

# An Exploration on Professional Development of Young Teachers in a Local University

## ——A Case of Huzhou University

Qi Zhang, Changming Gao, Qier Chen

Huzhou University, Huzhou, Zhejiang Province, 313000

angie@zjhu.edu.cn

**Keywords:** a local university, young teachers, professional development

**Abstract:** University teacher development indicates a dynamic process involving those factors as a favorable institutional environment, various ways for theoretical study and practice with which teachers can be well prepared for different academic roles, keep gaining high quality academic achievements and working vitality. This chiefly contains teachers' personal development, teaching development, professional development, organizational development and so on. Since there are lots of young teachers in a local university, the ways for their career starting development can be proposed as follows: helping them adapt to the teaching post as soon as possible; offering them supervisors so as to enhance their teaching and academic capability. Accordingly, with different manners such as optimizing humanistic environment as well as policy and institution, improving platform construction, young teachers' growth and development can be promoted.

### 1. Introduction

In recent years, with the fast development of higher education and continuous expansion of university running in our country, a large number of young teachers with master degree or doctorate have joined the teacher team in universities, therefore, there is a dramatic increase in proportion of young teachers in university faculty. According to statistics, in our country, there are 1.343 million full-time teachers in colleges and universities by the end of 2010, among whom there are young teachers under the age of 35 accounting for 47%, under the age of 40 accounting for 63% <sup>[1]</sup> (Wenjian Liu, 2011). The proportion of young teachers is higher in some newly-built universities. The 18th congress report of CPC explicitly states that we should reinforce the construction of teacher team, enhancing their morality level and professional competence, strengthening their sense of honor and sense of responsibility of knowledge imparting and talent cultivation. Therefore, it is an urgent task for universities, especially, a newly-built university, to accelerate the construction of teaching development center, reinforcing the cultivation of young teachers, promoting their development as well.

### 2. Basic Connotation of University Teacher Development

Focus on the university teacher development abroad started in the 1960s, by 90s, "University Teacher Development Centre" was established in various countries, the issue of university teacher development received high attention, there was even a continuous campaign for university teacher development in America, putting forward various teacher development projects. In 1991, a report entitled University Teacher Development: Elevation of National Power was published by US National Education Association (NEA), which proposed a more comprehensive and systematic definition to university teacher development, believing that university teacher development is basically around four goals: personal development, professional development, organizational development and teaching development.

It points out from the book named Encyclopaedia of International Education which was chiefly

compiled by the famous scholar Thorsten • Husen and others in 1990 that, in a broad sense, university teacher development indicates the overall changes of them which are influenced by a variety of factors in university environment; in a narrow sense, university teacher development refers to some development projects designed for improving the efficiency of their teaching and scientific research which contains four levels——teaching development, professional development, organizational development and personal development.

Chouyuan Pan, a higher education expert in our country holds a view (2007) that, in a broad sense, university teacher development refers to all university teachers who should insist on the theoretical study and practice through all sorts of ways and manners so as to continuously enhance and perfect the level of all aspects; in a narrow sense, he emphasizes upon the development and enhancement of their teaching competence since they are teachers. The connotation of university teacher development does not remain unchanged, it will be varied in different periods, different countries and regions together with changes in social development requirements. He believes that, at present, the connotation of university teacher development in our country should contain three aspects: academic level (basic theory, discipline theory, interdisciplinary knowledge), teachers' professional knowledge and skill (education knowledge and teaching competence), teachers' morality (academic morality, professional morality) <sup>[2]</sup> (Maoyuan Pan, Dan Luo, 2007).

Bixiang Chen, a Taiwan scholar thinks (2004) that university teacher development indicates that teachers should have self-reflection and understanding through their independent, cooperative, formal or non-formal further study and research activities during their teaching, research and service work so as to promote the professional knowledge and spirit of teaching, research and service, facilitating personal self-realization, promoting university academic culture, reaching the goal of university education, elevating the overall education quality.

What has mentioned above shows that university teacher development indicates a dynamic process involving those factors as a favorable institutional environment, various ways for theoretical study and practice so that teachers can be well prepared for different academic roles, keep gaining high quality academic achievements and working vitality. What university teacher development contains is their personal development, teaching development, professional development, organizational development and so on. Teaching development is the base, professional development the fundamentality, personal development the internal cause and organization the external cause.

### **3. Development Path of Young Teachers in a Local University**

Teacher is central in university teaching. Young teachers in a university are important component of teacher team, they are also the significant force in promoting the scientific development of higher education cause and in running higher education with satisfaction of people as well. There are lots of young teachers in teacher team in a local university whose growth and development are closely related to the quality elevation of teacher team, the enhancement of talent cultivation quality, furthermore, the sustainable development of the university. Accordingly, it is quite necessary to establish teaching development center with distinctive characteristics, implementing training, teaching consultation for young teachers with the focal points to strengthen their professional level and teaching competence, reinforcing the construction of teacher team and finally improving the quality of education and teaching.

#### **3.1 Guiding Young Teachers to Adapt to the Teaching Post As Soon As Possible**

Lots of graduate students have been recruited by our newly-built local university, generally speaking, most of them are able to deal with the teaching work since they have gone through a set of strict assessment of their performance and approval, but, due to the particularity of teaching career and the systematic nature of teaching work, young teachers could not be competent enough standing at the teaching desk and teaching their students. In terms of a teacher, standing confidently at the teaching desk and accomplishing the role of teaching career are the foundation for other roles as well as his development. With the goal to facilitate the career development of young teachers, we

have set up the teaching development center, actively carrying out the career-starting training work of young teachers, assisting them to adapt to the teaching post with the least delay possible. The chief points of career-starting training arrangement are as follows: teaching routine, teaching method, basic ways to deal with students' work, fundamental knowledge of pedagogy, psychology, basic theory of the discipline he is occupied in, university running history, university program, university campus culture etc. Through the ways of active guidance politically, training with effort professionally, caring their life enthusiastically, most of the young teachers have been promoted to hold firm ideal and belief, possessing outstanding capability through practice, being innovative and creative, determining to work hard, cultivating noble character, offering love and dedication to university, improving ideological and political quality as well as professional capability comprehensively.

### **3.2 Carrying forward the Tutorial System for Young Teachers in Different Faculties**

A common phenomenon with a newly-built local university is that there is a larger proportion of young teachers in each faculty. With the purpose to guide them to develop well in their profession, every faculty has provided young teachers with middle-aged or elderly supervisors who are of good ideological quality, high professional level, academic democracy, strong working capability, being active and enthusiastic as well, therefore, those middle-age or elderly supervisors have played their full role in the cultivation work of young teachers through knowledge imparting, assisting and guiding. For the sake of reinforcing the professional education of young teachers, through different methods and ways, we have made great efforts to cultivate their professional dedication to serve people, devoting themselves to educational cause with strong will, cultivating their struggling spirit to study diligently and assiduously as well as the scientific spirit of precise research and earnest teaching. Through the institution construction, we have established corresponding institutions and improved them gradually with aspects of selection and allocation of supervisors, their work responsibility and financial guarantee of tutorial system.

### **3.3 Promoting Teaching and Scientific Research Capability of Young Teachers**

The key point of teacher team construction in a newly-built local university is to assist young teachers to enhance their teaching and scientific capability, therefore, we have adopted various manners to strengthen the training work of all the young teachers according to the need of discipline construction and development, first, let them study for a degree in other universities, secondly, train and cultivate them in our own university. In accordance with the requirements of university teacher training center in our province, every year we implement the training with the content of professional theory, professional skill, teacher morality and style. In addition, apart from the regular qualification training to those new young teachers each year, our university has set up a "Forum of Famous Teacher" which can facilitate to enhance young teachers' ideological education, their teaching and scientific research ability and practice competence, thus, providing young teachers an effective and convenient way to adapt to their own posts as soon as possible. With respect to practice competence of young teachers in a newly-built local university, they are required to lead students to participate in practice such as teaching practice, production practice and graduation practice. Moreover, some young teachers are asked to take a temporary post in enterprise, letting them go into society, go into practice in which they can accumulate their knowledge, can strengthen their ability to solve practical problems. Furthermore, young teachers are encouraged to take part in scientific activity, applying for scientific research project of their own, being assistants for senior teachers, thus, creating a favorable academic atmosphere among young teachers. We have daringly selected some young teachers with good political quality, good teaching and scientific research potential and cultivated them specifically, sending them to those renowned universities or research institutes for studying visits or further study or cooperative research, with which great help has been offered for young teachers' development.

## **4. Utilizing Different Ways to Promote Young Teachers' Growth and Development**

### **4.1 Optimizing Humanistic Environment to Accelerate Young Teachers' Professional Development**

A favorable working atmosphere creates the function of unification, inspiration and mobilization which can boost morale, arouse working enthusiasm and creativity, release potential ability, realize personal growth and development, carry forward the overall development of teacher team in university. Therefore, we adhere to "people first", constructing with efforts a favorable atmosphere of encouraging talents to do their work well, supporting them to accomplish their work and assist them to become successful in their work, meanwhile, we also create a humanistic environment of liberty, freedom, democracy, equality, openness, fairness and impartiality, hence, teachers can coordinate and support each other, enhancing their working efficiency in a harmonious, relaxed and comfortable atmosphere together with a friendly, trusting interpersonal relationship. Upon the cultural psychology, we have helped young teachers form a sense of belonging and dependence of university, really integrating themselves into our university, then concentrating on learning and studying, seeking development wholeheartedly.

#### **4.1.1 Strengthening Leadership, Manifesting the Core Position of Talent Work**

Our university always holds that Party takes charge of talents, thus, we have set up the leading group for talent work in which Party Secretary of our university is the group leader, special meetings of talent work being held, target responsibility system being established to improve the construction of talent team, guidance being intensified and joint force being formed. In the meantime, we have quite well utilized media inside and outside our university together with commendation activities, thus, vigorously carrying forward the fine tradition of respecting teachers and attaching importance to teaching, respecting virtuous people and loving talents. In the meantime, we have created an atmosphere of public opinion throughout university to respect labor, respect knowledge, respect talents and respect creativity, treating "cultivating talents, attracting talents, making good use of talents" as the focal point in all types of resource allocation of our university, forming a talent evaluation and incentive mechanism based upon one's performance contribution and competence level.

#### **4.1.2 Enhancing Humanistic Care, Demonstrating the Core Spirit of Talent Work**

It is required that leaders, departments and offices at all levels of our university should firmly form a strong sense of serving high-level discipline leaders and front line teaching and scientific research. We have carried out the principle of "giving first priority to urgent matters, handling special cases in special ways", opening "green channel" to provide high quality and efficient service for teaching and scientific talents, in particular, those urgently needed high-level talents for the long-term development of discipline construction based upon the strict assessment. At the same time, we have provided them with the best possible living condition and working condition, tried our best to settle their worries so that they can concentrate on their teaching and scientific work. Moreover, the ideological and political superiority of party organizations at all levels, the advantages of organization and close link with the masses of teachers and students have been given full play to explore the ways and methods of talent work.

#### **4.1.3 Improving Service Sense, Serving All Sorts of Talent Seriously**

We have done our best to serve talents, providing discipline leaders with favorable working and academic environments, increasing investment, encouraging them to undertake national, ministry and provincial scientific research projects actively, meanwhile, increasing their material benefits and status in our university, actively creating conditions for them to participate in academic exchange activities at home and abroad so as to elevate their academic level and popularity, thus, more opportunities and stages to demonstrate their scientific achievements and academic level have been created.

#### **4.1.4 Implementing “Caring Project”, Caring the Growth of Doctoral Group in all Aspects**

Doctoral team is related to university future, accordingly, offices and departments at all levels have seriously implemented the “caring project” so that doctors can work more effectively, live with better quality, develop more smoothly. A doctoral association has been founded by our university and by making use of “Doctoral Forum” and other channels, we have provided platform and stage for all the doctors in our university to listen to different ideas, in this way, broadening their visions, inspiring their innovation, making as many friends as possible, letting thoughts collide as well as activating their potential. Furthermore, all the doctoral teachers are encouraged to be the first to compete with others, to be good at cooperation, to be courageous to do something so as to become leading persons in science and technology innovation, the main force in teaching work and good models for university students’ growth and development.

#### **4.2 Optimizing Policy and Institution, Ensuring Professional Growth of Teachers**

There are strict policy requirements in talent work in which the institution and normalization are the foundation to recruit, cultivate and utilize talents. In the meantime, there is much policy content in talent work which covers talent recruitment, cultivation, assessment, allocation etc. We have formulated various talent policy with the actual situation of our university and local economic and social development needs so that the institution guarantee for teachers’ growth and development can be ensured.

##### **4.2.1 Reinforcing Policy and Institution Construction, Improving Policy Guarantee Mechanism**

Our university has successively formed and improved a set of talent work policy and institution in which there are more than 10 documents such as the “12th Five-Year” Plan of Teacher Team Construction in Huzhou Teachers College; Appointment Methods of Distinguished Professors in Huzhou Teachers College; “526 Talent Project”—Selection and Cultivation Measures of Excellent Young and Middle-aged Scholars; Leading Talent Program in Huzhou Teachers’ College; Implementation Measures of Doctor Cultivation Project in Huzhou Teachers College; Implementation Measures of Teaching Staff Further Training in Huzhou Teachers College. So far, we have held talent work meetings four times, discussing the work specifically concerning the work platform construction, academic atmosphere creation, humanistic environment perfection and continuous competitiveness enhancement to attract talents.

##### **4.2.2 Strengthening Assessment Construction, Improving Teacher Evaluation Mechanism**

The interior requirement to perform the duty of university is to reform and improve teachers’ evaluation incentive mechanism which is also an urgent need to promote higher education quality and definitely an inevitable requirement to build a local comprehensive university. Until now, we have formulated relatively sound three-in-one teachers’ evaluation mechanism of “teaching work, science and technology work, students’ ideological and political education work”, at the same time, adhering to quality standard, emphasizing teaching normalization construction, intensifying assessment and evaluation of work quality in practice teaching, making objective and fair evaluation of teachers’ teaching work, commending and rewarding those teachers who have contributed to teaching, setting typical and good models, encouraging teachers to strive for excellence and make progress. In the work of science and technology, we also encourage teachers to have the “indomitable spirit” with which they should apply for more national projects, turning out more competitive products, producing more outstanding achievements recognized in academic circles at home and abroad, meanwhile, offering service directly to local economic and social development. In ideological and political education work of teachers, we have continuously improved the work performance assessment method, regularly assessing their work, deciding their ideological and political education work performance score, meanwhile, actively encouraging teachers to manifest their personality by a correct outlook on life, correct values and good teachers’ moral style in order to influence students. The three-in-one teachers’ evaluation mechanism takes

competence and performance as focal point, combining spiritual encouragement and allocation institution reform, carrying out the impartial, fair and open incentive evaluation.

#### **4.2.3 Optimizing Evaluation System of Professional Title, Focusing on Cultivating Outstanding Talents**

Professional title recognition is the recognition of professional and technical personnel's academic level, therefore, in professional title evaluation, we have adhered to principles, strictly implemented document regulations, resolutely broken old ideas of "arrangement in seniority order" and "much focus on qualification less attention on performance", daringly turned our attention to outstanding young talents. To those excellent talents who are qualified for exceptional promotion, we never withhold their promotion or easily deny them while to excellent people returning from abroad who do have real talent, we have offered them high professional title though they owned low one.

#### **4.2.4 Implementing and Improving Various Incentive Mechanisms and Incentive Policies, Creating a Favorable Environment for Success**

We have appropriately increased support efforts to those recruited high-quality talents in the aspects of house purchasing subsidy, family member arrangement, children attending school, distinguished professor subsidy and fund for special discipline construction. In the meantime, the recruiting treatment of doctors has been adjusted, the existing standard to the discipline in shortage been increased moderately. long-term discipline been offered with renting subsidy. Moreover, our university continuously implemented the incentive policy to those young teachers "gaining doctor degree by cultivation", let them enjoy salary benefits, further training subsidy, reward by means of written agreement. In addition, we have worked out incentive measures to excellent achievements in science and technology, excellent teaching achievements, encouraging young teachers to apply for all kinds of patent, technology development and academic research as well.

#### **4.3 Consolidating Platform Construction, Pushing Forward Teacher Professional Development**

Personal development needs not only personal effort, but also necessary platform provided by university. On the one hand, our university has gone forward by self-construction, creating a favorable environment facilitating teachers' successful development, depending on key disciplines and key projects, taking distinguished professors and other top talents as core, supporting and constructing science and technology innovation team as well as excellent teaching team with features of reasonable structure, complementing each other, united collaboration, possessing cohesive and fighting capacity; on the other hand, we have tried our best to set up the development platform for all kinds of talents, in particular, establish a cooperative base between university and local place, providing a broader platform for teachers' growth and development.

##### **4.3.1 Reinforcing Discipline Team Construction Continuously, Building Excellent Teaching and Scientific Research Team with Effort**

So far, in teacher team construction, we have constructed a group of excellent teaching teams with demonstrating function and outstanding achievements in teaching research and reform whose structure is also stable, development potential being optimistic, innovation spirit being prominent, all this have been accomplished during a long-term teaching reform and practice according to discipline characteristics, meanwhile, teaching office, research institute, laboratory, teaching base, training center are respective construction units with which we have integrated resources, constructed platform for curriculum and major. Moreover, long-term effective mechanism has been formed to reinforce organization construction in basic teaching unit, at the same time, reforming teaching content, method and means, developing teaching resources, promoting teaching discussion and exchange of teaching experience, accelerating knowledge imparting, assisting and guiding work in teaching, optimizing teachers' team structure, elevating the overall level of teacher team. Besides, we have established a group of science and technology innovation team taking the leading role in

our province with the ability to solve major problems led by distinguished professors and outstanding discipline leaders, forming a close link between talent team construction and key discipline, new interdisciplinary subjects, promoting innovative and competitive capacity of teacher team.

#### **4.3.2 Combining Local Government Talent Development Strategy, Recruiting and Developing Excellent Talents Jointly**

On the one hand, local university has provided local place with talent output continuously, on the other hand, we can also make use of local advantages to attract talents so that we have actively taken all sorts of government's talent development strategy into consideration according to current situation of industrial development and six key characteristic industries in Huzhou, fully utilizing those national and provincial talent projects such as "Thousand Talents Program"; "Municipal 1112 Talent Project"; "South Taihu Lake Elite Program"; "Special Expert of South Taihu Lake" etc., attracting excellent talents at home and abroad to start business in Huzhou and work in our university, meanwhile, building innovation team and seeking for cooperation by flexibly recruiting academician and doctor supervisor .

### **5. Conclusion**

Talent is the first resource, hence, it is of great significance to actively gather all kinds of talents, in particular, young talents according to local conditions for the sustainable development of a university. What we have successfully accomplished described in this paper is worthy of affirmation and treats as reference.

### **Acknowledgements**

This paper is the research achievement of (1) a key project of the "12th Five-Year" higher education scientific research plan of higher education association in Zhejiang province, which is entitled as *A Study on University Classification and Transformation of Newly-built University with Characteristic Development* (KT2011161) (2) a key project of teaching reform in Huzhou university entitled *An Empirical Research on the Development of Young Teachers' Teaching Capability in a Teaching Type University*; *A Study on the Construction, Running Mode and Mechanism of Teaching Development Center in Huzhou University*; *A Special Study on the Construction of Teaching Development Center*.

### **References**

- [1] Wenjian Liu, 2011. *The Necessity of Building Teachers' Development Organization in University* [N], China Education Daily. (3), 10-11.
- [2] Maoyuan Pan, Dan Luo, 2007. *A Brief History of Teacher Development in University* [J], China University Teaching. (1), 5-8.