

The enlightenment of the development of New Oriental School on Chinese educational system

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Abstract: In modern society, the essence of social competition is the competition of talents who are in need of education, and the education's quality can decide a nation's future and destiny. With the continuous development of China, Chinese educational system is also facing a new stage of development. Starting with analyzing the case of New Oriental School, a very popular training institution in China, this paper finds its sponsoring characteristics and the current situation of education in China by surveying and comparing some data. It is found that New Oriental School's success is the integration of Chinese and western culture. On the one hand, New Oriental School pays attention to training teachers and learning advanced teaching ideas and methods of western countries, on the other hand, its education is directed towards Chinese examination-oriented education, which results from the current situation that China has a large population and sharp competitions and the examination-oriented education can not be replaced in this moment. Chinese education can get a lot of inspirations from New Oriental School's successful experience. This paper makes a suggestion that China can benefit from the mode of New Oriental School, learning the advanced concepts and teaching methods of western countries, and doing some improvements to explore a suitable way for Chinese educational development.

Key words: New Oriental School; educational system; sponsoring features; education reform

1. Introduction

Since the early 1980s, with the rapid development of Chinese socialist modernization, Chinese education has gradually embarked on the road of rapid growth. However, with the development of China, the problems of educational system emerge seriously, which hinder the development of talents. Thus, the problems of educational system need to be solved.

Many scholars conduct researches on the current examination-oriented education in China, which indicate that under the examination-oriented education, Chinese talents are really hard to develop. Besides, many researches and surveys show that education is one of the most troubling problems that most Chinese have concerned. However, to date, no one can give specific solution of this problem. This paper gives a detailed analysis on the New Oriental School's sponsoring features and summaries the reasons for its success. Then, the paper makes a suggestion that China can benefit from the mode of New Oriental School and Chinese universities should do some improvements to explore a suitable way for educational development.

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2. Current educational background

2.1 Current situation of Chinese education

Enrollment rate is the lifeblood of most schools, so students have to regard scoring goals as motivation of learning. Teaching content is historical material, and teachers will impart it to students chapter by chapter, making them bear in mind, and then obtain high scores. China Youth Research Center announced a comparison survey about high school students' situation in China, Japan, Korea and America in March 3, 2009, and the results showed that Chinese students take the longest time to study among these 4 countries. 78.3% of Chinese students spend more than 8 hours in studying at school every day, while the Korea is 57.2%, Japan and America hardly have this phenomenon; 56.7% of Chinese students spend over 2 hours in doing their homework, while America is 24.7%, Japan is 20.5% and Korea is 15.4%; 26.0% of Chinese students spend over 2 hours in attending cramming schools, while Korea is 20.5%, Japan is 5.8% and America is 2.2%. So, it seems that Chinese students spend much more time in studying than those foreign students.

Chinese education attaches great importance to cultivate students' scientific thinking, which focuses on training students to think scrupulously and find necessary conditions to draw conclusions. Though this kind of thinking capacity makes Chinese students who are studying abroad have many more advantages than others, it is also this "too professional" education that makes Chinese students' scope of knowledge forms a narrow but deep bottleneck, thus, making it difficult for Chinese students to adapt to the rapid changes of market needs. There is still a big gap between Chinese higher education and that of developed countries. During nearly 107 years of the Nobel Prize, there are probably 700 winners, of which 600 are located in world-class universities, but no one in China. In recent years, more and more problems of higher education are reflected, and education reform remains as the hottest topic of social life. Furthermore, the recent declining employment rate of university students can also reflect that the current national education situation is not optimistic.

2.2 The concept of American education

According to the research and exploration, the authors find that almost all of the world-renowned universities have their features in the field of sponsoring concept, which are not only unique, but also keeping pace with the times and shining with bright light. For example, Cambridge's sponsoring concept is that "Here light and sacred draughts", Humboldt University's is "achieve a unity of teaching and research and provide students with an all-round humanist education", Harvard University's school philosophy is "Let Plato be your friend, and Aristotle, but more let your friend be truth".

Britain's University of Oxford and University of Cambridge are not the earliest universities, but they are outstanding among a large number of classical universities in Europe largely due to the facts that they can break the shackles of religion and make their sponsoring concept early. It is under the guidance of this prominent sponsoring concept that makes the two schools create a fundamental research universities system and train a large number of world-class talents. To date, Cambridge's alumni include 87 Nobel Laureates till 2010, which is the best of world's universities. In Humboldt University, according to its sponsoring concept, the first president—the philosopher Fichte Humboldt employed the first batch of teachers including the philosopher Hegel, Schelling and some other world-class talents. As a result, since the Nobel Prize has established in the first 40 years, there appeared 16 Nobel Prize winners, like Planck, Laue, Hahn, and so on in Humboldt University.

In fact, world-class universities generally have relatively long history and profound culture, forming distinctive school characteristics and specific sponsoring concepts, which can embody the social development and personnel

training requirements, and then they become the leaders of the global higher education and world-class universities.

2.3 The historical review of New Oriental School

As the largest provider of private educational services in China, New Oriental School offers education for a lifetime and teaching skills that give students a crucial competitive advantage in the workplace and help improve their quality of life. New Oriental School has become the most recognized brand in Chinese private education. Based on the founder Michael Yu's groundbreaking vision, teachers' innovative and inspirational instruction combines humorous and interactive teaching techniques with traditional Chinese educational values. Statistic shows that since their founding in 1993, New Oriental School has had nearly 8.5 million student enrollments, including approximately 1.37 million enrollments in the first 9 months of school year in 2010. Today, it has a network of 48 schools, 324 learning centers, 25 New Oriental bookstores, over 5,000 third-party bookstores, approximately 7,000 teachers in 40 cities, as well as an online network with over 5.5 million registered users.

New Oriental School always pays great attention to teachers' training and it provides teachers with opportunities to continue to study abroad, creating an innovative atmosphere to encourage teachers to enhance their core competitiveness. Teachers' training plays an important role in promoting them to break with tradition, keep pace with times, change the traditional teaching ideas and improve curriculum design.

3. Sponsoring features of New Oriental School

English is a language; English teaching is different from many other disciplines. In fact, learning English, just like swimming or playing, only if one jumps into the water or goes to the golf course, can he/she learn how to swim or play. Similarly, only if one speaks English, can he/she learn the language. So, context is to language like water is to fish. However, most of Chinese students lack such an environment. Therefore, as a teacher, he/she needs to create an environment for students and guide students to speak English as often as possible.

3.1 Situational teaching

3.1.1 How New Oriental School's education introduces situational teaching in classroom

In New Oriental School, teachers have fully realized the importance of learning environment, so one can find "situational teaching" everywhere in their school. For example, when they teach the phrases like "Good morning", "Good afternoon", "Good evening" and "Good night", teachers will draw a clock on the blackboard, then they require students to make accurate responses when minutes changing along with their hands; when they teach the names of human's organs, such as head, eye, face, mouth, etc., they may ask a group of students to stand up, letting the other group of students supervise, then teachers will say, "Touch your nose/hand... Please!". With their voices being changed from slow to fast, students must make the right response. Due to using the situational teaching method, New Oriental School can attract more students to attend their classes and achieve a higher quality of teaching.

3.1.2 The definition and functionality of situational teaching in learning English

Situational teaching means that under the guidance of the teaching program and teaching materials, teachers create various situations to make students immerse into the abundant, natural or semi-natural language customary situation. In such way, students can contact and input a large number of language materials in the natural or man-made circumstances, and they are able to use many similar dialogues to express their cognitive knowledge of social models, the main objects, and so on. Situational teaching method allows students to perform short dramas or dialogues and use various tools in English learning (such as using audio, photographs, etc.). Through students' seeing and hearing organs, teachers make the students draw the outline of a vivid and concrete picture in mind so as to stimulate the students'

interest in learning English, enriching their imagination and arousing their enthusiasm of thinking.

3.1.3 The current situation of English education in China

With the rapid development of Chinese education, English education plays an essential role in China. In fact, Chinese students are in need of language environment in learning English, Chinese schools should use the situational teaching method to better promote the development of education and train more outstanding English talents. However, Chinese main educational system has long been the examination-oriented education, so using the situational teaching method extensively is restricted by some actual conditions. Though many students are learning English, they feel bored and do not have interests, which result from the poor quality of English teaching. Just like the former Vice Premier LI Lan-qing pointed out, “many students have learned English for eight or twelve years, but most students can not read foreign original books masterly, in particular, they can not use it as a communication tool ...” (LI, 2003).

3.1.4 The inspiration given from the development of American sitcom

Remind of 70 or 80 years ago, most of Chinese surely still remember a sitcom called “Growing Pains”, and many other popular sitcoms, such as “Friends”, “Frasier”, “Will and Grace”, “Third Rock from the Sun”, “Home Improvement”, etc.. Language in sitcom is the most vivid in contemporary America, and many vivid slang usages are from it.

The sitcom’s dialogue is standard and authentic and its plot is close to everyday life, condensing the essence of the Americans’ life. So, for these reasons, New Oriental School teachers said that they were pleasantly surprised to find that learning English by sitcom was also a good way to enhance the deaf-dumb-English. In addition to the native speakers, it is more valuable for Chinese, the second language learners, to access to the American customs, feel their authentic mode of thinking, and savor their characteristics and cultural connotations. Therefore, after anglicizing a large number of the most popular sitcoms in today’s America, New Oriental School teachers are more aware of the role that situational design plays in teaching, so according to the characteristics, content, characters and classic dialogues of sitcom, they carefully select and sum up the most frequently used and coolest slangs of today, find out their original meanings and then, give a large number of excellent oral and practical examples, relevant cultural backgrounds and situational designs in the classroom. In this way, they can make their students easily read and understand the language of situational design in a pleasant and lively atmosphere.

3.2 The social responsibility

3.2.1 How New Oriental School shoulders its social responsibilities

When New Oriental School develops, it not only helps millions of students go abroad to fulfill their dreams, but also takes an active part in the public welfare of education. It supports Chinese education by training the public teachers, supporting scholarships, building Hope Primary Schools, and so on. Mr. YU, the chairman and Chief Executive Officer of New Oriental education, has said that New Oriental School is gifted with a mission of social responsibility, as the business has grown strongly, New Oriental School has the ability and willingness to make a contribution to Chinese education. It is its social responsibility, and also the entire community’s common concern.

Because of this guiding thought, New Oriental School does very well in the field of taking social responsibility. For example in 2007, New Oriental Education and Technology Group sponsored the “Candlelight Action—Actions of taking social responsibility of New Oriental’s teachers”. The action means conducting a branch of activities to improve the rural education. More than 30 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions have attended these activities, and 3,000 people in rural or urban have participated in the training. Nearly 200 people in Fujian province took part in the candlelight actions of teacher training, and these activities opened

another world for the local junior high school in the English education.

Furthermore, since December 2009, New Oriental School has officially become the “2010 Shanghai World Expo’s language training partner for volunteers”. So far, for nearly half a year, the Expo’s events and New Oriental School have been closely linked with. During the period of March 27—April 30, the New Oriental’s training was held more than 80 times for 18 counties, of which tens of thousands of Expo volunteers were trained face to face and 300,000 World Expo volunteers have accepted online training through the Internet.

3.2.2 The definition and functionality of university’s social responsibilities

The university’s social responsibilities refer to 4 kinds of responsibilities, which include the university’s research findings, the function of personnel training, the function of serving as social thought leadership and acting as a judge of social rational value. It is said that since the status of university established, nearly any theoretical thought that has a significant impact on human progress is closely related with the university. These thoughts were either born at the university, or spread through university, so that they made the university eventually become an important position of civilization. As the universities are trusted by China, the university must be more cautious to care about the fate of mankind. Rationality of the existence of contemporary universities mainly embodies in improving advanced knowledge and solving the social issues. Therefore, if the university wants to embody its value, it must take social responsibility, not only on developing the human civilization, but also on providing a number of talents and becoming the source of thinking of human civilization.

3.2.3 Status of taking social responsibility in Chinese universities

Because the current universities in China are on the imperfect stage, so the social responsibility which they take is more significant. However, during a very long period of past time, the universities always existed as a special organ or department of government, but their social responsibilities were rarely mentioned. So, they could not take the responsibilities of serving as social thought leadership and acting as a judge of social rational value. Therefore, what Chinese universities should do now is to try their best to take the responsibilities of serving as social thought leadership and acting as a judge of social rational value.

3.2.4 Status of taking social responsibility in western university: Introduction of the U.S. community college

In terms of taking social responsibilities in western countries, U.S. community college is a very good example. U.S. community colleges mainly provided their students with initial 2-year higher education, which is equivalent to Chinese junior colleges. It plays an important part in American educational system. Community college’s admission criterion is so simple that anyone who graduates from high school can be its member. Excellent high school graduates choose the community college for economic reasons, adults for developing skills, elderly people for fulfilling their dreams.

There are more than 1,200 community colleges and more than 10 million registered students in the United States. The average age of community colleges’ students is 29.40% of students are younger than 21 years old and 60% of them are studying while working. The average community college tuition is about 2,000 U.S. dollars, which is less than ordinary public universities. In the holidays, community colleges may provide some courses for primary and secondary students, which include painting, cooking, writing, science and technology, computers, business management, etc.. Nearly half of the students go to the community colleges are not for getting a degree, but for improving their levels of knowledge or necessary vocational skills. In addition, community colleges often hold lectures for the community residents. In the U.S., the contributions that the community colleges attribute to American economic development and the ordinary students are obvious to all. New Oriental School’s contributions to society have something in common with the community colleges in the United States.

3.3 Teaching students according to their aptitude

3.3.1 New Oriental School's personalized training

The implementation of the New Oriental School's personalized training is fully compliant with the students and parents' demand. For taking a highly responsibility for students, New Oriental School makes a good preparation for carrying out small-class teaching. In terms of hardware, it provides students with a comfortable learning environment and advanced teaching facilities. For example, each classroom is equipped with LCD (Liquid Crystal Display) television, multimedia projector, stereo, air conditioning, etc.. In terms of teacher, after careful selecting, New Oriental School reserves many outstanding teachers through the national large-scale recruitment and deployment, forming a team of well-trained teachers who have good business capacities and high qualities. In terms of system construction, it strictly controls the number of students in different courses, so that each class does not exceed 30 students. Besides, it has a rigorous system of various provisions on every student. Each student has a set of detailed records of learning. In a word, when carrying out personalized training and small-class teaching, the biggest beneficiaries will be students, they will receive more attention from teachers, and teachers can teach them according to their different aptitudes.

3.3.2 The definition and functionality of teaching students according to their aptitudes

The method of teaching students according to their aptitudes was first proposed by Confucius. It means that a teacher should teach his/her students in different ways that are eligible for the actual situation of individual differences, so that each student can get the best development. Because different people have different inherent genes and growth environments, so there are many individual differences among people in the field of intelligence, interests, habits, etc.. Therefore, teachers need the methods of teaching students according to their aptitudes. If teachers ignore the individual differences and treat students in the same way, teachers will be likely to bury many students' potential. Only individualized teaching methods can allow students to find enjoyment of learning and arouse their interests of study.

3.3.3 The use of teaching students according to their aptitudes in China

In today's domestic education, because of Chinese large population and intensive competition, the "popular education" is replacing the "elite education". More than 60% of Chinese high school classes have more than 50 students, while in Japan or Korea, their reported number of every class is less than 50 students. In the field of teaching organization, the most common form of classes for the Chinese respondents is dedicated classroom. Large-scale teaching may not only limit teachers' various teaching activities and methods, but also reduce students' interests in learning.

3.3.4 The use of teaching students according to their aptitudes in western countries

More than 80% of American schools choose unfixed small-class teaching as their teaching organization, and the number of students in their general classes is about 20. Small-class teaching can not only promote a comprehensive development of personality, but also conform to the quality education. It is a good method that let students share a variety of educational resources and have more time to communicate with their teachers directly, thus, students' quality of learning can be greatly improved. The New Oriental School's method of small-class teaching is also borrowed from western models.

3.4 Aimed at the examination-oriented education

New Oriental School provides a comprehensive range of educational services and products to address the needs of students of all ages in China, and it is a trusted teacher and advisor—whether the task is preparing for the Chinese high school, college entrance exams, the international exams for overseas universities or learning the skills most valued by today's employers. For example, reading is the most troublesome part for many students and many students

are afraid that they can not understand the article in the exams. But New Oriental School has given a number of skills to deal with this issue, such as method of exclusion and positioning method according to the subject. Compared with some other rote methods, New Oriental School's advanced skills are very useful. It is all because that New Oriental School pays great attention to encouraging and training teachers to acquire more skills and methods of teaching.

Besides, most of New Oriental School's courses are scheduled during winter and summer vacations, which is also in line with current educational needs of Chinese parents. In China, parents attach great importance to children's after-school education. A survey that has been done by the Institute of Higher Education of Fudan University showed that in the list of Chinese family expenditure, the education expenditure ranks the first in household spending. The average household expenditure of it ups to 17,088.24 Yuan, and education expenditure takes about 20% of annual total revenue in household. The report can fully reflect parents' attention to children's education. New Oriental School is also very wise to use this feature.

4. Conclusion

New Oriental School's success is the integration of the application of western advanced teaching ideas and methods and the consideration of Chinese current situation.

From the inspiration of New Oriental School's success, China has realized the superiority of western education and is ready to learn from it. But at the same time, people should also realize soberly that due to different national differences and various local customs and practices, their education modes only fit their own state conditions and living habits. Education is a cultural phenomenon, and different educations can reflect different cultural connotations. The education method or system which is suitable for western countries is not necessarily suitable for Chinese current society.

The success and popularization of New Oriental School show that this kind of education mode is worthy of Chinese reference and study. What Chinese should learn from it are not only their teaching methods, but also their teaching goals that education is not just for the high scores or good jobs, but for getting the real skills and knowledge in practice. So, Chinese must change their concepts of education first and work together to achieve the goal.

Of course, because of some limitations in China, such as large population and undeveloped situation, perhaps Chinese can not fully meet the requirements of the conditions of school operation in New Oriental School, but they can use whatever they have to improve their teaching methods.

In short, what Chinese need is a combination of internationalization and localization of modern education. Chinese educational system should explore a set of theories on the basis of learning successful experience of others.

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