

Strengthening the central position of undergraduate course teaching in local higher education institutions

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Abstract: Based on the achievements from the educational and teaching reforms conducted in Yanshan University in recent years, and considering the problems arisen from the University's development, this paper attempts to explore and illustrate the significance of conducting the teaching-oriented study and discussions, most importantly it provides some reflections on the basic issues in subject construction. Finally, this paper firmly holds the view that strengthening the central position of teaching is of strategic importance to local universities and colleges, therefore, only through placing teaching on the center stage of leaders of various levels and center of all the university's activities, at the same time carrying out the guideline for intensifying the principal status of undergraduate education, can Yanshan University rank in well-known high level university in China.

Key words: local institutions of higher learning; undergraduate course teaching; central position; teaching reform

Declaration of the World Conference on Higher Education have said: "The 21st century will take more attention on quality. The transformation from quantity to quality indicates that the end of an era and also the beginning of another. Taking attention to quality is the topic of the era. The one who ignored quality will pay a heavy price." With the increase of university enrollment and the expansion of the scale of higher education, the concern and criticism on the decline of university education quality is increasing. From the overall situation, we can guarantee the personnel training in the course of Yanshan University's rapid development, but there are still some problems.

1. The importance of carrying on activities in teaching research and discussion

What kind of people should be trained, how to train and train for whom has always been the starting point and end-result of higher education. Both ancient and modern developing history of the education indicate that the success of education lies on training people who adapt to the developing era, and contribute maximum effect to social development and human progress. Thus, the ultimate goal of the personnel training should be established on the adapting requirements of era and continuously adjust its system. The coming popularization era of higher education brings the unprecedented opportunities to the development of local colleges and universities. With the continuous expanding of higher education, the quality of personnel training is becoming increasingly grim. Local colleges and universities must pay more attention to connotation constructing to keeping their legs, seeking survival and trying for development in the fierce competition. How to strengthen teaching quality management

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and establish an effective teaching quality mechanism are the issues which local colleges and universities common faced and concerned.

Although higher education in developed country be known for world-class universities, these universities are the minority, and the majorities are the local universities. Localization of higher education is the successful experience in higher education developed country. The development of higher education in China is no exception. Up to June 28, 2004, there are totally 1,683 regular institutions of higher learning common universities. There are altogether 110 universities directly under the ministries and 73 under the education ministries and 37 directly under other ministries and commissions. The rest 1,573 local colleges and universities account for 93.5% of the total. They made an indelible contribution in popularization of higher education.

It is very important to set down the educational goals and development strategies in the development of local colleges and universities. Currently, some local colleges blindly pursue a large size and comprehensive subjects, but they couldn't accord to their fact. Despite the large amount of money they may have invested, they can not see much improvement, resulting in a huge waste of resources. Local colleges should abandon unrealistic thoughts. Firstly, they should rely on the local environment, find out the starting point of services and focus on training useful person for local economic construction and social development. They themselves can grow stronger only if they offer local service. And they can gradually adjust their development strategies and reach a higher goal only if they strengthen themselves.

2. Education and teaching reform of Yanshan University in recent years

It is very important for local higher universities and colleges to find their own space and develop in innovation and harmony. Years of teaching development make Yanshan University have the fine tradition to attach importance to teaching research. In 1978, Yanshan University established the "Teaching Research" journal for publication at home and abroad, and made achievements that received national and provincial awards. In recent years, the teaching reforms have achieved remarkable results. First of all, the localized characteristic credit system adapting to the development of the university makes further improvement. The university has established two-class teaching supervision system between the university and the schools and other 5 systems. These systems have further improved the teaching quality, security and monitoring system. Secondly, the university also held annual teaching competition and teaching demonstration activities.

In the past year, the university has strengthened the teaching from five aspects:

(1) Achieved academic management networks. And the university established modern educational administration system with Zheda Square Company. This system established four resources data, can be realized four chains, formed five Timetables online, which has realized seven inquiry functions and achieved evaluating teaching effect online, etc..

(2) This year, Yanshan University has invested a total amount of 6.5 million RMB for curriculum construction project. Eleven curriculums have been rated excellent university-level curriculums and six have been rated provincial excellent curriculums.

(3) Teaching managed documents were amended. According to the related regulation from Ministry of Education, Yanshan University has revised expulsion managed requirements and teaching managed requirements, making teaching management more standardized and scientific.

(4) The electronic testing center has been established to represent Hebei province to declare state

experimental teaching Demonstration Center.

(5) The college English teaching reform experimental projects and the college English graded teaching experimental work have yielded results.

Discipline construction also has acquired great progress: Yanshan University regarded engineering as its chief discipline, at the same time developed literature, science, economy, administration, law and education etc. According to “Key University Charts” in 2006, Scientific Evaluation Research Center of China has declared that Yanshan University has ranked 82th totally and 38th in science and engineering. The university has one national key discipline, one national key laboratory, one University Science and Technology Park, three post-doctorate mobile stations, six doctorate programs authorized first class disciplines, twenty eight doctorate programs authorized second class disciplines, thirteen master’s programs authorized first class disciplines, seventy three master’s programs authorized second class disciplines, eleven professional Master’s programs authorized areas and sixty majors.

Campus basic material platform building has lie a foundation for the rapid development of the school; teaching reform which the core content is credit system is gradually deepened, the quality of education and teaching have further improved and the quality of personnel training has won a broad social reputation; taking “characteristic subject” as the leader, taking academic degree sites building as the key, raising the level of scientific research, the school has formed a number of good momentum subject groups and has acquired remarkable achievements on discipline construction. The school has formed a professional team, but in terms of the reasonable degree of age, academic title and educational background structure it is still unsatisfactory. Since the investment of high level teaching and research facilities has increased, the construction of laboratory has got a remarkable achievement on meeting the basic teaching requirement and the needs of high scientific research. Objectively speaking, it strengthens the undergraduate teaching greatly. In 1998, the Ministry of Education held the first National Higher Education general meeting, and clearly put forward to enhance quality consciousness and strengthen quality education. This action has played a prominent role in universities on improving teaching work. In 2001, Yanshan University launched the “Discussion of Educational Thought” activities. Within the school, Yanshan University also launched the “three work- styles” debate activities. In 2003, the school initiated the “teaching quality and teaching reform project” and the construction of “school, provincial, national quality curriculum”; promoted “college English teaching reform” and strengthened and improved the work of teaching management etc. distinctively. These efforts played a significant role on improving the teaching quality and ensured the steady development of the quality of undergraduate education teaching. It should be noted that the quality is guaranteed, and the overall situation is good in the long developing process of Yanshan University.

3. The thought on the basic problems of teaching building

In higher education, discipline is defined as an academic unit. It serves as a core academic unit in reflecting the three social functions of personnel training, scientific research and social service in universities. Discipline level reflects the academic level of a university. Thus, the discipline construction is the basic and strategic foundation of universities of higher learning, and is the core of the work in the universities.

In recent years, Yanshan University, like other brother universities, has implemented the Expansion of Enrollment Scale. A majority of teachers are as busy as catching train to teaching everyday, and others are busy with doing research. However, they seldom sit down and think about the quality of our teaching. Through this seminar, we must change the concepts further, establish the teaching as the center firmly, deepen the teaching

reform effectively and improve the teaching quality. Take the purpose of the researching and discussing activities of education and teaching which is “further strength teaching reforms, improve education and teaching quality” as a turning point, commence the teaching work with great passion, improve teaching quality in the respective posts and make a greater contribution to promote the development of school with a pragmatic attitude, innovative spirit, efficient work style and open concept. Make great efforts to achieve Yanshan University's comprehensive rejuvenation in the new century!

The problems of how to enhance the teaching quality and strengthen the human based teaching quality assurance concepts have become the basic issue, which more than 30,000 students and staff have noticed. We are raising some reflection of teaching construction in the following text:

(1) Insist on taking the undergraduate teaching as the center unwaveringly. Undergraduate education is the root of the university, and academic research is the way of strengthening the school. On the premise of the level of postgraduate education and academic research having less influence, undergraduate teaching is still the principal part and of personnel training. Its quality is the main part of measuring the whole teaching quality of the school, the important embodiment of comprehensive strength and the important sign of social influence. Therefore, we must place undergraduate teaching at the center position unwaveringly. Teaching work is the master, particularly in the teaching managed departments, we should set down the measures, outreach ideas, set goals around the teaching work. Every college should follow Number One Leader, and relevant offices should do their best to regard the teaching work as the central task. At the same time, it should also improve the quality of content knowledge, seriously analyze the status and the weak points of teaching quality, find the gap between domestic and foreign universities, and improve the understanding of the deficiencies on personal quality.

(2) Carefully investigate and reason, clarify our thoughts, continuously improve two teaching managed system of the university, lower the focus of quality management. We should establish the thinking of “running a university with the idea of managing a corporation”. Extend the idea that corporations regard quality as the life to the concepts and methods of ISO9000 international quality certification system, redefine existing teaching quality structure, establish a quality system which the external condition and internal effective control well combined.

(3) Strengthen the construction of the teacher's team. We should build up the high teacher's moral characters, foster professionalism and form excellent teaching style. In practical work, we should vigorously promote professors walk to the platform; push the system of training youth teachers with tutorial system, regularly hold teaching competition of youth teachers and observe teaching for old and new teachers, bring full play to the old teacher's mentor role; it should continuously adhere to select “Excellent Teaching Award”, “Teaching Example”, “Teaching Master-handers” and “Teaching Famous Expert” etc. regularly and encourage all the teachers doing good job on teaching.

(4) It should roundly develop and use the teaching managed hardware systems which are bought by the school and create the conditions to immediately improve the program of credit system. It should find more space and autonomy to select courses for students, as soon as implement major and minor courses and dual degree system, increase “innovation credits” and “second class credits”, scientifically set the module of majors and constantly improve and introduce educational and teaching reform measures.

(5) Further optimize the distribution of resources, and strengthen laboratory construction and the building of engineering practice conditions. Schools should attach great importance to the investment of teaching conditions and put the funds on the improvement of undergraduate foster conditions. It should make up the mind to solve the rampart of laboratory. Teachers should be the principal part to use and manage the laboratory. It must push the

information management of opening laboratory and practice teaching, implement flexible experimental time and pay attention to the training and treatment issue of laboratory personnel.

(6) Rely on the system to consolidate teaching centers. The main principal of the school and every college party should carry out the obligation of the “first responsibility” actively.

4. Conclusion

It is strategically significant for the development of provincial universities and colleges to firmly putting the teaching task in the central position. Teaching reform is a systemic project. We must give all the power to practice and make great efforts unremittingly. We must identify the teaching reform as a rigid criterion for university leaders and create a good working environment for various administrative departments and colleges. The guiding ideology, proposed by LIU Hong-min, president of Yanshan University recently — “from extending the scale to strengthening the connotation, improving teaching quality, and achieving the scientific development, harmonious development and rapid upgrade of the university”, points to a new way of our development and teaching reform. Only by insisting on the guiding ideology — “sticking to people-oriented education and teaching work as the center, sticking to undergraduate education as a main part”, is it possible to build Yanshan University into a high level and well-known university.

References (Omit)

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