Research on the Reform and Application of Practical Teaching Mode in Financial Universities—A Case Study of Nanjing University of Finance and Economics

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Abstract. With the popularization of higher education in China, the mechanism of personnel training in universities of finance and economics must also keep pace with the times. It is necessary to change the traditional teaching mode focusing more on theory instead of practice. Reform has to be carried out to raise students’ innovative consciousness and develop their practical ability. However, the study has found that, the traditional theory-driven teaching mode still cannot be avoided in the process of practical teaching. There are a series of problems such as the unscientific training mode, single teaching form, unstable teaching staff, imperfect infrastructure and assessment system and so on. Through a comparative analysis of relevant documents and the education reform cases, this paper explores the concrete methods of practical teaching reform based on a case study of Nanjing University of Finance and Economics, hoping to find out the scientific and efficient training mode to promote the reform and application of practical teaching.

1. Realistic Meaning of Practical Teaching Reform

With the development of higher education, practical teaching has increasingly become the focus of attention in educational reform at home and abroad, especially in financial colleges and universities. In order to adapt to the social and economic development, a new teaching system should be built which combines the theory and practice to enhance students’ practical and problem-solving ability. It has illustrated, from the examples of educational reform in the world, that educators are paying more and more attention to practical teaching. Cultivating students’ innovative consciousness and practical ability has been included in the agenda of the educational reform. That is to say, the practical teaching has become the focus of the teaching reform of economic management specialties.

1.1 Adapting to the needs of teaching reform and “Quality Engineering”

The implementation of “Quality Engineering” means that the higher education in our country has embarked on a new level. Specifically, different from the traditional teaching system which emphasizes on quantity rather than quality, the higher education puts more stress on improving teaching quality, optimizing the educational structure, and enlarging the training scale of applied, compound and technical talents [7]. And the students’ innovative consciousness and practical ability will be cultivated through practical teaching, which not only meet the needs of national teaching reform, but also promote the “quality engineering” construction, and thus effectively improve the experimental and practical teaching quality.

1.2 Enhancing students’ ability of work, innovation and entrepreneurship

The teaching tasks of management specialty include scientific research, technology development or
professional personnel training. And the ultimate goal is to serve for social and economic development. Therefore, in addition to the traditional theoretical teaching, the teaching objectives should also focus on the development of students’ practical ability and innovative consciousness. The graduates trained by professional practical teaching are more competitive and more qualified for their jobs.

1.3 Improving teachers’ status and teaching conditions

Professional teachers have contributed a lot to the development of practical teaching. Their social influence has been greatly increased through their demonstration teaching and service for society. From this point, it will help improve the status of teachers and make the public aware of their importance. Besides, due to teachers’ service for the local economy, the social communities will also realize the significance of practical teaching, provide support to carry out relevant courses, and help establish the practice base and training platform, which can greatly improve the teaching and research conditions.

2. Content and Present Situation of Practical Teaching Reform

Far different from theoretical teaching, practical teaching centers on the students, assisted by teachers. Through a variety of practice, the students’ innovative and practical ability will be improved. For the purpose of knowledge expansion, skills improvement and so on, the content of practical teaching is various, involving numerous scenes inside and outside the classroom, on and off campus [2].

The content design of practical teaching reform is also complicated, not only following the requirements of syllabus and disciplines, meeting the needs of developing students’ overall quality, but also catering to social and economic development. Specifically, its content mainly includes the social practice, experimental teaching, practical teaching, graduation thesis and innovative project and so on.

As one of full-time universities in Jiangsu Province, Nanjing University of Finance and Economics (NUFE) centers on the disciplines of economic management. The school attaches great importance to practical teaching, the construction of experimental teaching center and off-campus training platform, and sets up professional courses. It has made remarkable achievements, owning an e-commerce lab and three experimental teaching demonstration centers in finance, accounting, economic management, innovation and entrepreneurship [4]. In addition to the relevant experiments set up with the professional courses, the school also carries out activities such as summer practice, social survey, and comprehensive practice, etc., to develop students’ ability of teamwork and innovation, thus enhancing their competitiveness in society.

3. Problems in Practical Teaching Reform

Over the years, profound insights have been gained in NUFE for undergraduate’s practical teaching, with a special teaching system and an effective management mechanism. However, there are too much traditional contents in the course of practical teaching, and the new contents have failed to achieve what people expect. So there is still substantial room for improvement considering the requirements for talents. With the development of higher education, it is inevitable to change the traditional practical contents. Through the analysis, the main problems of current practical teaching content are as follows:

3.1 Unscientific training mode and dislocated training objectives

The current mode of personnel training in NUFE is still based on theoretical knowledge in classroom, supplemented by practical teaching which includes practice and experiments. But there is few time for practical teaching, leading to the separation between theory and practice. Trained in such an unscientific mode, students’ innovative and practical abilities have been limited. Moreover, the dislocation of training objectives will obscure the goal of practical courses, which finally exerts a bad effect on the cultivation of innovative and entrepreneurial talents.
3.2 Rigid teaching

Due to the influence of the traditional teaching mode, theory inculcation has always taken a dominant place. Relying on teachers, currently, the practical courses in economic management are still based on theoretical teaching. The teaching contents of most courses, generally demonstrative and confirmatory experiments, are single and rigid, thus restraining students’ creativity and research ability.

3.3 Unstable teaching staff construction

With the development of higher education, the teaching staff in colleges and universities in our country have different degrees of improvement with optimized quality and structure. Except some well-known institutions, however, the practical teaching of economic management in other financial colleges develops slowly, and the quality of teachers has not been effectively improved. In reality, faculty members outside school who are in service of social economics can be better qualified for practical teaching, but they often fail to meet the requirements of many universities for highly-educated teachers. Those school teachers, with a good academic background, generally lack work experience, so it is difficult for them to teach practical courses well.

3.4 Imperfect training base and infrastructure

With the help of state investment for a long time, NUFE has limited funds as well as old equipment some of which is still in use for more than a decade. And large-scale databases and innovative experimental software have not been updated in time, and their efficiency needs to be further improved [1]. Due to the neglect of the establishment and improvement of off-campus training bases, most majors do not have a relatively stable base. As a result, the bases outside school are scattered and unstable, which is not conducive to the timely communication between teachers and students and thus bring difficulties in dealing with various problems that may arise in practice.

3.5 Imperfect assessment system

For a long time, NUFE has taken the personnel training assessment system which centers on students’ academic performance. Before the professional practice, there is no clear and unified standard for assessment because students are graded by different teachers in accordance to their own understanding. Therefore, it is hard to make a scientific and accurate assessment of different students’ innovative achievements or levels, thus it fails to guide students’ learning and affects the cultivation of their innovative awareness and practical ability [6].

4. Specific Approaches of Practical Teaching Reform

4.1 Reconstructing a new practical teaching system

At present, according to the concept of school running in NUFE, it requires that the teaching should be closely linked to the goal of personnel training and establish practical teaching that is compatible with the personnel training mode, especially for specialties of economic management. Its purpose is not only to enable students to learn and verify the theory, to master the basic skills, but more importantly, to develop students’ ability of thinking, research and innovation.

In the process of reconstructing the new practical teaching system, we should follow the targeted, systematic and normative principles. To be specific, firstly, the needs of students must be focused so that their comprehensive qualities can be improved, which finally facilitates the cultivation of high-quality applied talents. Secondly, the practical teaching system and its contents must be optimized. Thirdly, every aspect of practical teaching should be strictly supervised.

4.2 Innovating in teaching methods

We should adhere to the combination of theory and practice, and put more stress on the practicality, applicability and innovation in teaching. In addition, considering the curriculum and training objectives, other teaching methods are to be used flexibly to combine theoretical teaching
with practical ability training, such as autonomous learning, collaboration, discussion, exploration and so on.

For example, the theories in the course of economic management are usually derived directly from social practice, rather than laboratory data or mathematical derivation, so case study can be used in theoretical teaching. The typical cases are selected and students are required to have a discussion on the problems in the cases based on their theoretical knowledge. They can give speeches, raise questions and reach a consensus, so as to gain experience from social practice. By doing this the students obtain more direct information, which enhances the combination of theory and practice.

4.3 Improving teaching staff construction

The teaching of practical courses requires that teachers have some work experience, not just higher theoretical level [8]. Colleges and universities all over the country are now exploring ways to build new teaching staff with high quality for practical courses. The specific methods are as follows.

First of all, in order to overcome the difficulties of introducing teachers for practical courses, we can employ those who are familiar with the practical operation from the economic service departments in the society. What’s more, special funds have to be set up to invite outstanding foreign teachers to give a demonstration, so as to further improve the teaching quality of our teachers. Last but not least, we can actively invite those graduates who start a successful business to give speeches, which are greatly beneficial for students majoring in business management, international economics and trade, etc.

4.4 Exploring a new path for organic combination of off-campus practice base and school training platform

In the process of developing the off-campus practice base, there are still some problems to solve, such as the shortage of labs and the contradiction between practice and employment of graduates. At the same time, the safety of students has to be ensured. Therefore, we must make full use of our time to conduct interdisciplinary exchanges, exploration and targeted social investigation in different fields, and actively explore a new path for the organic combination of off-campus practice base and on-campus training platform [9].

We need to have a long-term cooperation with a number of part-time teachers outside the school who can provide practical guidance, and take the intra-school training platform as the core to stabilize and expand the off-campus practice base. In addition, advanced technologies and ideas should be introduced for the construction of a multi-functional and cross-disciplinary comprehensive training platform. Through that we can meet the requirements of all grades in various majors, and provide safe places for students, thus avoiding scattered practice.

4.5 Reforming the traditional assessment system

Financial colleges and universities should strengthen the assessment of students’ comprehensive ability in practical courses, especially pay attention to their learning process which will be graded as an important part of academic performance. This is the reform and innovation of the theory examination as the only standard for assessing students’ final performance. By reforming the assessment system, it promotes teaching reform and develops students’ ability to creatively solve practical problems.

For the evaluation of the learning process, a variety of assessment methods can be used to coordinate with the theoretical tests, such as internship reports, investigation reports, business assessment, oral defense and so on [5]. As an important content of undergraduate education, graduation thesis plays an irreplaceable role in cultivating students’ research ability of seeking truth. It also provides a reference for the evaluation of the teaching quality in colleges and universities. Therefore, we need to attach great importance to the management of graduation thesis.
5. Conclusion

Practical teaching plays a decisive role in cultivating students’ sense of innovation and entrepreneurship, and their ability of practice and scientific research and so on. However, the design, implementation and operation of practical teaching system are too complex which will take a long time to carry out. We should continue to strengthen the reform of practical teaching and build a scientific and rational system. As for teachers, it is necessary to support them to continuously explore practical teaching. For students, we should encourage them to actively participate in various activities, so as to constantly develop their innovative thinking and potentiality and improve their overall qualities [3]. We are looking forward to further improving the quality and level of practical teaching through the constant innovation and the joint efforts of all sectors of society as well as teachers and students in the school.

References


