

Orientation and Construction of Teacher Development Ideas in Local Universities

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Abstract: Local universities in China are confronted with a transform to application-oriented type, so teacher development idea for local universities needs a change accordingly. Scientific teacher development ideas should correspond to local universities' orientation which reflects on the aspects of teaching, scientific research and social service. As for teaching, all the curricula, teaching materials and teaching methodology should orient to application. As for scientific research, applied researches and teaching research should be given priority. In term of social service, local region and grassroots should be the main service objects. Nowadays, people still have some misunderstandings on local university teachers' development ideas and results in some incorrect practice, which need to corrected by renewing ideas, reforming guarantee system and strengthening operation mechanism.

1. Introduction

University teacher development is an important international issue in the development of higher education in the world, which refers to “the overall changes occurring in university teachers in a broad sense, and some development projects designed to improve teaching or scientific research of university teachers in a narrow sense”^[1]. The international teacher development has gone through five stages: scholar stage, teacher stage, developer stage, learner stage and network stage^[2]. Different stages are different in development goals, development contents, organizational forms and development patterns. In the 21st century, China has closely kept up with the international trend and proposed to replace university teacher' training with university teacher development. There is a difference between university teacher development and university teacher training: the former not only emphasizes the external support for teacher development but teachers' independent development, while the latter only emphasizes the external organizational support for teacher development.

In recent years, China has steadily promoted the transformation and development of some local universities to application-oriented universities. In this process, local university teachers developing towards application-orientation has been highly valued, which is considered as the foundation for the transformation of local universities.

2. The Connotation of Teacher Development in Local Universities

The university teacher development ideas refer to the rational understanding and pursuit of university teacher development, and are the concreteness of teacher development ideas in local universities, including rational cognition and expectation of local university teacher development goals, contents and paths. Currently, the development orientation of local university is to transform and develop into application-oriented university. Therefore, local university teacher development ideas should embody application, serve the education goal, and be implemented through teaching,

scientific research and social services accordingly.

3. The Ideal Orientation of Teacher Development in Local Universities

It is generally believed that university teachers' work includes teaching, scientific research and social services. Therefore, local university teacher development can be divided into development in teaching, in research and in social service.

3.1 Orientation of Teacher Development in Teaching

The orientation of teacher development of local universities in teaching is to improve teaching ability in cultivating applied talents, specifically speaking, including the ability to develop and implement application-oriented curriculum and teaching materials and the ability to teach in an inspiring and heuristic approach. The orientation is determined by the following factors:

For one thing, the primary task of local universities is to train students into applied talents who are excellent in application and operation instead of discovery and exploration. For another, limited by research ability, research platform and other factors, it is difficult for local university teachers to gain brilliant achievement in basic theoretical research. So they have to give teaching the first priority and devote themselves to continuous improvement of relevant knowledge, ability and skills in teaching. What's more, the education orientation of local universities is teaching-oriented, and all the work should be carried out for teaching.

Besides theoretical knowledge, cultivating applied talents requires teachers to have practical ability which is the deficiency of many teachers. Teachers need to improve their practical ability and to know the latest development trend of the field they are working on through the cooperation between universities and enterprises.

3.2 Orientation of Teacher Development in Scientific Research

The most important thing is to understand what scientific research is in a correct way. As Boyer points out, "The time has come to give wider meaning and richer interpretation to this familiar and lofty term, which will legitimize the full content of academic work. Academics are meant to participate in basic research, but a scholar's job also means stepping out of research, seeking interconnections, building bridges between theory and practice, and effectively teaching his or her knowledge to students."^[3] "It is not difficult to see that the work of a scholar has four distinct and overlapping functions: The scholarship of discovery, the scholarship of integration, the scholarship of application, and the scholarship of teaching. According to Boyer's view, both traditional "teaching" and traditional "academic work" are in the new category of "Scientific Research". "Teaching" is a kind of scientific research, which is called "teaching research". Besides teaching, "scientific research" also includes the research for discovery, the research for integration and the research for application.

Although all the university teachers undertake research work, they should have different focuses in their research work. According to the development orientation of local universities, the requirements of regional economy and society, the overall ability of research teams and the personal development orientation of teachers, local university teachers should devote themselves to applied research and teaching research instead of basic theoretical research. Applied research and teaching research should be the main direction of teacher development in scientific research in local universities.

Teaching is the fundamental activity of local universities. Without good teaching quality, local universities would not become excellent local universities. Excellent teaching quality requires teaching research, just as Liu Daoyu pointed out, "educational reform must be promoted by teaching experiments"^[4], and teaching experiments belong to this kind of teaching research.

Instead of theoretical discussion and contention, applied researches which aims to solve practical problems, should be given more attention in local universities. It is worth noting that among applied researches, there is a school-based research which is also supposed to be actively done by local university teachers. For example, computer teachers can develop software of teaching management

for universities according to the specific teaching needs to improve management efficiency. Administrative management teachers can study how to optimize school administration and promote the reform of school administration.

3.3 Orientation of Teacher Development in Social Service

Social service for local university teachers should focus on “Serving regional social needs” rather than “national needs”. Social service is a new function of universities, which originated from the beginning of 20th century and plays an increasingly important role in today's society. Compared with national elite universities, such as universities of Project 985 and Project 211, local universities are supported by local government and have more local features, which determines that the social service orientation of local universities is serving the region. According to the different service objects, there are roughly three types of service orientation for local university teachers.

The first is to serve the local governments for decision-making needs. University teachers should make full use of their academic expertise to provide specialized consulting services for the government, and improve the decision-making level and administrative ability of local governments. This is not only a channel for universities to obtain development resources, but also a way for university teachers to transform what they have learned into “actual productivity” and to show self-value.

The second is to serve the needs of the regional enterprises. Teachers of local universities should help to solve various technical problems in local enterprises and realize the coordinated development and mutual progress of universities and enterprises.

The third is to serve other regional organizations. Local university teachers should actively participate in various public services of local society, such as community services and cultural and artistic services, to reflect the social value of university teachers.

4. Current Situation of Teacher Development Ideas in Local Universities

Some teachers in local colleges and universities have deviation in the understanding of their own development and have not formed correct ideas of teacher development.

4.1 Deviation in the Teaching Development

Some local university teachers lack the awareness and ability to develop application-oriented courses, and consequently, it is difficult for them to develop corresponding training programs according to advanced ideas and the needs of the society. They even do not fully understand the function and nature of the courses they teach. Some teachers do not make it clear that the teachers in application-oriented universities should pay more attention to cultivating students' practical skills and they take technical skill courses as theoretical courses, deviating from the normal curriculum orientation, so that the training goal of application-oriented talents cannot be achieved; Some not only lack professional practical ability, but also lack enthusiasm and consciousness to accept training in enterprises. As a result, it is difficult for them to connecting theory with practice in their teaching design and implementation. Some teaching materials are difficult to meet the actual needs, and teachers also lack the corresponding ability to develop new teaching material and the initiative to learn how to develop them. Some teachers have been teaching in a cramming way for many years and cannot use new teaching means such as Micro-lesson and Flipped Classroom. In addition, some local universities have not paid enough attention to guiding teachers to develop the application-oriented teaching ideas, and the supporting policies are incomplete.

4.2 Deviation in the Scientific Research Development

Deviation in research ability development is reflected in the wrong direction of scientific research.

Some teachers, especially those with doctor's degree, devote most of their time to theoretical research and make few breakthroughs and achievements for the limitation of research platform and team. Few teachers consider combining research objectives with practical applications. In this

respect, teachers with doctor's degree are often criticized for not playing much role in applied research and the research results cannot be applied directly. Some teachers do not like or even feel ashamed of teaching research, and do not regard teaching research as a type of academic research, still holding the outdated idea of "teaching and scientific research being opposite". Most teachers have no enthusiasm and tendency to carry out school-based research. Generally speaking, some local university teachers' own understanding of the development of scientific research deviates from the orientation of application. Although they have research results, these results are not "practical". Moreover, many local universities have no correct development orientation, biting off more than they can chew and advocating basic research, which also makes it difficult for teachers to have a correct understanding of the orientation of scientific research development.

4.3 Deviation in the Development of Social Service

Deviation in the understanding and practice of the ideas of social service development is reflected in the following cases: Some teachers lack practical experience and ability related to their own major, which makes it difficult for them to effectively "respond" to real practical problems when engaging in social services and propose workable solutions. Some teachers could propose some solutions while these solutions are too expensive to be implemented. Or in the service process, some teachers make decisions for the service objects and fail to fulfill their due service duties properly. Furthermore, local universities usually lack administration mechanism or policies to guide teachers to engage in social services.

5. Restrictive Factors of Teacher Development Ideas in Local Universities

Restrictive factors of teacher development ideas in local universities mainly include conceptual factors and management mechanism factors.

5.1 Conceptual Factors

Without correct perception, there would be no correct action. On the one hand, some local universities lack proper orientation for their own development. Local universities are supposed to be turned into application-oriented universities to cultivate application-oriented talents. Scientific research and social services should also be application-oriented. School leaders should guide and organize teachers to work on the goal. While in reality, some local universities blindly follow and imitate elite universities and deviate their due direction, which leads to the teachers forming wrong perception about their own development. On the other hand, even if a local university has clear and correct developing orientation, some teachers themselves do not hold a sound and profound understanding of the educational orientation of the university and teacher development ideas. They don't realize that they have to conform their own development with the application orientation of local universities. As a result, in teaching development, some teachers are not interested in teaching and are unwilling to devote themselves to the reform and the improvement of related abilities on curriculum, teaching materials and teaching. In scientific research, some are keen on basic research and do not like teaching research and applied research. In social service, some prefer to do researches deviated from practice rather than provide services to the region.

5.2 Management Mechanism Factors

In teaching development, to promote teaching needs the corresponding teaching management and incentive mechanism. At present, some local universities have set up teaching achievement awards to guide teachers to be passionate about teaching. Nevertheless, the number of prizes is too small to meet the actual need of teachers. Moreover, most of the prizes are taken by the teaching team headed by leaders in the end, thus greatly discouraging teachers' enthusiasm about teaching. As for scientific research, although many universities have formulated scientific research award system to guide teachers to carry out teaching research and applied research. However, in practice, the professional title evaluation system, which has the greatest impact on teachers' development, is still theory-research orientated. Teaching research and applied research account for a small weight

in the professional title evaluation system. Therefore, it is difficult to essentially solve the problem of parallel development of teaching research, applied research and theory research. The situation of emphasizing theoretical research and neglecting applied research is still serious. In terms of social services, some local universities have set corresponding systems and quantified standard, but the scores of some service items are far lower than those of publishing an ordinary academic paper. How can teachers get positive incentive?

6. The Construction and Implementation Strategies of Teacher Development in Local Universities

6.1 Innovating Educational Ideas

The top priority of local universities is to clarify the educational ideas. Local universities should develop toward application-orientation and the educational mission is to train high-quality application-oriented talents for the region. Research and social services also point to “application” and “region” respectively.

First, local universities should firmly hold to application-orientated developing goal. Second, local universities should publicize the educational ideas through various channels to ensure that teachers internalize the ideas and coordinate their own development with the school. Third, local universities should take effective actions to promote the shaping of correct teacher development ideas. Except publicizing the educational ideas to teachers, universities should try to promote local university teachers to form correct development ideas through economic, institutional and administrative means.

University teachers need renew their ideas. Firstly, they ought to fully understand the complexity of teachers' roles and establish the idea of lifelong development. Secondly, they should realize that teachers' development must be consistent with the developing direction of their university, otherwise, teachers and universities will fail to develop simultaneously. Thirdly, they should be aware of the double meaning of teacher development that includes both university's support for teachers' development and teacher's personal independent development. On the one hand, teachers should actively support and participate in teacher development programs organized by universities. On the other hand, they should actively make plans for their own development and implement plans in practice.

6.2 Establishing Corresponding Management Mechanism

Corresponding management mechanism needs to be established for the formation and implementation of correct teacher development ideas. Universities should take responsibility on the establishment of corresponding regulations and rules to ensure that teacher development in teaching, scientific research and social service follow the application orientation.

As for teaching ability development, teachers' ability to initiatively explore curriculum, teaching materials and to flexibly adopt various teaching methods ought to be paid more attention and corresponding encouraging mechanism should be established as well. For one thing, the mechanism should have mandatory regulations, such as requiring teachers to master application-oriented curriculum development program, developing a curriculum within 3 years and put it into practice, requiring teachers to develop teaching materials within 4-5 years according to the idea of “combining theory with practice”. In order to guide teachers to be enthusiastic about teaching, the regulations on the awards of teaching achievement evaluation should clearly state that administrative leaders withdraw from the evaluation, and front-line teachers are the main body receiving the awards without being restricted by professional titles, educational background and qualifications. Awards for teaching competitions are supposed to be roughly equivalent to those for scientific research and social services.

As for scientific research, applied research, teaching research and theoretical research are supposed to be given the equal importance in the management mechanism. The academic status of teaching research should be guaranteed. To encourage the transformation of teaching and research

achievements into practice, and to evaluate research work with actual results should also be guaranteed.

As for social services, reasonable regulations are supposed to be formulated to strengthen that teachers serve the local society well by using their personal knowledge and technology. The key points in management are as follows: first, incentive measures should be designed, such as reducing teaching workload and providing transportation subsidies and appropriate bonuses for teachers engaged in social services; the second is to officially guarantee that the status of social service is equivalent to that of scientific research and teaching.

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