

Problems in Teaching Management of Joint Programmes in Universities and Suggested Solutions

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Abstract. Joint programmes have many advantages. However, common problems do exist, such as irregularity in teaching management, lack of both Chinese and foreign teachers, and the enormous pressures that students have to face. Taking the joint programmes in North China Electric Power University as example, the authors try to provide proper solutions, including regularity in teaching management; introduction and cultivation of excellent teachers both at home and abroad, and helping students overcome difficulties, etc. Furthermore, the authors suggest constructing a Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run school, setting up new energy-related majors, improving teachers' remuneration, and developing joint programmes for both Chinese and foreign students.

Introduction

It is stated in the *National Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020)* [1] that internationalization of university education meets basic requirements of Chinese policies, follows the trend of university development, provides basic dynamics for teachers, and is the necessary way to improve students' quality. With encouragement of several policies, many universities begin to develop joint programmes with their counterparts abroad, in order to promote the internationalization strategy against globalization. With China's opening to the outside world and the deepening of education reform, the joint programmes in different universities develop rapidly [2] in large scale, high level and diverse models. Many excellent universities abroad have advanced education principles, new school-running patterns, strict management, outstanding teachers, sound curriculum, excellent teaching materials and high academic reputation. Therefore, joint programmes with these universities may take advantages of these resources to cultivate talents with solid professional knowledge and outstanding practical ability for better development of China.

Problem in teaching management of joint programmes

The existing problems in teaching management pose great threat to joint programmes, which must be carefully considered and properly solved.

Irregularity in teaching management

Unevenness in quality of teaching management staff. In some joint programmes, there are no full-time teaching management staffs, or retired teachers are employed to deal with teaching affairs. These people are always occupied with daily work, having little time to introduce advanced principles and innovation management. Some staff lack experience in management and have few chances to take training.

Irregularity in teaching management system. Many joint programmes recruit student out of the university's enrollment plan, so the teaching management cannot be integrated into the undergraduate teaching management system, which neither ensures quality of students enrolled, nor

reflect specialty of universities. Staffs in China have to discuss with their foreign counterparts about training schemes, teaching programmes, courses, books, etc.

Defectiveness of education evaluation and assessment. Some joint programmes do not lay enough emphasis in teaching evaluation and supervision, so teaching quality cannot be effectively ensured.

Lack of foreign teachers

Teachers dominate smooth process of teaching activities. Lack of both Chinese and foreign teachers hinder further development of many joint programmes. Without excellent teachers, it makes little point to regulate management and introduce courses, let alone cultivate advanced talents. Foreign teachers are scarce resource in many joint programmes. First, with few foreign teachers, such programmes cannot reflect the feature of cooperation with foreign universities. Second, some university employ foreign teachers without fully understanding their morality and professional abilities, and teachers may bring about quite different result. Third, some foreign teachers neglect the discrepancy between courses in and out of joint programmes. They may use the same method to teach students, and do not meet requirements of joint programmes. Besides, the relatively frequent change of foreign teachers may result in inconsistency of students' study.

Lack of Chinese teachers

Joint programmes are in desperate need of Chinese teachers with solid professional knowledge and good command of English. At present, few teachers can meet such requirements. Many teachers serving in joint programmes have never been abroad before [3], so they differ much from foreign teachers in teaching principles and methods. Furthermore, emphasis is laid on professional knowledge, rather than the English language. Some teachers just introduce proper nouns in English with limited explanation. As a result, bi-lingual teaching is not really realized.

Enormous pressure faced by students

Compared with their peers, students of join programmes face much more pressure in several perspectives, so they need special care and proper guidance. First of all, these students have to study difficult major courses in advance of their peers. Secondly, in order to meet language requirement of foreign universities, these students must pass CET4, CET6 and IELTS (over 6.0 at least), and communicate freely with English when they are abroad. Thirdly, with insufficient self-help skills and psychological immaturity [4], these students of younger ages may not get used to life and study abroad, and lack experience in face of western culture shock.

Experiences in teaching management of joint programme in NCEPU

The joint programme of Electrical Engineering and Its Automation between North China Electric Power University (NCEPU for short) and the University of Strathclyde and the University of Manchester in Britain started in 2004. In the same year, NCEPU began to cooperate with the Institute National Polytechnique de Grenoble in France in the joint programme of Nuclear Science and Engineering. In the past decade, the International Education Institute (IEI for short) in NCEPU has taken various measures to improve the teaching quality.

Regulate teaching management from several perspectives

Improve staff quality for teaching management. The International Education Institute employs full-time teaching management staffs with good command of English. Some people have studied or worked abroad before, so they can smoothly communicate with foreign counterparts about teaching affairs. Since August, 2010, the Teaching Affairs Office in IEI started to issue *Teaching Information Brief* to report work content and seek for suggestions ^[5]. Besides, staffs in the Teaching Affairs Office visit other universities in China to learn about their joint programmes, science and research, and communication with other countries. Through all the above measures, these staffs gradually accumulate rich experience in teaching management and improve personal quality.

Regulate teaching management system. Students recruited for joint programmes are included in the NCEPU enrollment plan, which effectively ensures students quality. All teaching management can be well integrated into the undergraduate teaching management system of the university. Graduates can only acquire degree certificates from NCEPU and its cooperator and NCEPU graduation certificate after getting required academic credits.

Implement strict requirements. In order to ensure teaching quality, NCEPU enacts and implements *NCEPU Graduate Teaching Norm*, *NCEPU Implementation Suggestions to Further Improve Graduate Teaching Quality Supervision*, *NCEPU Working Norm for Supervising Commission of Teaching Experts*, etc., which are strictly abided by IEI in joint programme running. Meanwhile, the University of Manchester enacts *Quality Assurance Proforma*, *The Purposes of a Manchester Undergraduate Education*, and *Guidance and Procedures for the Quality Assurance of Collaborative Provision*. The University of Strathclyde and the Institute National Polytechnique de Grenoble also implement serious quality supervision mechanism. These documents require regular and constant supervision of teaching quality.

In every semester, IEI organizes mid-term examination and suggests the results take up 20% in the final course result, which is rarely seen in universities today. With cooperation of teachers in the past few years, mid-term examination has brought out sound effect, promoting students to review courses regularly rather than study overnight just before the final exams.

Employ and train teachers

It is an important issue to build a properly structured teaching team in joint programmes. Both foreign teachers and Chinese teachers must meet high requirements.

First, foreign teachers must take up a certain proportion in the teaching team, because they “force” students to think and talk in English so as to improve language application of students. Next, morality and professional abilities should both be taken into consideration when introducing foreign teachers. Regulation training must be done before they start teaching, and constant supervision should be implemented. Besides, professionals rather than language teachers are needed. With development of joint programmes, language teachers cannot fully meet requirements, and it is necessary to introduce professionals of different majors and the academic resources they may bring in. Finally, celebrating birthdays and other measures can be taken to warm the hearts of foreign teachers who may always be homesick.

Currently, universities are filled with “Three High Teachers” [6], namely, teachers with high academic level, high professional title and high quality. However, their language level and the ability to teach in English may not meet requirements of joint programmes. On the one hand, advance talents who have studies or worked abroad should be given preference in employment. These teachers can promote teaching internationalization by their experience of foreign culture and education principles. On the other hand, the “Going Out” strategy should be taken. As agreements require, Strathclyde and Manchester provide proper and effective English training for NCEPU teachers. IEI also encourages Chinese teachers to apply for projects sponsored by the China Scholarship Council to study or work in universities or institutes abroad. Until now, over 40 NCEPU teachers have been sent to Britain for further training, through which they learn more about teaching, talent cultivation, and their ability to use English to communicate and teach.

Manage and care about students

Management staffs working in NCEPU joint programmes take the following three measures to help students overcome pressures they face.

Promote academic study. NCEPU actively boost small-size class teaching to optimize the effect. With a limited number of teachers, IEI tries to enhance teachers’ concern and instruction by reducing the class size, which may also prepare students for study abroad.

Rationalize students’ English study. NCEPU requires students in joint programmes to pass CET 4 in the first semester, get through CET 6 in the second semester, and acquire over 6.0 within the first three semesters. IEI suggests students to take IELTS more than once to pursue higher

results. Management staffs tell students, their parents and other people concerned the above requirement to make sure students do well in English study. Besides, IEI also encourages students to actively take part in English knowledge or speaking contests, and organize dubbing competitions to create sound environment for students to study and use English. With joint efforts, IEI students acquire higher grade in IELTS.

Concern about students' mental status. As is required by the programme, all students must take a complete set of socialist core value courses to cultivate their solid socialist belief and patriotism. They are required to watch the documentary film of *Study Abroad in Past 10 Decades* to learn about the origin and development of study abroad, distinguish features of study abroad in different stages, and know more stories of excellent Chinese abroad. When these students go abroad, IEI continues to enforce education and communication through activities organized by party branches abroad. Furthermore, connection between students of different grades realizes contact and mutual assistance among them.

Improvement Measures

It is promising to develop joint programmes to effectively promote internationalization in universities. In order to further optimize these programmes, the following measures can be taken.

Promote standardization of joint programmes

Strictly abide by Chinese laws, regulations and implementation measures in student recruitment and teaching managements. At present, IEI of NCEPU is applying for construction of a Chinese-foreign Cooperatively-running School, which is surely of a higher level.

Set up other new energy-related majors

NCEPU is characterized by new energy electrical power majors. Against the development of energy industry in China, other new energy majors, such as Mechanical Engineering, Renewable Energy and Materials Science & Engineering, can be set up to further promote discipline construction.

Improve teachers' remuneration

Teaching with small-size classes produces better results than teaching in big-size classes. However, because of the low remuneration received by the current computing method of teaching workload, some teachers are reluctant to shoulder such tasks. If the computing method is changed in preference of teachers working for joint programmes, more teachers may be attracted, which in turn improves the quality of joint programmes.

Promote joint programmes for both Chinese and foreign students

Against the current internationalization trend, universities on the one hand try to create better chances for Chinese students to study abroad, and on the other hand hope to attract more foreign students to China. NCEPU cooperates with Mongolian University of Science and Technology in a joint programme, in which Mongolian students came to NCEPU for major study in August, 2014 after they acquired basic knowledge in Mongolia in previous years. Such brand-new cooperation provides possibility for development of foreign student education.

Conclusion

Teaching quality is the core issue of joint programmes, and improving teaching management is the key measure. The problems mentioned above must be carefully solved through regulating management, employing better teachers, and properly managing students. Only through these measures can we cultivate high-quality, innovative talents with international insight and high professional abilities.

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