

Practical Exploration of Local Colleges and Universities Serving Regional Economic and Social Development—A Case Study of Ningbo Garbage Classification Institute

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Abstract: *Improving the ability to serve regional economic and social development is the key to high-quality development of colleges and universities in the new era. In the process of its transformation, Ningbo Open University leverages its institutional advantages to stimulate innovation and creativity by actively explores paths and strategies, including raising awareness, developing coordinately, conducting overall management, and constructing faculty team, aiming to enhance its role in serving the local economy and society in the process of high-quality development for distinctive colleges to serve local economic and social development.*

Keywords: Open University, Distinctive colleges, Serving local economy and society.

1. Introduction

With the advent of the knowledge economy, the concept of colleges and universities serving local economic and social development has gradually caught more attention. Their status as social think tanks have been continuously promoted, making their social service functions increasingly critical in the higher education system. Many universities, together with local governments, has been actively exploring and practicing ways to support local economic and social development by strengthening university-local cooperation, promoting the transformation of scientific and technological achievements, and cultivating application-oriented talents. Concurrently, the government has introduced a series of policies and measures to encourage and support universities to participate in local economic and social development, and promote the in-depth development of university-local cooperation. Taking the initiative to serve local economic development is not only an essential requirement of the party's education policies, but also the only way for developing higher education with Chinese characteristics, and a historical mission entrusted to higher education by the times.

2. The Significance of Colleges and Universities in Serving Local Economic and Social Development

2.1 Theoretical Significance

The social service function of colleges and universities has become a focal point as well as hot point of research in higher education and educational administration, and how to better serve the local economic and social development has gained widespread attention from educational administrative departments and local universities. As early as the beginning of the 20th century, the University of Wisconsin in the United States put forward the concept that university education should serve the regional economic and social development, formed the idea of "state universities should serve the

development and construction of the state", and created a triadic higher education development model to cultivate talents and develop science and social services. American scholar Henry-Ezkowitz proposed the "Triple Helix Model" based on government, enterprise, and university, the three major elements of the knowledge-based economy and society, emphasizing that only through the cooperation of the government, enterprises, and universities can a strong synergy for universities to serve local economic and social development be formed.

2.2 Practical Significance

As one of the components of society, colleges and universities cannot exist independently from local communities, and their development is closely related to the economy, society and culture of the region, while the development of the local economy and society relies on the contribution and participation of universities, both of which promote and restrict each other. Local universities, with their strong regional features, use their local strengths to serve local economic and social development, which in turn benefits the reform and development of universities, improving their educational quality and running level. In serving local economic and social development, universities can clearly identify the urgent theoretical and practical issues, make accurate forward-looking analyses and decisions, and thus expand spaces for local economic and social development, from which they can also seek higher value for themselves, like expanding their social influence locally and laying a foundation for survival in a competitive environment, by advancing their educational positioning, improving educational level, clarifying talent cultivation directions, and enhancing training quality.

Since 2017, Ningbo Open University (formerly Ningbo Radio and Television University) has put forward the basic strategy of "resource sharing, complementary advantages, scale operation, and cooperative engagement". Leveraging its educational advantages, aligning with regional industrial

development directions, and taking substantiation as the carrier, the university began to explore the establishment of distinctive colleges. It has successively established Ningbo Community University, Red Peony College, Ningbo Overseas Chinese College, Network Communication College, Auxiliary Police College, Ningbo Garbage Classification College and other distinctive colleges. Guided by the concepts of making full use of social forces, integrating social resources and open running, Ningbo Garbage Classification College promotes university-enterprise cooperation, gives full play to the guidance, evaluation and service role of industry authorities, encourages teachers to walk out of the school gate and step into the society, and integrate into the wave of economic and social development.

3. The Establishment and Practice of Ningbo Garbage Classification Institute

3.1 Background of the Establishment of Ningbo Garbage Classification Institute

With the rapid economic development and accelerating urbanization in China, people's living standards are improving day by day, and therefore the amount of domestic garbage has increased significantly. Traditional disposal methods like landfilling and incineration can no longer meet demand, and the problem of waste encroachment is quietly forming, and the risks caused by improper waste disposal are increasingly prominent. In December 2016, President Xi Jinping emphasized at the 14th meeting of the Central Leading Group for Financial and Economic Affairs that the ability to reduce, recycle, and harmlessly dispose of waste is critical to improving the living environment for over 1.3 billion people, so it is necessary to universally launch the garbage classification system. Promoting garbage classification is crucial for ecological civilization and is part of China's ongoing economic reform, social transformation, and environmental management reform. To effectively implement President Xi Jinping's important instructions on household waste sorting, and to promote waste sorting work in Ningbo, in September 2019, the Ningbo Municipal Comprehensive Administrative Law Enforcement Bureau (Ningbo City Administration) and Ningbo Open University (formerly Ningbo Radio and Television University) jointly established Ningbo Garbage Classification Institute (hereinafter referred to as the College) after full consultation. The management committee, composed of relevant leaders from Ningbo Comprehensive Administrative Law Enforcement Bureau and Ningbo Radio and Television University, provides decision-making consultation, business guidance and supervision for the construction and development of the college. The college has the dean appointed by the Municipal Garbage Classification Office and the vice deans appointed by Ningbo Open University. Relying on the advantages of Ningbo Open University's (Ningbo Radio and Television University) school-running system, Ningbo Garbage Classification Institute has set up branches in various cities and counties in Ningbo, and established ten branches of Ningbo Garbage Classification College in Yinzhou, Yuyao, Cixi, Ninghai, Xiangshan, Fenghua, Beilun, Zhenhai, Jiangbei and Dongqian Lake, which form an overall publicity and training system.

3.2 College Operational Practice and Achievements

As a distinctive college of Ningbo Open University, Ningbo Garbage Classification Institute, since its establishment, has undertaken a series of tasks including field research, publicity and guidance, education and training, theoretical research and resource construction.

3.2.1 Field research. The college's lecturers went deep into the communities, villages and towns, schools, enterprises and institutions to conduct in-depth research, extensively collecting residents' doubts, prominent issues, main problems and typical practices in garbage classification. This first-hand information lays the foundation for subsequent publicity, education, training, and theoretical research.

3.2.2 Publicity and guidance. The college lecturers, together with community staff, conducted door-to-door publicity, distributed publicity materials, provided on-site guidance for waste sorting, supervised garbage sorting with community volunteers, and guided residents to classify garbage at garbage sorting points.

3.2.3 Education and training. Based on collected research data, literature, and online resources, the members of the lecturer group carefully prepared training courseware for different trainees, and designed training content as well as methods. Through door-to-door instruction, we have carried out garbage classification training for school teachers and students, urban villagers, enterprise employees, law enforcement personnel, community workers, property management personnel, etc., publicized garbage classification knowledge and ecological civilization theory, and helped citizens change their concepts, establish awareness and develop habits. The training participants has reached over 100,000.

3.2.4 Theoretical research. Throughout research and training, the lecturer team have been continuously collecting and accumulating issues and local experiences in waste sorting under the guidance of scientific research and think tank consultation, meanwhile refining decision-making suggestions, and making suggestions to the relevant departments. For example, the Ninghai team produced a research report of more than 10,000 words on Ninghai's intelligent garbage classification after comprehensive research in various villages in Ninghai, which received the Mayor of Ningbo's comments and caught the attention of the Central Party School (National Academy of Governance) and major media outlets.

3.2.5 Resource construction. In order to achieve a better publicity effect and provide theoretical and practical guidance for the popularization of garbage classification education, the lecturer team have compiled garbage classification brochures, published guides such as "Illustrated Waste Sorting: A Guide for Villagers" "Household Waste Sorting: A Guide for College Students" and "Waste Sorting: Together with You (Citizen Edition)" and made short films like "Ningbo Garbage Classification Typical Case Collection", among which more than 10 promotional video clips have been produced, such as "Where Does the Garbage Go", "The Village Secretary Talks Garbage Classification", and "Garbage Classification

Guidance Film for Barrel Supervision". The college has developed 21 on-site practice teaching bases, designated as "Ningbo Garbage Classification Institute Practice Teaching Base", including Ningbo Waste Treatment Industrial Park, exemplary communities, intelligent classification town, model schools, and model commercial areas. These bases enrich training content and enhance trainees' direct experience.

4. Existing Problems

During the process of establishing distinctive colleges to serve local economic and social development, Ningbo Open University has faced new challenges against management mechanisms, operational models, teaching resources, and faculty teams caused by business transformation and problems existing in the establishment and operation of Ningbo Waste Sorting College.

4.1 Weak Awareness of Serving Local Economic and Social Development

Despite the deep understanding of the role of Ningbo Open University in economic and social development, there is still a weak awareness of proactively serving local needs and inaccuracy to grasp the needs of the government and the future development trend. The university also lacks mechanisms to proactively respond to local social development needs, which affects its educational positioning and development strategy. The teachers of Ningbo Open University have always been engaged in academic education and therefore accumulated rich teaching experience, so they pay more attention to teaching and research tasks, but ignore the deep integration with the local economy and society. They do not have a clear understanding of the importance and necessity of universities participating in local economic and social development, they lack a clear understanding of the responsibility of actively serving local economic and social development and lack enthusiasm and motivation for participation in local economic and social service activities.

4.2 Insufficient Coordinated Development and Comprehensive Management

Although Ningbo Garbage Classification Institution, taking advantage of open university's system, has established ten county-level branches, its overall management and operational mechanism have not been fully developed. Some projects cannot cover the entire city due to the lack of a unified management mechanism. As a result, only a few branches such as Ninghai and Cixi actively participated in waste sorting training, while other branches don't pay much attention to it, or even have no interest.

As the headquarter, Ningbo Open University lacks unified leadership, does not play a leading role, and fails to give full play to its system advantages to serve the local economic and social development. Additionally, the local government has also gradually reduced its support for the college due to its busy government affairs. Although Ningbo Open University has already set up a special organization, its management is insufficient, its personnel ability is weak, and it lacks a mechanism to link the government and system branches,

which results in poor communication and unsmooth information exchange.

4.3 Improper Measures for Teaching Team Construction and Development

The faculty of Ningbo Garbage Classification Institute comes from the university's own teachers and teachers in the system, who may lack professional knowledge and practical experience in relevant fields or interdisciplinary abilities. The college also employs industry experts and administrative leaders, but their appointment can be arbitrary.

Although the teachers of the university are good at teaching, they lack professional knowledge and practical experience. Industry experts have rich professional knowledge and practical experience, but lack teaching experience. Moreover, most of the experts are from other provinces and cities, so they are not familiar with local conditions in Ningbo. The administrative leadership from the city and county government excel in policy but lack practical guidance and teaching experience, and don't enough time and energy to participate in the publicity and training of garbage classification due to many administrative affairs. These factors lead to limited service capacity and teaching quality, which are not able to meet the actual needs of local economic and social development. At the same time, they also affect the personal development of teachers and limit the university's contribution to local economic and social development. Therefore, it is urgent to strengthen teachers' service awareness and ability, and to improve their professional quality and practical ability.

5. Strategies and Reflections for Enhancing Ningbo Open University's Service to Local Economic and Social Development

Since its establishment in 1979, Ningbo Open University, through more than 40 years' accumulation and development, has made great progress and entered a new stage of high-quality and connotative development. In the face of the new era and new challenges, to innovate and expand open education and enhance its social influence, we must break conceptual barriers, find the direction of running a university, and establish distinctive colleges based on our own development level and specific needs of local economic, social and cultural progress, to undertake appropriate social functions. Only in this way can Ningbo Open University secure its survival and development in the local society, and forming a favorable situation of mutual support and common development between local universities and local governments, creating a positive cycle of mutual reliance and joint progress.

5.1 Deepening Service Awareness and Enhance Understanding

In the context of rapid economic development, colleges and universities should deepen their understanding of serving the local economy and society. The key lies in breaking through conceptual barriers, clearly understanding their own socialization status and development needs, fully realizing the value and positioning of serving the local economy and

society, and giving full play to their own advantages and expanding their social influence. Colleges and universities should not be limited to the traditional concept of serving the local economy and society based on talent training and scientific research, but should consciously step out of the ivory tower, be innovative, face difficulties, and prioritize “serving the local area” to promote local economic and social development. First of all, universities should strengthen the publicity and education of serving local economic and social development, improve the awareness of teachers and students, and make them realize the importance and necessity of serving local economic and social development. Secondly, universities should strengthen cooperation with local governments and enterprises to understand the development needs and problems of local economy and society, actively seek cooperation opportunities, to provide all-round services. Finally, universities should strengthen the evaluation of local economic and social development and improve the feedback, adjust and improve their tasks promptly and continuously improve their service quality and effect.

5.2 Strengthening Collaborative Development and Coordinated Management

Strengthening coordinated development and overall management, scientifically building management mechanisms, and giving full play to the advantages of the system are important guarantees for universities to serve local economic and social development. By formulating corresponding management mechanisms and systems, integrating resources, optimizing allocation, and improving service capabilities and level, universities can provide strong support and contribution to local economic and social development, and also promote their own development and improvement.

Ningbo Open University has accumulated rich experience in degree education over the years, forming a relatively sound academic education management system. However, in terms of transforming to serve the local economy and society, the university still needs to strengthen its management mechanisms, formulate corresponding management systems, further leverage its educational system advantages, and strive for opportunities for the grassroots colleges to serve the local economy and society and improve their influence. First of all, it is necessary to strengthen the management of serving local economic and social development, formulating corresponding management systems and processes, clarify responsibilities and tasks, to ensure service quality and effect. Secondly, the university should strengthen the advantages of the system, and improve the service capacity and level by integrating resources and optimizing allocation. Finally, the university should provide strong support and guidance for grassroots colleges to help them better participate in and serve local economic and social development, thereby enhancing their influence.

5.3 Optimizing Faculty Teams and Building New Think Tanks

As the core resource of universities, the quality and ability of faculty directly affect the effectiveness of universities' service to local economic and social development. Therefore,

universities should take various measures to optimize the construction of faculty, improve the adaptability and innovation ability of teachers to serve the local economy and society, and build a new type of think tank.

First of all, universities can, based on the university itself, explore the establishment of think tanks, by inviting relevant research experts, regional authorities and government personnel to provide theoretical support and intellectual services such as decision-making consultation, decision-making reference, special planning, and special topic research in serving local economic and social development. Universities should rationally allocate teachers according to the needs of local economic and social development, actively introduce outstanding talents, and establish a sound teacher training system. By training teachers and establishing mentorship systems, the structure of the teaching team will be optimized, and their teaching, scientific research and social service capabilities will be enhanced. Secondly, universities should formulate relevant policies to clarify teachers' responsibilities and obligations for serving local economic and social development and take it as one of the important indicators for teacher evaluation and promotion. Finally, universities should strengthen incentives and support for teachers, encouraging them to actively participate in serving local economic and social development, providing necessary resources and conditions to create a better work environment and atmosphere for their them.

6. Conclusion

As educational institutions, universities have abundant teaching and research resources and a strong teaching team, with their fundamental mission to cultivate talents, conduct scientific research, provide social service, and inherit and innovate cultural. Universities should take the initiative to know the needs and problems of local economic and social development, actively seek cooperation opportunities, and provide a full range of services for local economic and social development. By participating in the development of local economy and society, universities understand social needs and problems, promote their own reform and development, improve the quality of their education and teaching and scientific research, and realize the optimal allocation and efficient use of resources. The composition of things results from mutual interaction, and only such interactions can maintain the balanced and stable development of things. Universities and local economies and societies share a mutually promoting and developing relationship. Universities' serving local economic and social development not only promotes the development of the local economy and society, but also enhances the level of colleges and universities themselves, promotes the high-quality development of colleges and universities, and expands their social influence. Therefore, universities should actively perform their social service functions and make greater contributions to local economic and social development.

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