

## On Social Service Functions of District Universities

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### Abstract

There have been four functions for nowadays universities: talent cultivation, scientific research, social service and cultural passing and creation. The social service function is the major one among the four because the position of school running, which is to foster application type talents and the role of district economy in social development. The article states the functions, the connotation and the aims of the district universities.

**Key words:** District university; Social service; Connotation; Aims

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The speech of Hu Jintao Secretary General at 100 Year of Qinghua University is not only a guiding principle for reform and development of higher education, but also a theoretical guide for us to understand the functions of the universities. Hu Jintao Secretary General pointed out that our aim is to push the economic society to develop perfectly and quickly and rejuvenate the Chinese nation. Technology is the key; personnel are the core; education is the foundation. The strategy of boosting the country through science and education and making the country powerful through talents must be firmly implemented. The nation must comprehensively carry out the national middle and long-term educational reform and fasten the steps to higher level as an educational nation.

As an important combination of science and technology to the first productivity and the first resource

for the talents, the higher education is playing the key role in the nation's development. Continuous quality improvements, a lifeline in the higher education, should be penetrated among the works as fostering the talents, scientific research, social services and cultural inheritance and innovation. We must adapt the requirements to make the economic society develop excellently and quickly, to promote the comprehensive developments of the talents and to push the society forward. We should insist on connotative development, have international advanced ideas and experiences, improve the qualities of the higher education in full-scale and provide the talents and intelligence for the socialist modernization construction. The speech of Hu Jintao, the General Secretary, is the guide for the district universities to serve their function of providing service to the society.

### 1. THE FUNCTION OF SERVING THE SOCIETY OF DISTRICT UNIVERSITIES

What is the function of the university? The earliest university, Bologna University, was founded in 1088 in Italy. There were Professors and Doctors in the Imperial College in Tang Dynasty. However, the purpose of founding the Imperial College was to pass the examination. The aim of foresting the students was to take part in the imperial examination instead of learning knowledge and fostering the abilities. The Bologna University is the earliest to bring up the idea that the main function of the university is transmission of knowledge and personnel training. The subject of the universities of that age was theology, the science of law, medical science and literature, which was teaching the knowledge and fostering the talents. In 1810, Berlin University was founded in Humboldt, German. The new cultivation was introduced. It is believed that there should be scientific research, independent academic spirit, academic freedom

and academic autonomy. It has been well known as the Humboldt Spirit, which adds the new function of science research to the university. In 1930s, Wisconsin University stood for all America universities, illustrating the idea that the best professors are those stepping in the cow dung. It has added the function of serving the society to universities, aiming to fostering the talents for the society and providing the technology for the society.

Entering the 21<sup>st</sup> century, especially after the 911 Event, higher education has experienced two common changes worldwide. On the one hand, the internationalization of the university has been increasingly improved. There appeared a standard for estimation of universities according to the international standards. On the other hand, universities started to make use of their special advantages to promote exchanges and fusions between different cultures and to eliminate the conflicts between different cultures and to push the world to be harmonious. In 2011, Hu Jintao, the General Secretary, classified inheritance and innovation as the prime one in the functions of the universities at the Anniversary of 100 years of Qinghua University.

In the opinion of the author of the paper, seeing from the angle of value and functions, the local universities serve four functions: the cultivation of talents, the science research, the contributions to the society and the passage and the renovation of culture. The four functions are inseparable just like the four wheels of a car, with the contribution to the society being the driving wheel, because universities have turned into “the core institutions of modern society”, the engine of a country’s economy. The revitalization of the country, the government and the people demands that universities serve the society well. Universities are in fact no longer the ivory towers; instead, they are closely connected with all aspects of the society, exchanging materials, energy, information, system and space.

From the perspective of epistemology and politics, local universities embody the requirements of politics by serving the society. Science and technology contribute to the development of society, while thoughts lead the development. Universities should be both the driving engine for the development of society and the think tank which helps to decide the direction of society. Universities should shoulder their responsibilities of leading the development of the society by means of employing academics, knowledge, ethics, spirits, thoughts, and culture to the society. Thus, universities can make themselves the lighthouse of the society, the flowing water of renovation, the origin of truth, the incubation of culture, the resource of knowledge and the high ground of ethics.

According to the theory of game of tripartite correlations of market, government and academics put forward by Burton Clark, the market factors no doubt take the advantages in the course that local universities serve the society.

## 2. THE CULTIVATION OF CONNOTATIONS OF LOCAL UNIVERSITIES’ ROLE FOR SERVING THE SOCIETY

Local universities should focus on the general objective of the establishment of universities. They should get familiar with the situation of economy, society and culture, and understand well the essence of education and teaching, science research, subject establishment, and culture establishment. Meanwhile, they should know well their own advantages and disadvantages in order that they can decide how many majors, projects, accomplishments and rewards can be appropriately employed to the development of the society and turned into real productive forces, what can be helpful to the policy-making reference, decision consultation and culture development, and what can provide the society with a variety of education services and help to generalize the scientific knowledge. The local universities should stick to the principles: “Having what others lack, doing what you are better than others, perfecting what you have when others also have them, doing what you think are valuable to the society, not what is against your values, making full use of the competitive advantages and reforming the disadvantage of backwardness”. They should also set up the service forums and cultivate the service teams, produce more service accomplishments and generate service effects. Only by taking an active part in the construction of the local economy and society and by mutual benefits can local universities realize the missions of serving the society and leading the development of the society. The local universities should also aim at the strategic goals of the renovation of the local science and technology and the development of the society and economy, because the local universities can highlight their values by only making contribution to the society, and only by applying what they have achieved to the development of the society can the local universities incarnate their functions and achievements so as to serve the society in a better way. The local universities should conform to the way of thinking of “getting support with service and achieving development by making contributions”, strengthen the service consciousness of both faculties and students, renew service thinking, widen service channels, create service images and increase their contributions to development of the regional economy and society.

Local universities should create a university’s brain trust and think tank, attach great importance to their association with the outside world and reinforce their communication with the society, pay attention to the issues of the society, because their important responsibilities are to help to take the society and economy take off and lead the development of culture. Take Shandong Province as an example, *The 12<sup>th</sup> Five-year Scheme Outline for the Development of Shandong Province’s*

*Economy and Society* points out that the local government should carry out the project for reform and upgrade of traditional industries, attach greater importance to the development of such industries as engineering machinery and electrical equipment, make the advanced equipment manufacturing industry stronger, regulate and optimize raw material industries, improve the development level of such primary industries as building materials and mechanical engineering, attach greater importance to the five industries such as new material, new information and new medicine, strive to develop cultural industry, and push forward the development of the industry to make it into a pillar industry. *The 12<sup>th</sup> Five-year Scheme Outline for the Development of Jinan City's Economy and Society* points out that the local government should accelerate the speed by which such traditional industries as petrification and building material will be updated and advanced with high-tech and advanced practical technologies, strive to develop information service industry, make a service-prior economy, integrate such spring cultural resources as local folk customs, cultivate and strengthen many a spring cultural images and create such images characteristic of Spring City, accelerate the strategy of making the city more prosperous with the help of culture, strive to develop cultural undertakings and cultural industries. The above-mentioned strategies provide the local universities in Shandong Province a better chance to thrive, and the universities in turn should make full use of the chance to make strategic changes in such aspects as talents cultivation, science research and society service, improve their service abilities and levels to serve the society in order to win capacious space for the future.

The Sixth Plenary Session of the Seventeenth Central Committee of Chinese Communist Party provides clear direction for the great cultural development and prosperity of social service for local universities: Universities are a community of academy, knowledge, thoughts, morality, value and culture. Local universities should exploit this opportunity at large, enabling their brain trusts, youth volunteers to play a leading and inheriting role on social culture better. Secretary General Hu Jintao regards cultural heritage and innovation as the fourth function of universities, which is an important cognition of universities and higher education law. Cultural heritage and innovation plays an equal role as innovation of science and technology and therefore they have equal status. In its meaning, cultural heritage and innovation offer direction and life style to the society while technology innovation provides driving force for the society, just as the steering wheel and engine have their own functions. The expansion of the universities' fourth function puts forward higher and newer requirements for the construction of higher education. A university should possess not only innovative capability adapting to the original function, but also the ability of keeping the tradition suiting the new function because the cultural heritage needs loyal insistence,

especially guarding the university's essence, that is, its status and dignity in a community of morality, academy, knowledge, value, thoughts and culture. Sometimes keeping the tradition is harder than innovation. The university should not only look forward, but also look backward and the method of research must be distinct from the norms of common customs. Universities need to make choices and commitments to the eternity that forms in the history.

Three concepts stand out when local universities develop the institutions of social service. The first is to insist on the concept of open mind in the development on the institutional level of social service functional departments, for functional departments in the universities ought to strengthen the communication with the outside parties on a variety of aspects, actively broaden the development space in order to realize the development of interaction between universities and society. In the second place, stick to the concept of nature in the development of the proceeding level of social service functional departments, focusing on the affection needs of the targets served, making sure to take advantage of people's virtues, avoid their weaknesses, and help them get out of trouble. Thirdly, insist on the concept of reason in the development of the technological level of social service function, forming the highly efficient structure of organizations, carrying on streamlined management, reducing hierarchies, connecting heart to heart among the large number of teachers and students, building the broad bridge between universities and society.

Concerning the social service, local universities should utilize four kinds of resources, that is, the government, the news media, teachers and students in the universities and the alumni.

Firstly, take good advantage of government resources. Local universities should establish strategic cooperative relations of mutual benefit and trust with local cities and concerned organizations and carry out extensive cooperation with government, entrepreneurs and social entities. On the basis of regional economic construction and development, according to the win-win model, they should expand cooperation with all local cities and businesses in the provinces, accelerate the construction pace of production, learning and research, improve the cooperation levels and manage to form the long-term and stable cooperation relations with the local councils and enterprises. At the same time, they also ought to actively become involved in the research and development of regional major projects, together with enterprises, set up engineering centers on ministry, provincial and national level, declare major projects and scientific research awards, quicken the transformation of scientific research results, elevate the contributing level of serving local economic and social development, and win a broader development space for the universities.

Secondly, take good advantage of news media

resources. Make perfect the news planning, increase the strength of news publication, improve the popularity, reputation and placement of social service, and broaden the influence, competition and credibility of universities on the society.

Thirdly, take good advantage of the resources of teachers and students in the universities. Set up contact spots and persons in all departments and schools, master the dynamic trend of talents cultivation, scientific research, discipline and cultural construction, launch them out to serve the local councils on time. Strengthen the leading role of organizations and organic combination of carrying on social service and strengthening the construction of teachers and create good conditions for teachers with great specialty to engage in social service, inspiring the initiative of teachers to carry on social service.

Fourthly, take good advantage of the alumni resources. Set up the contact spots of serving society in different places by using the organizations, i.e. the alumni and educational funds and improve the landing rate of service.

### **3. FOCUSING ON SOCIAL SERVICE OF LOCAL UNIVERSITIES: THE APPLICATION-ORIENTED TALENTS**

According to UNESCO International Education Standard Classification revised in 1997, although subject-oriented professional education and application-oriented professional education belong to 5A normal higher education, there exist differences in training direction and function. Subject-oriented professional education belongs to 5A1 which is classified by subjects while application-oriented professional education belongs to 5A2 which stresses on classification in different industries. Accordingly, application-oriented professional education is the second type of professional applied education (5A2) between 5A1 and vocational education (5B). This type of education is led by vocations. The main line is “professional and practical”. It is based on professional education and the characteristic is to combine subjects and vocations, training advanced talents to face the real society.

According to the data from The Ministry of Education, there are altogether 792 undergraduate colleges in mainland China, including 430 institutes and more than 350 universities. Undergraduate education is the base of higher education in China. Among nearly eight hundred colleges, except that those “985” universities are universities of researches, most colleges are application-oriented whose students consist of the fatal construction of our economy development and this is of strategic significance for us to turn from big country of human labors into strong country of human resource. Apparently local colleges focus on cultivating students who will take social service as their aim of career.

American Carnegie Foundation classifies schools into four levels according to different degree of conferring units. The first level is doctor’s degree conferring unit, consisting 6.6%; the second one is master’s degree conferring unit, occupying 16.5%, the third one is undergraduate’s (13.9%) while the fourth one is community college which consists 43.3%. With all these levels, it’s easy to settle their own goals. Furthermore, it’s more appropriate to classify by functions into three levels: The first one consists of teaching, researching and serving, including doctor’s degree conferring universities; the second one consists of teaching and serving, including those undergraduate universities; the third one is the college of teaching and serving, including high vocational colleges. The first type focuses on cultivating high-level talents of related education. Those universities are meant to train college teachers, professional researchers and high-level managers. There must be some specific teaching models for those universities which might be class teaching plus students’ researches. The second one is common undergraduate school focusing on training application-oriented students. The third type is the high vocational education which focuses on skill training.

From the experience of modernized process of western developed countries, demand for talent in economic and social development shows an “olive” trend, which means academic talents and normal labors are minorities while those people with certain skills occupy the majorities in society. With development of our industries and high-tech, strategic adjustment of economic structure should be fastened. Traditional industries are replaced by high-tech ones and transformation from labor-intensive to high-tech knowledge happens frequently. That trend requires not only skillful workers but also plenty of advanced engineers and management talents, who can do researches and experiments, improve production level and make research work profound in the front line of manufacturing and managing.

Provisions of the Law on Higher Education have also made clear that colleges are independent legal person sponsoring entities. Thus every college should be equal only with differences in teaching level, characteristics and reputation. It’s quite wrong to artificially divide colleges into various grades and ranks. To a college the most important thing is its brand and its own characteristics. So every type of colleges should make their own reputation in a down-to-earth manner on the appropriate level of running.

National Medium and Long Term Educational Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020) points out that colleges should optimize the structure and get their own features to adapt to the need of our economic and social development. We should establish dynamic adjustment mechanism and optimize teaching structures, major structures and type structures to promote interdisciplinary integration, stressing on expanding size

of application, compound and skillful talents education, building classification systems in colleges, improving classification management, playing the role of policy guidance and resource allocation, guiding universities' orientation, overcoming the homogenization to form their own teaching methodologies and styles. The above can specify the direction for cultivating applied talents in local universities.

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