, and optimizing the higher education development environment.

The external circulation approach focuses on transforming the landscape of higher education, integrating technology-enabled and data-driven development to build an external support system for higher education innovation. In terms of technological empowerment, it comprehensively advances smart campus development by organically integrating intelligent teaching environments, management platforms, and service systems to achieve intelligent upgrades across teaching, research, administration, and service workflows. Regarding data-driven approaches, it optimizes the construction of educational data sharing platforms, establishes unified data standards and sharing mechanisms, breaks down data silos between institutions and departments, and facilitates the integration and sharing of teaching, research, and management data to provide scientific and precise data-driven insights for educational decision-making. Regarding ecosystem development, we will promote collaborative participation among multiple stakeholders including governments, universities, research institutions, and enterprises. Establishing regularized cooperative mechanisms will integrate resources and leverage respective strengths to foster an open, win-win ecosystem for intelligent innovation in higher education (Zheng, 2025).

4.2. Establishing a Multi-Stakeholder Collaborative Development Model to Ensure Systemic and Sustainable Innovation

To ensure the systemic and sustainable nature of higher education innovation, a four-pronged collaborative development model integrating government, society, universities, and individuals will be established. This model will pool resources from all parties to foster a favorable environment for coordinated advancement. Government takes the lead, fully leveraging its role in policy guidance, resource coordination, and macro-regulation. It formulates policies, regulations, and development plans for the integration of artificial intelligence and higher education, increases funding allocation, and strategically plans the intelligent development of regional higher education to provide robust institutional safeguards and resource support for higher education innovation. Strengthen societal participation in universities' digital and intelligent transformation. Encourage enterprises, research institutions, and other social entities to leverage their technological, resource, and practical advantages. Through R&D collaboration, shared resource development, establishment of practical training bases, and university-enterprise cooperative education, inject vitality into higher education reform. This will drive precise alignment between university education and industry development needs and job requirements.

As the core agents of innovation, universities must proactively advance educa-

tional reforms. By integrating institutional strengths, disciplinary advantages, and regional development needs, they should explore distinctive intelligent innovation pathways. Concurrently, they must strengthen faculty development and smart campus construction to enhance capabilities in intelligent teaching, research, and management. At the individual level, faculty and students—as direct participants and beneficiaries of higher education innovation—should actively adapt to educational transformation trends. Faculty must proactively transform teaching philosophies and methodologies, leveraging AI technologies to optimize instructional design. Students should embrace self-directed and personalized learning approaches, fully utilizing intelligent learning platforms to enhance learning efficiency and quality. This will foster a collaborative advancement framework guided by government, involving society, led by universities, and practiced by individuals.

4.3. Establish a Comprehensive Risk Prevention and Control Mechanism to Achieve the Organic Integration of Technological Empowerment and the Essence of Education

While advancing innovation in higher education, artificial intelligence inevitably poses potential challenges such as ethical risks, the digital divide, and technological alienation. It is imperative to establish a robust, comprehensive risk prevention and control mechanism to safeguard the essence of education and ensure the steady and sustainable progress of intelligent innovation in higher education. Regarding ethical risk prevention, strengthen technology ethics education for faculty and students by integrating it into university curricula. Guide educators and learners to cultivate sound technological perspectives and values. Simultaneously, develop ethical guidelines for AI education, clearly defining application boundaries and responsibility allocation for AI technologies in teaching. This prevents ethical issues like algorithmic bias, data breaches, and privacy violations. To bridge the digital divide, increase support for digital resources in underprivileged and remote institutions. Extend high-quality intelligent educational resources to grassroots levels and underserved areas. Establish inter-institutional and regional digital assistance mechanisms to narrow regional and institutional gaps in digital development, thereby promoting educational equity.

In addressing the risk of technological alienation, we consistently uphold a people-centered educational philosophy. We clearly define artificial intelligence as a tool, prioritizing talent cultivation as the core objective of higher education. This approach prevents technology from deviating from education's fundamental purpose and avoids the pitfalls of "prioritizing technology over education" or "emphasizing intelligence at the expense of humanities." Throughout the application of AI technology, we emphasize the organic integration of technological empowerment with humanistic care. While leveraging technological advantages to enhance teaching quality, we remain steadfast in upholding education's fundamental mission of nurturing individuals. We prioritize students' emotional needs, value formation, and holistic development, ensuring that AI technology consistently

serves the core objective of talent cultivation. This approach enables the high-quality, sustainable advancement of intelligent innovation in higher education.

5. Conclusion and Outlook

In the era of digital intelligence, the deep integration of artificial intelligence and higher education is an inevitable trend of education modernization, and it is also the core starting point to promote the high-quality development of higher education and help build a strong education country. The research analyzes the coupling relationship and internal mechanism of the four core elements of information technology, education needs, education industry, and evaluation system, and builds a practice that integrates the "dual cycle" practice approach, multiple coordinated development models, and a full-dimensional risk prevention and control mechanism. The system confirms that the innovation of artificial intelligence in higher education is not simply technology embedding, but a systematic change based on element collaboration, mechanism reconstruction as the core, and practice implementation as the key. The four core elements are dynamically coupled according to the logic of input → process → output → feedback. Educational needs anchor the direction of innovation, information technology provides underlying support, the education industry builds a practical bridge, and the evaluation system guarantees effectiveness and promotes optimization. The core essence of the precise adaptation of application, personnel training and social needs is to return to the essence of education through technological empowerment.

In the future, higher education needs to continue to deepen the integration and application of artificial intelligence technology, continuously optimize the factor coupling mechanism and practice path, and promote all-round innovation in teaching, management, and evaluation models, so that artificial intelligence can truly become an important force in reconstructing the higher education ecology and improving the quality of talent training, serving the important force of regional economic and social development, with the two-way rush of digital transformation and connotative development, injecting lasting intelligent momentum into the construction of a strong educational province and the process of educational modernization.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Explanation on the Fact That the Individual Revision Opinions in the Improvement Suggestions Have Not Been Revised

In response to the revision of the article "The Logical Core and Practical Path of Artificial Intelligence Empowering the Deep Innovation of Higher Education", strictly follow the principle of "retaining the core research content and writing logic of the original text", and improve the fourth article of the proposal "clarify the practice path corresponding to institutional actions, Responsibilities and example deliverables", Article 5 "Supplement measurable student ability and teaching quality evaluation indicators and AI audit methods", after comprehensive consideration, it is decided not to revise, the details are as follows:

1) The part of the original text about the practical approach of artificial intelligence-driven deep innovation in higher education has focused on the three dimensions of the "dual cycle" practical approach, the multi-dimensional coordinated development model, and the full-dimensional risk prevention and control mechanism, and clearly explained that universities, enterprises, teachers The core role and implementation direction of different subjects such as teachers and students, the overall logic and content have formed a complete closed loop. If institutional actions, detailed division of responsible subjects, and example deliverables are added, the existing rhythm of the original text will be broken, redundant content will be added, and it will easily lead to repeated expressions of subject responsibilities and implementation strategies, affecting the simplicity and consistency of the research content sex.

2) In the part of the evaluation system in the original text, it has been clarified that the education evaluation system empowered by artificial intelligence presents the characteristics of diversification, process, and precision. It also discusses in detail the evaluation dimensions and evaluation methods of students' comprehensive literacy and teachers' teaching ability. The core The evaluation logic and framework have been relatively complete. If measurable specific quantitative indicators and AI audit methods are supplemented, it is an extended expansion of research content and goes beyond the scope of "minor repairs", and the setting of quantitative indicators needs to be combined with specific empirical research and industry segmentation standards, and random addition It is easy to lead to the lack of scientificity and adaptability of the indicators, which is inconsistent with the theoretical research positioning of the original text.

3) The core research focus of the original text is to analyze the coupling relationship and internal mechanism of the core elements of artificial intelligence-driven higher education innovation, and to explore the overall framework and implementation strategy of the practice path. research. The relevant contents of the fourth and fifth items of the improvement suggestions are more inclined to the detailed design at the practical application level, and are not the core necessary content of the theoretical research of the original text. After revision, it will deviate from the research focus of the original text and affect the integrity and profession-

alism of the research content.

To sum up, in order to ensure that the research logic, writing rhythm and core research positioning of the original text are not destroyed, the relevant content of the fourth and fifth suggestions for improvement will not be revised for the time being, and it is hereby explained.

Bai Zhanjun
23rd February 2026