

## Development of Applied University Connotation in Educational Democracy Horizon

Junxia Chen

Department of Hospitality Management, Guilin tourism University, Guilin, 541006, China

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**Abstract.** The development of applied university not just concerns quality of China's higher education, but also concerns educational democracy. In applied university connotation construction, unclear cognition still exists in the source of students and cognition ability. It is still necessary to improve setup of internal teaching quality guarantee system and improvement of external system.

### Introduction

In China's higher education development course, applied university education is undoubtedly the key point and difficult point of current higher education development. It just takes 10 years from the proposal of the concept of applied university to all-round practice of it. Its development speed and scale are striking. Local universities will be transformed to applied universities. This means nearly 1/3 universities in China will become applied universities. It is very urgent to review the development problems and carry out connotation development.

### Specify orientation of applied university students

In the opinion of traditional higher education, learning ability, cognitive power and cognitive power of university students reach the requirements of higher education. They are the products of "forced screening" mechanism of Chinese college entrance examination. Strong screening results not just distinguish ordinary student sources of Class 1 universities and ordinary Class 2 universities, but also lead to classification. Class 1 universities are academic universities. Class 2 universities and higher vocational colleges are vocational colleges. Applied universities occupy the position of Class 2 universities. What's about their sources of student? If this question is not made clear, teaching work of applied university, course setting and student management work will encounter numerous problems and doubts.

Most student sources of applied universities come from rural areas. The proportion that rural students go to local universities is as high as 48.7%, while only 26.8% of them are admitted to national key universities. This data conclusion is consistent with the view of many sociologists in China. Chinese sociologists indicate the expansion of higher education increased unequal educational opportunities. Their important theoretical basis includes "Maximally Maintained Inequality hypothesis" (MMI hypothesis) and "Effectively Maintained Inequality hypothesis" (EMI hypothesis). According to MMI hypothesis, new educational opportunities brought by educational expansion are sully occupied by children of upper class. Only when education of a level at the upper class reaches saturation (e.g. over 80% of children of upper class can got to college), educational inequality at this level can decline. EMI hypothesis modifies MMI hypothesis. Two kinds of inequalities exist in educational opportunities and distribution including quantity inequality and quality inequality. Even in the education at the same level, grading also exists. The diploma of academic universities is better than the diploma of vocational colleges.

Most students in applied universities are from rural areas. They have obvious differences in educational background and educational resources with the children of upper class who are admitted to key universities and Class 1 universities. Family education degree of children of urban upper class is high. On the one hand, they have the ability to educate and tutor their children and help them improve learning strategies; on the other hand, they have higher education expectation for their

children. Besides, children's self-expectation and self-actualization wish is stronger. "Pygmalion" effect in educational psychology is continuously achieved. We can see that for the families with more cultural capital, the advantage of family culture is turned into children's individual learning impetus, academic performance and educational opportunities. Chinese sociologists prove through analysis of massive data that, social status and economic capability of families have great influence on children's acquisition of educational resources. For example, father's occupation, income, degree of education and housing conditions have huge effects on whether his child can enter key primary school, middle school and university. Usually, these families exclude competitors during selecting schools by use of social economic resources, privilege and privilege exclusion.

We can easily find through the above analysis that family cultural capital accumulation of applied university students is small except poor abilities and talents. Plus the privilege and economic exclusion, they suffer various limitations in the opportunity of gaining educational resources. So, they are not so outstanding like undergraduates we imagine in terms of cultivation of learning habits and learning attitude, formulation of learning strategy and learning method, development of cognition ability and comprehension as well as value sense of self-actualization. They are scanned out by college entrance examination. Logically, another problem seemingly appears. "Are the students unsuitable for academic universities certainly suitable for applied universities?" College entrance examination mechanism fails to give an explicit answer, and only knows the emergence of applied universities meets the needs of track division and layering of higher education and complies with social development.

### **Setup of internal teaching quality guarantee system of applied universities**

Preliminary analysis of applied university students contributes to us to form correct judgment of starting point of teaching and helps us review problems in teaching quality guarantee.

#### **Teaching system connection of applied universities and higher vocational colleges**

Since Mr. Pan Maoyuan published the paper On Orientation of Applied Universities, applied universities have been gradually known by people. Especially since 2010, many excellent middle-aged and young scholars such as Lu Wuxia, Chen Xiaohu and Li Xiaoming have carried out rich and significant exploration for this new higher education type. They indicate educational connotation and attributive character of higher vocation colleges and applied universities have similarity and relevance, including homogeneity of type orientation and continuity of level orientation. They believe the development of applied universities and especially the problems encountered by local applied universities in transition process can refer to development mode of higher vocational colleges, as long as connection problem is solved well.

Higher vocational colleges and applied universities come down in one continuous line and belong to the category of category. In the development history of higher vocational education, the development and exploration time of higher vocational colleges is at least 10 year earlier than applied universities. In the past 20 years, higher vocational colleges have explored a whole set of talent training mode and scheme: constructed practical teaching system, established school-enterprise cooperation training, the project of introducing and training double-professionally-titled teacher, scientific research innovation and service for local economy. Although the development of higher vocational colleges is not perfect, it indeed sets up thinking path and frame for the development of applied universities. So, applied universities should consciously perfect connection with higher vocational colleges in teaching system.

#### **Concept needing to be specified by applied universities in course and teaching**

Although applied university education belongs to vocational education, the education pursuit of "making people continuously become useful people" remains unchanged. Only when this pursuit is adhered to can many concepts of higher education such as freedom, liberation and excess be really embodied. Just as Dewey said, "education is not for occupation, but career". With persistence in such

idea, changes may be triggered in the following four aspects. Firstly, pay more attention to the relationship between basic subjects and applied subjects in course setting, let educatees' subject logic extend and provide potential for their future work; secondly, not only focus on specific behavior change of educatees in skill-oriented courses, but also pay close attention to how these skills trigger changes in educatees' ability and emotion; thirdly, rethink the approaches and methods to construct potential experiential knowledge (tacit knowledge) with professional knowledge accumulation; fourthly, in terms of improving teaching method, see the advantage of traditional task-driven teaching method in significance relevance, see its defects in handling knowledge system, and explore cultivation of students problem handling ability in situations.

### **Approaches of training guaranteed teachers of applied universities**

Guaranteed teacher training of applied universities includes three approaches: school training, enterprise training and social training. School training means to train school teachers by taking applied university as the subject of training, mainly including training new teachers, original teachers and industry-introduced teachers. Aiming at different types of teachers, school training is based on establishing applied university education and teaching concept, mastering education and teaching methods and forming course reform ability and mechanism. Enterprise training means teachers of applied universities enter relevant industries or enterprises to improve and train professional ability. Formulation of training plan and content and assessment will be done jointly by industrial experts and school teachers. Enterprise training objective is to train teachers to master advanced technology, know production flow and experience real working situation. Government training means teacher cultivation major should be set in normal education. Applied university education is characterized by high grade, occupation and application. Professional teacher education training will enhance environment adaptability, teaching ability, course study and development ability of applied university teachers so as to effectively reduce the cost of school training and enterprise training as well as deviation risk.

### **Two systems in urgent need of improvement for applied universities**

The development of applied universities cannot be separated from external environment improvement and support. The establishment and perfection of life-long education and vocational qualification authentication system fully support its connotation, rationalization and sustainable development.

#### **Life-long education system**

Life-long education not just refers to education time continuation from cradle to grave, but also stresses people's study in different learning places according to vocational needs. The establishment of this system will provide countless employees with the opportunity of gaining vocational ability again. The functions of applied universities in vocational ability promotion and social work cannot be neglected. The reasons why the system is not established are as follows. Firstly, life-long education awareness is not established, and traditional cognition holds that education is only the event in a stage. Secondly, China has a large population. Education cost of lifelong education is far from enough by only depending on government support. Education cost sharing among government, enterprises and individuals and the frequency of continuing education become the key problems.

#### **Vocational qualification certificate system**

The establishment of vocational qualification certificate system is crucial for hierarchical and orderly development of vocational education. It is especially important for applied university education which is at the top of vocational education. Vocational qualification certificate system involves the question that which development is more qualified to evaluate vocational capacity. The enterprise serves as the evaluation subject. However, there are numerous enterprises. Which enterprise should be chosen? If the government serves as the evaluation subject, government's

distribution of human resources and material resources are not sufficient enough. Hence, the ideal evaluation subject should be industry association. Industry association is the intermediary agency of government and enterprises. It is “third-party field” which appears when public and private parties cannot well handle public affairs. Through cooperation with applied universities, it formulates and implements industry standards and vocational (post) skill standards as well as studies vocational education theory so as to make the connotation of vocational qualification certificate system become rich and to really provide qualified talents for the industry. But it is a pity that current, Chinese industry association lacks legal control and the management is chaotic. Benign circulation mechanism with enterprises and government is not really set up. Thus, the quality of many vocational qualification certificates is low. Industrial and vocational development needs cannot be fully and truly reflected.

### **Other functions of the two systems**

Other functions of lifelong education and vocational qualification certificate are as follows. Firstly, applied university students pursue higher education background in order to make up for insufficient school reputation, so the possibility of excessive education and the cost are very high. “Parchment effect” (also called diploma effect) can be reduced effectively through training and evaluating talents with multiple approaches. Secondly, the two systems effectively support orientation of mass education of applied university and the aim of social service.

### **Conclusions**

Applied university is the product of Chinese higher education. Its development directly concerns the quality of Chinese higher education and the course of Chinese education popularization and democracy: whether equal educational resources are given to the public; whether the opportunity is provided for the public to achieve social class flow through education.

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