

## A Study on Teaching Management Reform of Universities From the Perspective of Scholarship of Teaching

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### Abstract

China started higher education reform in 1999, which has lasted 17 years. With the continuous deepening of higher education reform, the number of Chinese college students has significantly increased. Yet the expected quality objectives of higher education are not achieved, and some universities' student quality even degrades. In my opinion, the main reason is that most universities adhere to the management idea of "scientific research outweighing teaching". Thus, I hold that Chinese universities' teaching management should be reformed from the perspective of scholarship of teaching.

**Key words:** Teaching learning; College teaching management; Reform

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### INTRODUCTION

In 1999, the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China promulgated the *Education Promotion Action Plan for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, putting forward: "The gross enrollment rate of colleges and universities should reach 15% of college-age individuals in 2010." After nine years of development, however, Chinese college students' quality was found to degrade in 2008, which attracted the attention of the education department. Thus, the Ministry of Education promulgated the *Opinions on Comprehensive*

*Enhancement of the Quality of Higher Education* in April 2012, but this document had no significant effect. Presently, there are many problems in Chinese higher education, and the problems relating to teaching management are most prominent. Under the circumstances where the quality of higher education degrades as universities increase enrollment, that universities adhere to the management idea of "research outweighing teaching" to compete for educational resources undoubtedly has complicated this problem. In view of this, I insist that the idea of "scholarship of teaching" should be introduced into the teaching management of Chinese higher education, and the teaching management of Chinese higher education should be reformed from the perspective of scholarship of teaching.

### 1. CONNOTATION ANALYSIS OF SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING

Scholarship of teaching refers to a scholarship about teaching, of which the core idea is to impart knowledge to students. In the 1990s, a scholar named Ernest Boyer put forward the concept of scholarship of teaching in the *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*. He believed: teaching is a link between teachers and students, and a dynamic process of knowledge impartment. He pointed out: the scholarship of universities should cover four aspects: scholarship of discovery (deep study on professional knowledge), scholarship of application (application of theoretical knowledge), scholarship of integration (integration of theory with practice), and scholarship of teaching. About this, he made further discussions, and considered: in a dynamic teaching process, teachers play two roles, namely knowledge imparter and knowledge receiver. In other words: The teaching process is also a learning process of teachers. Essentially, the teaching process is a process of constantly imparting and creating knowledge. Thus,

teaching should be regarded as a scholarship. I think: Boyer's views on scholarship of teaching are similar to the ideas of "the way of education is valued in concentration" and "education without distinction". The core of both is to stress the importance of the teaching process.

Soon afterwards, the concept of scholarship of teaching aroused wide attention of scholars in the East and the West. Some interpreted the concept of scholarship of teaching, and analyzed the characteristics of scholarship of teaching on this basis; some made practical analysis of scholarship of teaching and summed up the characteristics of the behaviors of scholarship of teaching in practice; and others interpreted scholarship of teaching from a mathematics perspective, and built systematic models of scholarship of teaching. As scholars constantly deepened their studies and researches, the concept of scholarship of teaching became clearer and clearer, along with continuous discussions. On the whole, a consensus has been reached on the connotation of scholarship of teaching in the academic circles, in which it is held that the connotations of the scholarship of teaching are: "reflection, communication, and openness".

I insist: Chinese universities should reform their teaching management from the perspective of scholarship of teaching, subvert the teaching management idea of "research outweighing teaching", establish a talent cultivation mechanism focusing on teaching, and improve the ideas and mode of teaching management.

## 2. REFORM MEASURES OF TEACHING MANAGEMENT MODE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING

Based on the connotation analysis of scholarship of teaching as above, it can be concluded: Certain achievements will be made by improving the teaching management of universities from the perspective of scholarship of teaching. The following is to analyze various problems based on the actual situation of Chinese universities, and put forward specific measures for teaching scholarship management reform of universities.

### 2.1 Promotion of the Idea of Scholarship of Teaching

In western philosophy, philosophers have deeply analyzed consciousness as a key research object. It is widely held: Consciousness counteracts behaviors, and sometimes has a decisive effect. The philosophers' view on consciousness can be taken as guidance for practice. The precondition for eliciting a behavior is to build a consciousness or view about the behavior.

Thus, I think, for reform of teaching management of universities from the perspective of scholarship of

teaching, the idea of scholarship of teaching should be introduced first. It needs to be stressed that the idea of "scholarship of teaching" should be introduced into both the leadership of teaching management and teachers and students. According to the connotation analysis of scholarship of teaching in foregoing paragraphs, the classroom from the perspective of scholarship of teaching is a classroom of "teaching benefiting teachers as well as students", and teachers act as both knowledge imparters and receivers, which requires that students also should form the idea of scholarship of teaching, and actively communicate and discuss with teachers in classroom. The further development of this mode may break the traditional classroom mode of "teacher-leading". Instead, students or knowledge will lead the classroom. Hence, the introduction of the idea of scholarship of teaching also should cover teachers and students.

#### 2.1.1 Introduction of the Idea of Scholarship of Teaching to Teachers

Under the circumstances where authorities of universities are striving for research achievements, teachers also tend to solely seek academic achievements, and ignore the knowledge education and ability training of students. Hence, the aim of introducing the idea of scholarship of teaching to teachers is to drive teachers back to the "teaching-centered" and "students-centered" professional orientation.

Presently, it is provided that only those who reach doctor's degree are qualified for teachers in universities and colleges, which are inevitable with the improvement of Chinese universities' teaching level. Thus, Chinese teachers in universities and colleges all are scholars and capable of academic research. On this basis, Chinese teachers in universities and colleges at least have two identities, namely scholar and teacher. The identity of scholar requires them must be able to perceive and recognize social problems and contradictions, and provide theoretical suggestions on problem solving based on their knowledge. The identity of teacher requires them to "propagate cardinal principles, imparting professional knowledge, and solving puzzle". Which identity should they focus on? I think: They are teachers first, and then scholars. According to the analysis of the characters of different identities, the identity of scholar is mainly to reflect the value and interests of individuals, and whether they act as a scholar will mainly affect themselves. The identity of teacher involves responsibilities of education and knowledge impartment, which come at the time they decide to be a teacher and would never be exempted unless they stop acting as a teacher. This determines that teachers in colleges and universities should stick to their identity as a teacher.

After the above problems are solved, the stress can be laid on the introduction of the idea of scholarship of teaching to all teachers. It needs to be stressed that the identity of teacher is stressed, and teachers in colleges

and universities are required to develop the idea of scholarship of teaching and teaching-centered idea doesn't mean teachers should give up academic research. On the contrary, teachers should focus on academic education of students while enhancing theoretical research, to improve students' academic research ability, and help them to make contributions to society as senior intellectual talents through academic research.

### **2.1.2 Introduction of the Idea of Scholarship of Teaching to Students**

Different from the fundamental education of middle and high schools, higher education is professional, and aims to train students to acquire basal specialty ability, form their own views on specific issues, and develop certain practical ability. In summary, higher education centers on students, and aims to train students' learning and creative ability. Presently, Chinese higher education doesn't fulfill this aim, and some universities even just continue and extend the education of middle and high schools.

Chinese students all have received exam-oriented education for a long time before entering universities, of which the consequence is students focus on books, chronically obey authority, strive for high scores, and never intensively study problems. Such consequence is against the requirements of higher education. In such circumstances, universities should help students to develop the idea of learning rather than follow the inertia of exam-oriented education and let it develop. In my opinion, to introduce the idea of scholarship of teaching to students, measures should be taken to alleviate and eliminate the influence and consequence of exam-oriented education first. Reform always comes with pains, and even may lead to conflicts and contradictions. Hence, universities should not take extreme countermove, but exert their influence subtly from pilot to overall popularization, or enable students' problems to be solved by the students themselves under the guidance of "upperclassman". In summary, the core requirement for alleviating and eliminating the influence of exam-oriented education is to make students stop obeying authority and develop the consciousness of independent thinking.

After the influence of exam-oriented education is alleviated and eliminated, the idea of scholarship of teaching can be introduced to students. The core requirement for introducing the idea of scholarship of teaching to students is to help students realize their dominant role in the classroom. The following is to interpret the "dominant role of students in classroom". Presently, there is a misunderstanding among Chinese education circle, namely it is considered that the students-centered classroom is to satisfy students' requirements. In my opinion, the classroom based on students' requirements has its own advantages in respect of teaching and management, but it is impossible to realize the real goal of education by satisfying students' requirements

without distinction. The real goal of education is to impart knowledge and morality normatively. If whether students' requirements are satisfied is taken as the criterion for determining a students-centered classroom, such classroom can never be truly established. This is because students' irrational requirements can never be satisfied. For example, students don't want the classroom. In my opinion, the students-centered classroom should be a classroom where students' ideas and views are respected. Students' ideas should be respected rather than be executed. Similarly, in higher education, students' ideas should be respected, and students' views and solutions should be listened. This is important to introduce the idea of scholarship of teaching to students.

It needs to be noted that the precondition for students chronically obeying authority is that authority exists. Academic discussions vary from person to person. Introducing the idea of scholarship of teaching to students must be preconditioned by introducing the idea of scholarship of teaching to teachers. In other words, teachers should not act as the authority in classroom. Students also should know that they should have their own ideas rather than obey teachers even though teachers' views are right.

### **2.1.3 Introduction of the Idea of Scholarship of Teaching to Teaching Management Layer**

The teaching management layer and teachers supplement each other, and both are indispensable for universities. To introduce the idea of scholarship of teaching to the teaching management layer, the labor division between the teaching management layer and teachers must be clear. The management layer is responsible for management, and imposes punishment on those who violate the management rules rather than give instructions to teachers. Teachers should bend themselves to teaching and knowledge impartment, be responsible to students, and impose punishment on students who violate rules within the scope allowed by universities' rules. After labor division, the core of introducing the idea of scholarship of teaching to the teaching management layer is promotion and popularization, so as to introduce the idea of scholarship of teaching to students and teachers.

It needs to be stressed that the authority of some universities intervenes teaching cannot be changed immediately, and it is a long process. The management layer of universities should gradually develop the teaching-centered idea, and take "achievements" rationally. In my opinion, students' reputation in the job market after graduation is the loudest evidence for the "achievements" of universities.

## **2.2 Creation of a Teaching Environment Based on the Idea of Scholarship of Teaching**

After the idea of "scholarship of teaching is introduced, a teaching environment based on the idea of scholarship of teaching should be created, as below:

### **2.2.1 Analysis of Creation of a Material Environment Based on the Idea of Scholarship of Teaching**

A material environment based on the idea of scholarship of teaching refers to integrating the idea of scholarship of teaching into the material construction of universities. This can be considered from the aspects of classroom and after-class. From the aspect of classroom, desks and chairs in the classroom can be arranged to form a ring, which facilitates students and teachers discussing with each other. Besides, round table implies equality and communication. This also is good for students and teachers to form the idea of scholarship of teaching. From the aspect of after-class, the idea of scholarship of teaching should be integrated into students' and teachers' after-class lives. For students, the mode of online class can be adopted, with which students can learn knowledge, and discuss with classmates and teachers even after class. For teachers, books, courseware, and excellent courses of excellent universities on scholarship of teaching can be provided, from which teachers can learn experience to improve themselves.

In addition, the idea of scholarship of teaching also should be integrated into campus construction. For example, slogans on teaching-centered idea can be posted, and sign boards on campus can be transformed, say, designing them in blackboard form. The theoretical basis for the construction of material environment is that the culture carried by campus landscapes will have an influence on teachers and students. Considering the construction of material environment is not a main content of this paper, no further discussions will be made. At last, it needs to be stressed that the essence of constructing a material environment is to construct campus culture symbols, which should be taken seriously.

### **2.2.2 Analysis of Creation of a Mental Environment Based on the Idea of Scholarship of Teaching**

The idea of "scholarship of teaching" contains two core elements, namely teaching and learning. Thus, a mental environment based on the idea of scholarship of teaching should be created from the two aspects. From the aspect of teaching, teachers' teaching level should be improved first. The occupation of teacher is similar to that of doctor, which requires practitioners have profound theoretical knowledge, and rich experience through practice. An effective way to raise teachers' teaching level is to increase teachers' opportunities of teaching. I think besides conventional teaching, teaching competitions also should be held to increase teachers' opportunities of teaching. Alternatively, universities can encourage teachers to participate in some teaching competitions or trainings financially or morally. Specifically, universities whose finances permit can reimburse teachers for such competitions or trainings, and those who can't afford reimbursement can give moral encouragement and some

affordable material awards. Besides, efforts can be made to build excellent courses to improve the overall teaching quality. A series of course systems can be built on the basis of the excellent courses, so as to realize teaching systemization, and further improve teaching quality. Regardless of the forms, the core purpose of creating a mental environment is to improve teachers' teaching level and ability by providing sufficient teaching opportunities, so that teachers can sum up experience through practice and improve their teaching level.

Besides, teachers' theoretical level also should be raised, especially of the idea of scholarship of teaching. It is viable to promote teachers to enhance their theoretical research method of scholarship of teaching, and organically combine scholarship with teaching. In this way, teachers can improve their teaching ability at the time of raise the level of scholarship of teaching.

## **3. ESTABLISHMENT OF AN EVALUATION MECHANISM BASED ON THE IDEA OF SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING**

Evaluation mechanism will have certain influence on both the teaching of teachers and the learning of students. For example, under a score-focused evaluation mechanism, students will try their best to get high scores, and ignore the development of reading and thinking abilities; under an academic achievement-based evaluation mechanism, teachers will stress academic research and ignore teaching. Evaluation mechanism based on the idea of "scholarship of teaching" refers to an evaluation mechanism focusing on teaching quality. In my opinion, such a mechanism can be established from two aspects.

From the aspect of teachers, universities should evaluate teachers' performance based on the teaching quality. In my opinion, the teaching quality of teachers in colleges and universities is mainly reflected in two aspects, i.e. students' theoretical level and practice level. Hence, the proposed evaluation mechanism based on the idea of scholarship of teaching should contain two main indexes, namely students' theoretical level and practice level. Students' theoretical level can be evaluated by means of thesis and exam. Concerning the evaluation by means of thesis, the quality of thesis should be focused on. As to the evaluation by means of exam, subjective questions are mainly set to evaluate students' ideas and thoughts. Students' practice level can be evaluated by means of on-campus and social practice. On-campus practice mainly refers to practical activities organized by universities. For example, the faculty of law can simulate a court. Social practice can be realized via school-enterprise interaction. It needs to be stressed that a real evaluation refers to the combination of theoretical evaluation and practical evaluation, but evaluation should depend on the situation. For example, it is

inappropriate to hold practical evaluation for theoretical courses.

From the aspect of students, universities should evaluate students' performance based on their ability. It needs to be noted that college students should have two kinds of ability, namely professional competence and basic transferable ability. Transferable ability refers to an ability of public character, specifically to communicative competence, collaboration ability, etc.. Being transferable means something can be transferred to different fields. Hence, the evaluation of students should cover professional competence and transferable ability. To this end, universities should set evaluation indexes and assign weights rationally based on the actual situation, so as to form a complete evaluation system. Besides general evaluation, adjustment also should be made according to students' personalities. For students who intend to work on researches in the future, more importance should be attached to the evaluation of their theoretical ability.

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## CONCLUSION

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Based on the comprehensive analysis of "teaching learning", this paper summarizes the connotation and characteristics of teaching and learning, and combines with the specific problems in our country at present. Summed up the specific application of "teaching academic" concept of the method, for the university to establish "teaching academic" teaching concept has made a theoretical contribution.

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