

# The Role and Activities of NGOs on Young Faculty Development in Teachers College at Chinese Impoverished Region

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**Abstract:** This paper presents the results of a formative evaluation of young faculty development scholarship program conducted in teachers colleges at Chinese impoverished areas. In the paper we describe the implementation of the program, the utilization of scholarship by recipients, recipients' satisfaction, and outcome data. Based on these data we discuss the successes and barriers of the program thus far. Several data collection methods were used in the evaluation: a longitudinal random survey of recipients, group interviews with their students, directors and colleagues, in-person interviews with individual recipient, interviews with representatives of provider agencies, and the data base in provider agency. The findings reported in this paper are primarily from the recipients' survey. Key findings from the group interviews and representatives' interviews are also included. As a whole, the findings suggest success in terms of recipients' knowledge and use of advanced training, and high levels of satisfaction with individual development and the organization level. Continuing challenges to the faculty training and development program include long-standing barrier to recipients' involvement (e.g. low levels of networking) and resident uncertainty to retain in the colleges to take the social role that the program framed.

**Key words:** evaluation framework; intervention strategy; efficiency & effectiveness evaluation; social impact analysis; sustainability evaluation

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 The Evaluation Framework and Process

The United Board (UB) supports an initiative for faculty development in Chinese higher education institutions that was launched in 1996 by the Amity Foundation, a key Chinese NGOs, which is headquartered in Nanjing. From 1996-2004, the UB has made grants to the program designed by Amity to promote further training for the faculty of local teachers colleges. The program, entitled the "Young Faculty Development Scholarship" (YFDS), aims to support and promote the quality of young faculty who serve in local teachers colleges in underdeveloped areas.

The evaluator was asked to evaluate the YFDS on the basis of a number of recipients who have finalized their training program. On a general level, the intervention strategy of the YFDS shall be analyzed with regard to the applicable framework and in the context of China, the type of intervention and beneficiaries, and the means deployed for implementation. Further, the coherence of the YFDS with UB policies and Amity's missions also shall be analyzed.

On a project level, each project was to be evaluated according to the intervention logic of the project

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framework. For the above purposes, the Evaluator conducted a total of 40 long distance phone call interviews with a total of 14 project colleges receiving UB funds. Also, 30 semi-structured questionnaires were administered through phone calls.

Therefore, six key indicators were identified for the evaluation:

- (1) Project design, as well as relevance of the interventions to the problem to be addressed and consistency with policy guidelines;
- (2) Efficiency of activities undertaken in terms of achieving intended results;
- (3) Effectiveness of results in terms of fulfilling the intended project purpose;
- (4) The longer-term impact of the achieved project purpose in terms of its contribution to the overall program;
- (5) Sustainability;
- (6) Adequacy of procedures.

We wish to emphasize that an essentially educational program such as the YFDS has many “soft” components with regard to project results, objectives and impact, i.e. enhanced awareness, new attitudes, satisfaction, etc. These are psychological processes and thus very difficult to measure in terms of the logical framework. Moreover, many YFDS projects are geared towards long-term impact which cannot be assessed after a short period of program operation, when just a small number of projects have been completed. Therefore, in order to get more detailed and more reliable information we went to do field investigations in 3 local colleges in Jiangxi province for 7 days<sup>1</sup>.

### **1.2 The Context of the YFDS Program**

We believe that any assessment of the YFDS intervention strategy is only possible against the background of the real situation in higher education in China. Defining a strategy will require in-depth analysis of education issues in order to develop a range of instruments tailored to the specific needs and features of the countries concerned. This in turn requires an assessment of the current state of Chinese higher education.

In the higher education system of China, regional and local colleges are of great importance. Up to May 2004, 46.67% of China’s colleges are regional and local colleges, which account for 53.67% of the national student population. However, development of teachers from regional and local colleges seldom heads the list of people’s concern, due to insufficient funds and teachers’ low salaries, and in a long run this may diminish the quality of basic education of these areas. A survey conducted by the evaluator in Jiangxi shows that governmental and foundational training programs for teachers met little of the need in regional and local colleges. According to the evaluation statistics, 87% of recipients cited “lack of startup funds” as the biggest problem limiting faculty training in the local colleges. Furthermore, the low salaries in these schools makes self-supported training impossible. On average, one teacher’s yearly income is about 18,000 RMB. If she (or he) wishes to get training in a Chinese key university in big city, i.e. to afford a MA degree, the program will cost two years of her (his) income. If costs for support of a family are calculated in, the cost of an MA program will require five years of the teacher’s income.

This overview should give a better picture of the general higher education background against which the

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank all those people in local colleges involved in the program as well as in Amity Foundation who were willing to be interviewed or who participated in the discussions and roundtables during our field visits, who are too numerous to be listed. I am highly indebted to three local colleges in Jiangxi Province who provided us with invaluable background information and who helped us to organize all the interviews and meetings.

YFDS as a whole has to operate. A more detailed analysis is included in the respective sections of the report.

### 1.3 Overview of the YFDS Program

Up to July, 2004, this program has covered 85 institutions from 18 provinces in China. 381 teachers have received funding through the program, of which 12 teachers received overseas training and 369 received training in China. The Amity Foundation has provided over 2,310,000 Yuan (RMB) through the program since 1996, with the support of UB.

## 2. Analysis of the YFDS Intervention Strategy

### 2.1 Geographic and Demographic Analysis of the Recipients

As regards geographical distribution, the most apparent feature is the comparatively high share of funds distributed in underdeveloped areas. Between 1996 and 2004, most YFDS funds were given to colleges in areas that are relatively disadvantaged economically. Overall, the program covers local teachers colleges from 18 provinces, among which the underdeveloped ones range from Tibet, Sichuan, and Guizhou in the southwest, to Qinghai, Gansu, and Inner Mongolia in the northwest, and Shanxi in the north. In the overall picture, underdeveloped areas account for an overwhelming percentage of the funds distributed. For examples, Tibet is in first place with an allocation of 25% to Tibet University in Tibet (before 2000), followed by Guizhou province with 10% or so.

Demographically, statistics indicate the following characteristics of program recipients:

- (1) They are mainly in the age range from 20 to 49 (see chart 1);

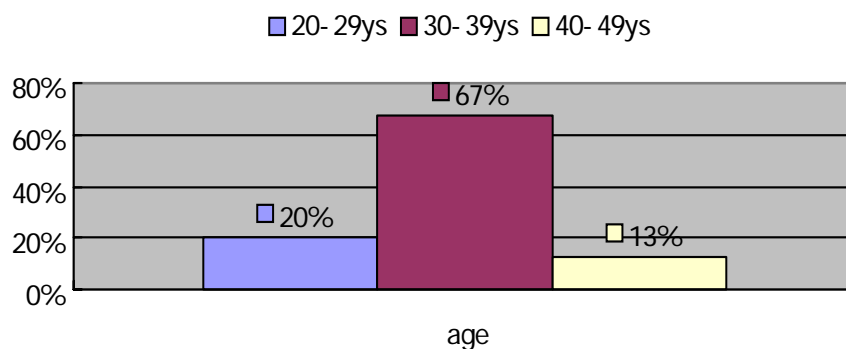


chart 1 Recipients Age Distribution

- (2) More female teachers have received funding than male (see chart 2);

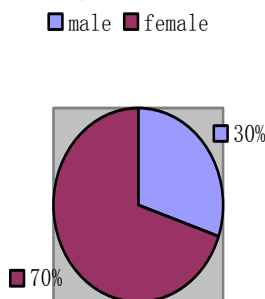


chart 2 Recipients Gender Distribution

(3) Most recipients are from the fields of Arts and Social Sciences (see chart 3);

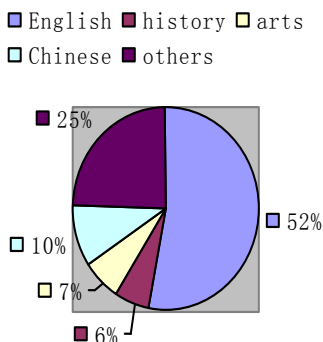


Chart 3 Recipients Discipline Distribution

(4) The educational backgrounds of recipients are relatively poor (see chart 4);

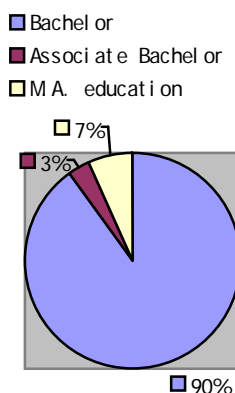


chart 4 Recipients Primary Degree Distribution

## 2.2 Geographical Priorities

In accordance with the Amity Foundations’ framework of priorities, economically backward provinces have been chosen as the main intervention areas. Among the 18 target provinces, most are located in western China. Guizhou, Gansu, and Qinghai are among the most underdeveloped areas in China. Although a few colleges in economically advanced eastern provinces, such as Jiangsu, Fujian, and Shandong, were listed in the YFDS program, they are located in relatively poor communities in these provinces.

Overall, the majority of projects support economic development in disadvantaged sectors of society. This is based on the idea that a systematically development of a whole country has to be based mostly on substantial improvement of capability-building measures in underdeveloped areas.

## 2.3 Priorities in Terms of Local Teachers Colleges

In light of other social problems of China, such as poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and so on, teachers’ training for local and regional colleges has been selected as a preferential program by Amity foundation on the following grounds:

(1) In China, poverty, population and even environmental problems are closely related to quality of local

education, in which teachers' qualifications play a key role. This is why the Amity Foundation places local education issues on their list of urgent tasks.

(2) Nowadays, local and regional colleges in China are facing a very serious problem due to the imbalance between large student bodies and very limited resources. Among these kinds of colleges, the teachers colleges are crucial to local development because they are the source of qualified teachers for local basic education. Also, local teacher colleges are the most unassisted group in terms of funds.

#### **2.4 Target Groups**

The way we defined target groups was by identifying the direct (and sometimes indirect) beneficiaries of a project. Target groups are those who receive training and education domestically or abroad. In this context, female faculty (70%) and faculty in humanities and social science fields (94%) were the most highly prioritised target groups.

##### **2.4.1 Why is faculty development preferred?**

As a precondition for sound development of education, teachers' training has long been an important item in China's governmental agenda. However, due to limited governmental resources and a growing teacher population, more involvement of NGOs and foundations in teacher training is necessary and urgent. Compared with key universities in China, local and regional teachers colleges and academies are facing more pressure because of larger student bodies and limited budgets.

In particular, the reform directed at enlarging enrollment, implemented in 1999, has seriously challenged local teacher colleges. A survey conducted by the evaluator among 30 teachers who received support from the YFDS program indicates that providing qualified teachers is the biggest need in development of local colleges, while lack of startup funds is the biggest problem they are facing currently.

##### **2.4.2 Why are female teachers preferred?**

In the intervention groups, it is noteworthy that 70% of recipients are female teachers. In China, female teachers enjoy fewer opportunities than their male colleagues in higher education. This corresponds to the overall situation of female faculty in Chinese higher institutions: Female participation in higher learning is depressed, in other words, the higher one looks in the educational hierarchy, the lower the ratio of females is. In 2002, for the whole Chinese higher education system, at the assistant professor level females account for 50.3%; at the lecturer level they account for 44.5%; by the associate professor level they only make up 35.3%; and at the full professor level they only account for 16.6%. The picture is similar with regard to academic degrees. 48.3% of female faculty hold associates degrees, 38.8 hold BA degrees, 18.1 hold MA degrees, but only 18.1 hold Ph.D. degrees. Traditionally, women's potential is always ignored. Furthermore, young female faculty have to undertake the burden of raising young kids and supporting aged parents. All of these facts indicate that female faculty are the most appropriate intervention group for this project.

##### **2.4.3 Why are Faculty with humanities and social sciences background preferred?**

Arts and Social Sciences' development in local and regional colleges urgently requires support. Humanities and social sciences need more attention than science and technology. In this program, 94% of funds were directed toward faculty in humanities and social sciences.

This appears reasonable because awareness of humanities and social sciences requires great attention in China. It's very efficient to help young faculty who have the necessary intimate knowledge of language and culture. Training increases the impact and the efficiency of transfer of humanities and social sciences knowledge.

A look at research and development expenditure in the humanities and social sciences in higher education

institutions (HEIs) in 2002 shows that it only accounted for 6.5%, whereas expenditures in science and technology accounted for 93.5%. Hence, it appears the fields of humanities and social sciences are an appropriate intervention target for this program. It seems reasonable that actions targeting this group make sense in the context of China.

In conclusion, it can be said that the design of YFDS is suited for the current Chinese higher education situation. Furthermore, the project helps address issues of poverty, environment and population, and basic education in the regions described above.

### **2.5 Types of Activities**

We have divided the different types of activities employed for project implementation into 3 main categories:

- (1) MA degrees
- (2) course development
- (3) visiting scholars

The following chart shows the distribution of the different types of activities for the whole programme:

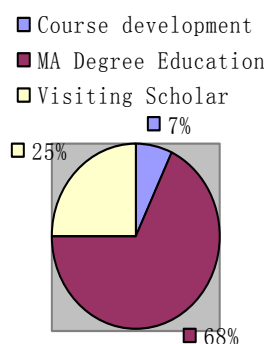


Chart 5 Training Activities Distribution

### **2.6 Coherence of the Intervention Strategy with UB Policies**

UB policies in other fields are essentially in the field of faculty development and leadership growth assistance in Asian colleges and universities. The Amity Foundation, an independent Chinese voluntary organization, was created in 1985 on the initiative of Chinese Christians to promote education, social services, health, and rural development from China's coastal provinces in the east to the minority areas of the west.

This program targets small colleges and the poorer strata of the population. The main target groups of the YFDS (see above) and their particular needs are addressed by the YFDS project. Thus, the YFDS is coherent with the overall goals of UB and Amity not only in terms of the shared desire for promotion of holistic development and public welfare, but also in terms of making Christian involvement and participation in meeting the needs of society more widely known to the Chinese people.

## **3. Evaluation of the Project**

### **3.1 Relevance of the Project**

By relevance, we mean the extent to which the YFDS project addresses the particular strengths and weaknesses of the state of faculty development in Chinese higher education institutions. In all the colleges we investigated, our finding was that relevance was very good.

Much of the analysis pertaining to the relevance of the YFDS interventions has already been presented in the

context of assessing the intervention strategy in terms of intervention areas (see above, part II.). As noted above, the YFDS as a whole showed an uneven distribution, with a distinct emphasis on local teachers colleges, women faculty development and humanities and social science.

Here there is one more point to be noted. The lack of full-time qualified teachers in primary and secondary schools, combined with an unsound overall structure, severely handicaps western areas in basic education. The Amity program aims to change the situation through improving the teachers' quality in local teachers colleges, the training schools for teachers involved in basic education. This project supports the government's effort to implement the Nine Years of Compulsory Education policy in western areas.

### **3.2 Efficiency and Effectiveness of Projects**

By efficiency, we refer to the efficiency of implementation of the program, i.e., whether activities undertaken addressed needs and achieved intended results. By effectiveness we mean the extent to which each action produced results in terms of fulfilling the intended project purpose.

We found that efficiency was highly satisfactory. Regarding the efficiency of the evaluated colleges and the YFDS as a whole, a *quantitative* overview should help put the *qualitative* analysis in a meaningful context. A typical question that was put to recipients was "Have you make progress in your teaching as well as your research?" The positive answers of evaluated recipients reached by 97%. Nobody gave a negative answer. Almost all the interviewed recipients emphatically stated that the training was the most important experience in her (or his) life.

Regarding transfer of funds, colleges set up special accounts for the Amity program. This helped ensure that funds were used for their intended purpose. A high level of fund security may also be attributed to careful selection of recipients and the small number of program candidates.

With regard to effectiveness, the program has clear objectives – to improve faculty's comprehensive capability in teaching and research. These objectives seem to have been achieved very successfully. The program was very welcomed in local teachers colleges. It is obvious that the objectives of such a program tend to be identical with the desired long-term impact. All colleges and the sponsored teachers appear to be highly satisfied with the commitment and professional service from the Amity Foundation in carrying out the program, with the result that activities efficiently yielded the intended results.

### **3.3 Projects and Their Different Impacts**

We found that training and education projects tend to target a limited number of beneficiaries, but usually have a very high impact on them. The benefiting group can directly apply the acquired skills in their day-to-day activities, often training others themselves, i.e. their colleagues in the same department, or teachers in local primary and secondary schools. When addressing other groups, such a program contributes to developing many beneficiaries involved in YFDS activities later on. Where the program targets teachers' colleges, the impact will be more long-term. Such a snowball-effect presents an important long-term impact on the development of local society. Therefore, we regard this kind of intervention as high-impact.

### **3.4 Sustainability**

Sustainability in the context of the present evaluation covers three main aspects: (1) We tried to establish whether the project brought about a sufficient degree of personal capability-building to enable the NGO to carry out similar activities in the future. (2) We looked at the Amity Foundation's institutional ability to implement the program, as well as that of the funded colleges. (3) We hoped to probe the weakness in sustainability after the project ends. We found that sustainability is good, but that weaknesses in sustainability exist.

Regarding the personal aspect of sustainability, we generally found a high degree of sustained activities among the evaluated recipients. For example, some recipients have made great progress in their teaching and research. According to the administrators, colleagues, and students in the focus group seminar, the teachers sponsored by Amity are very often well established and professional in knowledge and personality, and they are among the most outstanding teachers in the colleges we visited. Interviews showed a high degree of sustainability if the recipients are trained to become group leaders in their departments or schools.

With regard to the institutional aspect, we also found a high degree of sustained activities among the colleges and Amity Foundation. It should be added that all project management - initial selection, preparing project summaries and contracts, writing internal notes, reviewing incoming progress and financial reports, and keeping in touch with UB - was well done by the program manager. Nevertheless, this is an obvious case of severe understaffing.

All the colleges involved in the program run the selection, contracts and payment well, thus enhancing the overall impact of the program. This internal control mechanism guarantees a high degree of institutional capacity in the Amity Foundation, UB and colleges. As pointed out above, we believe that more assisting programs like YFDS should and could be initiated in teachers colleges in economically backward regions.

Weaknesses in sustainability exist on the college-level: in a few cases, several recipients left their colleges to go to eastern coastal areas for better living and work environment after their training. Thus, more follow-up activities need to be conducted in colleges, especially improvement in working conditions, after the participating faculty return to their home colleges.

### **3.5 Conclusions**

With respect to the program preparation and design and their coherence with the overall objectives of the YFDS, we found that the results are generally good. As regards the internal coherence of the proposals of the program, we did not identify any particular weaknesses.

Relevance of projects selected for funding was generally well in line with the findings regarding the intervention strategy. We found that efficiency was overall satisfactory.

By type of project activity, we found that MA degree training and education tend to target a limited number of beneficiaries but usually have a very high impact on them. Their individual impact on beneficiaries is higher. However, such activities tend to extend and thus result in a positive impact in the long term.

## **4. Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **4.1 YFDS Intervention Strategy**

The intervention strategy is partly determined by the Amity Foundation. This initially “reactive” strategy (as to UB) is not to be seen as being negative: relying on submitted proposals guarantees a bottom-up approach. On the other hand, programming missions took place in the years from 1996 to 2004, during which priority areas of intervention have been identified following contacts with Amity Foundation. The Amity Foundation has extensive contacts with Overseas NGOs. This tends to make Amity Foundation easily nourish herself with new ideas in NGO program management. That and Amity’s annual following - up with the colleges - provided for continuous evolution of the (unwritten) strategy for the program by redefining or adjusting priorities when and where necessary.

*We would see a combination of relying on a bottom-up approach and proactively defining and pursuing a*



*particular strategy as the best option for the future.*

We found the YFDS properly defined the most relevant issues of faculty development in local teachers colleges in underdeveloped areas in China, and their young faculty majoring in humanities and social science. We also found this intervention strategy is highly appreciated by the recipients and administrators across the colleges. Our analysis of the situation of Chinese higher education showed great support to the program's priorities.

*In the future, efforts should be made to fund more projects in "local teachers colleges" in "underdeveloped regions", preferably with additional substantial focus on "female faculty" in the program in the China context.*

#### **4.2 Adequacy of YFDS Procedures**

##### **4.2.1 Selection and application**

Basically, the application process was streamlined and transparent for the applicants. Some of the applicants suggested introducing one more deadline per year for the applicants to submit proposals to the Amity Foundation.

*The Amity Foundation should adjust the selection and application procedure in accordance with the reforming status of Chinese higher education and notify each applicant.*

##### **4.2.2 Follow-up**

We found that feedback from recipients seems to suggest more active promotion of a UB scholar's reunion, such as annual roundtables. They believe annual roundtables, inviting a number of UB scholars (including those already financed) and possibly organized by Amity Foundation, would significantly enhance the visibility and social impact of the program.

*Within the YFDS, we recommend that the Amity Foundation conduct a variety of micro-activities with a view to assisting UB scholars and their colleges in enhancing the visibility and social impact of the program, as well as building sustained development. To improve holistic teaching quality, the colleges could try to invite the recipients to hold seminars with colleagues, or give lectures to middle school teachers. The administration of micro-activities could be decentralized to the local colleges.*

#### **4.3 Adequacy of YFDS Management**

The feedback shows YFDS has the potential to significantly enhance the efficiency of the program regarding the mass awareness of the program. In particular, the public will get better awareness of the program through "Program Image Agents" or the most visible proof from excellent recipients. The Amity Foundation should also be committed to building partnership with a number of specialists both domestically and overseas.

*One recommendation in this respect would be the distribution of a new and more comprehensive program guide to the public. Such handbook should explain in more detail the program's "philosophy", the frame of logic, and the intricacies of application.*

As noted above, the Amity Foundation directly deals with selection, contracts, payments, academic service, alumni follow-up, and so forth. Project selection, contracts, and payments were good in terms of quality, but the academic consultancy and follow-up appear lengthy and weak. Concerning the issuing of more valuable academic suggestions (i.e. a recommended key university list, a top professional program list) and more efficient follow-up efforts, we believe these would positively affect the implementation and impact of the project.

*There should be at least one permanent staff within the Amity Foundation, who is responsible for the day-to-day co-ordination of the YFDS program. Alternatively, the program managers should be encouraged to do advanced study in areas related to the program theme.*

In conclusion, these recommendations will contribute to a more coherent strategy. Then perhaps the YFDS can develop into a powerful instrument improving the already well developed program in China.

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