

The Development Path of Disciplinary Characteristics of Specialized Universities in China

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ABSTRACT

In the development of universities, disciplines carry many functions, such as personnel training, scientific research and social services. All kinds of organizations and activities of universities are centered on disciplines and developed around the development of disciplines. As an industrial university, the discipline characteristics are accumulated in the long-term history of running a school, and also created in the service of economic and social development, which is different from other universities. Based on the analysis of the influencing factors of discipline development in industrial universities, this paper holds that industrial universities should persist in optimizing discipline layout, concise discipline direction, take the road of characteristic development and win by comparison, which is also the only way to build a "double-first-class" world-class university.

KEYWORDS

Industrial colleges and universities; Discipline construction; Development path

INTRODUCTION

The 20th CPC National Congress proposed to “strengthen the construction of basic sciences, emerging disciplines and inter-disciplines, and accelerate the construction of world-class universities with Chinese characteristics and dominant disciplines”. The Chinese government is implementing the construction plan of world-class universities and first-class disciplines (also known as the “Double-First Class” initiative), which is an inevitable choice for the transformation of China from a big country to a strong country and a powerful nation of education. From the development history of universities and the development trend of higher education around the world, Chinese colleges and universities, especially the “Double-First Class” universities, to gather a number of influential academic masters and famous scholars, to cultivate the first-rate undergraduate elites and academic research pillars, to produce outcomes that will have a revolutionary impact on the development of science and technology, to profoundly change and promote the process of civilization and the way of life of human beings, and to keep the right, innovative and excellent spiritual culture, should all start from the construction of first-class academic disciplines.

The construction of disciplines is the leading part and foundation of university development, the carrier and guarantee for the sustainable development of team building, talent cultivation, scientific research, social services and other work, and the realistic embodiment of the level, characteristics and strength of a university. Disciplines carry a variety of functions such as talent training, scientific research and social services in the development of universities, and all kinds of organizations and various activities of universities are centered on disciplines and around the development of disciplines (Yan, 2014: 96-99). As an specialized university, the characteristics of disciplines are

accumulated in the long history of school, and also built in the service of economic and social development, which is the difference between other universities. Therefore, it is a necessary way for world-class universities to optimize the discipline layout, condense the discipline direction, take the road of characteristic development, and win in the comparison.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several factors of the construction of discipline

There are three factors of the construction of discipline that deserve thought and attention, one is the layout of the construction of discipline, the second is the key point of the construction of discipline, and the third is the vision of the construction of discipline.

First, the construction of discipline should have a scientific disciplinary layout. From the point of the current international influential world university rankings, the world-class university is usually a comprehensive university or universities focusing on natural sciences. For example, the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) has often been in an awkward position in the world university rankings in recent years, even though it is still one of the world's leading universities. Primarily, it has incomplete coverage of the humanities disciplines and an extreme lack of natural science disciplines, which leads to tougher numbers in other ranking metrics. Renmin University of China is a flagship university in China for the construction of humanities and social sciences disciplines. Despite the fact that there are 9 A+ first-level disciplines in the fourth round of disciplinary assessment, and that 14 humanities and social sciences disciplines have been selected for the second round of the national "Double-First Class" initiative, Renmin University of China is trying to explore the development of natural sciences disciplines in the hope of making breakthroughs in scientific and technological disciplines, because from the perspective of the current rankings of the world's universities, it is difficult for universities focusing on humanities and social sciences to get into the ranks of the world's first-class universities.

Accordingly, for universities specialized in finance and economics like Central University of Finance and Economics (CUFE), in the foreseeable future, there is still a long way to go to build a world-class university in the real sense. One university would not be considered as a comprehensive university, much less a world-class university, if it only established individual disciplines in a number of disciplinary categories even if all categories are included. Reasonable disciplinary structure is the foundation of the sustained and high-quality development of the university disciplinary system (Li, 2006:85-88). Therefore, we should optimize the layout of disciplines based on the current conditions, consolidate the foundation of disciplines, promote the multidisciplinary study, and especially stick to the philosophy that "doing something but not everything".

As we all know, the basic disciplines include the three major branches of social science, humanities and natural sciences. Social science disciplines mainly include four disciplines such as economics, management, law and education. From the development history of CUFE, economics and management is the tradition, and it has been extended to law in the past two decades. These three disciplines are the core competitiveness of universities specialized in finance and economics and therefore can not be tossed. From the development of the disciplines, the discipline of education is not so closely connected with the other three disciplines.

Humanities disciplines mainly include literature, history and philosophy and art. The attributes of colleges and universities specialized in finance and economics determine that humanities disciplines can only be supporting disciplines before the core disciplines

become first-class ones. However, natural science disciplines, such as mathematics, statistics and others are key instrumental disciplines.

At present, humanities and natural sciences disciplines should not be lacking, but should by no means be the mainstream disciplines. Accordingly, first of all, we should “do something”, which means expanding the first-level disciplines appropriately, and making efforts to improve the level of disciplines. Most of the dominant disciplines of universities specialized in finance and economics are the three first-level disciplines—theoretical economics, applied economics and business administration. Besides, some other main disciplines are law, Marxist theory, management science and engineering, public administration and so on. Besides, there are some other supporting disciplines, such as mathematics, statistics and so on. There is no doubt that all of these disciplines are to be developed, but how to develop in a specific way, and who is the first one to develop, are all worth exploring.

Only with a good top-level design, scientific layout, and continuous building over a period of time can we demonstrate the situation that social science disciplines become world-class disciplines with strong support from a number of humanities disciplines and natural science disciplines.

“Doing something” is relatively simple but “doing nothing” is usually difficult. In the last century, Stanford University canceled the School of Architecture, when its School of Architecture in the United States should be in the top 15. However, on one hand, to build an excellent School of Architecture is too much investment, on the other hand, the School of Architecture in University of California, Berkeley (adjacent to Stanford University) is already a top school, and therefore Stanford University had to cancel the School of Architecture. The resources of one school are very limited, and establishing too many disciplines takes twice the effort for half the result, therefore we can only focus on strengthening the dominant and specialized disciplines.

Therefore, in a sense, building all kinds of disciplines is a way of development, and focusing on certain disciplines is also a way of development. That some comprehensive universities in China have taken the initiative to cancel some degree authorization centers is a great indicator of this viewpoint. We should highlight our own characteristics and adhere to the philosophy that “doing something but not everything” (Lai, 2021:18-22). We should still take the traditional advantageous disciplines as the center, expand to the surrounding areas, develop supporting disciplines, build new disciplines and integrate the disciplines that obviously have no advantages into the advantageous disciplines supporting system, and realize the integrated development of dominant and supportive disciplines as well as traditional and emerging disciplines.

Second, the construction of disciplines should seize the key points. We evaluate the discipline based on two points, one is scientific research, which means the strength of scientific research and the quality of academic achievements, and the other is first-rate teaching resources, which means the cultivation of talent. All of this boils down to the need of high-level faculty, which is the key to the construction of disciplines. From the development process of disciplines in world-class universities, many universities have achieved breakthroughs in disciplines through the introduction of leading talent and the establishment of high-level academic team.

Linguistics at MIT is at the top of the world thanks to a team of high-end linguistic researchers assembled by Chomsky, and education at Columbia is world-renowned through the pedagogue Dewey, to name but a few. As regard to CUFU, there is a relative lack of master-level specialized leading talents who have important academic discourse in the field of finance and economics, and academic teams that can exert significant influence

in the relevant fields at home and abroad have not yet formed a scale, so we adhere to the principle of introducing and cultivating talents, carefully attracting and cultivating specialized leading scholars, developing young and middle-aged leading talents with academic potentials, strengthening the construction of disciplinary teams, and supporting the building of academic innovation teams.

To build a first-rate faculty team, there should be a relatively flexible and sufficient financial support that can attract excellent talents, an efficient institutional mechanism that can link the development of disciplines with the cultivation of talents, and a platform for the construction of disciplines that allows excellent talents to form an great team and stand out from the rest.

Third, the construction of disciplines should have an open vision. Being in the midst of the great changes in the world pattern, colleges and universities should have a sense of historical mission, an open mind and a broad vision. All the universities here are qualified and capable of representing China's higher education to participate in the competition of the world's higher education.

The path of the construction of disciplines is both a marathon race and a mountaineering race. It is a marathon race, because the construction of disciplines have certain basic laws, therefore we must follow the law of discipline development, grasp the trend of disciplines development, expand the path of disciplines development in order to achieve the purpose of a marathon. It is also a mountaineering competition, because the characteristics and paths of development of each school is different, which means they can "climb the mountain from all angles". The barriers between schools should be broken down, especially between our financial institutions, therefore we can build cross-school innovation team, strengthen teamwork, promote resource sharing and stronger alliance, and achieve a development pattern of respecting differences while seeking consensus based on mutual benefit and win-win result.

Open vision requires us to actively carry out international exchange and cooperation activities. International cooperation is currently an important way for institutions of higher education to enhance their influence and optimize their resources (Zhang, 2019:130-132). Therefore, it is necessary to adhere to the opening of education to the outside world, actively adapt to and participate in the development of internationalization of higher education, strengthen the concept of internationalized school running, build an internationalized platform for scientific research cooperation and exchange, introduce outstanding talents from overseas, and expand substantive international cooperative research projects, so as to grasp the dynamics of the frontier of disciplinary development and accelerate the pace of the construction of disciplines through a high-level and wide-ranging education opening to the outside world.

Open vision requires us to serve the economic and social development and government decision-making needs. We have to embrace opening education and accelerate the transfer of scientific research achievements, to promote innovation-driven development, to serve economic and social transformation and sustainable development, to seek for support through contributing, and to form a benign interaction between the development of disciplines and the needs of society.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Development with Characteristics

Regarding the development of the characteristics of disciplines, there are two unavoidable issues, one issue is what are the characteristics, and the other issue is how to develop.

What are the characteristics? I think the first answer must be the advantageous disciplines. For example, when mentioning Harvard University, many people will think of its business, law and medicine; when mentioning Oxford University, many people will think of its mathematics and political science; when mentioning Tsinghua University, many people will think of its architecture; when mentioning the domestic financial colleges and universities, many people will think of the economics. This kind of discipline with high social recognition is our dominant discipline, which are the foundation for our further development, and are the driving force and source of sustainable development.

The characteristics should come from the advantages, and it has nothing to do with the size of the school or the layout of disciplines. The label of advantage is like the peak in a plateau of school discipline construction, and then the label of characteristic is like the landscape on the peak, not necessarily large, not necessarily complete, but definitely irreplaceable. Disciplines with characteristic are gradually formed in the process of long-term development of industry-specific colleges and universities, which can reflect the characteristics and development orientation of colleges and universities, and have a good social reputation and influence (Xue,2022:614-621). To some extent, the construction of characteristics is the construction of key disciplines, and the disciplines with characteristics are the dominant disciplines.

When one school are equipped with some disciplines others do not have, the school is of characteristics. The direction of development of the discipline can not necessarily be of strong strength, but the research direction should be cutting-edge, which means no one else has studied before, or it is a newly proposed theories with a high degree of recognition, then it can be said that there are characteristics of the discipline. After the development of a certain stage, the discipline can play a leading role in the country and even internationally.

When a school has much stronger disciplines than others, the school is also of characteristics. This is a strategy adopted by many schools. When mentioning colleges and universities specialized in finance and economics, why do we always think of the discipline of economics? I think the most common reason is that we play the role of cluster advantage and win the reputation by the scale and quality.

The comprehensive universities or polytechnic universities are usually equipped with only one School of Economics, or even the School of Economics and Management, but for colleges and universities specialized in finance and economics, a first-level discipline of applied economics can be divided specifically into the School of Finance and Taxation, the School of Finance, the School of Insurance, the School of International Trade and so on, indicating that our strength of discipline is very strong, to the extent that we have to carry out the division of labor. A certain degree of division of labor can achieve the effect of “one plus one is greater than two”, and can be a powerful enhancement of the strength of the discipline, because the discipline of the competition ultimately rely on the strength of the competition.

When a school has much more cutting-edge disciplines than others, the school is also of characteristics. Emphasis on innovation should be the highest level of the advantages of the discipline. There may be many schools with characteristics and strengths in a certain discipline, but if one school make deep ploughing in this discipline, keep expanding the field of research, promote interdisciplinary research, new theories are going to be produced from time to time or the school can be the only one who has the discourse power in a certain discipline, and then the school can be always on the leading edge in some fields.

How to develop the characteristics, according to the development practice of the economics discipline in CUFU, my answer is to gather, to deep plowing and to integrate.

Gathering, simply speaking, is to give full play to the advantages of clusters and teams, and to form a quality advantage by the strength of scale. The world-class discipline that CUFÉ is building is applied economics, and the university will focus on and lead the construction of applied economics, based on the Sinicization of theoretical economics and theoretical innovation, supported by the innovation of statistical methods, and eventually build a first-class economics discipline. Through a series of integrated arrangements and top-level design, the strength scattered in the various colleges and research institutes of the university is integrated into a synergy and cluster around the first-rate disciplines, so that the advantages of clustering can be accomplished and the effect of first-class discipline construction can be achieved. The cluster of discipline of economics may involve four hundreds to five hundreds teaching and research personnel and thousands of students, and it is an absolutely pivotal position in CUFÉ. In the future, on the basis of the overall high level of the discipline, if the economics discipline cluster is of first-class, then I think it should be the result of gathering.

Deep plowing, namely, is constantly carding the problem on the basis of existing core strengths of the discipline, refining the research direction, finding overlap or gaps, and paying attention to historical research. From my perspective, such disciplines of economics in universities specialized in finance and economics, basically, can and should achieve full coverage, and should also be able to put forward some original theories. For example, the Chinese school reflecting originality and temporal spirit, such as the theory of new market finance and the theory of China's financial structure proposed by CUFÉ, is maturing. Besides, human capital research and other disciplines studying China's problems with the internationally accepted academic paradigm can also be widely recognized by the international academic community. Moreover, the carding of the fiscal and taxation system reform, the study of green finance, economic security and PPP, etc., all of which are based on the dominant disciplines and have formed certain characteristics, that is, the characteristics among the advantages, so as to maintain the core competitiveness of the dominant disciplines.

Integrating, namely, is continuous expanding the areas and boundaries of research, and an important mode of integrating is the interdisciplinary research. According to the catalog of disciplines issued by the Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council, it is obvious that it is not realistic to create new disciplinary categories or new first-level disciplines, nor do we necessarily have the ability to do so.

However, it is relatively simple to integrate the strength of multiple disciplines and conduct interdisciplinary research. The world's new round of scientific and technological revolution and innovation-driven development and other national strategies have provided a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for academic research, but some of the major issues of economic and social development of the research can not be accomplished within one discipline, and it requires interdisciplinary research.

There is no doubt that the premise of interdisciplinary research is still centered on the dominant disciplines, exploring the frontiers and boundaries of the dominant disciplines. As far as economics is concerned, China already has a comparative advantage in some fields, such as finance in the field of science and technology, artificial intelligence, big data and so on. I assume that through the efforts of Chinese researchers, we can lead the world in the interdisciplinary research of these issues. For instance, CUFÉ has set up the Internet Economy Research Institute, the International Research Institute of Green Finance and so on to encourage mature interdisciplinary research programs by building regular institutes and research institutes.

CONCLUSION

Chinese universities and colleges are stepping into a new stage of development. In the construction of disciplines and the development of disciplinary characteristics, we still face many problems, as General Secretary Xi Jinping said in his speech at the National Symposium on Philosophy and Social Sciences, “the overall level of construction of disciplinary system, academic system and discourse system are not up to standard yet, and the ability of academic originality is not strong enough”, which is a problem we need to solve urgently. Chinese universities and colleges should start from the specific practice of China’s economic reform, opening up and development and use the “international language” to tell the “Chinese story” with an open vision and doing research on the motherland so as to explore new ideas to promote China’s economic and social harmonious development.

Chinese universities and colleges should also continue to improve the modern university system, adhere to the connotation enhancement and innovation leadership, reshape the characteristics of the university, and devote ourselves to cultivating elites who can promote economic and social development, so as to contribute to the progress of the country, the society and even the human civilization.

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