

Highlighting the Characteristics of Running a School to Promote its Key Competitiveness

Presented by

Zhang Ningsheng

(Xi'an Shiyu University, Xi'an, China, 710065)

Abstract: Faced with the development of popularization, internationalization and modernization of the higher education, the institutions of higher learning must be accurately oriented, highlight the characteristics of the school-running, clarify the school development thoughts, promote the competitiveness by improving the educational quality, intensifying the discipline construction and strengthening the vigor of the school.

Key word: the institution of higher learning; the characteristics of running a school; core competitiveness

With the speedy development of the economy, society, science and technology in our country, the popularization process of higher education in China has been accelerated. The new era entrusts a new mission to the university, and the university faces the new challenge and opportunity for development too. It is the inevitable choice of the strategic development for each modern university to know how to seize the opportunity and establish the scientific development view to innovate constantly, to deepen the reformation, to develop the advantage, and to own the characteristics. Meanwhile this is the great subject that we must face as well. As to the characteristics of the school and its development, we should show great foresight, size up the situation, grow with each passing hour, and innovate constantly to promote the sustainable development of the school.

I. The Connotation of the Characteristics of Running a School

What are the characteristics of running a school? The characteristics of school-

running are unique styles and features of its own which has evolved progressively in the long-term development course and practice of running a school. This is the result that the leading collective of the school and all teachers, students, administrative personnel and workers have exerted themselves for many years through accumulating constantly, summarizing, condensing, improving, pursuing untiringly, and perfecting constantly under correct thought and idea of running a school.

The connotation of the characteristics of running a university includes a lot of respects. On broad sense, the university is a purposeful, normal academic organization, and therefore the school characteristics are supposed to have three components---- ideology, material shape, and organization. Among them, the ideology reflects the idea of running this university, as well as the thought, the objective, the campus spirit, the academic and cultural atmosphere, etc. It is the soul of a university and the base of running a school too.

The characteristics of running a school embody many aspects in the composition of discipline and on the level of discipline construction, which are the core characteristics of running a university. It also plays a leading role in the course of formation and development of the universities. The teaching characteristic of a university, the mode characteristic of personnel training, and the scientific research characteristic all depend invariably on the professional discipline characteristic of this school. The forms of the professional discipline characteristics are varied. The characteristics can be highlighted though the overall arrangement of discipline, the specialty offered, the personnel building, the discipline echelon construction, and the condition building of management and scientific research. The university can develop some key disciplines according to its own to make them become dominant disciplines, taking the lead in seizing" the commanding point " in this field, and then to make the remarkable achievement. It is an important way for the university to form and develop its own characteristics of running a school.

II. Highlighting the Characteristics of Running a University is the Key Development Strategy

The characteristics of running a university are not merely the existence strategy, but also a development strategy of a university. From the history of higher educational development, only owning clear orientation and characteristics could help the school to form the effect of "famous-brands " and find its own identity in the world. Once the characteristics of a school form its own shape, it will become a kind of valuable education resource of the school, a kind of cultural atmosphere. In this way, they will

exert an imperceptible influence on teachers, students, administrative personnel and workers. Meanwhile, it will also become a kind of intangible assets to exert an extensive and deep influence in the society. But in our university, the position of dominant disciplines is not very outstanding; the pattern of multi-disciplinary coordinated development has not really taken shape yet. And the conspicuous contradictions between the scale of the school and the poor condition for running a school, together with the gap between the real basic teaching condition and the needs for development make everything more difficult. Only through owning its characteristics, developing its characteristics, and strengthening its characteristics, can our school strengthen its own competitive power and then survive and develop.

III. Strategic Reflection On The School's Characteristic Development

1. On the school's characteristics

Characteristic development should be made in close combination with the needs of social and economic growth of Shaanxi Province and with the needs of the industrial structure's readjustment and the science and technology development of the petroleum industry and the petrochemical industry. Shaanxi, abundant in oil and natural gas, is a province with a great developmental potential, and an important energy and chemical base of China. Xi'an Petroleum University, with a history of 54 years' development, is one of the earliest petroleum universities in China. We should develop our school's characteristics around the petroleum industry and the petrochemical industry. In Shaanxi Province, there are numerous colleges and universities, with a complete range of disciplines and rich teacher resources, each school having its own characteristics and advantages. Having particularly favorable geographic location, our school is supposed to learn and absorb each school's strong points, thus developing our own features.

2. On school's Orientation and Aim

Starting from the whole requirements of structural distribution of Chinese higher education and the school's reality, we have made clear our orientations based on the petroleum industry and the petrochemical industry. The main target for the university orientation is centered around the teaching of undergraduates and postgraduates. And also the education objective is toward cultivating application-type advanced special talents with solid theoretical base, good practical ability and high quality for the development of the petroleum industry and the petrochemical industry and also for the social and economic development of West China. The discipline orientation for the university is toward a multidisciplinary institution with emphasis on petroleum

engineering and petrochemistry engineering as its main characteristics, with science, engineering, economy, management and liberal arts developing in harmony.

3. On the Characteristics of Disciplines and Specialties

The disciplines' characteristic is the key competitive power for a school's development. The discipline's innovation and its characteristic are the driving forces for the school's growth. Within a few years, the number of students in our school has been quadrupled and the number of undergraduate majors has doubled, and the school has developed from a single-discipline institute to a multidisciplinary university. In regard to the disciplinary set-up, engineering will be taken as the chief discipline, with science, economy, management and liberal arts developing harmoniously and with petroleum and petrochemicals as well as advanced new technology as the principal feature. While strengthening the engineering, which has already had its advantage and strong demand, we have to develop disciplines of science, economy and management along their natural courses and gradually perfect liberal arts.

Keeping the engineering-centered direction and strengthening the feature of the petroleum and petrochemical and advanced new technology, Engineering is still the main body of the school's disciplines with a solid base, and it is also the school's advantage. We should concentrate our resources on the fast development of the petroleum exploration and development disciplinary group with petroleum engineering and petroleum geology as its backbone, of the mechanical engineering group and machinery electronic engineering as its backbone, of the electronic engineering group with instrument and apparatus as its backbone, and of the chemistry and chemical engineering group with fine chemical engineering as its backbone. Meanwhile, we should gradually strengthen relevant engineering majors, making the school's engineering category rich, solid and perfect, thus having prominent features and advantages.

In the field of science we have mathematics, physics, chemistry, material science and electronic information science, which belong to 5 first-grade disciplines in our university. A well-running of science major will have a profound strategic significance in improving the school's academic level and upgrading the school's level. We should make science majors into excellent ones. When engineering majors have science as a support, it will be of much help to improving engineering level, and science majors will be enhanced and developed in its combination with engineering, benefiting from each other.

In the field of economy and management disciplines, we are in a stronger

position and may have fine potential for future development and a bigger advantage compared with the other petroleum colleges and universities. We have to maintain our characteristics and advantage. Especially against the background of petroleum enterprises and petrochemical enterprises having entered the international markets, we should strengthen our researches into international petroleum economy, international mineral resources distribution, international mineral resources regulations, international business law and some other fields, intensify the characteristic building of international economy and trade, business management, and make further improvement of disciplinary set-up so that we can provide a good service for China's four major petroleum and petrochemical corporations in their exploration of the overseas markets and in their development of the international co-operations.

4. On discipline construction

----- Discipline construction is the core of all the school's development, and the optimization of the disciplinary structure and the promotion of disciplinary level are the key to realize the school's connotative development. After a basic completion of scale-enlarging development, we are supposed to focus our strength on the development of the discipline construction.

----- Discipline construction consists mainly of two correlative indivisible aspects: to readjust and optimize disciplinary structure to form a pattern in which science and engineering may combine with each other and science and arts penetrate each other; to build several key disciplines and raise discipline level so as to form several characteristic disciplinary groups based on key disciplines.

----- Discipline construction should based on applicability principle, characteristic principle, level principle and entirety principle.

----- Liberal arts in the university is new in our university but with a good developing tendency, especially English, music and law, which have already had their individual bases. At present, these departments could do well in their undergraduate education programs, and meanwhile they have to take measures to reach maturity and to apply for the qualification of granting a master's degree.

5. On the School's Developing Steps

According to the 15-year-plan of the school development and the perspective for the year of 2015, the target of the first step has been achieved on the whole. To be specific, the total number of the student enrollment amounts to 13,000; a multi-subject has been established with the newly increased seven subjects in Science, Engineering, Economy, Management, Arts and so on.

The goal of the second step will be achieved within the following five years. The total number of the student enrollment for the undergraduate program will amount to 16,000. The school will readjust and balance the structure of the subjects for undergraduate programs. Meanwhile, the postgraduate programs will be increased, and the enrollment of the postgraduates will amount to 1000 or 1500. In order to enhance the essence of the development, the school will develop some important, even brand-Major, for example, Engineering, Economy and Management and try to be empowered to award doctor's degree in two to four fields.

The third step is to keep total number of the student enrollment in the undergraduates level around 16,000, and the number of postgraduates around 3000 or 5000. In this way the school will continue to increase the rate of undergraduate students and postgraduate students at one to four. At the same time, the school will also try to develop a series of important subjects in Science, Engineering, Economy, Management and so on. And also one target for the university is to have one or two state-level disciplines with the future aim to have at least 10 doctorate programs, and to have one or two academicians. Anyhow the final target for us is to be a famous university with a high reputation in China.

6. Four Great Strategies as the Major Measures for School Development

A. The quality-oriented strategy

The priority of the quality-oriented strategy is to establish a strong quality consciousness in the university. Adhering to talent-valued core, both teachers and students are rendered with a full role in their teaching and learning activities. The initiative and creativeness of the students and the teachers are motivated in this way. And we are taking the strategy to reform the teaching in the university. The basic strategies are to enforce the basis education, to broaden the major development, to highlight the education characteristics, to develop the students' ability and to emphasize the basic quality of the students under the well-planned and constant steps.

B. The subject-featured strategy

A university could maintain a constant development and strive for a bright future if it has its own individual features regardless of the subject scale. Our university is featured with Petroleum, Petrochemical, and Petroleum-associated subjects throughout the school development, and holds on to developing some potential and new subjects which have a good adaptation to the social development. Consequently, because of the clear feature in its development, Xi'an ShiYou University has won more attention from the other universities.

C. The talent-valued strategy

The main point of the talent-valued strategy is to build up a comprehensive human resources. Making adjustments in the use of manpower, optimizing the structure of the human resources, creating the favorable atmosphere and conditions, and achieving the conformity of resource distribution are the key points and main tasks of the talent-valued strategy. And to this point, the school will pay much attention to the "three tactics" to attract more talents.

The school will make a great effort to make a comprehensive and reasonable combination among major subjects, vital research programs, the important experiment bases and the right professional talents. In this way, a group of talented professionals will be discovered and well nurtured. What's more, the core of the talent-valued strategy is the refreshing of educational notion and the innovation of the educational system. All in all, the crucial task for this strategy is to construct an excellent, creative, competitive group.

D. The expanding development strategy

All along we stick to an 'open school' policy. The university takes the advantage of the subject superiority of Petroleum and Petrochemical, and tries to enhance the cooperation and interaction with the local Petrochemical corporations. The school also maintains the principles of mutual complementary of superiority, sharing the common resources, mutual benefit and reciprocity, exploring the synchronous development, to enlarge the scope and raise the level of the cooperation with the local corporations. The school provides the corporations an all-round service in talents, technology and so on. At the same time, we could also make full use of the instruments and the equipment, the working stuff, and the funds of the local corporations in return.

In any event, I think we should maintain a life-long learning and keep clear consciousness all the time. To be creative and initiative, We not only should have the courage to develop our own features, moreover, to have the courage and capability to make it known to the world. As remarked by the famous Australia educationist Mallogan: "The greatest university belongs to the world". Let's keep on trying and try to make it.

Thank you