Practical Exploration on Strengthening the International Construction of University Teaching Staff under the Background of "Double First-class Initiative"

Qiong LIU
International Office, Wuhan University of Technology, Wuhan, P.R. China, 430070
lqiong@whut.edu.cn

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Abstract. International construction of university teaching staff is the internal requirement to achieve the goal of "double first-class" construction in Chinese universities and the inevitable trend to promote the internationalization development of Chinese higher education. Combining the current situation of the international development of teaching staff in Chinese universities, this article analyses the existing problems and puts forward feasible suggestions for strengthening the international construction of university teaching staff by making practical exploration from the four aspects of innovating the modes of intelligence introduction, reforming university system and mechanism, cultivating the existing teachers and promoting the management services.

Introduction

The internationalized development of Chinese higher education is an inevitable course for Chinese universities to better serve innovation-driven development strategy, guide and support the construction of world-class universities and first-class disciplines. Most universities have incorporated internationalized development into the 13th five-year plan and the blueprint for comprehensively deepening reform in the new period. To cultivate high-quality open talents, Chinese universities must construct internationalized teaching staff. The internationalization of teaching staff is the key to promoting teaching, scientific research and enhancing the international competitiveness of disciplines in Chinese universities. The Outline of the National Program for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020) puts forward new and clear requirements for the construction of teaching staff. In 2015, the State Council issued To Push Forward the World First-class University and the First-class Discipline Construction Overall Plan, and pointed out that "constructing first-class teaching staff requires full implementation of the talents strategy and strengthening the supportive and leading role of high-level talents. It needs to speed up the cultivation and the introduction of a group of first-class scientists, discipline leaders and innovation teams who are active in international academic frontier and will meet the demands of national major strategies, and gather outstanding talents in the world." Only by pressing forward the internationalization construction of the university teaching staff can Chinese universities grasp the internationalization development direction of Chinese higher education and realize the connotation development of "double first-class initiative" [1].

The Objective of International Construction of University Teaching Staff and the "Two-way Channel" to Realize It

The objective of the international construction of university teaching staff could be summed up as constructing high level teaching teams with international vision and international ability and cultivating innovative talents with international vision and international competitiveness by learning from advanced foreign education ideas and education modes. Through the integration of high quality talent resources home and abroad, discipline innovation resources and international cooperative innovation strength, jointly carrying out teaching and scientific research, breaking
through international problems in the key field of technology, so as to improve teaching and scientific research level and innovation ability, promote the discipline construction and strengthen international influence. To support the "double first-class" construction of Chinese universities, Chinese universities must establish a "grand talent concept" to cultivate high-quality teaching staff and broaden the channels for selecting and employing talents [2]. In order to strengthen the internationalization of teaching staff, many universities have currently implemented the talents strategy and attach importance to both the introduction of overseas talents and the cultivation of existing staff, through the “two-way channel” of "bringing in and sending out."

"Bringing in”—The Introduction of Overseas Talents

Innovation leads development, and talents support innovation. The core of today's world competition is the talent competition. The talent is the first resource. Through various channels, Chinese universities actively introduce foreign talents and intelligence, invite foreign experts to teach, to lecture, to exchange and cooperate in scientific research. With the internationalization development of Chinese universities, the field of employing foreign experts has been expanded and the level of intelligence introduction has been improved. Universities have shifted from bringing in ordinary language teachers to bringing in high-end talents, from general international cooperation to demand-oriented international cooperation, and the number of high-level foreign experts such as overseas academic masters, overseas honorary professors, visiting professors and chair professors appointed by the universities has been increasing. Moreover, the proportion of introduced overseas young talents and the number of Ph.D. students and post-doctoral researchers from well-known foreign universities are also increasing.

To hold international Forums, international conferences and promote international academic communication are also effective ways to boost internationalization development of teaching staff through "bringing in." The communication and discussion with international counterparts and the sharing of resources help domestic teachers grasp the academic frontier and the latest development of the related field, and make up the knowledge gap. The collision sparks of thinking will inspire the idea of innovation and promote the scientific research and teaching levels.

"Sending out”—The Cultivation of Existing Teaching Staff

By applying for the state-sponsored study abroad program and provincial-level overseas study programs, universities select outstanding young teachers to go abroad for further study, which becomes a main way of “sending out” [3]. Chinese universities attach great importance to the necessity and urgency of "sending out." In combination with their own development, Chinese universities have also set up various overseas study programs to select and fund backbone young teachers to visit overseas renowned universities or research institutions for academic exchange, or directly entered the cooperative partner's team or laboratory for scientific research cooperation. Most Chinese universities have made relevant measures to encourage and promote teachers to study abroad. Take Wuhan University of Technology as an example, the professional title appraisal work rules (Trial) requires, "teachers born on or after January 1, 1970, who apply for professorship shall have at least one year's academic experience or work experience in a prestigious foreign university (generally required to be the top 200 universities in the world or research institute) or research institution (except for sports, arts, humanities, ideology and politics, etc.)," which incorporates teachers' overseas experiences into the title appraisal system in order to inspire and mobilize teachers’ initiative to go abroad for further study.

In addition, Chinese universities also encourage teachers to participate in international academic exchanges, such as short-term overseas exchanges, attending seminars or international academic conferences in order to provide the platform for teachers to communicate with international peers, broaden their international horizons and cultivate their international concepts. Through learning foreign advanced teaching ideas and research models, existing faculty' teaching ability and research level will get improved.
Problems Existing in the International Construction of University Teaching Staff

Under the new situation of internationalization development of Chinese higher education, Chinese universities are more aware of internationalization and attach importance to the construction of talents teams. Considering the current conditions, however, there are still some problems in this regard.

Firstly, although Chinese universities have put forward requirements for the number of full-time teachers with overseas study background, at present, the proportion of domestic students studying abroad accounts for a relatively low proportion of the total number of faculty and staff. There are fewer opportunities for teachers to be sent out. Moreover, the proportion of overseas teachers in Chinese universities is significantly lower than that in first-class foreign universities.

Secondly, relatively few large-scale international conferences with international influence have been held in China. Instead, many are small-scale international seminars. Chinese universities are still insufficient in holding high-end international forums and gathering international well-known experts and scholars home and abroad.

Thirdly, on the problems of how to provide favorable working and scientific research environment for the introduced talents, so that they can be “introduced, retained and used well,” and how to carry out humanized management in order to give full play to the talent introduction effects, Chinese universities still need reform and innovation in the recruitment system and mechanism, assessment mechanism, incentive mechanism and other aspects. What’s more, the assessment and incentive mechanism for “sending out” also need to be improved [4].

Fourthly, universities should change their thinking from introducing single foreign expert to group introduction of foreign talents. Relying on the field of discipline, they should gather and integrate talents resources and introduce teams of foreign experts to form Chinese and foreign teaching teams or innovative research teams. They also need to think about how to bring the effectiveness of the team and the supportive and leading role of talents into full play.

In addition, systematic training for the improvement of foreign language level and internationalization ability is found lacking in Chinese universities. Teachers’ cross-cultural awareness, cross-cultural communication ability and skills and their knowledge about international etiquette are not enough, which makes it difficult for them to carry out substantial international cooperation.

The Practical Exploration on Promoting the Internationalization of the Teaching Staff under the New Situation

Strengthening the Top-level Design of Intelligence Introduction and Innovating the Mode of Introducing Talents

Chinese universities should set up the internationalization concept. In face of national demands and scientific frontier and based on their own discipline characteristics, they need to make planning about bringing in leading talents in science and technology and explore to innovate new models of intelligence introduction. By integrating foreign high-end talents resources, discipline resources, they can carry out group introduction of foreign experts and strengthen the construction of high level international innovative teams and high level international cooperation bases, forming the intelligence-introduction model of “introducing high-end talents, gathering innovation teams, establishing cooperative bases and conducting joint research.” Take Wuhan University of Technology for an example, based on various national, provincial or university-level talents programs and projects, the university has introduced a group of overseas academic masters and their overseas innovation teams. By building international innovative teams, high-level bases or platforms and establishing a group of high-level international joint laboratories, the university promotes interdisciplinary integration and carries out high-level talents cultivation and high-level research cooperation. Major scientific research achievements have been fostered and accomplished in recent years. The mode of intelligence introduction has realized the strategic transformation from project cooperation to the talent-group introduction, base and platform construction.
Exploring Reforms in Higher Education and Innovating the System and Mechanism of Talents Introduction and Management

The key of introducing foreign intelligence lies in its actual effectiveness. As for high-level overseas talents, whatever the employing patterns are and no matter how long the employment term is, the most important is to bring their role into full play [5]. In recent years, universities have carried out reforms of personnel system to adopt flexible intelligence introducing measures. Through global recruitment of professors and the implementation of special evaluation and special employment system for distinguished professors, Chinese universities have attracted a group of overseas young talents with the potential for “national excellent young scholars and distinguished young scientists.” They also have introduced internationally renowned scholars to engage in teaching, research or management work by taking the position of dean of the school, institute director or lab director. As to the introduced talents, universities should give them full support in personnel treatment, evaluation mechanism, growth environment, platform construction and other aspects. Effective international management mechanism needs to be established. Chinese universities should attach importance to both introduction and management of overseas talents [6].

The "Promotion Plan of Internationalization Demonstration School" is jointly implemented by the Ministry of Science and Technology and the Ministry of Education in China with the purpose of building world-class universities and first-class disciplines and cultivating top-notch innovative talents. The internationalization school aims to carry out comprehensive reforms in the field of higher education in China and exploring the innovation in teaching, scientific research and management systems. Among the approved internationalization demonstration schools, some have established independent personnel power, financial power, academic power and students’ recruitment power. They have also set up independent employment system and personnel system. The schools could practice independent planning and independent operation on position setting, talents introduction, position appraisal and evaluation and salary distribution. They carry out systematic intelligence introduction and recruit full-time teachers from all over the world, establish internationally coordinated management system and internationally integrated curriculum system and build international talents training platform associated with internationally renowned universities. The operation mode of the international school effectively pushes forward the practical exploring in the internationalization development of Chinese higher education.

To constantly optimize the structure of the faculty, Chinese universities should also inspire the initiative of the school or institute by integrating the internationalization construction of teachers into their assessment indicators. It is also necessary to set up corresponding incentive mechanisms. For example, to establish "model school for international development" is a beneficial exploration.

Cultivating the International Ability of the Existing Teaching Staff

Chinese universities should attach importance to the improvement of the international capability of the existing teaching staff and courage teachers to actively participate in international exchanges. They also need to increase funding in it. The internationalization degree of teachers can be fully integrated into various assessment indicators. By selecting and sending young teachers to attend international conferences or study abroad, Chinese universities increase the opportunities for teachers to go abroad to grasp the international academic frontier and the carry out exchanges and cooperation with their peers in the internationally renowned universities. With advanced foreign research perspectives, methods and teaching concepts being introduced into daily education and teaching, Chinese universities’ international teaching and research capabilities can be improved [7]. After returning to China, visiting teachers can be required to complete international assessment indicators. They can be encouraged to invite overseas experts to the university for academic exchanges, lecturing, cooperative scientific research, and substantial cooperation relying on their foreign resources. For those teachers with a good command of English and rich professional teaching experience, they can also apply for English teaching courses or bilingual teaching courses. Meanwhile, the university should encourage teachers to take part in international academic organizations or take position in the international academic journals, to publish academic papers in
international academic journals, and actively participate in international cooperation projects etc. In addition, the university should pay more attention to language and culture and organize foreign language training and cross-cultural communication skills training among young teachers. Moreover, Chinese universities should also build a management team skilled at work and strong in foreign affairs ability. Sending administrative staff to study abroad, learning advanced foreign management concepts and management models is also necessary for the improvement of their international management and service capabilities.

Establishing High-quality Talents Service System

In recent years, many national and provincial exit-entry facilitation policies for overseas high-level talents have been issued and implemented. The policies for talents introduction are more active, open and effective from the government. For example, the "implementation measures of talents visa system" has been issued to promote talents visa. At the same time, the application conditions for permanent residence and long-term residence is becoming more open for foreign experts, their spouses and children, which will definitely attract more foreign talents to work and live in China. Chinese universities need to raise the internationalization level of the management teams itself, enhance the service consciousness and provide high quality and convenient service to the introduced talents. The cooperation among the personnel department, foreign affairs department, logistics department and other related department also should be strengthened to form a collaborative and coordinative mechanism with reasonable division of work, clear responsibilities and smooth operation. They jointly assist introduced talents to solve such problem as children education, health care, residence permit, social security so as to lift their worries and settle down in their job. Meanwhile, Chinese universities need to implement humanized management and meet the personalized needs of foreign experts.

Conclusion

"Constructing first-class teaching staff" has been identified as one of the main construction tasks in The Overall Plan to Promote the Construction of World-class Universities and first-class Disciplines. And the internationalization of teaching staff is also a common feature of world-class universities [8]. Chinese universities should adhere to the talent-oriented international strategy. Under the guidance of “double first-class” construction, they need introduce a group of top-notch innovative talents, and cultivate high-quality teaching staff with international core competitiveness [9]. Through exploring and innovating new modes of intelligence introduction, reforming relevant system and mechanism and improving the personnel management and service, Chinese universities will continue to gain more practical experience about the internationalization construction of the teaching staff so as to promote the “double first-class” construction and the connotative development of Chinese higher education.

References


