Principle and Significance: Enhance the Construction of New Types of Think Tanks with CHINESE Application-Oriented University

Tao YAN
Xi'an Fanyi University, 710105, Xi'an, China

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Abstract. The transformation to application-oriented universities is an opportunity and a challenge for Chinese ordinary university. By using the think tanks of universities as a bridge, this paper provides a platform for the transformation of application-oriented university. Under the situation of parallel operation of theoretical and practical researches of think-tanks in application-oriented universities, interactional and complementary researches, integration and innovation, the functions of think tanks in application-oriented universities are highlighted and improved.

Introduction

With the strategic adjustment of economic structure, the continuous promotion of social and cultural construction, the profound changes in the relationship between supply and demand of talents and the emergence of application-oriented universities, it is also a product of structural adjustment and theoretical research in higher education. Application-oriented universities focus on integration of industry and education, the fundamental task is to serve the regional economy and social development.[1] The think tanks in application-oriented universities formed by complementing the characteristics of application-oriented universities and with the characteristics of think tanks. The think tanks is an important organization which of applied talents cultivation, social service and scientific research, Cultural heritage of four functions in one body.

Organization of the Text

On the Necessity of Development of Think Tanks in Universities of Application-Oriented Universities

Current Environment. “Plan for Promoting the Development of Think Tanks with Chinese Characteristics in Universities” was released in February 2014, which requested the “universities to play an important role in strategy research, policy suggestion, talent cultivation, public opinion guidance and public diplomacy.” The requirement is in line with the positioning of universities of applied undergraduate education. It not only caters to the basic functions of universities, but also explores the functions of universities of applied undergraduate education in talents cultivation and serving the society. Therefore, the development of think tanks in universities of applied undergraduate education will provide new room of development of the universities.

The Relationship between the Think Tanks and Application-Oriented Universities.

(1) Think Tank: the development platform of the universities.

Some local universities of general undergraduate education follow suit with key universities involved in “985” and “211” programs. That’s the reason why most of local universities of general undergraduate education fall behind. Such trend makes local universities of general undergraduate education common in the eyes of the masses, and these universities are trapped in the dilemma between “exploring new way and staying still”. The four basic functions—talent cultivation, scientific research, serving the society and cultural inheritance—of universities of applied undergraduate education have something in common with the functions of the think tank, like strategy research, policy suggestion, talent cultivation, public opinion guidance and public diplomacy. The development of think tank in the universities will certainly promote the development of the universities in return.

(2) Think tank is a new way to cultivate talents.

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In August, 2015, NexGen Global Forum was established by 18 students of a dual master’s degree program jointly held by Tsinghua university and SAIS, under the guidance of the teachers of School of Social Sciences in Tsinghua University. That was the first university think tank in China. The students analyze and discuss current international situation and release information and policy research report, as well hold public seminar, medial interaction and international forum at regular interval, in order to promote exchange and expand influence. “Effective studying, exploring and solving practical problems by working as a think tank”. The scientific research on economic and social issues will bring light of wisdom to the campus.

University think tanks play roles in scientific research, serving the society and cultural inheritance, and organically combines with the basic function of universities—talent cultivation. The talents cultivation function of think tank targets not only the teachers but also the students. The cultivation of applied talents with innovative ideas is the precondition and base of cultivation of innovative talents.

(3) The spirit of think tanks for pursuing influence is a good example for the universities to build their own brands.

Influence exemplifies the brands of think tank. Brookings Institution, Royal Institute of International Affairs and Carnegie Endowment for International Peace are the top three think tanks over the world. Their strength comes not only their strong research strength, but also the power in which they can show their research strength to communities of all levels, from government, social organizations to the individuals. Exerting influence comprehensively is the way to make these think tanks more excellent, i.e., the formation of influence is a process of self-improving. Local general universities of applied undergraduate education are long for brand effect as well. They could learn something from the think tank. By this way, not only the vitality of the research departments of the universities can be evoked, but also the universities can explore a new way to improve school brand.

(4) Think tank: the bridge between the universities and the external world

Serving local economy and society has been a way to bridge local general universities of undergraduate education and the external world. However, the innovative driving force of the universities in the development of local economy and society is not obvious. Through think tank inside the universities, i.e., exhibiting the functions of university think tanks, the local society will be impressed by the innovative driving force of the universities. The connection between university think tanks and the world outside the campus lies in two aspects: talent cultivation and product.

Talent cultivation is the most important connection between think tank and the society, as well between the universities of applied undergraduate education and the society. As it is the same way for think tanks and universities to serve the society, talent cultivation is the most direct exhibition of the connection between university think tanks and the society.

Think tank itself is a policy research institute to generate influence to public policies and opinions. University think tank serves similar purpose, which virtually connects the universities and the society. The statistics show that in five years from 2008 to 2013, universities have provided over 60,000 consulting reports and policy suggestions to the national leadership, departments and committees of the State Council and local governments. Over ten thousands of them have been reviewed or accepted by national leaders, provincial governments or ministries of the State Council. The product of university think tank involves ordination and operation of many departments of the universities. So the connection between the products of university think tanks and the society implies the connection between the universities and the society, i.e., the development of university think tanks enable better platform for the universities to serve local economy and society.

The Principle of Cultivating the Think Tanks in Application-Oriented Universities

In the context of the state's emphasis on the development of university think tanks and application-oriented universities, there is a spring of opportunity in the cultivation and construction of application-oriented university think tanks. At present, the research on the cultivation and
construction of the university think tank in application-oriented universities is still in its initial stage, and both theoretical research and practical experience are obviously lagging behind. Therefore, in the process of building the university think tank gradually, we will gradually explore the principles that should be followed in the university think tank. Specific practices may be as follows:

**Theory and Practice Go Hand in Hand.** In the process of the emergence, development and maturation of application-oriented universities think tanks, there are thousands of practice attempts and summing up practical experiences so as to find out the laws from experience, form theories, think behind the implications of phenomena through theories. Only in this way can colleges and universities think tanks be transformed, stabilized, reformed, re-stabilized and gradually stepped out of a thoroughfare.

**Interaction and Mutual Complementarity.** The think tank in universities is the most dynamic research institution that exists in colleges and universities. Its vitality stems from the various external links other than it. Application-oriented universities’ think tanks gradually meet the local government decision-making consulting at the same time, more attention to social groups (including enterprises), the general public, covering many levels play “think tank”, “planner”, “Advocate expert” role. Facing the interaction of all strata of the region and providing intellectual support for the regional economic and social development, this is the fundamental requirement of the basic positioning of the think tank in universities.

Enhance the cooperation and communication between different types of think tanks, and promote the complementary advantages and avoid the disadvantages of a single think tank. Increasing this interaction and complementation is also effective in the university think tank. Therefore, interaction and complementarity are omnidirectional, including both horizontal and vertical social strata.

**Integration and Innovation.** However, the methodology and research methods of scientific research are the best key to pry open all kinds of problems, and study the research paradigm of international excellent think tanks. Combining the background of the times and local characteristics, the integration and innovation open up the application of undergraduate colleges and think tanks to serve the region a new world of economic and social.

**Summary**

The focus of this article is think tanks of application-oriented universities in China. Focusing on the necessity of think tanks in application-oriented university and the principle of construction, this paper puts forward some views.

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**References**


