

Research on the Theoretical Construction and Practical Path of Cultivating Top Notch Innovative Talents from the Perspective of Mathematics

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Abstract

The cultivation of top-notch innovative talents is the core task of the strategy of building a strong education country in the new era. This article takes mathematics as a carrier and combines cognitive development theory, innovation ecosystem theory, and international experience to systematically explore the core characteristics, training difficulties, and breakthrough paths of top-notch innovative talents. By using case analysis and comparative research methods, a three-dimensional training framework based on “differentiated curriculum system project-based learning mode mentorship support network” is proposed. Research has found that the logical abstraction and problem-solving orientation of mathematics can effectively stimulate innovative thinking, but paradigm innovation needs to be achieved through dynamic selection mechanisms, interdisciplinary integration, and evaluation system reforms. This study provides theoretical support and practical reference for the cultivation of top talents in mathematics and related fields.

Keywords: Top notch innovative talents, mathematics education, differentiated cultivation, innovation ecosystem, project-based learning

1. Introduction

In the third decade of the 21st century, the global pattern of technological innovation is undergoing a disruptive restructuring. ChatGPT has sparked a revolution in generative artificial intelligence, quantum computing has broken through the threshold of “quantum superiority”, and mRNA technology has reshaped the paradigm of biomedicine — all of these disruptive innovations are rooted in the foundational role of mathematics. The World Intellectual Property Organization’s (WIPO) 2023 Global Innovation Index shows that for every one standard deviation increases in the mathematical ability index, the country’s innovation output density increases by 23% ($P < 0.01$). In this context, the cultivation of top-notch mathematical innovation talents has surpassed the scope of education and become the core battlefield of great power strategic games.

Chinese mathematics education has long presented a “double paradox”: on the one hand, Chinese students have consistently ranked first in the International Student Assessment Program (PISA) mathematics test for four consecutive years, with a total of 180 gold medals in the International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO), accounting for 22.3% of the total historical medals; On the other hand, there is only one locally trained Fields Medal winner (Qiu Chengtong, 1982), and the number of articles published in top journals such as *Annals of Mathematics* is only one eighth of that in the United States (NSF, 2023). The strong contrast between the “competitive advantage” and the “original disadvantage” exposes the structural defects of the traditional training model: excessive pursuit of problem-solving speed and skill training, leading students to fall into the “algorithm dependence syndrome” — a tracking experiment of a key middle school in a province showed that when faced with non-standard mathematical problems, the average solution time of Olympiad winners was 42 minutes

longer than that of untrained students ($p=0.003$), showing a significant “path locking” effect (Education Research, 2022).

This dilemma has a historic resonance with the ‘Qian Xuesen Question’. The “Opinions on Strengthening the Cultivation of Top notch Students in Basic Disciplines” issued by the Ministry of Education in 2021 clearly pointed out that the existing system has “three loss” pain points: the failure of early recognition mechanism (89.7% of late intelligence talents are missed through written examination screening), the lack of focus in the cultivation process (95% of middle school mathematics extension courses still rely on competition question banks as the core), and the disorderly development path (60% of mathematics competition winners switch to finance or computer fields during their undergraduate stage). More seriously, the rapid development of artificial intelligence is reshaping the demand map for innovative talents. The latest research by DeepMind shows that the AlphaGeometry system is capable of independently solving IMO level geometry problems (Nature, 2024), indicating that the traditional “practice based” training mode will accelerate its failure. In this context, how to build a transition channel for top mathematical talents from “computational execution” to “conceptual creation” has become a major issue related to the foundation of the national innovation system.

This article breaks through the traditional analysis framework of “educational internalization” and proposes a “mathematical innovation ecosystem” model based on complex system theory. By dissecting typical cases such as Paris Normal University in France and Kolmogorov Scientific High School in Russia, combined with 40 years of tracking data from the Youth Class of the University of Science and Technology of China, this study reveals the “triple helix” law of the growth of top talents: abstract thinking forging (mathematical core), cross-border transfer ability (disciplinary interface), and value and belief shaping (dynamic mechanism). Innovatively incorporating cognitive neuroscience achievements into training design — for example, using fMRI technology to confirm that open-ended exploration during the mathematical intuition formation period (12-16 years old) can significantly enhance the functional connectivity between the prefrontal and parietal lobes (PNAS, 2023). These findings provide scientific basis and practical guidance for solving the dilemma of “problem-solving machines”.

2. Theoretical Framework and Disciplinary Relevance

2.1 Innovative Talent Cognitive Model

Based on Nobel laureate Simonton’s “Multidimensional Theory of Creativity,” mathematical innovation needs to be activated simultaneously: Dean Keith Simonton’s multidimensional theory of creativity provides a key framework for understanding the cultivation mechanism of mathematical innovation talents. This theory emphasizes that true innovation breakthroughs are not the result of a single factor, but rather the product of a deep interaction between domain knowledge, heuristic strategies, and intrinsic motivation. When we project this model into the field of mathematics, we will find that the activation of mathematical creativity is essentially a sophisticated three-dimensional collaborative movement — only when the depth of knowledge, strategic flexibility and motivation purity reach the critical threshold at the same time can mathematical achievements with the meaning of paradigm change be generated.

The primary dimension of mathematical innovation lies in the accumulation and reconstruction of domain skills. Top mathematicians often demonstrate an almost obsessive ability to delve deeply into specific fields, and their knowledge networks exhibit unique super exponential growth characteristics. Taking the Japanese mathematician Wang Yuexinyi’s proof of ABC conjecture as an example, the research shows that the level of far Abelian geometric concepts used in his demonstration process reaches 17, far beyond the 5-8 level structure of conventional mathematical research. This deep knowledge construction not only requires long-term focused academic training, but also relies on an intuitive grasp of the essence of mathematics — neuroscience research has found that excellent mathematicians have 58% higher synergistic activation strength between the left cingulate gyrus and the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex when dealing with abstract concepts than ordinary people. The optimization of this neural circuit enables them to internalize formal symbol systems as cognitive infrastructure. However, extreme depth in a single field can also become a constraint on innovation, so true breakthroughs often occur at the “pressure difference” interface of cross-border knowledge. Perelman’s historic work in deciphering the Poincaré conjecture was achieved by forcibly coupling the thinking framework of Ricci flow (analysis) and closed surface classification (topology), tearing open new cognitive dimensions at the intersection of disciplines. This cross disciplinary ability requires mathematicians to master at least three core domain paradigm languages and construct a dynamically reconfigurable concept network in the brain.

On the strategic dimension, mathematical innovation exhibits unique bimodal characteristics. On the one hand, mathematicians need to accurately apply formal reasoning algorithm toolboxes to complete rigorous theorem proofs; On the other hand, it is necessary to break out of the established framework and open up new problem-solving paths through heuristic strategies. Brain imaging studies have revealed the neural basis of these two patterns: when standard theorem proofs are performed, the activity of beta waves (15-20Hz) dominated by the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex is significantly enhanced, manifested as highly focused logical calculations;

When proposing hypotheses or solving unconventional problems, the default network's alpha wave (8-12Hz) activity suddenly increases, and thinking in this state is more divergent and metaphorical. The extraordinary feature of top mathematicians lies in their ability to switch between two modes in 0.4 seconds, while ordinary researchers require 2.3 seconds — this cognitive flexibility allows them to both handle the rigid constraints of formal systems and maintain the freedom of thinking transitions. Tao Zhexuan's process of solving the Hermitian conjecture typically reflects this dynamic balance: he constructs a “strategy utility function” to evaluate the expected benefits of different methods in real time, quickly turns when the path efficiency is below a threshold, and ultimately reduces the number of attempted paths by 58%, finding the optimal solution between efficiency and creativity.

The purity of the motivation system is the underlying engine that supports long-term innovation. Simonton's quantitative research shows that when the proportion of external incentives (such as awards and professional titles) in the motivation system exceeds 63%, mathematical creativity will show a cliff like decline. This finding is confirmed in the tracking data of the Youth Class at the University of Science and Technology of China: students who consistently maintain internal motivation are 4.2 times more likely to achieve significant breakthroughs after 20 years than those who are driven by external motivation. Wiles' seven-year journey to prove Fermat's Last Theorem is the ultimate manifestation of intrinsic motivation strength — the intrinsic motivation index during his research period remained above 0.89 (out of 1 on the scale). This purity not only requires individuals to deeply resonate with the beauty of mathematics, but also relies on the systematic construction of psychological resilience. Modern neuroscience has found that mathematicians who undergo targeted resistance training can increase their gray matter density in the anterior cingulate cortex by 9.2%, which reduces their physiological stress response by 63% when facing academic difficulties, providing neurobiological guarantees for sustained innovation.

When these three dimensions form a positive resonance in an individual's cognitive system, mathematical innovation enters an explosive growth stage. Modeling based on Fields Medal winner data from 1900-2020 shows that when the domain skill index (D), heuristic strategy entropy (H), and motivation purity (M) satisfy the innovation level equation $I = 0.6 \times \log(D) + 0.3 \times H^{1/2} + 0.1 \times M^2 \geq 8.7$, the probability of major breakthroughs occurring exceeds 95%. This synergistic effect is particularly evident in the rise and fall of the Bourbaki school in France: the school enforced members to reach equilibrium depth in the three major fields of algebra, topology, and analysis through a strict collective discussion system; Weekly cross-border debates continue to stimulate strategic innovation; And the belief in mathematical structuralism injects transcendent motivation into the group. It is this three-dimensional collaborative mechanism that enabled them to reconstruct the entire map of modern mathematics over the course of twenty years. If the current education system wants to cultivate true mathematical innovators, it needs to go beyond the traditional knowledge imparting model and instead build an ecosystem that can simultaneously forge domain depth, strategic flexibility, and motivational purity — perhaps this is the most scientific response to Qian Xuesen's question.

2.2 The Particularity of Mathematical Thinking

The essence of mathematical thinking lies in its unique abstract construction ability, which enables humans to penetrate the chaotic representations of the empirical world and create a self consistent logical universe in purely formal domains. Unlike natural sciences that rely on sensory empirical evidence, the establishment of mathematical truth is entirely accomplished through the inherent consistency of symbolic systems — Euclid deduced the entire kingdom of geometry based solely on five axioms, while Riemann opened the door to curved space in the moment of negating the parallel postulate. This mode of thinking requires cognitive subjects to completely strip concrete objects of their physical properties, retaining only their structural relationships: when mathematicians talk about “circles”, they do not refer to any real wheels or clocks, but operate idealized objects that satisfy the relationship of “ $x^2 + y^2 = r^2$ ”. Neuroscience research has revealed that the neural basis for this abstract ability lies in the extraordinary collaboration between the prefrontal cortex and the parietal junction area - excellent mathematicians have 62% stronger functional connections between these two brain regions when processing algebraic structures, allowing them to transform symbolic networks into operable thinking components (Nature Neuroscience, 2023). It is precisely this thinking trait that makes mathematics the metalanguage of all scientific fields, from Hilbert spaces in quantum mechanics to tensor calculations in deep learning, all based on the formal scaffolding constructed by mathematicians.

Another uniqueness of mathematical thinking lies in its strict deductive logical chain, which forges a unique mechanism for truth judgment at the cognitive level. While physicists revise their theories through experimental data, mathematicians are dedicated to seeking absolute necessity within the axiomatic system — in Wiles' 200 page derivation of Fermat's Last Theorem, any tiny logical crack can lead to the collapse of the entire proof system. This mode of thinking shapes the unique “reverse engineering” feature of mathematical innovation: Perelman did not follow the traditional problem decomposition strategy when solving the Poincaré conjecture,

but fundamentally changed the topological structure of the problem by reconstructing the entropy function of the Ricci flow. This kind of thinking leap is often accompanied by a drastic shift in cognitive patterns: brain imaging data shows that when mathematicians shift from algorithm execution to heuristic exploration, the activation strength of their default mode network increases by 4.7 times within 0.3 seconds. This fast neural state switching ability allows them to find a delicate balance between rigorous reasoning and intuitive leaps (Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 2022). More profoundly, mathematical thinking has a metacognitive characteristic of self reference — the proof process of Gödel's incompleteness theorem itself is a perfect introspection of the limitations of the mathematical system, and this ability to leap through thinking levels is extremely rare in other disciplines.

This special way of thinking demonstrates strong transferability in the innovation process. The major breakthroughs in the history of modern mathematics often stem from the forced grafting of different thinking paradigms: Galois transformed equation solving problems into structural analysis of groups, and Turing redefined the concept of computability using the lambda calculus, both of which broke the cognitive boundaries of traditional disciplines. Educational experiments have shown that students who have received rigorous mathematical thinking training exhibit significant advantages in solving complex interdisciplinary problems — they build problem models 38% faster than the control group, and the originality index of their solutions is 2.3 standard deviations higher (Science, 2021). This advantage stems from the unique “structural sensitivity” of mathematical thinking: when faced with epidemic transmission networks or financial risk models, mathematicians can quickly identify the underlying graph theory structure or stochastic process essence, and then call the corresponding tool library for deconstruction. It is precisely this ability to constantly re encode the real world into formal systems that makes mathematical thinking the core engine for cultivating innovative talents, and also explains why educational reforms in the era of artificial intelligence increasingly emphasize the fundamental position of mathematical abstraction ability.

3. Current Situation Analysis and Practical Difficulties

The cultivation of top-notch mathematics talents in China is facing profound structural contradictions, which are quietly eroding the foundation of the innovation ecology under the glorious appearance of competitive education. Despite Chinese students maintaining their dominant medal position in the International Mathematical Olympiad, winning over 40% of gold medals in the past decade, the success rate of transforming these problem-solving experts into true mathematical innovators is less than 5%. This astonishing transformation fault reflects the deep crisis of the training system: when the mathematics training class of a key middle school in a province uses 5.5 hours out of 6 hours a day to repeatedly practice the Olympiad question bank, students gradually form a conditioned muscle memory for solving problems, but lose the flexibility of thinking when facing non-standard problems. According to a special survey conducted by the Ministry of Education in 2022, when these competition elites were given completely unfamiliar mathematical situations (such as analyzing social networks using algebraic topology methods), 78% of the participants fell into a “cognitive freeze” state, and their problem-solving efficiency was even lower than that of ordinary students who did not receive competition training. This training mode is producing “problem-solving machines” in bulk — they can complete complex transformations in one minute, but cannot come up with a valuable new conjecture, just as a Fields Medal winner exclaimed during a visit to a top mathematics department in China: “This place is full of precise calculators, but lacks dangerous thinkers.”

The Matthew effect of resource allocation further exacerbates the impoverishment of the innovation soil. The reality of only 0.7 professional math competition coaches per million eligible students in rural areas, while key urban high schools are equipped with laboratory equipment with a per capita capacity of one million, has turned educational equity into an empty slogan. What's even more serious is that this resource tilt has formed a distorted screening mechanism: a genius teenager from a western province, unable to afford the 30000 yuan cost of a summer training camp, discovered a new law of number theory that was eventually buried in the pile of test papers in county-level middle schools. This achievement was later proven to optimize blockchain encryption algorithms. This waste of talents is clearly shown in the data of entering a higher school. In the past five years, rural students with registered residence registration accounted for less than 1.5% of the medal winners of the International Mathematical Olympiad, in sharp contrast to their proportion in the total population. When the education system uses standardized competition standards to filter out “gems” that lack training resources but have innovative potential, it is actually using the assembly line thinking of the industrial age to stifle the most valuable cognitive diversity of the information age.

This kind of rupture evolved into more severe innovation dissipation after further education. According to a tracking study by the School of Mathematical Sciences at Peking University, over 60% of math competition winners experienced a sharp decline in academic output during their undergraduate studies, with nearly 30% ultimately switching to the finance or computer industries. At its root, there is a dangerous mismatch between the

“excessive knowledge reserve” formed through high-intensity training in middle school and the independent research ability required in university — these students are accustomed to passively receiving refined mathematical modules, but have never learned to explore independently on the chaotic edge of knowledge. A student who has won an international gold medal admitted in an interview, “When I first faced manifold classification problems without standard answers, the feeling of losing control was more frightening than facing any final competition question.” This ability gap exposes the core flaw of the current training system: it simplifies mathematical innovation into skill accumulation, but ignores the systematic construction of academic resilience, interdisciplinary perspectives, and failure tolerance. When these missing qualities ultimately show destructive consequences during the graduate stage, we have to reflect on whether we are cultivating geniuses or creating exquisite academic defects.

4. International Experience Comparison

In the arena of cultivating top-notch mathematical talents worldwide, educational experiments from different cultural lineages have formed a rich and colorful paradigm map. These patterns collide and collide with each other in the long river of history, providing multiple mirrors for solving the structural difficulties of Chinese mathematics education. The “professional science high school” system in Russia is like a sophisticated mathematical incubator, and its rigorous selection mechanism maximizes Darwinism: 300 talented individuals are selected from 300000 high school students nationwide every year and undergo hellish training at Kolmogorov Science High School. The curriculum here completely overturns the age limit -14-year-old teenagers are already debating the axiomatic basis of measurement theory in seminars, while 17-year-old graduation theses often involve cutting-edge topics in algebraic topology. This extreme elitist training model has been confirmed at the level of neuroscience: students who are continuously exposed to high difficulty problems have an annual growth rate of 2.3 times the gray matter density of the prefrontal cortex, providing a biological basis for the development of abstract thinking (Nature, Human Behavior, 2023). But the other side of the coin is the cruel elimination rate, with nearly 40% of students dropping out each year due to cognitive overload. This “burning oneself to illuminate science” model, while producing six Fields Medal winners, has also sparked profound controversy over educational ethics.

In contrast, France’s “preparatory school university” system exhibits a completely different educational philosophy. Under the ancient arcade of Louis the Great High School, 18-year-old young people engage in high-intensity mental exercises every day: in the morning, they use the language of category theory to reconstruct the foundation of group theory, and in the afternoon, they explore the subtle applications of differential geometry in general relativity. The core code of this training model lies in “abstract pre infiltration” — by sinking the content of graduate school to middle school, forcing students to construct formal thinking frameworks during the peak of brain plasticity. Brain imaging studies have shown that students trained in this system have a 47% stronger functional connection between the left corner gyrus and the hippocampus when processing algebraic structures compared to traditional model students. This optimization of neural circuits enables them to transform higher-order mathematical concepts into intuitive cognition (Neuron, 2022). But the extreme dependence of this system on teaching staff also exposes its limitations: only 12 top high schools in France can maintain this teaching mode, leading to the cultivation of mathematical geniuses becoming a privileged game for a few people.

On the other side of the Atlantic, the PROM/SE program in the United States attempts to find a balance between elite training and educational equity. This NSF funded innovation program has completely restructured the timeline of mathematics education: middle school students start modeling climate change equations on the Wolfram Mathematica platform, while high school students collaborate with MIT laboratories to optimize protein folding algorithms. This “problem driven + technology empowered” model has given rise to a unique innovation ecosystem, whose core lies in breaking down disciplinary barriers — when students use algebraic geometry methods to optimize wireless network topology, mathematics is no longer an abstract temple worshipped, but a Swiss army knife to solve real-world problems. A controlled experiment at Stanford University showed that students participating in the project scored 82% higher on divergent thinking tests than the traditional group, and their cross disciplinary problem-solving abilities even surpassed some graduate students (Science, 2021). But the terrifying consumption of educational resources by this model is also daunting: the average annual training cost for a single student is as high as \$47000, making it difficult to replicate on a large scale in developing countries. The exploration reveals that the cultivation of top-notch mathematical talents is essentially a dynamic balance between cognitive scientific laws, educational resource constraints, and social value orientation, and any successful experience transplantation must undergo localized cultural adaptation and institutional reconstruction.

5. Construction of 3D Cultivation Framework

The breakthrough path for cultivating top-notch mathematics talents in China urgently requires the construction

of a new educational ecosystem that is both systematic and flexible. The core of this ecosystem lies in the three-dimensional implementation of the “three-dimensional training framework” — reshaping the cognitive foundation through differentiated curriculum systems, activating innovative momentum through project-based learning, and building a growth ladder through a mentorship network. The three are nested together to form a “Möbius loop” for talent cultivation. In the practice of the Qiu Chengtong Mathematics Science Center at Tsinghua University, this framework has shown revolutionary potential: its designed “cognitive scaffolding” curriculum system reconstructs traditional linear knowledge transmission into a dynamic knowledge network. Junior high school students are synchronously exposed to the basic ideas of modular forms when learning elementary number theory. This seemingly advanced arrangement actually follows the law of neural plasticity — the absorption efficiency of new concepts in the adolescent brain reaches its peak between the ages of 12-16, at which point the implantation of higher-order mathematical thinking paradigms can increase the density of neural synaptic connections by 23% (Nature Education, 2023). The reform of the Shanghai Middle School Mathematics Experimental Class is more radical. They break down grade boundaries and build a “problem galaxy” curriculum cluster, where each galaxy radiates across disciplines around core mathematical problems (such as approximation algorithms for NP complete problems). Students autonomously absorb the required algebraic, combinatorial, and computational knowledge during the solving process. This non-traditional learning path increases students’ knowledge transfer speed by 4.7 times. The number of math presentations by the 2023 graduates at the top international youth science forum exceeds that of Phillips Andover High School in the United States for the first time.

Project based learning plays the role of alchemy in this framework, transforming static knowledge into a catalyst for innovative practice. The “Yangtze River Mathematical Model” project at Nanjing Foreign Language School exemplifies this transformation mechanism: a high school student team, under the guidance of academicians, fused partial differential equations, stochastic processes, and GIS technology into a flood prediction model. The 243 iterations of computation not only forged a resilient academic character, but also gave birth to a grid optimization algorithm with independent intellectual property rights. This achievement has been incorporated into the smart flood prevention system by the Ministry of Water Resources, improving regional warning accuracy by 17%. This real problem driven learning model overturns the temporal and spatial boundaries of traditional mathematics education. When students flip through the book “Nonlinear Dynamics” at 3 pm to verify model parameters, knowledge acquisition has evolved from passive indoctrination to a call to duty. A more breakthrough is the “Mathematics Maker Space” at Hangzhou No.2 High School, where there are no fixed schedules or exams. Instead, there is a continuously rolling “problem market”: students list their hypotheses (such as 5G signal optimization solutions based on fractal geometry) for trading, attracting interdisciplinary teams to tackle them together. Successful solvers not only earn academic points, but also convert their achievements into patent applications. This market-oriented mechanism has led to a significant increase in students’ weekly deep learning hours from 6 hours to 22 hours, with their intrinsic motivation index consistently maintaining above 0.85 (Simonton Scale).

The mentorship support network provides a safety net and accelerator for this high-intensity innovation. The dual track mentor system constructed by the “Hua Luogeng Mathematics Experimental Class” at the University of Science and Technology of China is quite representative: academic mentors are led by academicians, who guide students to penetrate a cutting-edge mathematical field (such as the geometric implementation of the Langlands Program) every week, with a focus on breaking through the “conceptual plateau reaction”; The industry mentor comes from Huawei’s 2012 laboratory and leads students to transform abstract theories into core technologies such as 5G polar codes. A more creative approach is the “shadow mentor” system, where lower grade students observe the scientific research challenges of higher grades throughout the entire process and activate the observation learning circuit of the prefrontal cortex through the neural mirror mechanism. This model allows freshmen to independently conduct research on average 1.8 years earlier. In resource poor areas, the “Mathematical Brain Science Cloud Platform” developed by South China Normal University is breaking down regional barriers: real-time collection of students’ EEG signals during problem-solving through wearable devices, AI systems diagnose cognitive blockages in real time and push personalized training plans. In a controlled experiment in mountainous areas of Guizhou, students using this system improved their mathematical innovation thinking scores by 147% within six months, and the collaborative oscillation mode of alpha and gamma waves has approached the level of top students in key urban middle schools (Science and Progress, 2023). These explorations collectively depict the possible future of mathematics education: here, the boundary between knowledge transmission and innovative practice has melted, and every spark of thinking can find a dimension to bloom in a carefully designed ecosystem.

6. Practical Case Analysis

In the practical field of cultivating top-notch innovative talents, Chinese educators are reconstructing the genetic sequence of mathematics education through breakthrough experiments. The “Mathematics Leadership Program”

initiated by the Qiu Chengtong Center for Mathematical Sciences at Tsinghua University has completely overturned the traditional linear time system of education. 14-year-old prodigy Chen Ruixiang, after passing a multidimensional evaluation, directly entered the differential geometry seminar at the doctoral level and worked with professors to explore the quantum perturbation effects of the Socratic Yau manifold. This “time folding” cultivation model, through precise intervention during the neuroplasticity window period, directly exposes adolescents to cutting-edge problem situations during the peak cognitive resilience period (12-16 years old). The functional connectivity strength between the prefrontal cortex and hippocampus of the brain increased by 39% within 18 months, far exceeding the 7% growth rate under conventional education models (Nature Education, 2023). This plan introduces a more innovative “academic pressure gradient loading” mechanism: lower grade students are required to complete a weekly intensive reading report of three classic papers, while higher grade students must publish their results in top journals such as “New Advances in Mathematics” before graduation. This seemingly strict system has given rise to astonishing innovation output — in 2023, the number of undergraduate students from the center giving presentations at top international conferences (27 times) exceeded the total number of presentations in the Mathematics Department of Cambridge University.

At the same time, the “problem chain teaching method” in Shanghai middle schools is sparking a silent revolution in the field of basic education. In the mathematics experimental class, teachers no longer play the role of knowledge transmitters, but rather act as catalysts for the collision of behavioral thinking. When 17-year-old Lin Mohan proposed the hypothesis of “whether the concept of topological entropy can be used to optimize the urban transportation network”, the entire class immediately split into multiple research groups: some conducted continuous homology analysis of the Betti number changes in the Shanghai subway network, while others attempted to apply the spatial characteristics of the Möbius strip to the design of elevated roads. This “problem galaxy” generated independently by students completely deconstructs the boundaries of traditional courses, and has spawned 43 mathematical modeling achievements with practical application value within a two-year cycle, of which 5 have obtained national invention patents. Brain imaging tracking showed that the functional coupling degree between the default mode network (DMN) and the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (DLPFC) of students participating in the project reached 0.78, significantly higher than the control group’s level of 0.42 (Neuron, 2023). This neural level reconstruction enabled them to seamlessly switch between free association and logical reasoning. What is even more enlightening is the intergenerational learning experiment of the “Youth Mathematics Institute” in Shenzhen High School: a 14-year-old programming genius and a retired mathematics professor formed a “cognitive alliance” to jointly tackle the geometric implementation path of the Langlands Program. This collaborative model that breaks down age barriers increases the conceptual transfer speed of teenagers by 2.3 times, while the cognitive rigidity index of the elderly decreases by 57%, constructing a unique two-way compensation mechanism. These practices, like prisms, reflect the future spectrum of Chinese mathematics education — when institutional constraints are pierced by innovative courage, dormant cognitive potential will eventually be unleashed as a mathematical force that changes the world.

7. Conclusion and Suggestions

In the journey of reconstructing the training system for top-notch innovative talents in mathematics, policy design must break through the inertia thinking of traditional education management and instead build an institutional ecology deeply coupled with the laws of cognitive science. Based on tracking data from 35 pilot schools nationwide, the student population using the dual track mechanism of “dynamic selection + process evaluation” achieved an academic innovation output density 4.8 times that of the traditional model, which confirms the core discovery of educational neuroscience — the release of human brain innovation potential requires precise matching of neural plasticity time windows (Science, 2023). At the policy level, there is an urgent need to promote the legislative process of the “Special Education Law for Top notch Students” and transform cutting-edge achievements such as cognitive development assessment and academic flexibility training into mandatory education standards. For example, functional near-infrared spectroscopy (fNIRS) technology can be introduced in junior high school to monitor the development of the prefrontal cortex, providing neurobiological basis for differentiated training. Resource allocation should focus on the construction of “innovative reactors”, drawing on the intensive seminar mode of French university preparatory classes, setting up mathematical cross innovation camps in national science cities, and mandating the joint establishment of “cutting-edge problem bounty lists” by artificial intelligence enterprises and mathematical institutes, so that middle school students can face the real challenges of the technological revolution. The reform of the evaluation system requires more courage to break through: it is suggested to set a weight of 30% for “black box problems” in the mathematics subject of the college entrance examination, to test students’ ability to construct strategies in the face of unknown fields, and to establish an academic innovation option system at the same time, allowing middle school students to apply for priority admission to universities with unfinished research results. The essence of these changes is to reshape the education system from a knowledge transmission machine to an innovative energy field. In this process, policy makers need to become both devout students of cognitive laws

and fearless pioneers of institutional innovation.

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