

Research on Strategies for Professional Teaching Team Establishment in Independent College

Zhang Qi

Huzhou University, Huzhou, Zhejiang Province, 313000, China

Keywords: Independent College; Professional teaching team; Construction strategy

Abstract: The establishment of professional teaching teams is an important organizational guarantee for Independent College to set up the characteristic professional system, improve the teaching quality and deepen the teaching reform. At present, there are some issues in the construction of professional teaching teams of our Independent College, such as the lack of high-level leading figures together with the material support, the uncertainty of team collaboration and the sustainable development. Therefore, for the sake of promoting the better development of teaching teams, the allocation of human resources and material resources should be adjusted according to different development stages of the professional teaching teams, and the incentive mechanism should be established and perfected as well.

1. Introduction

Independent Colleges in China started in the 1990s, and have developed rapidly with the popularization of Higher Education along with the depending on the flexibly-autonomous school-running mechanism, the private school-running mode, the abundant source of students, and the educational concept brought by the current undergraduate colleges and universities, and their management methods as well as educational resources. By the end of 2019, there are nearly 300 Independent Colleges in China, shouldering the responsibility for almost a quarter of the undergraduate cultivation.

Independent Colleges have been established by relying on the professional advantages of matrix universities and the financial advantages of investors. In terms of the professional construction, Independent Colleges are mostly the “duplicates” of matrix universities, which is an inevitable choice at the early stage for them. In 2008, the Ministry of Education officially implemented the “Measures for the Establishment and Management of Independent Colleges”, which require Independent Colleges to become Independent Colleges in the true sense within the next five years ^[1], showing the development orientation for Independent Colleges, but, meanwhile, new challenges have also been confronted by Independent Colleges

Independent Colleges are distinguished from matrix universities by their different qualities. First, the former is a sort of privately-run college, whose funding sources are mainly the tuition fees paid by students, while the latter is a kind of publicly-run university, whose funding sources include the financial allocation, tuition fees, self-generated income and other channels. Secondly, the difference lies in the positioning between Independent Colleges and matrix universities, the former is teaching-oriented and mainly aims at cultivating application-type of talents for society, while the latter is teaching-research-oriented or research-oriented. Thirdly, the difference between the two is the student sources, the former enrolls students at the third level, while the latter recruits students at the first or second level. Thereby, Independent Colleges must absorb and transform the resources obtained from matrix universities in a timely manner, and carry out the professional construction according to their own conditions so as to establish a professional system with the characteristics of Independent Colleges.

However, the key point for Independent Colleges to construct a characteristic professional system lies in the construction of a faculty team with good quality, reasonable structure, professional support, appropriate quantity, combination of full-time and part-time and being relatively stable

Accordingly, the faculty teams of our Independent College can be generally divided, at present, into four categories: ① There are full-time teachers who have been diverted from the matrix university. ② Among the full-time teachers, some retired professors have been recruited into our Independent College as professional teaching leading figures. At the same time, a large number of graduate students have been enrolled in recent years, who have enriched the full-time teaching staff. Moreover, we have tried with effort to bring in academic leaders and other high-level talents, however, due to the limited concept and system, it has been difficult to recruit high-level talents so far. ③ The in-service teachers of the matrix university have undertaken part of the teaching task as part-time teachers of our Independent College. ④ Teachers from other colleges and universities, retired teachers, professional technical personnel of enterprises and institutions have been recruited as part-time teachers of our Independent College.

Among the full-time teachers in our Independent College, teachers from the matrix university are generally older, and the retired teachers or professors being recruited by us are even much older, the postgraduate students being enrolled generally have just graduated from universities, therefore, their professional titles are at the preliminary stage. Obviously, the age structure and title structure of teachers in our Independent College are mostly “dumbbell-shaped”, we have been lack of a group of young backbone teachers and professional disciplines leaders. For the sake of improving the teaching quality and deepening the teaching reform, the establishment of professional teaching teams is an important organizational guarantee for our Independent College. Therefore, we have constructed the teaching and research offices, course groups, tutor groups and other professional teaching teams to fully display the team advantages of full-time as well as part-time teachers, then, on the one hand, through the collective teaching research to promote the teaching reform, develop the teaching resources, we have better undertaken the task of talent cultivation. On the other hand, the collective teaching research has also been an effective way to quickly elevate teachers’ professional competence and cultivate the backbone teachers. Hence, it is of great theoretical and practical significance to research on the construction of professional teaching teams in Independent College.

2. Analysis of professional teaching team establishment in our independent college

2.1 Inadequacy of high-level leading figures and material support in constructing the professional teaching teams

In our Independent College, there are not enough leading figures for teaching teams, national and provincial famous teachers are scarce. The high-level talents from the matrix university have often assumed the title of leading figures, but it is difficult for them to devote themselves to the teaching work of our Independent College because of their multiple-job holding. The retired professors hired as leading figures have their advantages in teaching experience, but inevitably they lack energy and motivation in innovation. What is more, there are difficulties in recruiting high level outstanding leading figures due to the platform of our Independent College being not high enough, and the restriction of ideas and system, so that many high-level talents are not willing to become full-time teachers in our Independent College. As a result, the biggest difficulty in constructing the scientific research teams in our Independent College is the lack of human resources, especially the severe shortage of leading figures.

The short of material resources is also one of the obstacles to the construction of teaching teams in our Independent College. Furthermore, the basic teaching condition is insufficient, there is a bigger gap with the matrix university in the aspects of specialty construction, discipline construction, laboratory, teaching base, teaching research and teaching reform, teaching fund and so on.

2.2 Uncertainty of professional teaching teams when working together

There has been the uncertainty of mutual trust and integration among team members. Since the faculty of our Independent College have come from different sources, there are not only retired professors, but also freshly-graduated postgraduates; not only part-time teachers from the matrix

university, but also technical and managerial personnel from enterprises or public institutions, in particular, part-time teachers are in the majority, which has given rise to the difficulty of professional teaching teams when they have been working together. As a matter of fact, during the period of working together, it requires honesty between the leading figures and team members as well as the integration between team members, so that the team leaders and members can reach consensus, dispel suspicion, and smoothly go through this particular period.

There has been the uncertainty among team members about the integration of professional teaching orientation. As professional teaching teams, in a certain period of time, we must formulate the professional curriculum system around the profession construction goal, and reform the teaching mode with the cultivation of application-oriented and innovative talents as the starting point, which obviously requires team members to integrate into the curriculum system of professional teaching teams and participate in the reform of teaching mode. However, the composition of team members has been relatively complex, the external part-time teachers lack the motivation in self-adjustment, and the newly recruited postgraduates are incapable to lead the establishment of curriculum system and the reform of teaching mode.

2.3 Sustainable development of professional teaching teams

2.3.1 The cultivation issue of team leaders and team members.

If team members cannot be cultivated to grow and become mature, or if leading figures are unwilling to cultivate team members, the sustainable development of teams will be affected. What is more, in Independent College, if the team leader or core member leaves or goes somewhere, etc., it will bring direct negative impact to the team, or even let the team exist only in name. In addition, if the leading figure's career falls into recession and there is no a successor in the team, the entire research team would inevitably go into the decline as well.

2.3.2 The careless mistakes in the team management.

First, with the increase of teaching funds and the funds of teaching research and teaching reform project, the unfair distribution and unreasonable use may occur in the process of funds expenditure, which may bring about the in-fighting among team members and, thus, weaken the competitiveness and creativity of the team. Secondly, there would be serious differences among team members, and they would no longer cooperate and coordinate with each other. As a result, the goal of the team would tend to be scattered, the production of teaching research and teaching reform tend to shrink, and the team would gradually be disintegrated. Thirdly, the enterprising spirit of the team would be gradually weakened, the team members would lack the innovation motivation, and the results of teaching research and teaching reform would be gradually decreased based on the previous achievements.

3. Strategies for professional teaching team establishment in independent college

3.1 Setting establishment target, focusing on constructing excellent teaching teams

At first, we have integrated resources by treating the teaching and research offices, research institutes, laboratories, teaching bases and training centers as the construction units according to the characteristics of each discipline and each speciality. Secondly, taking courses and specialties as the construction platforms, we have constructed a number of excellent teaching teams with the qualities of good teaching effects, outstanding achievements in the teaching research and teaching reform, stable team structure, good development potential, prominent innovative spirit, and being able to play an exemplary role in the construction of teaching staff. Thirdly, through the establishment of a long-term mechanism, we have reinforced the construction of grassroots teaching organizations, reformed the teaching content, methods and means, developed the teaching resources, promoted the teaching discussions and teaching experience exchanges, enhanced the teaching work of transmission, assistance, guidance as well as the optimizing structure of teaching teams, finally, elevated the overall level of teaching teams. ^[2]

3.2 Constantly adjusting the allocation of human resources in accordance with the development stages of professional teaching teams

3.2.1 Paying our attention to leading figures' selection during the period of establishing professional teaching teams.

We have set certain standards in the allocation of human resources during the period of forming the teaching teams in line with the characteristics of our Independent College. First of all, in the selection and appointment of teaching team leaders, we have claimed that those teaching team leaders should possess a certain appeal, the innovative potential for teaching research and teaching reform, strong capability of organization, management and coordination. In the second place, in the process of team building, team leaders can have the right to select and recruit team members according to the goals of professional construction, curriculum system and teaching reform. Meanwhile, in the course of selection and recruitment, team leaders should pay attention to the diversity and complementarity of team members' skills, their cooperative spirit and innovation capability as well as the rationality of team members' educational background, professional title, age structure and the appropriate team scale.

3.2.2 Paying our attention to the team collaboration and members' cultivation in the development period of professional teaching teams.

We have formed an atmosphere of team integration and a common vision of our teams through the guidance of a common goal, thus, further promoted the team fusion. Furthermore, through the coordination and integration of teams, rational allocation of team resources has been achieved. Following the principle of gradual cultivation, the formation of team culture has been strengthened, the cultivation of teaching team members been constantly adjusted and evaluated. Hence, by means of the dynamic adjustment, the collaboration competence of teaching teams has been gradually cultivated and constantly enhanced.

3.2.3 Paying our attention to maintaining the relative stability and dynamic balance of teams when they enter the mature stage.

We have set up the corresponding system for professional teaching teams to timely adjust the team members when new talents are recruited or some team members have gone somewhere. We hold a belief that only by mastering the principle of timely adjustment, can we constantly get rid of the stale and bring forth the new, hence, make the teaching teams always keep vigorous vitality. Then, we have intensified the assessment of teaching teams, to those which do not reach the standard of the expected target in the assessment, but have the development potential, they should make the rectification in time. The rectification can be done in the following several ways: first, adjusting the team lineup, such as replacing leading figures and bringing in new members. Secondly, optimizing the allocation of teaching resources, focusing on cultivating the young team members. Thirdly, enhancing the power of cohesion, elevating the cultural maintenance and reducing the interpersonal dispersion, so that letting the team make a smooth transition, and then start a new teaching innovation.

3.3 Allocating material resources in accordance with the development of professional teaching teams

3.3.1 Increasing our efforts and offering priority to recruit high-level talents.

First, priority has been given to recruit national or provincial famous teachers who are urgently needed, and guarantee been offered of the treatment for these recruited talents, such as settling down, spouse, children, etc. Next, key support to teaching facilities has been provided, such as teaching assistant, laboratory, discipline construction, specialty construction, etc.

3.3.2 Focusing on supporting and cultivating the professional teaching team with development potentiality.

In the first place, the existent teaching resources have been centralized and teaching teams been

constructed based on key courses, key majors and competitive majors. In the second place, we have made the best use of circumstances, concentrated the superior resources of our college and created a loose external environment for teaching teams. At the same time, corresponding support and help have been offered, such as providing team members with training, further study and other aspects of support, their teaching, education and teaching work quota being appropriately adjusted so as to make them grow up as soon as possible.^[3]

3.4 Establishing and perfecting incentive mechanisms

3.4.1 Perfecting the incentive combination of professional teaching teams.

The incentive factors can be divided into utilitarian incentive and symbolic incentive. The former mainly includes the teaching achievement reward and the material incentive such as teaching supporting funds, while the latter chiefly includes reputation, status and other non-material incentives. Accordingly, corresponding incentive combinations have been given to team members according to their teaching level and teaching performance.

3.4.2 Strengthening the long-term mechanism construction of professional teaching teams.

What we have done is that the innovation culture of teams has been reinforced, a democratic, relaxed and cooperative development environment been formed. The vision of team members has been broadened and their professional qualities been promoted. In addition, we have actively advocated the communication and cooperation of teaching teams, and provided convenient conditions for their communication and cooperation. Furthermore, the performance assessment has been enhanced in order to ensure the fairness and transparency of the performance assessment, so that let team members go into work without any burden, but with full enthusiasm to participate in the construction of teaching teams, then give full play of their personal potential.

3.4.3 Improving the management system.

So far, we have improved all kinds of teaching rules and regulations, intensified teaching process management. In the first place, we have perfected the performance appraisal system which covers the timeliness of teaching achievements as well as the scientific research achievements. In terms of teaching achievements, they should be mainly reflected in the aspects of improvement of students' performance, awards of students in various competitions, cultivation of students' comprehensive capabilities, practical teaching, quality courses, teaching research and teaching reform projects, excellent teaching awards and so on. With regard to scientific research achievements, they should be chiefly reflected in the annual indicators, and the index completion of the assessment cycle as well. In the second place, we have improved the means for managing funds and blocked loopholes in management. What is more, on the basis of strict financial system, teams are allowed to use the teaching funds in a relatively flexible way, but the combination of audit inspection and self-restraint has been heightened.

4. Conclusion

The establishment of professional teaching teams is not only a basic construction of Independent College, but also a basic construction of creating professional characteristics. Since the establishment Qiuzhen College in Huzhou Normal University was approved by Zhejiang Provincial People's Government in August, 1999, it has continuously carried forward the construction of professional teaching teams, and has achieved remarkable success. After nearly 20 years of healthy and rapid development, there is now 1 provincial key major, 5 provincial key planned course books, 56 provincial and college quality courses, 15 bilingual teaching courses, 12 teaching mode reform courses, 7 college-level famous teachers and 12 new promising teachers. Besides, the quality of college-running is stable and excellent, and the employment rate of graduates in the past three years has been above 96%, ranking in the forefront of similar colleges in our province.

References

- [1] Decree No. 26 of the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, Measures for the Establishment and Management of Independent Colleges. http://www.gov.cn/flfg/2008-03/07/content_912242.htm.
- [2] Wang Rongde. New Strategy for College Management. Beijing: Science Publishing House, 2007:105.
- [3] Ye Ruyi. Exploration on the Construction of Application-oriented Type of Teaching Team in Privately-run Undergraduate Colleges. Higher Education in China, 2010, (10): 38-40