

Reflections on the Cultivation of Elite Education in Non - Governmental Institutions of Higher Learning

----- Take Xijing University as an Example

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Abstract: In 2011, the Ministry of Education approved 5 private colleges and universities including Beijing City College to set up master's program, which is a substantial breakthrough in the development of higher education. After over 30 years of construction and development, a number of famous schools with a high level of teaching quality have emerged in private colleges and universities in mainland China, and private colleges and universities have already become an important force in China's higher education. Private colleges and universities have a strong demand for cultivating college students into "elite talents". Therefore, in addition to paying attention to constructing the basic system needed to build a college, constructing undergraduate teaching system and putting scientific research assessment of private colleges and universities at the level of key universities, we also need to understand that one of the purposes of colleges and universities is to cultivate "elite talents" who can lead the progress of human civilization.

The Development Progress of Private Colleges and Universities

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, new educational programs have been promulgated and institutions of higher education have been adjusted. At the end of 1952, all the private institutions of higher learning were revoked and integrated into public institutions of higher learning. 30 years later, private institutions of higher education were re-established. Ever since the 1990s, ordinary institutions of higher education have been flourishing in mainland China, making positive contributions to the development of the educational cause. In 2011, the Ministry of Education approved 5 private colleges and universities including Beijing City College to set up master's program, which is a substantial breakthrough in the development of higher education. According to statistics, as of December 2013, there were 426 ordinary private colleges and universities in mainland China (with additional 292 independent colleges) and 5.5752 million students, accounting for over 20% of the total number of college students. After more than 30 years of construction and development, a number of famous schools with a high level of teaching quality have emerged in private colleges and universities in mainland China, and private colleges and universities have already become an important force in China's higher education.

Important Significance of Cultivating Elite Education at Private Colleges and Universities

Private colleges and universities' admission line at the national college entrance examination determines the level of students. Private college students are not so good at learning without a solid foundation of basic skills. Besides, they cannot often be concentrated and listen attentively to the teachers at class without correct learning attitudes. However, still a large number of private colleges and universities have strong demand for cultivating college students into "elite talents". All the rural students, students not from rich families, and students with strong interest in learning but having limited ability have strong demand for desire to learn, and they are looking forward to becoming

“elite talents” and having important individual competitiveness at the talent market after graduation. In the context of popular education and expanded college enrollment, most students only master the basic subject knowledge and still lag behind the requirements for the quality of “elite talents”. At present, the cultivation of “elite talents” is mostly concentrated in “985 Project” and “211 Project” universities, where the academic competition is intense. It is undeniable that students at these colleges and universities have a relatively high level of cultural accomplishment and are highly international, so it is relatively easy to implement the “elite talent” cultivation system. However, in the process of raising private colleges and universities to local universities, in addition to paying attention to constructing the basic system needed to build a college, constructing undergraduate teaching system and putting scientific research assessment of private colleges and universities at the level of key universities, we also need to understand that one of the purposes of colleges and universities is to cultivate “elite talents” and the “connotation” is to cultivating talents who can lead the progress of human civilization.

Path to Cultivate Elite Talents at Private Colleges and Universities

Combine General Education with Professional Education. General education is a part of elite education. Colleges and universities have gradually set up general education classes to train students’ logic thinking and the ability to examine and analyze problems instead of a passion-driven decision and paranoia. To implement the four-year consistent general education refers to that regardless of stages, general education, professional education and social practice are throughout the four-year learning course. The high-end “elite talents” are not just high-tech talents nor management talents who are familiar with businesses, but high-end comprehensive talents with a high level of art accomplishment, historical culture and compassionate feelings. XU Delong and FENG Zhengqing, etc. also propose that “we must attach great importance to cultivating and improving professional graduate students’ humanities and artistic accomplishment.” To provide a profound history and humanities education is a necessary content to cultivate senior talents. History education with “deep thought” can make our cultivation objects have a strong sense of historical responsibility and mission so that they are boldly understand the great cause of development and reform; to provide rich humanistic education enables our cultivation objects have a wide range of social knowledge and hobbies, increase the transcendence, interest of their work, expand their social communication and cultivate their sense of gratitude, tolerance and devotion.

Construct Featured Subjects and Advantageous Majors. Construction at the discipline level is the key to the successful development of elite education for without the specific disciplines and professional construction, it is hard for elite higher education to achieve long-term development. Featured subjects are an important factor to measure a college or university’s level of elite higher education. Advantageous majors refer to those majors enjoying certain degree of popularity both in China and abroad. Such majors can attract more excellent students and teachers. Our school’s Machinery Design and Manufacturing and Automation was approved by the Ministry of Education as the sixth batch of “features major construction at institutions of higher education”. This is the school’s another result in terms of major construction and implementing “quality engineering” after the school’s Civil Engineering and Art Design were approved to become the provincial featured majors and Interior Decoration Design, E-Commerce and CNC Technology were approved to become provincial key majors. This will also play a good demonstration and leading role for private colleges and universities to further deepen teaching reform and promote the construction of brand majors so as to further speed up the pace of the school’s elite education and cultivation.

“Flipped Classroom” Teaching Mode. To actively promote the reform of classroom teaching, strengthen communication and research of “flipped classroom” teaching mode, cultivate students’ innovation spirit and practical ability and further promote the application of “flipped classroom” teaching mode and project teaching, our school regularly holds “flipped classroom” demonstration class, at which the teachers insist on that the class is guided by the teacher and dominated by students. Before the class, teachers will provide students with resources like micro-classes and documents, and students can freely arrange time to watch them and complete the pre-class

homework. At the class, students can express their opinions and works and make targeted demonstration and mutual evaluation while actively participating in the class, so the class atmosphere is active. In traditional teaching, teachers mainly impart knowledge at class and students need to acquire knowledge after class on their own. However, at flipped classes, students learn through multimedia courseware without being restricted by time and space, which makes it more convenient for students to learn independent through cooperation and exploration; and at class, teachers mainly help students to acquire knowledge through answering students' questions, discussing and applying knowledge. In such classroom model, students become the real master of learning, which maximizes students' enthusiasm and curiosity in learning and motivates students' enthusiasm and subjective initiative.

International Orientation. In the international situation, private college students need to actively participate in international exchange programs and improve their own competitiveness. Our school has already provided training for college students in Summer Work & Travel program, studying in Spain program and teaching Chinese as a foreign language program. Besides, our school has ushered in the first batch of American students, which is a major breakthrough in carrying out teaching Chinese as a foreign language, spreading Chinese culture and promoting international exchanges and cooperation. Our school has recruited foreign students for the first time, indicating that our teaching space is further expanded and foreign exchange and cooperation have stepped onto a new stage. Recruiting foreign students to exchange and study at our school can not only promote exchange between Chinese and foreign students and enhance mutual understanding, but also proposes new requirements for the school's teaching quality and management level, thus playing a positive role in promoting the school's teaching level.

Cooperation between Schools and Enterprises Promotes Elite Education. To further improve the teaching level of "application and technical colleges and universities", and deeply implement the school's work deployment about "constructing application and technical university", all the departments should actively mobilize faculties through teamwork and assigning responsibility to specific people, and then establish various forms of cooperation relationship with enterprises through various forms of cooperation so as to give full play to the practice and teaching base's function of recruiting students in internship and employment. The Dean's Office manages all the faculties of the Management Department and actively contacts and coordinates sub-branches of each department to timely collate and summarize written agreements of constructing the practice and teaching base, and then it should collect statistics of the progress at each stage and archive related documents.

Two-Tutor System Inside and Outside the School to Cultivate High-Quality Graduates. In the progress of training professional masters, school-enterprise two-tutor system is implemented. The on-campus tutor is associate professor or above with both a high theoretical level and engineering practice experience. Enterprise tutor is technical staffs with advanced technical titles within an enterprise, focusing on professional practice and management. On-campus tutor begins to guide graduate students upon their enrollment, i.e., "tutor responsibility system". Till the third term, when the graduate students enter the practice link, both the on-campus tutor and enterprise tutor teach the students together. At the stage of selecting dissertation topic, the on-campus tutor and enterprise tutor guide students in topic selection and dissertation writing together combined with the practice contents. Enterprise tutor should start from the real application and use his/her rich practical engineering experience to promote students to closely combine corporate production in the dissertation and focus on solving technical problems in production. For example, taking into account of corporate practice and market demand, a graduate student chooses the topic "Design and Research of Quanqiaoruan Switch and Power Supply". A good communication mechanism would be established between school and enterprise, on-campus tutor and enterprise tutor, student and on-campus tutor, student and enterprise-tutor. Enterprise tutor formulates detailed internship and teaching plan for the graduate, who will report the internship content and experience monthly to on-campus tutor, and on-campus tutor and enterprise-tutor will discuss to formulate graduate internship scheme.

China's socialist modernization is in urgent need for institutions of higher education to cultivate a large number of "elite talents". Thus, private colleges and universities need to follow the trend of the times to make bold reform and courageously explore so as to make more contributions to cultivating more "elite talents" welcomed by the society.

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