

New Thoughts on College Teachers' Training

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Abstract

With the continuous improvement and development of teaching quality in colleges, college teachers' training has achieved fast development and been strengthened significantly. However, conditions are various at different times and problems are complicated. Concerning the issue of college teachers' training, the authors put forward several new thoughts, i.e., enriching the training contents, enhancing the diversity of training methods, improving teachers' initiatives and enthusiasm, and adopting modern training tools.

Key words: Teaching staff; Teachers' training; Training approach; Modern training

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INTRODUCTION

With the development of higher education, college teachers' training has achieved fast development and been strengthened significantly. It has developed the basic principle, i.e., training college teachers mainly by means of teaching and scientific research, and built the college teachers' training system based on the network organizations, with the policies of insisting on the right direction and domestic training, focusing on current college teachers and key points, strengthening practices and multiple forms.

However, with the fast development of higher education in China, the college enrollment continues to expand, accompanied by worsening graduate employment situation. Where is the problem from? Since the trend of the popularization of higher education, all colleges have invested more in campus and hardware, but seldom cared about the college teachers properly. As a matter of fact, the qualities of college teachers determine the competence and the development of colleges. Colleges should locate the focus on the development of college teachers. Only by this way, can colleges ensure the invincible position in the future competition. College teachers' training is the important content and the main link of the college management and the construction of college teaching team.

1. HISTORY OF COLLEGE TEACHERS' TRAINING IN CHINA

Since the foundation of China, along with the reform and development of the higher education cause, college teachers' training has experienced tough practices and explorations, gradually built the national network system, formed special characteristics, and achieved significant successes. At different historical periods in the development of higher education, college teachers' training can be divided into the following six stages according to the different tasks and requirements:

(a) The initial stage (1953-1956). At the very beginning of the foundation of China, focusing on the problem of the shortage of college teachers, the Ministry of Education issued "Temporary Approaches for College Teachers' Further Study", which disclosed the college teachers' training for the first time in China. At that time, the main task was: increasing the teaching level of college teachers as plans and solving problems in opening certain courses. The instructors were professors, associate professors, or exports from former Soviet Union (Li, 2002).

(b) The preliminary stage of development (1957-1966). In early 1960s, with the expansion of higher education in China, the college teachers' training has been strengthened at the same time. In the year 1961, the Ministry of Education issued the "Minutes of Meeting of National Secondary and Higher Schools' Adjustment". In the year 1963, the Ministry of Education pointed out: "Higher schools must continue to train dedicated and professional teachers and draw up a plan of training young college teachers", in the "Sixty Rules for Higher Education". At this stage, the task of training college teachers has been changed from the shortage of teaching staff and the difficulty of opening certain courses to the improvement of college teachers' political consciousness and the enhancement of their scientific research capabilities.

(c) The stagnation stage (1966-1977). During the ten years of "Cultural Revolution", the higher education had been seriously damaged. College teachers' training had been stopped reluctantly. The whole training of college teachers was entering a stagnant state right after it was just on the right track.

(d) The recovery and development stage (1978-1986).

Since Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, the education authorities and colleges have restored and strengthened the college teachers' training. In the year 1980, the Ministry of Education issued the "Temporary Policies for Key Colleges Providing Trainings for Teachers". According to the actual conditions of teaching staff and the requirements for school teaching and scientific research, it summarized the experiences and the lessons for the training of teachers after the foundation of China, advanced the "five-orientation" principles, i.e., domestic- training-orientation, teacher-orientation, internal-school-orientation, practice-orientation, self-study- orientation. It played a positive role in restoring the college teachers' training in China, improving the overall quality of college teaching staff, and maintaining the continuity of qualified teachers in colleges.

(e) The stage of forming network system (1987-1992). It was an important period for college teachers' training strengthening programs and establishing the national training network, and also a key historical period of exploring the standardization and emphasizing the institution. Based on Beijing Normal University and Wuhan University, the Ministry of Education has built two national centers for teachers' training, which are in charge of coordinating and carrying out the annual plans for national college teachers' training. Then, the Ministry of Education has established six regional centers for college teachers' training based on six normal universities, which are responsible of carrying out the regional plans for college teachers' training. Meanwhile, all provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities have formed training centers for college teachers one after another. Then, it completes the construction of network

system for college teachers' training, led by two national training centers, with the participation, organization, and coordination of six regional training centers, with the specific training bases of provincial centers, key colleges, and some key fields.

(f) The stage of legalization (1994-now). This stage is marked by the application of the Law of Teachers and the equipped regulation "Practical Procedures for College Teachers' Training". In the year 1996, the Ministry of Education issued the "Program for College Teachers' Training". It definitely established the guiding principles and rules for college teachers' training, including the organization of training, the obligations and responsibilities, the main training forms, the evaluation and management of training, the guaranty for training and related benefits. According to the data of survey (Wang, 2007), in the year 2008, judging by the overall quality, the numbers of professors and associate professors are respectively 117,000 and 247,000 in common colleges, respectively accounting for 10.4% and 29.6% of the total; the number of postgraduate teachers with is about 49.8% of the total, in which 31,300 teachers with the doctorate degree and 200,500 teachers with the master degree, respectively accounting for 6.4% and 39.6% of the total. From the year 1992 to the year 2008, about 270,000 college teachers participated in various trainings, including special training courses, domestic visiting scholars, and senior seminars. Apparently, after the long-term period of exploration, college teachers' training has not only realized the vigorous development, but also developed the special characteristics, achieving remarkable fruits. However, there are still many problems in this field.

2. PROBLEMS IN COLLEGE TEACHERS' TRAINING

2.1 Missing and Narrowing the Function of Training, Especially Neglecting the Overall Development of Teachers

Due to the influences of traditional education, in many places the teachers' training still focuses on the "on-demand training", "providing what we lack", or "learning what we are taught". Maybe it is always right. However, what we are taught and what we learn are mostly knowledgeable conclusions, lacking of developing knowledge. In the teaching process, emphasize on the systematic knowledge overly and pay too much attention to the accumulation of knowledge, but seldom stress on the optimization of knowledge structure. As for the training of capabilities, it merely stays in applying learned knowledge to answering relevant questions or learning new knowledge. This approach, as a matter of fact, locates the value of training on the knowledge itself, and the goal of training on training "knowledge-

base teachers". Therefore, it can only meet in the teachers' full compliance. With the coming of knowledge economy, this concept has turned into one of reasons for teachers lacking of motives for further development. At current college teachers' training, it basically follows the traditional education methods that focus too much on measurable knowledge teaching, but overlook the training of immeasurable qualities, such as the capabilities of operation. Thinking is limited to books or certain frames set by teachers, lacking of creative thoughts. From the defects in current college teachers' training, the function of training has been narrowed to a great degree, especially ignoring the overall development of teachers.

2.2 Separating Present Training Approaches From Modern Educational Concept

Although present college teachers' training advocates the advanced scientific educational concept, it usually adopts the training approaches that are not in accordance with or even contrary to the educational concept. For example, the purpose of training is supposed to advocate the idea of encouraging the participation of students, but the training of college teachers adopts the inculcation teaching approach, seldom providing chances for teachers' participation. The purpose of training is supposed to advocate the idea of encouraging students make innovations, but the training of college teachers still adopts the traditional class pattern of "teacher-teaching and students-learning" in a new way, i.e., "trainer-lecturing and teachers-listening". Teachers just imitate trainer's teaching techniques in training. They do not make innovations by themselves. The purpose of training is supposed to advocate the idea of stimulating students' internal learning motives, but the training does not consider the actual needs of teachers. It just progresses as former plans. This self-contradictory training cannot only change the teaching concept of teachers effectively, but become the example of strengthening teachers' wrong teaching views. In addition, even they have learnt some advanced teaching strategies or techniques from the trainings they might fail to apply them to teaching practices, because of the lack of new educational concept. Even more, they would never create effective teaching approaches based on their teaching experiences. The data of survey show that among the training approaches used by all training institutions, the face-to-face teaching is used more frequently, accounting for 73.5%. The face-to-face teaching usually covers the whole training process, and it is usually performed in front of several hundreds of people in one class. The most unsatisfying problem in college teachers' training is the boring, simple, and traditional training approach (Wang, 2006).

2.3 Ignoring the Characteristics of Adults as Training Targets

For a long time, we hold a misunderstanding of education, i.e., "student is a piece of white paper as teacher makes

drawings on it" (Project Team, 2005). It forgets a fact that students' learning starts before the regular education. Before children enter schools or even the kindergarten, they have already learnt and formed some concepts and experiences in life. As this misunderstanding extends to college teachers' training, it evolves into regarding teachers as pieces of white paper, neglecting their backgrounds, such as the possessed educational concepts and experiences. Then, it grows a wrong idea in college teachers' training field: As long as we convey the scientific teaching concepts to the college teachers, the concepts will naturally be accepted and will become rules of teaching, guiding their behaviors. However, according to relevant researches and training practices, facts show that: if teachers do not remove the wrong educational concepts from their brains, they will never easily accept the new scientific educational concepts and form the stable internal knowledge structure. According to the cognitive implicit theories, it is the individual's internal cognitive structure that actually directs an individual's recognition and behavior. It suggests that we must know about the educational background of college teachers in training and help them equipped with new teaching concepts.

3. NEW THOUGHTS ON COLLEGE TEACHERS' TRAINING

3.1 Integrate Training Contents

In college teachers' training, we should carry out the idea of quality education, taking the needs of education work and teachers' personal development into consideration. It is the fundamental guiding ideology for designing the college teachers' training in the 21st century. Teachers should not just be conveyers. Teachers should be happy well-rounded human beings who are not only good at teaching, but also enjoy modern civilization. It is necessary for the society, individuals, and education (Ding & Fan, 2013). The cultivation of compound talents needs educators with compound knowledge structure. Therefore, college teachers must vertically deepen their knowledge and horizontally expand their knowledge. They should not only possess solid professional basis, but also be good at educating students by interdisciplinary teaching. Therefore, college teachers should break the "professional barriers" consciously and pursue for the integration of knowledge. Teachers of social sciences should pay attention to complementing some natural and practical scientific knowledge. Teachers of natural sciences should pay attention to complementing some social and art knowledge. It is the foundation and the precondition for college teachers achieving the cultivation of students' ability of knowledge integration and knowledge internalization. Accordingly, the socialization of educational contents puts forwards new requirements

for college teachers' knowledge structure, i.e., college teachers must possess necessary social practices and experiences. In addition, college teachers should learn and master the innovation theories and methods, and make them virtual, specific, and practical, so that they can better serve in training students' innovation spirits and capabilities. Under the guidance of sustainable development objectives, the present training for college teachers is different from the former training approach, since the later just emphasizes on theoretical guidance or skill training. The present training also cares about the reconstruction of college teachers' fundamental education concept and the improvement of core teaching skills. Reviewing all the curricula reform in other countries, the essence is to advocate and emphasize on certain core educational concept. The innovative and scientific teaching skills are the necessary tools for carrying out the educational concept. Practices have proved that trainings can help college teachers internalize the new teaching concept into personal educational concept and college teachers will apply or even create certain new teaching skills in practices that accord with the educational concept. By this way, the curricula reform can penetrate into the school level, reflected by each college teacher's oral and specific teaching activities, actually promoting the active development of students, and finally achieving the goal of reform, i.e., the common growth of college teachers and students.

3.2 Adopt Multiple Training Approaches and Try to Meet the Diverse Needs of Training Objectives

In order to encourage college teachers' exploration and innovation, the present college teachers' training is not just composed of simple and boring indoctrination lectures. It gradually introduces a variety of teaching methods that highlight the participation, operation, and experience, such as the sharing of experiences, the case study, the cooperative inquiry, etc. Especially the scenario cooperation training method is welcome among researchers and college teachers. It particularly emphasizes on college teachers' personal "experience" and "participation" in the training process. This training approach is based on the constructivist learning theory, the adult learning theory, and other educational theories. The constructivist learning theory explains the learning from the following key points:

- (a) The learning is the process in which a learner actively constructs the internal psychological features.
- (b) A learner always understands and constructs new knowledge or information based on personal experiences.
- (c) Learners construct the understandings of things in their own ways. Different people see different aspects of things. By means of cooperation, learners can know different opinions and perspectives, which will enrich the understandings of things more comprehensively.

It can be seen that the cooperative learning is very

necessary and extremely important for any learner, including both students and teachers in training. During the process of cooperative inquiry, college teachers can not only learn from the trainer, but also share the useful experiences with other teachers. Find the problem by oneself and seek for diverse solutions by cooperative learning. By this way, it will completely stimulate the enthusiasm and the creativity of college teachers.

3.3 Motivate College Teachers' Enthusiasm and Initiatives Completely in Training

With the realization of the popularization of higher education, colleges are increasingly showing a variety of different types and levels. College teachers are not and should not be evaluated by one criterion. The quality of college teachers becomes the important factor that determines the level of colleges. The college teachers' training is closely associated with the quality of college teachers. Therefore, the college teachers' training should not continue to use the traditional contents or approaches. It is not appropriate to equalize the organizational needs to college teachers' personal needs. The college teachers' training should take both organizational needs and college teachers' personal needs into consideration at the same time. During the training process, we should follow the principle of freedom and flexibility, giving choices for teachers concerning the training time, places, and contents. Cherish college teachers' time, arrange the training generally, and improve the efficiency of training. If the conditions are allowed, we can encourage college teachers to participate in some social high-level training. College should provide academic vocations for college teachers and ensure that college teachers have the time for further training based on regulations.

At the same time, we can make best use of some convenient, accurate, visual, and efficient teaching tools, such as the multimedia assisted instruction, and modern distance education, achieving the diversity of training. Improve the effectiveness and the efficiency of training, and promote the enthusiasm of college teachers for training.

Under the new situation, as for the college teachers' training, we must stand on the strategic position in perspective of educational internalization and modernization, emphasizing on the cultivation of innovative team of college teachers, and reforming the training concept. Considering the specific training contents and approaches, we should focus on the cultivation of the innovative, open, and research qualities, and the competitive and cooperative spirits, achieving the perfect combination of the two aspects.

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