

Practical Study on MPA Talent Cultivation Based on the Whole Process Management: The Case Study of Guangxi University

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Abstract: Master of Public Administration (MPA) is the core carrier of cultivating high-level, application-oriented and compound public management talents. The talent training process covers a series of key activities or processes such as training program formulation, curriculum construction, teaching quality assurance, academic early warning and diversion, practice-based construction, academic salon activities, case writing and competition participation, etc. Based on the perspective of the whole process management, this study takes the MPA education of Guangxi University as an example to comprehensively sort out and summarize the main practices in the MPA talent cultivation of Guangxi University. An in-depth discussion was conducted on the challenges faced in improving the quality of MPA talent cultivation in the future.

Keywords: The Whole Process Management; MPA; Talent Cultivation.

1. Introduction

In January 2025, the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council jointly issued *the 2024-2035 master plan on building China* into a leading country in education. This document clearly proposes to optimize the layout of higher education, expand the scale of postgraduate training, and vigorously develop professional degree postgraduate education. This marks that professional degree postgraduate education has become a key support for serving the national development strategy and supporting the construction of a leading country in education. Master of Public Administration (MPA) is a professional degree that focuses on public governance practice and connects academic research with public services. It is a kind of postgraduate education program established to meet the requirements of society for the modernization, scientization and professionalization of public management. Its core mission lies in cultivating high-level, applied and compound public management talents for government departments and public institutions[1]. Since the Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council approved *the Plan for the Establishment of the Master of Public Administration Professional Degree* in 1999, MPA education in China has gone through nearly 30 years of development. From the first batch of 24 pilot institutions for student recruitment in 2001, 341 colleges have been authorized to award MPA professional degrees. It has made significant contributions to the cultivation of civil servants, the building of the contingent of cadres, and the development of higher administrative management education[2].

The whole process management is a structured approach to improve enterprise performance through the careful design and strict execution of business processes, and the core is to manage the process[3]. The whole process management breaks down the goal into small goals for each process, and achieves the overall goal through the realization of these small goals in each process[4]. The whole process management has been applied to various management practices and has played a key role. The MPA talent cultivation process involves a series of key activities and

procedures, including training programs formulation, course construction, teaching quality assurance, academic early warning and diversion, practical bases construction, academic salon activities, case writing and competition participation, etc. Deeply integrate the concept of the whole process management into the talent cultivation and management of MPA, establish a closed-loop management mechanism with each training link interlinked to effectively enhance the quality and effectiveness of MPA postgraduate training. Some scholars applied the idea of the whole process management to the evaluation of MPA education quality[5] and the quality guarantee of MPA education[6], providing useful references and inspirations for improving the level of MPA talent cultivation.

2. The Practice of MPA Talent Cultivation through the Whole Process Management: A Case Study of Guangxi University

Guangxi University combines its own characteristics and advantages, and learns from the experiences and practices of domestic and foreign institutions that set up the MPA program. Based on this, Guangxi University makes active explorations and innovations in the cultivation of MPA talents from multiple aspects, including training program formulation, course construction, teaching quality assurance, academic early warning and diversion, practical bases construction, academic salon activities, case writing and competition participation, etc.

(1) Through careful organization and multiple thematic discussions, Guangxi University has revised the training program into a new version, enhancing its content and systematically optimizing its curriculum structure. The university has introduced specialized courses such as Governance in Border Areas and Emergency Management, Comparative Study of China-ASEAN Civil Service Systems, Regional Public Governance in ASEAN Countries, and Research on Regional Grassroots Governance. A curriculum system with public management strengths and regional

characteristics has thus been progressively developed.

(2) By integrating disciplinary features, existing faculty resources, and geographical advantages, Guangxi University has refined its disciplinary orientation. Course teams have been formed based on the current teaching staff, and a course leader system has been implemented. Under this system, the course leader takes the lead in revising and improving the instructional programme, consistently incorporating ideological and political education throughout the curriculum. Efforts have been strengthened to develop high-quality postgraduate courses, aiming to create golden courses while eliminating substandard courses. Thus, the university establishes a research-oriented teaching model centered on graduate students. This model incorporates diverse teaching methods, including case studies, seminars, and thematic lectures.

(3) Strengthen the daily monitoring and quality evaluation of courses. In alignment with the university's closed-loop quality monitoring system, the college establishes a supervision team responsible for postgraduate teaching evaluation, quality feedback, and continuous improvement. The team includes the secretary of the party committee in charge of moral education for graduate students, the vice dean in charge of postgraduate affairs, and the directors of each department and center. They jointly participate in the daily monitoring and quality assessment of postgraduate courses.

(4) The review is conducted item by item in the four stages of postgraduate credit review, mid-term assessment, final assessment and degree review. Based on the review, warnings or elimination and diversion will be issued. Those who fail to pass the course credit review within two years will be diverted and eliminated. Those who fail to pass the mid-term assessment review within three years will be diverted and eliminated. Those who fail to pass the final assessment within three months before the end of the valid study period will be diverted and eliminated. Those who fail to pass the degree review within two months before the end of the valid study period will be transferred and eliminated. At the same time, including outstanding or problematic papers in the positive and negative lists of job assessment will further solidify the responsibilities of supervisors and promote the continuous improvement of the quality of postgraduate education in the university.

(5) Strengthen the construction of practical bases. Adhering to the concept of resource sharing and mutual benefit, Guangxi University adopts methods, such as university-government co-construction and the government and university-society collaboration, to strengthen the construction of internship and practice bases for cultivating high-level public management professionals. The college establishes practice bases in cooperation with organizations, including Guangxi Transportation Investment Group Co., Ltd, Guangxi Red Cross Foundation, the municipal governments of Laibin and Jingxi, and the Hezhou Municipal Government Research Center, etc. These efforts aim to achieve mutual benefits for the university, graduate students, teachers, the government, and social organizations.

(6) Regularize academic salon activities. Academic salon activities are held regularly, which greatly stimulates the academic interest of graduate students. Since September 2020, a total of fifty academic salons with themes for graduate students have been held. Each academic salon focuses on a research topic within the discipline of public administration, with graduate students serving as the main speakers and

inviting professors as participating guests for open exchanges. So far, graduate students and professors from Tsinghua University, Guangxi University, Guangxi University for Nationalities and other universities have been invited to discuss and exchange on the cutting-edge issues in the field of public administration. An open platform that can integrate classroom theoretical knowledge with scientific research and practical experience has gradually been formed. This not only provides an opportunity for graduate students to engage in theoretical exchanges and intellectual collisions, but also helps broaden their thinking and horizons, and enhances their academic critical thinking and theoretical innovation capabilities.

3. Challenges in Improving the Quality of MPA Talent Cultivation

(1) Challenges in Cultivating MPA with Local Characteristics.

Guangxi University has been offering MPA education for two decades. With the growing enrollment, how to enhance local characteristics has become a key issue for its future development.

In recent years, in line with the training objectives and fundamental requirements of the MPA professional degree education, Guangxi University has actively adapted to the demands of social development by establishing research directions and specialized courses that reflect local characteristics. For instance, it adds research directions such as governance in border areas and emergency management, as well as local characteristic courses like Governance in Border Areas and Emergency Management, Comparative Study of China-ASEAN Civil Service Systems, Regional Public Governance in ASEAN Countries, and Research on Regional Grassroots Governance, etc. However, in the process of running the training, some challenges have also been encountered. For instance, there are relatively few original professional teachers engaged in research on governance in border areas and emergency management. Although some teachers began to shift their research focus in this direction, the shortage of teachers in this field will persist for some time. Moreover, due to the limitations of the university's authorized strength, it is difficult to introduce talent in this direction. All these factors are not conducive to cultivating the local characteristics of MPA. In addition, in the actual teaching process, although the above-mentioned courses have been set up, some characteristic courses have not been truly offered due to insufficient student enrollment, and some have only held some specialized academic lectures or seminars.

(2) Challenges in MPA case teaching.

Although MPA teachers have achieved certain results in case writing and case teaching, MPA case teaching also faces many challenges under the new situation.

First, the number of MPA teaching cases still fails to meet the constantly growing learning demands of students. In recent years, case teaching has been promoted in MPA education, and MPA students have benefited a lot from it. However, the demand for MPA students for the use of cases by teachers in teaching is also increasing. Under the promotion of the National MPA Education Steering Committee, activities such as core course teaching, case discussions, case competitions, and the publication of public management case textbooks have led to a considerable

number of cases at present. However, due to the strong practicality of the discipline of public administration, some of the original cases may lose their applicability because of adjustments in public policies and changes in practice. In addition, teachers writing cases by themselves face the problems of long-term consumption and great difficulty. Therefore, the number and growth rate of existing cases still cannot meet the constantly increasing learning demands of MPA students.

Second, the number of original localized cases is significantly insufficient. In the process of case teaching, most of the cases adopted are from abroad and other regions in China. Cases created by teaching staff, especially those with the characteristics of Guangxi Province, are used less frequently. Case events have regional characteristics and varying degrees of difficulty, which makes it difficult for students to enhance case interpretation and analysis skills through case learning and discussion. This affects the actual effect of case teaching to a certain extent.

Third, the MPA case teaching poses challenges to teachers' teaching skills. At present, a large number of MPA teachers have received seminars on case writing and teaching, training on case teaching of core courses, and lecture training on case teaching organized by the National MPA Education Steering Committee. However, case teaching puts forward high demands on teachers' teaching skills. Without teachers' meticulous design and preparation of teaching links, the substantive effect of case teaching will be affected.

Fourth, the incentive mechanism for MPA case teaching is insufficient. Although case teaching has gradually gained attention, to a large extent, it relies on the enthusiasm and sense of responsibility of front-line MPA teachers. The incentive mechanism of MPA case teaching is obviously insufficient, which hinders the sustainable development of MPA case teaching. For instance, no dedicated funds have been set up for teachers to conduct investigations and write cases, nor have case teaching work been included in the assessment indicators. If these practices continue, they will dampen the enthusiasm of front-line MPA teachers for case teaching. When it is difficult to coordinate the time for teaching and research work, teachers will give up case teaching exploration, which requires a large investment, takes a long time and yields little effect. In order to achieve the sustainable development of case teaching, it is necessary to establish an incentive mechanism for MPA case teaching.

(3) Challenges in implementing the double mentor system under the new situation.

To implement the requirements of the Communist Party of China Central Committee on strict management of cadres, strengthen cadre team construction and anti-corruption and integrity promotion, local government discipline inspection and supervision organs have more stringent requirements for the part-time work behavior of leading cadres. Therefore, many leading cadres are rather cautious about serving as off-campus practice mentors for MPA students. Although they have not received any part-time remuneration, some of the existing off-campus practice mentors have applied to no longer serve as off-campus part-time mentors due to public

opinion pressure, disciplinary requirements, and considerations of their personal political futures. Therefore, the difficulty of hiring off-campus practice mentors is increasing.

(4) Challenges in the MPA education internationalization.

Against the backdrop of globalization and the Belt and Road Initiative, MPA education is increasingly emphasizing internationalization. The transformation, upgrading and development of MPA education in universities must actively adapt to and integrate into the development trend of this new era, and unswervingly promote the internationalization strategy and process of MPA education. Due to various constraints, Guangxi University's MPA postgraduate education has few opportunities to "go out and invite in". The international exchanges of full-time MPA teachers are relatively few, and those of MPA postgraduates are even rarer. To actively address the challenges brought about by the internationalization of MPA education, the following key areas of work need to be focused on in the future. First, establish a regular communication mechanism with teachers and students from foreign universities to enhance the international perspective of MPA teachers and graduate students. Second, explore the joint MPA education mechanism between Chinese and foreign universities and promote the internationalization of MPA education. Third, taking advantage of Guangxi Province's geographical proximity to ASEAN countries, directly recruit MPA international students from ASEAN, enhance the internationalization level of MPA education, and demonstrate the international influence of MPA education in local universities.

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