

Research on the Teaching Strategies for Universities and Colleges to Improve the Training Effect of Veterinary Medicine New-Type Professional Farmers

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Abstract

Based on the experiences of the Sunshine Project over the past years, the Central Committee of the CPC put forward the requirement of “vigorously cultivating new-type professional farmers” in No. 1 Document in 2012. Since then, Chinese universities and colleges, especially those related to agriculture, have launched the training of new-type professional farmers. This is an important approach for Chinese agriculture, especially Chinese livestock husbandry, to develop and cultivate their human resources. To improve the training effect of veterinary medicine new-type professional farmers, it is necessary for universities and colleges to adopt the intensive organization management of learners, optimization and combination of the faculty, functionalization of training content, diversification of training methods and other teaching strategies. By doing so, it can also contribute to the realization of the ambitious goal of promoting sound and fast development of livestock husbandry in China or even the whole Asian Region at large.

Key words: Universities and colleges; Veterinary medicine; New-type professional farmers; Training effect; Teaching strategies

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INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is the foundation of national or regional economy. As an important part of agriculture, livestock husbandry also underlies the development of national economy. Modernization of livestock husbandry is a must-taken road for the development of husbandry in a country or a region to play an essential role in national economy. However, to achieve modernization of livestock husbandry, veterinary medicine human resources are indispensable, just as what the No.1 Document 2015 of the Central Committee of the CPC says, “vigorously developing agricultural professional education and cultivating new-type professional farmers.” The training of new-type professional farmers is in response to the requirement of promoting Chinese agricultural modernization and development of profitable and featured agriculture. It focuses on training farmers’ professional skills and comprehensive qualities. The backbone farmers from large planting and breeding business households, family farms, farmer’s specialized cooperative organizations and agricultural socialized service system are the major training objects. To effectively enhance the targetedness and efficiency of training and to cultivate a modern agricultural production and operation team featuring a reasonable structure, adequate number and high qualities can provide the human resources support for the acceleration of agricultural modernization and new countryside construction. Chinese universities and colleges, especially those related to agriculture, have become the main trainers for new-type professional farmers. In order to solve the problem of “who to and who can” be engaged in the production and operation management of the modern livestock husbandry, it is imperative to study the teaching strategies for universities and colleges to improve the training effect of veterinary medicine new-type professional farmers.

1. BACKGROUND AND PROCEDURES FOR UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES TO TRAIN VETERINARY MEDICINE NEW-TYPE PROFESSIONAL FARMERS

1.1 Background for Universities and Colleges to Train Veterinary Medicine New-Type Professional Farmers

Nowadays, Chinese agricultural development is faced with many prominent problems and challenges. In response to the spirit of No.1 Document issued by the Central Committee of the CPC in 2012 and the requirement of the Chongqing Municipal Party Committee for the vigorous development of the profitable and featured agriculture and the promotion of the agricultural modernization, it is necessary to accelerate the training of the new-type agricultural production and operation subjects and the new-type professional farmers., further improve the production techniques and the operation management level of professional farmers and invigorate the potential of the agricultural production elements. Based on the full implementation of the Sunshine Project training in 2013, the Chongqing Municipal Government issued the new-type professional farmers pilot training plan in 2013. Departments in charge of the plan implementation including Chongqing Municipal Agricultural Committee chose Rongchang County, the core area of China Livestock Technology Town and National Modern Livestock Husbandry Demonstration Area at the pilot unit for the training of veterinary medicine new-type professional farmers. Southwest University Rongchang Campus, Rongchang County Livestock Bureau and other relevant units were entrusted to coordinate and organize the pilot training. After that, Chinese universities and colleges, especially those related to agriculture, like Southwest University Rongchang Campus, spearheaded in unveiling a new chapter for the training of veterinary medicine new-type professional farmers.

1.2 Procedures for Universities and Colleges to Train Veterinary Medicine New-Type Professional Farmers

New-type professional farmers refer to the new generation of professional farmers who are cross-regional, mobile, socialized and professionalized; have culture and know techniques; and are good at operation and management. Obviously, new-type professional farmers differ greatly from the indigenous farmers both in terms of connotation and denotation (Wang, 2012). This is a brand-new transformation of the agricultural human resources especially those engaged in the production, operation and management of livestock husbandry. To the end, a systematic training and education system should be developed based on the national standardized requirements and procedures. For example, based on the

training tasks of the national Sunshine Project and the spirit and requirements of the implementation advices, combining the development layout of the municipal agriculture industry, the implementation area of the agricultural projects, the demand of various areas for the training of new-type professional farmers and the past implementation experiences of Sunshine Project, Chongqing Municipal Agricultural Committee and Financial Bureau decomposed the general tasks to every district and county. Agricultural department of all levels formulated their training and implementation plans according to the training tasks and requirements. These training and implementation plans were released to various training institutions. To put it simply, a) Chongqing Municipal Agricultural Committee gave the instruction of the training task of veterinary medicine new-type professional farmers to Rongchang County Agricultural Committee; b) Rongchang County and the other departments decomposed the training tasks to Southwest University Rongchang Campus; c) Rongchang University Rongchang Campus and Rongchang County Livestock Veterinary Medicine Bureau cooperated to implement and organize the training under the supervision of Rongchang County Livestock Bureau.

2. TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES TO IMPROVE THE TRAINING EFFECT OF VETERINARY MEDICINE NEW-TYPE PROFESSIONAL FARMERS

2.1 Intensive Organization Management Strategies for Learners

Organization management exists in all social activities of humans. Universities and colleges should take the characteristics of the learners and refer to agricultural talent training and education in developed countries, such as America, Japan and German, to conduct a good organization management of agricultural learners. Most veterinary medicine new-type professional farmers receiving training in China are aged between 35 and 55. Their culture level is generally low. Besides, they undertake lots of agricultural production tasks. In order to ensure their training effect, it is necessary to conduct intensive organization management. First, the organization and leadership of training activities for veterinary medicine new-type professional farmers should be enhanced. Southwest University Rongchang Campus has established the training leadership group consisting of Deputy Director of Management Committee, Director of Network and Continuing Education Department and personnel in charge of various departments. The leadership group is responsible for the fund preparation,

publicity and campaign, macro management and cross-department coordination. Various departments should send specialists to be in charge of project application, curriculum arrangement, classroom check and learners' daily management; make relevant adjustment according to training content and tasks; and immediately solve problems existing in the training projects. Second, the training management and the project implementation should be intensified. The publicity and campaign efforts should be enhanced; more information should be provided for teachers; and teachers' enthusiasm to contribute to the training work should be stimulated. All these could contribute to the formation of favorable social public opinions as to the training of new-type professional farmers. Third, the training quality should be strictly controlled. According to the arrangement of the training schedule and training content, 50 learners are put in a class for concentrated training. Besides, according to the practical situation of learners, relevant adjustments should be made to the training site and schedule. For example, there are ten days of training for the veterinary medicine new-type professional farmers. It is advisable to arrange five and half a day for theoretical learning and four and half a day for field practice. During the training process, the head teacher should enhance the management of class discipline and make relevant record. Besides, the head teacher should care about learners' life. For example, the head teacher should call learners who fail to come to the classroom in time; give mineral water or tea to learners present in the classroom. Such an intensive organization management can make learners concentrate on the training.

2.2 Optimal Combination of the Faculty

In terms of the training for new-type professional farmers, especially for veterinary medicine new-type professional farmers, universities and colleges should endow learners not only with professionalized values, but also with production, operation and management skills. In response to the above stated training characteristics and requirements and improve the knowledge, operation skills, operation and management level and comprehensive qualities of new-type professional farmers, it is necessary to combine classroom training with field training, combine theoretical knowledge learning with case analysis. Besides, field schools, village schools, village training sites and facilities should play their role. The most important thing is that the faculty should be optimally combined so as to improve the training effect. Experts and professors in universities and colleges who are familiar with the rural area, agriculture, farmers and farmers' demands, and who are professional and experienced in training should be chosen to organize the faculty. At the same time, every teacher of the faculty should make good preparation before every class so as to ensure the completion of

the training tasks and the training quality as well. For example, from 2013 to 2014, according to the pig breeding, operation and management class, and pig, rabbit and aquatic cultivation skill classes, Rongchang Campus established a training faculty made up of experts and professors in the field of Animal Science, Animal Medicine and Agricultural Economy Management. Moreover, Rongchang Campus conducted training in the corresponding villages, townships and subdistricts of Rongchang County, including Anfu Subdistrict, Shuanghe Subdistrict, Renyi Township, Panlong Township, Ronglong Township and Guansheng Township. Due to the optimal combination of faculty knowledge, abilities and structure, teachers could cooperate with each other well, thus greatly improving the training effect.

2.3 Functionalization of Training Content

Most learners receiving the training are adults having followed the professional of the production of animal products for years. Their perception of training content is often based on their experiences. In other words, they learn and receive training on the basis of their cultivation experiences. Such experiences are a precious resource, which will stimulate them to learn knowledge and skills related to their experiences, and help them better understand new knowledge. This coincides with the idea of many scholars that: Humans have the demand for knowledge during the process of working (Zhang, 2008). Thus, they require the training content they are learning to be practical and functional, and related to the knowledge and skills they are in need of for their current animal production and cultivation. Such knowledge includes the prevention and control of various diseases during the pig cultivation, how to use and manage various feeds. During the training process, veterinary medicine new-type professional farmers often bring questions they have encountered in animal production and cultivation to the class and raise them at the opportune moment. Therefore, the training content for the veterinary medicine new-type professional farmers should be functionalized. For example, the training content for the pig cultivation skills class can focus on the prevention and control of major diseases, the key skills for pig breeding, piglet feeding skills, weaning skills, weaned piglet feeding skills, pig farm production and management skills, pig and pig products marketing skills, and the other practical content so as to meet the learners' learning demands and meet the demand of the future pig industry for human resources.

2.4 Diversification of Training Methods

Training methods can be diversified. Teachers should get rid of the mentality that there is only one best or correct training method. The teaching process is not exploring a best approach, but numerous approaches to achieve different objectives. In fact, the best teaching method or

learning method does not exist at all (Li, 2002). Currently, the training methods for veterinary medicine new-type professional farmers mainly include lectures, dialogues, demonstration, self-study guide, tutoring, experiments, internship, exercise and discussion. According to the characteristics of learners, perceptual, diversified and interconnected teaching methods should be adopted. Attention should be paid to the exchange and cooperation between learners. During the training process, PPT, videos and audio-visual aids can be adopted. For example, the common diseases of pigs can be demonstrated in a vivid way through images or videos. By turning the abstract into the concrete, the difficult questions into easy ones, learners will have more passion for the training content, because the training content is practical and highly related to their production, operation and management. Teachers can also bring the pig models to the training site to help learners understand the training content. Or teachers could bring learners to the pig production sites or the other animal production sites or veterinary medicine products production, operation and management sites, where experts with teaching and practical operation and management experiences can interpret the theoretical knowledge and practical operation to learners in a more vivid way. The above vivid and diversified training strategies could greatly improve learners' interest and learning effect. Attention should also be paid to the follow-up education management work. For example, based on the training, Southwest University Rongchang Campus has set up scientific experts courtyards in some areas of Rongchang County, which provides constant guidance for veterinary medicine new-type professional farmers in terms of livestock husbandry production, operation and management, such as cow cultivation and rabbit cultivation. Besides, Southwest University Rongchang Campus has sent experts and universities to act as the veterinary medicine technology promotion personnel in the local areas. In this way, the veterinary medicine new-type professional farmers could retain the veterinary medicine industry, give full play to their knowledge, constantly update their knowledge and lay

the human resources foundation for the modernization of livestock husbandry.

CONCLUSION

Based on the past experiences of Sunshine Project, the Chongqing Municipal Government spearheaded in launching the training of veterinary medicine new-type professional professors in universities and colleges in 2013. This is an important approach for Chinese agriculture especially Chinese livestock husbandry to develop and cultivate the human resources. In order to improve the training effect of veterinary medicine professional farmers in universities and colleges, it is necessary to conduct intensive organization management, optimal combination of the faculty, functionalization of training content, diversification of training methods and consistence follow-up management. Besides, the training summaries and reports should be enhanced to increase the publicity influence. Radio, television, newspaper, internet and other media should be made full use of. Posters, leaflets and advertising videos should be adopted to enhance the publicity effect. The advanced groups, individuals and excellent learners should be praised to give full play to their leading role. All these strategies can contribute greatly to the improvement of the training effect of veterinary medicine new-type professional farmers in universities and colleges, and the realization of the ambitious goal of promoting sound and fast development of livestock husbandry in China or even the whole Asian Region at large.

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