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Research on Mobility Willingness of Teachers in Universities and Colleges and its Influential Factors

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Abstract: With the implementation of the Double First-Class Initiative, the mobility of teachers in universities and colleges has been more frequent. As the central pillar of the development of universities and colleges, the orderly mobility can enhance the teachers' enthusiasm, contribute to the academic exchanges, as well as improve the overall education quality. However, the utilitarian management system of talent introduction in some universities and colleges has led to the disorderly mobility of teachers, and exposed many problems. This paper makes an analysis of the current trends of the mobility of teachers in universities and colleges and its influential factors, as well as proposes concrete solutions.

Keywords: Teachers in universities and colleges; Mobility willingness; Influential factors.

1. Introduction

As the primary resources, teachers in universities and colleges assume the crucial responsibilities of talents' cultivation, academic research and innovation. In recent years, the competition in the field of higher education has been fierce. Especially, since the implementation of the Double First-Class policy, universities and colleges have been faced with a variety of development pressure, for example, the striving of non-first-class universities and colleges for a member of the Double First-Class Initiative, the application for the master's and doctoral programs, and the promotion to a higher rank in the world-famous universities such as US News, QS, and Times.[1] The high-quality teachers have become what universities and colleges compete for, flourishing the academic talent market. However, some universities and colleges have attempted to attract the high-quality teachers within a short time to achieve transformation and upgrading, so that the impetuous utilitarianism is gradually exposed in the process of talent introduction, thus, destroying the normal order of mobility and leading to the chaotic mobility. The unscrupulous poaching and the unreasonable retention have caused the teachers' mobility to be disordered, imbalanced, and even uncontrollable to varying degrees.

2. Core concepts of mobility willingness of teachers in universities and colleges and its influential factors

2.1. Teachers in universities and colleges

According to the Article 5 of the Guiding Opinions on the Management of Post Setting in Universities and Colleges, teachers in universities and colleges are responsible for education, teaching, scientific research and other work, and must have corresponding professional skills, which are not limited to management and logistics support posts..[2]

As a knowledgeable group that undertakes to teach and answer possible questions, the spiritual needs of teachers in universities and colleges are more complicated, therefore, they have more stringent requirements for the pursuit of truth, exploration of the unknown, talents' cultivation and realization of their self-worth. Teachers in universities and colleges are high-level talents engaged in talents' cultivation and innovation, and the academic capital itself is a type of scarce resource, which makes them a relatively more independent group with high requirements for discipline platform and academic cultural atmosphere, so they have relatively high requirements for universities and colleges, making it potentially possible for them to move from one to another.

2.2. The mobility willingness of teachers in universities and colleges

The mobility willingness of teachers in universities and colleges refers to the general tendency of leaving their current teaching posts to seek non-teaching posts or simply of leaving to seek opportunities in other universities and colleges. Simply speaking, it refers to the strong willingness to leave their current jobs, which, however, doesn't necessarily mean the actual mobility. [3]

2.3. Factors influencing the mobility of teachers in universities and colleges

Currently, there are four major factors influencing the mobility of teachers in universities and colleges, namely, the individual, the family, the work and the society.

(1) The individual

With differences in their disciplines, educational background and working experience, teachers in universities and colleges show different needs for work benefits. Here, the work benefits cover many factors such as individual needs, job satisfaction, prospects for career development, performance evaluation, academic working conditions, relations with colleagues, work pressure and sense of belongings. From the perspective of individual needs, there are needs for self-realization, materials and others.

(2) The family

The family has a significant influence on the mobility, especially in the aspects related to children's education, family economic incomes, parents' pension and medical care, family housing conditions and spouses' working conditions. The work stability cannot be separated from the influence of the family, therefore, more attention should be attached to it, if we intend to regulate the mobility of teachers in universities and colleges.

(3) The work

In terms of the work, the factors that influence the mobility willingness are divided into three aspects, namely, working environment, working conditions and payment. The working environment mainly refers to the internal environment, including the types of academic work, levels, the academic conditions, the promotion system, the cultural atmosphere, the objective management, as well as the fairness in the management mechanism. Of many factors, the mobility caused by the promotion system and academic conditions has been the most common. The working conditions mainly refer to the running conditions, the exchange opportunities and scientific research conditions, the lack of which can lead to the loss of teachers to some extent. Playing an important role in the mobility, the payment includes various forms of incentives such as salaries, housing subsidies, and employment subsidies for their children.

(4) The society

The social factors include international and domestic environment. The former includes social development trend and talent introduction mechanism, while the latter involves social security system, talent mobility mechanism, policy guidance, the formulation and improvement of laws and regulations, as well as the economic development level of the city where the university or the college is located.

3. Current situations and problems related to mobility of teachers in universities and colleges

3.1. The imbalanced mobility

With the implementation of First-class University and First-class Academic Discipline Construction, excellent and high-quality teachers have been more favored by universities and colleges than ever, which triggers a fierce competition for talents, thus, resulting in the imbalanced mobility. On the other hand, the salaries set by the governments, universities and colleges, and the one-sided selection by the market have also led to the imbalanced mobility. [4]

3.2. Utilitarianism

Currently, the mobility of teachers in universities and colleges has entered an active period, when some have adopted obvious short-sighted measures, unilaterally pursuing the number of talents, but ignoring whether enough posts can be offered and the lack of various conditions that correspond to the development, such as scientific research facilities, project funds and other. This is not conducive to the stability of their teachers and the long-term development. Judging from the current situations, the school-running resources are continuously flowing to those with high reputation and levels. Especially, the concept of Double First-Class Initiative has caused the school-running resources reshuffle again, so that the school-running resources of the non-double-first-class universities and colleges have shrunk, seriously hindering the overall development of their teachers and educational cause.

4. The negative influence of the disorderly mobility of teachers in universities and colleges

4.1. Intensified waste of education financial resources

The poaching through higher payment is not a positive-sum game, but a zero-sum one or even a negative-sum one. Any university or college involved in the poaching cannot maintain an edge in the competition, since either the net out-mobility or the net in-mobility can confront them with different development challenges, such as the loss of teacher resources and the insufficient expenditure of educational funds.

4.2. The widened gap between universities or colleges in the school-running

With the progress of the times and the growth of population, there are obvious differences in the level of economic development in different regions of China, among which the difference between the eastern, and central and western regions is the most prominent. There is a significant gap between the western and the developed eastern regions in the economic development level, the scientific research equipment, as well as the living environment. Therefore, those universities or colleges with advantageous geographical locations and promising development prospects are more likely to poach teachers from those in less developed regions. The high-quality teachers cultivated by less developed regions using a large amount of time and money may be poached overnight by those in developed regions, a serious disservice to the development of universities and colleges in western regions. [5]

4.3. A disservice to the stability of teachers in universities and colleges

Known for their occupational complexity and distinctiveness, teachers in universities and colleges assume the heavy responsibilities for teaching and scientific research, and coupled with the continuous development of higher education in recent years, the requirements for teachers in universities and colleges are also increasing. With the aim of achieving the best educational results, cultivating a team of teachers with good morals and professional knowledge is a significant means to improve the allocation of teachers and promote the academic development. In response to the mobility, the prudence and moderation should be followed to ensure the rationality of the scale and quantity, and meanwhile, the blind mobility should be avoided so that the existing stability of the team of teachers won't be destroyed.

4.4. A disservice to the academic atmosphere and achievements

The material incentives to attract teachers can promote the quality of teachers' academic research and speed up the outputs of scientific research. However, in the long run, the funds that should be used to support scientific research and teaching are over-invested into the high cost of attracting teachers. Such utilitarianism is a serious violation of development trajectory of universities and colleges as the main front for academic innovation, inevitably hindering the outputs of academic achievements.

5. Research Recommendations

5.1. Improvement in the quality of teachers

Universities or colleges should establish an appropriate recruitment mechanism, so as to cultivate excellent teachers through appropriate adjustments and guarantee the fairness in the academic competition. Through the establishment of scientific research cooperation mechanism between universities, colleges and social organizations, a favorable academic environment can be created. Through the improvement in the teachers' morals, communication between teachers and students and the teachers' mobility, the optimal allocation of teachers can be achieved, thus enhancing the teaching quality. Through the stimulation of teachers' subjective initiatives, the academic atmosphere can be maintained.

5.2. Improvement in the teachers' perceived job satisfaction

To effectively solve the issues existing in the management of universities and colleges, the relevant administrators should organize teachers to communicate on a regular basis, adjust the conflicts in teaching and scientific research, and eliminate the conflicts between teaching and administrative work, in order to ensure the timely and effective feedback in the management.

Universities and colleges should try their best to meet the reasonable teaching requirements, ensuring the teachers' autonomy in their teaching. Teachers should be allowed to express their own ideas, arrange their own teaching content and methods, ensuring that they can sense the great importance attached to teachers and education, so that they can genuinely accept the ideas, values and management mode, and possess a positive work attitudes and behaviors.

Universities and colleges should establish an effective mechanism to collect teachers' opinions in an innovative way, encourage them to speak up, and offer timely feedback, so as to solve the problems that teachers are faced with in teaching and research.

5.3. Improvement in the teachers' income

The structure of the fund use should be adjusted to increase the cost investment in talents, since teachers in universities and colleges are highly educated talents, most of whom are PhD graduates, have numerous overseas learning experience, as well as invest much more monetary, time and opportunity costs. As the most important human resources in universities and colleges, teachers in universities and colleges assume responsibilities of talents' cultivation, scientific research and continuous innovation, therefore, the proportions of investment in human costs should be increased.

The current structure of payment should be improved; a reasonable performance appraisal mechanism should be established; the internal fairness in the payment should be enhanced; and the starting salary paid for young teachers should be raised to guarantee them a favorable environment for scientific research. Teachers in universities and colleges should be classified into scientific research type and teaching type, and different payment structure standards should be correspondingly employed to promote teachers to maximize the value in their professional fields.

Various means should be employed to increase income; advantages that universities or colleges enjoy in talent cultivation, scientific research and continuous innovation should be given full play; various means should be tried to make good use of the knowledge creation advantages; the income of universities and colleges should be increased; and universities and colleges should be encouraged to transform their own scientific and technological achievements and intellectual properties into actual productive forces, so as to generate economic benefits.[6]

5.4. More attention paid to teachers' development to help improve their abilities

More attention should be attached to the training of new young teachers. In order to meet their needs, more practical training should be offered to eliminate tedious and dull training contents such as PPT making and multimedia learning, which have been learned when they were students. Meanwhile, more training of teaching methods should be added to allow teachers to practice and sharpen teaching skills in the classroom. What's more, the training of scientific research project application and research methods should be added to lay a solid foundation for them to dive into the scientific research.

Close attention should be attached to the training of core teachers. What teachers lack most is the promotion of scientific research abilities, therefore, universities and colleges should strengthen the training of scientific research abilities and methods, as well as provide teachers with opportunities to communicate with academic masters. For this purpose, universities and colleges should invest certain financial and material resources into each academy, so that each academy can determine the corresponding academic training funds based on the development of its own discipline.

Excellent teachers should be selected and sent to learn abroad, or more opportunities to exchange with universities and colleges with advantages in various disciplines should be provided, thus, stimulating more academic inspiration and enhancing the attractiveness to teachers.

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