

2014

BioTechnology

An Indian Journal

FULL PAPER

BTAIJ, 10(21), 2014 [13157-13161]

Importance of discipline construction in education and teaching in higher education

Wang Xianghua*, Yang Xiaoming

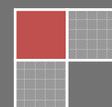
School of economics and management, North University of China, Beijing,
(P.R.CHINA)

ABSTRACT

Most scholars neglect the importance of discipline construction in the higher education, while focusing on its effect upon academic development. The paper emphasized on the role and effect of discipline construction in the higher education, and addressed the ordinary problems existed in the discipline construction. Finally, some advised was proposed to advance the education quality of universities based on the discipline construction. Specifically, it was proposed that construction of discipline courses and teachers should be enhanced on the basis of clarification of position and duty. Furthermore, it was proposed to promote the sustainable development of disciplines, universities and societies by the way of compromising the relations of teaching and researching, universities and societies systemically.

KEYWORDS

Higher education; Discipline construction; Education and teaching, Quality of teaching; The professional curriculum.



INTRODUCTION

Under the condition of the continuous growth of economic development, quick variance of social needs and rigor international competence, society advocate the higher requirement to the higher education. On July 29, 2010, National Medium and Long-term Plan for Education Reform and Development was issued by Ministry of Education, which claimed to position the quality of higher education on the more significant role. In the long term, universities always regard the education quality as the basic rule and find many ways to promote it. Many practices was appeared, such as assessment of education, enhance of academic investment, importing international education resources, promotion of teachers construction, innovation of education ways, rigor rule of examinations. Meanwhile, some problems constraining the further development of universities appeared, specifically neglecting the importance of discipline construction in the higher education development.

ROLE AND EFFECT OF DISCIPLINE CONSTRUCTION IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION

Discipline construction is the core and key of the higher education. In the National Medium and Long-term Plan for Education Reform and Development (2010-2020), it is proposed that reform and development of universities can finally be considered as the output of the first class talents which is also the ultimate goal of higher education. The duty of universities is decided by the it's position, i.e. either spreading knowledge purely or servicing societies and take research responsibility. In the other words, the ultimate goal of universities is decided by the directing ideas and position. However, no matter the position of universities is categories of research, teaching and application^[1], the output of talents is always the facts. The type and level of talents is correlated with the disciplines resources of universities, which also impact the investment of discipline construction, discipline courses setting, talents groups and others infrastructure^[2]. The first class talents surly are cultured from the first class disciplines or subjects, though not the first class universities. Subsequently, enhancement of discipline construction could fundamentally tend to realize the talents cultivation goal of higher education.

Subject construction is the foundation and precondition for improving the quality of higher education, and is the starting point of university reform advance. Enhancing the quality of teaching in Colleges and universities is the most basic function different from the professional research institutions, which is affected by many factors, i.e., education policy, education scale, education resources from the macro view, and scientific research, discipline course system setting, teachers, management system from microscopic aspect. However, we found that factors forms the subject construction also affect the quality of teaching. Therefore, while strengthening discipline construction at the same time, it is proposed to strengthen the construction of teaching and scientific research, improve teachers' team construction of scientific research, promote the professional course construction, for the purposed of to ensure the quality of teaching.

For the demand of the social development, governments will support higher education through fiscal policy. The discipline, deciding the training direction and level of university talents, is affected by three aspects including training objectives, the government's educational policies and social needs. Through the organic combination of college teachers team construction with discipline construction, it intend to impact on the competitiveness of the University and the society.

On the one hand, strengthening discipline construction through the teaching and research activities could promote the development of the science and technology and meet the needs of the society; on the one hand, it could realized the subject the sustainable and healthy development by the mean of subject differentiation and progress and the professional course setting which promoting the realization of the personnel training goals and meeting the needs of social development shown as Figure 1. It is concluded that the discipline construction is a systematic project, which include elements of school teaching, scientific research, personnel training, the direction of research, academic exchange and infrastructure etc^[3]. Strengthening discipline construction is to mobilize subject elements, resource efficient operation. Realization of strengthening teaching, scientific research, and teaching could be achieved in the process of promoting the overall level of discipline at the same time,

Scientific research activities can maintain and promote the advance of teaching theory and practice regarding the discipline construction as the guidance and foundation.

Discipline relies on college and university development; on the other hand university depends on the subject for development. The development of societies require diversification of the university function and meet the requirements of modern university from aspects of knowledge spreading (teaching), scientific research, social services. So the University mainly focuses on the establishment and construction of subject concerning all aspects of scientific research, teaching and student employment demand. Scientific research activities guided by discipline construction can build reasonable academic team, and strengthen the teacher's capability by new ideas and new knowledge in the accumulation system through scientific research achievements. And it could also nurture and support professional and curriculum in the construction of subject setting and the degree^[4], which could be important for enhancing the practices of disciplines, maintaining and promoting the advance of theory and practice teaching.

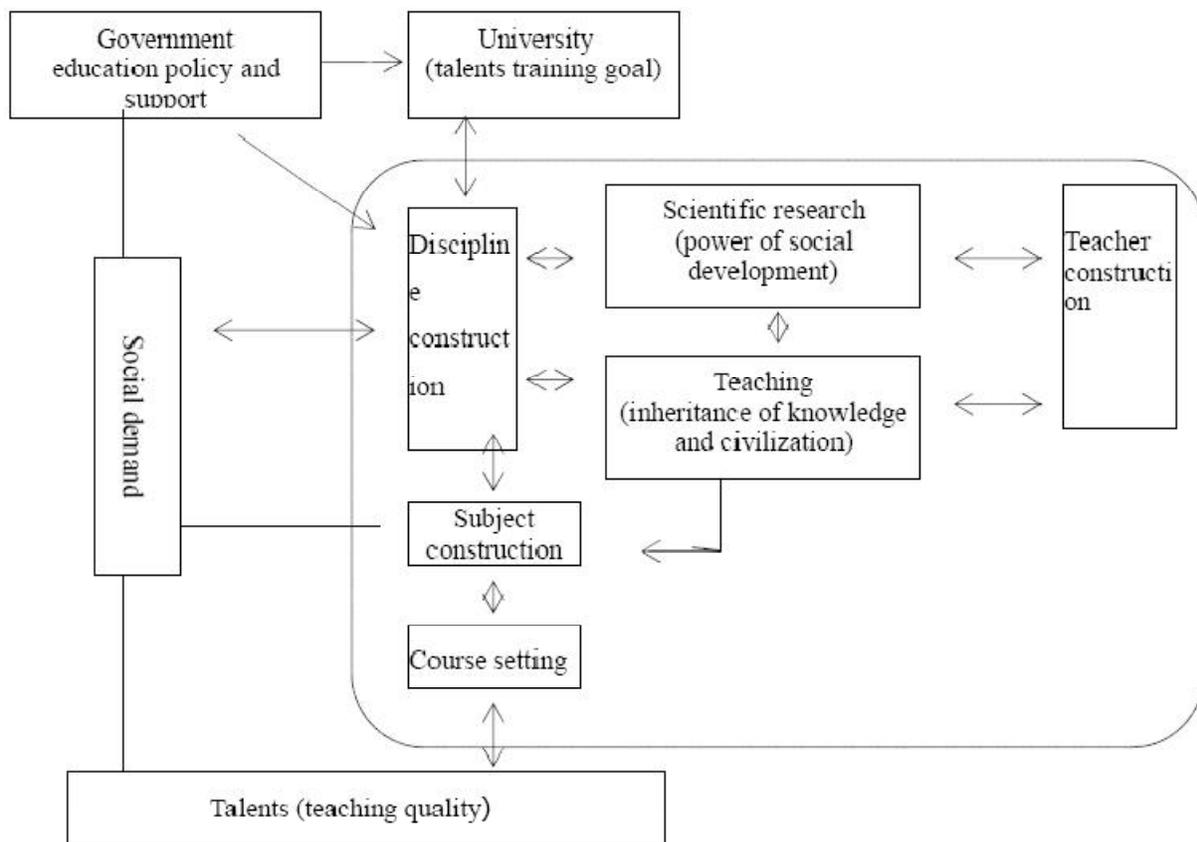


Figure 1 : Role of discipline construction in the higher education

PROBLEMS OF DISCIPLINE CONSTRUCTION IN UNIVERSITIES

Discipline construction is neglected in practices. At present, more and more schools realize the importance of discipline construction, but there exist a lot of mistakes in the discipline construction of universities, i.e., ignoring the relationship among the subject construction, school position, training target, curriculum, teacher’s team architecture^[5]. These mistakes could results in facts that scientific research could be to orient for professional disciplines as the guidance, and cause the low level of scientific research^[6], unclear duty of the subject leaders. In this condition, each key step of the discipline construction is not actually carried out, and there is lacking the effective coordination mechanisms to compromise the exercise of academic power and administrative power.

Scientific research is regrettably regarded as the more important things than teaching in the subject construction. At present, most of the domestic universities generally attach importance to scientific research, and the main reason is that scientific research can obtain a large amount of funds and teaching activities need to be continuously invested. Scientific research could get the higher profit quickly than teaching activities. Furthermore, it is vague to deal with the relationship between scientific research and teaching, and no special treatment could be followed^[7]. In practice, scientific research could be often more seriously treated than teaching. Teachers' promotion is mainly based on the research instead of teaching. In the teaching activities the title and degree are pay more attention, and teacher's discipline and professional research direction are usually ignored. Condition discussed before not only cause academic corruption, but also had a bad effect on teaching.

The specialized curriculum configuration is failed to be emphasized in the discipline construction. At present, many universities pay attention to the advance of academic in discipline construction, the quality control in teaching process. However, the professional curriculum could not be paid enough attention^[8]. Typically it intend to refer to each other when setting the specialized courses, and the ways of cultivation and talents training does not reflect the characteristic of itself, which not only affects the effect of classroom teaching but also failed to attract the students and meet the needs of society.

Furthermore, the course system rearrangement, including the introduction of new courses, selection of professional courses and elective courses, arrangements of examination course and test curriculum, lack the basis of teaching theory. These mistakes will cause the result which cannot reflect the advanced nature of discipline. If the professional curriculum is not reasonable, fail to reflect the advance of nature of disciplines, it is difficult to attract students and cause the

phenomenon of students' escaping from the classroom. Furthermore, it will increase the difficulty for teaching, could not guarantee the teaching results.

COUNTERMEASURE OF ENHANCING THE TEACHING QUALITY AND DISCIPLINE CONSTRUCTION

First, it intend to articulate the position and functions of universities, deal well with the relationships among knowledge-transference, scientific research and social services. Since the Middle Ages, the higher education based on university as the basic unit have experienced a long process from simply transferring knowledge, to the research responsibility, then to the social services proposed by "Morrill Land-Grant Act" in American. The function of the modern university is becoming more and more diversified, while the social requirement for universities is also changing. Still, No matter how we understand education and the essence and the function of higher education, we cannot deny that: education must solve the problems, what kind of materials to teach (educational content), how to teach (educational method), what organization to operate (Education Management System), what kind of people to foster (educational goals)^[9]; But the social resources are scarce, it is determined to invest in education at a point in time and it is also relative determined for the time the object of education to accept education. So, It makes higher education face with greater challenges and conflicts between the various functions to get the education individual, such as the conflict between quality education and professional education, the conflict theory education and practice education, the conflict between teaching and scientific research, the conflict between education goals with students' employment, etc. Therefore, only clearing the position and functions of universities can make education targeted, resource investment and planning more reasonable, improve the economic and social benefits of higher education, and also promote the self-development of higher education.

Second, it intends to focus on curriculum system construction, dispose the relationship among academic discipline construction, professional curriculum system construction and talent training. Talent cultivation in colleges and universities is decided by the professional construction and talent cultivation scheme that represents the direction of the subject, and professional curriculum system construction is the basic unit of academic discipline construction^[10]. Hence, professional curriculum system construction is not only to reflect the existing advanced scientific knowledge of the academic discipline, but also to reflect the changes in social, enterprise, market demand. As shown in Figure 1, professional curriculum system construction should be oriented by the academic discipline construction, combined with scientific research, introducing new knowledge, new technology, new curriculum; Meanwhile, academic discipline construction group should actively carry out research activities in all levels of society, collect and analyze the development information of social needs to perfect and improve the professional curriculum system of university, to meet the community demand for talent. Strengthening academic discipline construction, therefore, should be based on the professional curriculum system construction. Research programs in accordance with the course system and teaching plan of school talent training scheme not only can improve the teaching quality and promote the construction of study style, but also close the contact with society and improve the students' employment.

Third, it intends to combine discipline construction with teaching staff construction, handle the relationship between the scientific research and teaching. Teaching and research in colleges and universities themselves are complementary and mutually reinforcing, besides that, they are also contradictory (contradictions in the allocation of teachers' time and energy, contradictions in the allocation of funds, etc). The academic discipline construction focus on the law of natural development itself, and the advanced nature of academic research. As well as, by means of education teaching activities, it meets the social needs of talents through professional courses construction. On the one hand, research can promote discipline construction, and you can build a reasonable echelon academic and teacher's team. On the other hand, teaching is the means of imparting knowledge, inheriting culture and creating talents. The dissemination and application of research results can achieve by teaching and learning. Thus, teaching guided by the scientific research, theory with practice, grasping the frontier dynamic, the research into teaching, not only can improve the quality of teaching^[11], also can effectively solve the contradiction between research and teaching, combine them together, and promote the cultivation innovation talents^[12].

In conclusion, with academic discipline construction being the core, we should clarify the position and functions of universities, strengthen major and curriculum development, and properly handle the relationship among the government, school and society in order to truly meet the social, university self-development needs in the current higher education reform.

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