Construction of Characteristic Programs of Private Colleges and Universities in the School-Enterprise Cooperation Mode

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Abstract. This paper discusses the aims, contents, problems, and principles of the construction of characteristic specialties of private colleges and universities in the school-enterprise cooperation mode and offers suggestions for school-enterprise cooperation, construction of feature programs, and promotion of teaching reform.

Introduction

In order to improve the quality of undergraduate teaching and personnel training, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance have jointly increased the intensity of specialty construction in recent years. Regarding enrollment scale and number of graduates, private colleges and universities occupy an increasingly important position in China's higher education, not only showing their strong vitality, but also reflecting a new development pattern of China's higher education. Therefore, research on the construction of characteristic specialties of private universities has become a focus of the research of higher education. At the same time, competition between private universities is becoming fiercer. Urgent problems facing private colleges and universities thus emerge: How to optimize the design and structure of programs, how to ensure professional characteristics, in order to improve the quality of personnel training? It seems that one good way to promote the construction of characteristic specialties is to cooperate with local enterprises and jointly run schools, since such cooperation can provide strong industrial support for the characteristics construction and healthy development of professional disciplines. But in the process of such cooperation, more wisdom and greater courage are needed if we wish to further deepen the reform of education system, promote the quality of private education, and ensure its characteristics.

Re-understanding

The construction of characteristic programs of private colleges and universities in the school-enterprise cooperation mode needs to be based on the actual situation and during the construction process we need to learn in a timely manner gains and losses. The key to exploring the causes of problems and countermeasures is to have a correct and accurate understanding of cooperation between enterprises and private colleges and universities.

Private colleges and universities refer to colleges and universities and other institutions of education organized and set up by enterprises, institutions, social organizations and individual citizens with non-state education budget. They include community colleges and universities offering undergraduate programs. These institutions comprise an important part of higher education in China. Compared to public colleges and universities, private colleges and universities are more flexible in that their disciplines and programs are closer to market needs and their goal of personnel training is clearer. But on the other hand, these private colleges and universities have their problems. They generally have insufficient funds, weak teams of teachers, poor school conditions and poor quality students.

School-enterprise cooperation focuses on training quality and pays much attention to the combination of school education and enterprise practice. It is a win-win mode of running schools as the school and enterprise share their resources and information. Such cooperation reflects the new belief of running a school which should be in line with the needs of society, market and enterprise,
as well as practice and theory. In this regard, enterprise talents and technology advantages greatly
make up for what private colleges and universities fall short of. In return, such cooperation with
positioning by the other party also provides for the enterprise applied talents who are trained to
meet its requirements.

Characteristic programs are feature specialties of universities established after a long period of
experience. Specifically, they refer to programs which have a high level and distinctive
characteristics in such aspects as educational objectives, quality of teachers, curriculum system,
teaching condition and training quality, and which have performed well, exerted positive social
influence, and thus are of high standard, quality programs. School-enterprise cooperation is
essentially one of the best ways to construct such programs.

The Role of School-Enterprise Cooperation in the Construction of Characteristic Programs

Firstly, it is conducive to the healthy development of private colleges and universities. The state
medium- and long-term education reform and development plan (2010-2020) supports private
education and encourages innovation of private schools and educational mode with a view to
improving education quality and characteristics and establishing a group of high level private
schools. It is true that private colleges and universities have great development opportunities.
Nevertheless, there are also serious challenges. Because of their short history and shortage of
teachers, their setting of specialties is quite limited and it is difficult for them to meet the
requirements of society and market. One good way to meet this challenge is to work together with
enterprises to jointly run schools.

Secondly, it is beneficial to improve the competitiveness of private colleges and universities.
Specialty construction is an important embodiment of the quality of education and the level of
running a school. It is the symbol of the core competitiveness of colleges and universities. It is also
an important driving force for the survival and development of private colleges and universities in
the new era of education reform and development. Thus, to achieve scientific development, content
development, and sustainable development, private universities must join forces with enterprises
and actively cultivate characteristics of existing programs so as to enhance their core
competitiveness.

Thirdly, it is conducive to the transformation of application-oriented personnel training. The
cultivation of applied talents should be dynamic, as the development of society, advances in
technology, and career needs are in constant development and change. Moreover, the increasingly
rapid pace of this change gives rise to more professions and jobs in market competition. Naturally,
university personnel training must change accordingly in a timely manner. However, the cultivation
of applied talents is often complex. When constructing a characteristic specialty we need to
integrate multi-subject knowledge and skills. This should be generally guided by market needs and
supported by positioning by the other party. Only in this way can specialty construction and talent
training truly meet the needs of industry and society.

Fourthly, it is conducive to the use and sharing of social resources. In the mode of
school-enterprise cooperation, characteristic specialty construction is placed in the industry
background and supported thereby. Technology and talent advantages of enterprises can be brought
into full play and at the same time can also solve the problems of funding shortage, lack of teachers,
weak scientific research capacities, and poor conditions of practical training on the part of private
universities.

Finally, it is helpful to solve the problem of rigidity and seclusion of university specialties. In
terms of the construction of grass-roots academic organizations in private colleges, it is clear that
the discipline should be strengthened and the specialty should be weakened. But in terms of the
orientation of the application-oriented talents training, we should strengthen the specialty and
weaken the discipline. Disciplines are connotative and specialties are denotative. The overall set of
all specialties of the university functions as personnel training, and cooperation between universities
and enterprises contributes greatly to the effective running of programs.
Explicit Goal and Content

At the early stage, private colleges developed considerably fast despite less favorable government policy and environment. The reason here lies mainly in the novelty of its specialties. In recent years, however, the enrollment of private colleges and universities has gradually changed from the seller's market to the buyer's market. Social concern over specialties has changed from its denotation to its connotation and brand. The fact that private colleges and universities attaches great importance to the scale effect (i.e., the size of school reflects its efficiency), coupled with instability of their teaching staff, makes their construction task much harder and heavier than that of public colleges and universities. How to highlight their characteristics and strengthen their construction is a major task for private colleges and universities. Here are some suggestions.

First, clear the goal of construction. Years of cooperation in school running tells us that, under the premise of clear educational goals, curriculum construction as the breakthrough point is effective and feasible. With the help of experts from enterprises, specific curriculum teaching can be jointly carried out to strengthen teaching abilities, optimize curriculum system, improve teaching conditions and training quality, and explore a new model of characteristic specialty construction. Specifically, this includes: make a scientific and reasonable plan as a basis for the setting of a program; balance development and efforts to ensure that connotation construction keeps up with the requirements of development; seek concrete countermeasures for homogeneous construction; explore different connotations of personnel training specifications and patterns; seek methods and measures to solve the problem of specialty and curriculum system lagging behind the needs of industry.

Second, sort out the relationship between specialty and discipline. A specialty entails a set of courses for a certain model of personnel training, organized to meet the needs of society for talents and can be of one single discipline or across several disciplines. A discipline is formed in the continuous development of differentiation and integration of science. It is a relatively independent knowledge system according to the classification of science and a knowledge platform that is composed of a plurality of identical or similar specialties. At the same time, it is also a foundation platform for the development and construction of specialties. Generally, discipline construction supports specialty construction; deepening research in the discipline helps specialty construction constantly develop in depth; discipline crossing and development or emergence of new disciplines give rise to new specialties and programs. Discipline construction attaches great importance to tracking the forefront of discipline development and more often than not is embodied in the fruits of scientific research. On the other hand, specialty construction, especially that of private colleges and universities, emphasizes market adaptability, and more often than not is reflected from the social effects of the cultivation of talents.

Feature specialty construction focuses on its rich connotation, but it is embodied in the programs. If graduates are seen as products, then in the cooperation mode, it is important that they should be welcome on the market. Only when students are able to adapt to the needs of society and are recognized by society will they have value. It is clear that the key to linking production and market is the setting of specialties which must follow the principle of market needs. However, to adapt to the market and social demand does not mean blind setting up of hot specialties, but to achieve a real grasp of the market context and an insight into the causes of market demand. Similarly, if the specialty only reflects formal characteristics (i.e., the specialty is unique within a certain range or area), then specialty direction reflects its connotation. This is especially true after the Ministry of Education reduced the number of undergraduate specialties in 1998. In addition, specialty direction itself not only represents the level of scientific research and teaching development of a school, but also constitutes an important part of the construction of specialty. The direction should, on one hand, be in line with the direction of the development of the discipline, that is, be forward-looking (market-oriented), and on the other hand, also have its necessary conditions and advantages (feasibility) in terms of teachers, scientific research, facilities and equipment. This way, its characteristics will prove themselves along with the deepening of the construction work.

Specialty construction is the basic construction of colleges and universities, the level of specialty
setting and construction is directly related to their quality level and characteristics. Private colleges and universities should make full use of their advantages of flexible mechanism and implement a different development strategy to avoid convergence with public universities. To select a different development path, they should start from the cultivation of specialty characteristics to foster their strengths and circumvent their weaknesses and to gain new space for development. They may then gradually form their own characteristics and occupy a favorable position in market competition. At present, talent training of most of China's private colleges and universities targets application type talents, therefore their specialty construction needs school-enterprise cooperation and must adhere to the principle of meeting market needs and making up for social deficiencies. For the development of specialty direction, they must make full use of enterprise advantages, cultivate practical talents, improve students' practical ability and comprehensive quality, update teaching concepts, optimize training programs, and innovate their talent training mode, so as to improve their comprehensive strength and core competitiveness.

Principles for the Construction of Characteristic Programs

In constructing characteristic programs in the school-enterprise cooperation mode, private colleges and universities should take the scientific development concept as a guide, focus on the training target of their talents to the social demand as orientation, adhere to the principle of "differentiation, individual and non-balanced development", make full use of their advantages and make up for their weaknesses, design reasonable development plans, highlight key programs, integrate and optimize teaching resources, cultivate and construct their own characteristics. Specifically, they need to take updating their understanding and concept of running a school as the first priority; make scientific and reasonable orientation of talents training target as the premise; understand the dominant importance and difficulty of making a scientific personnel training plan. They also need to understand the following: The basis for scientific construction is the cooperative operation mechanism that can guarantee benefits of both sides; optimization of the curriculum is the core content; innovation of the talent cultivation model is an important way of education; teaching reform is the driving force; enforcement of practice teaching is the starting point; reform and improvement of the evaluation of quality of is the standard of testing effectiveness; teachers are the key; increased funding is the guarantee.

The construction of specialty in the cooperative education mode is not easy, as both sides have many problems to solve in the process of cooperation. In particular, we should pay special attention to the following: first, when choosing partner enterprises for support, we must first take into consideration the orientation of talent cultivation and professional counterparts, local economic and cultural development, as well as talent and technology support for the construction of disciplines and specialties; second, protection of interests of both sides should be considered and both investment and profit distribution have be to expressly agreed in advance; third, in order to train students for application, it is critical that specialty construction be driven by enterprise projects. This entails the combination of project and syllabus, scientific design of syllabus and tasks, transformation of such syllabus and tasks to meet the requirements of enterprise projects; fourth, professional modular curriculum construction should be important content of school-enterprise cooperation.

With the support of enterprises, universities may be able to set up an advanced mode of education, which in turn is the major goal of school-enterprise cooperation.

Concluding Remarks

The construction of characteristic specialties in the mode of cooperation between school and enterprise is to promote and strengthen the application of talent training objectives of private colleges and universities. It is an important incubator platform for the development of characteristics specialties of private colleges and universities. Private colleges and universities need to closely follow the pace of reform of higher education to serve local enterprises, economy and
cultural construction. Only with a clear talent training goal and adherence to practice teaching reform, combined with their own resources and characteristic development, can private higher education institutes cultivate high-quality talents with integrated skills who can readily adapt to the needs of society and market. This in turn will promote the sustainable and healthy development of private higher education.

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