Research on the Realization of Objectives of Professional Degree Masters’ Education from the Perspective of Stakeholder Management

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Keywords: stakeholder management, integration of production and education, the education of professional degree master

Abstract. Influenced by a variety of factors, The supply of Chinese professional degree masters can’t completely match the demand for it in the structure, quality and level. And the degree of the integration of industry and education is still poor. Therefore, this paper adopts the stakeholder management theory to identify and classify the stakeholders of professional degree masters’ education, then develops management strategies by recognizing the interests of core stakeholders to arouse the enthusiasm of stakeholders and improve the accomplishment degree of education goals.

1. Introduction

The professional degree is a degree that aims at cultivating high-level talents the society needed who have strong professional competence and can engage in practical work creatively. Since the Ministry of Education issued the "Several Opinions of the Ministry of Education on improving the Education of Full-time Master Degrees" in 2009, the education of Chinese professional degree masters has developed rapidly and the social acceptance degree of it has gradually increased. By 2019, the applicant number of it has surpassed that of academic degree graduates. Obviously, the education of professional degree masters has become a crucial part of postgraduate education. However, there is still a phenomenon of "dwarfing" in the process of professional degree masters’ education. Many educational units and tutors believe that the professional degree master’s education system should simulate the academic degree master’s education system to ensure the quality of education and even believe that professional degree masters are the supplement and backup of academic degree graduate masters. Such prejudice makes education of professional degree masters deviate from the initial goals and causes the supply of Chinese professional degree masters can’t match the demand of it in the structure, quality and level. Therefore, it is of great practical significance to study the realization of professional degree masters' education goals.

In order to meet the new demand for high-level and application-oriented talents of the national economic and social development, many scholars have studied the innovation method and the driving mechanism for reform of the postgraduate education mode in China. Yingwei Zhang[1] pointed out that the mode of postgraduate education mainly involves student recruitment, teaching, scientific research, graduation design, defense, and degree-awarding. These links must be carried out under the effect of many factors such as the establishment of goals, the interaction between teachers and students, curriculum and major settings, education methods, management of education quality. He clarified that there is a clear distinction between the objectives of academic and professional masters' educations, and discussed the basic path of reform and innovation of masters' education mode from four aspects includes education objectives, education process, curriculum setting and quality management. To echo the strategy of integration of production and education, Xianqing Shen[2] took the measurement and control technology and instrument major as an example to explore the cultivation of innovative and complex talents under the new economic situation. He thought we must adhere to the road of integration of production and education and realize the cultivation mode of innovative talents that driven by various projects to improve the
innovation and practical ability of students. There is also some paper studying under the perspective of stakeholders. Tao Zhang[3] recognized four core stakeholders in school-enterprise cooperation, including colleges, enterprises, the government and students, then structured the school-enterprise cooperation interest community by analyzing conflicts among stakeholders in the current school-enterprise cooperation, finally made recommendations for the establishment of a win-win school-enterprise cooperation talent training model.

In conclusion, the study of stakeholders in higher education has already been noticed. The integration of production and education, school-enterprise cooperation, and professional degree master education should meet the social demand actively have been a consensus. Academia and educational circles have already conducted several studies about the reform of professional degree masters’ education model and the objectives realization mechanism[4]. Education units are also adjusting the professional degree masters’ education plan. However, the studies on how to mobilize the enthusiasm of stakeholders in higher education are lacking. And the application of stakeholders management in improving the quality of professional degree masters’ education and the accomplishment degree of education objectives is also rarely involved.

2. Identification and Classification of the Stakeholders

2.1. Identification of stakeholders

A stakeholder is a concept in project management. According to the PMBOK guide (sixth edition), every project has stakeholders (individuals or organizations) who will be affected by or exert a positive or negative influence on the project[5]. Some stakeholders have limited ability to influence the project, while others have a significant impact on the project and the expected achievements of it[6]. Stakeholder management refers to identifying stakeholders and their interests, then planning and managing the participation of stakeholders to improve stakeholders’ satisfaction and achieve or exceed the set objectives.

In this paper, the project document method is adopted to identify stakeholders. And the identification process is divided into two stages:

In the first stage, we collected information and documents related to the project, such as the name, the objectives, the research content, plan and implementation steps document of the project.

In the second stage, we organized a seminar and invited tutors and students who have experience in the project about the reform of the masters’ education to join us. Then according to the collected information and document of the project, we discussed and identified stakeholders.

Through project document method, we identified that stakeholders in progress of professional degree masters’ education includes universities, enterprises participating in the masters’ education, the school tutors, postgraduates, families, the enterprise mentors, the public, government’s education management departments, employers (enterprises not participating in masters’ education) and alumni.

2.2. Classification of stakeholders

According to the effect of stakeholders on the realization of education objectives, we divided the stakeholders into core stakeholders and marginal stakeholders and focused on the core stakeholders to develop management strategies.

Generally speaking, the effects that stakeholders can make on the project include such points: providing the necessary financial support, shaping a good project environment, accelerating the project progress, and improving project quality.

These points are of different importance to the realization of the education objectives. In order to score the total effect of each stakeholder, we must give each point a reasonable weight to quantify them. Therefore, we invited representatives of stakeholders to discuss the weight of each point. After discussing, it was concluded that the weights of providing financial support, shaping a good project environment, accelerating the project progress, and improving project quality are 0.3, 0.3, 0.1, and 0.3 respectively. Then the experts invited scored these points of each stakeholder from -5 to 5 and then summed the product of the score of each point and corresponding weight up as the stakeholder’s total effect. Finally, we got the total effect of each stakeholder is 2.7, 2.7, 2.7, 0.6, 3,
Because the scoring range is -5 to 5, we deemed that the stakeholders whose score of total effect
was greater than or equal to 2.5 are core stakeholders, while the other stakeholders are marginal
stakeholders. So, universities, enterprises participating in the masters’ education, the school tutors,
postgraduates, the enterprise tutors, government’s education management departments are core
stakeholders. While the public, families, employers and alumni belong to marginal stakeholders.

3. Interest Appeals of Core Stakeholders

3.1. Interest appeals of universities and school tutors

Professional graduate education aims to develop application-oriented talents who are needed
eagerly by society. So, the mode of production-education integration should be taken. In the process
of education, financial support from enterprises, improvement of equipment, the exact
understanding of the needs transformation of society for new products and technologies, and the
students cultivated are more in line with employers’ requisite constitute the main interest appeals of
universities. As for school tutors, their interest appeals mainly consist of their students’ successful
graduation, getting more income, improving the quality of students they educate and rising themself
prestige.

3.2. Interest appeals of enterprises participating in the masters’ education and enterprise tutors

Enterprises are all for-profit organizations. So, in the process of professional degree masters’
education, they aim at getting access to high-level talents preferentially to save the cost of talents
discovery and knowing the cutting-edge technology in advance. They also expect to
enhance popularity by establishing a joint training base with universities. For corporate tutors, they
intend to promote steady improvement in post and income levels.

3.3. Interest appeals of government’s education management departments

As the guide and supervisor of industry-education integration, educational administrations aim at
achieving the strategic goals of industry-education integration, upgrading the country's scientific
and technological level, improving employment quality and promoting economic and social
development through its own organization and guidance.

3.4. Interest appeals of masters

Professional degree masters’ main interest appeals are improving their academic competence and
practical ability to fulfill graduation requirements, meet development needs and enhance their
employment competitiveness.

4. Countermeasures and Suggestions

4.1. Angle of universities and enterprises participating in the masters’ education

First of all, colleges and universities should make clear education objectives, then revise training
programs reasonably.

Secondly, making universities and enterprises participating in the masters’ education aware of
their common interests. For example, universities are committed to educating high-level talents that
meet the requirement of the economy and society. These enterprises need to recruit high-level
talents to work for them. So, based on such a common interest, the enterprise can provide capital,
equipment and opportunities of internship to universities to help them educate better students. Then,
the universities can provide these enterprises opportunities to organize a job fair in advance to select
talents preferentially. In this way, universities and enterprises can play their own roles and achieve
win-win coexistence and promote the realization of training goals.

Finally, it is necessary to improve relevant rules and regulations about school-enterprise
cooperation gradually, such as the system of funds collection and use, the assessment system, etc.
Meanwhile, setting up special institutions devoted to supervising and managing the operation of
school-enterprise cooperation to ensure the efficiency of cooperation implement is essential.

4.2. Angle of school tutors and enterprise tutors

As individuals, school and corporate tutors both seek to maximize their economic returns.
However, in the current double tutor mechanism, enterprise mentors are always not very enthusiastic about the education of students. Instead, they treat the "tutor" title as an honor and are unaware of the responsibilities that come with it. Therefore, in order to increase the involvement of enterprise tutors, it is necessary to combine the assessment result of professional degree masters’ education quality with the performance evaluation of enterprise tutors and take the past results as a reference for future employment. Meanwhile, for school tutors, the quality assessment of professional degree masters should also be included in professional title and award evaluation.

Besides, a reasonable incentive and assessment coordination mechanism should be established. It could be the basis of improving the enthusiasm of mentors both inside and outside the universities. Universities should also set up special funds for the double tutor system and pay tutors guidance fees and bonuses according to the relevant agreements.

4.3. Angle of government’s education management department

The government’s education management department as the implementer of industry-education integration must take the responsibility to improve laws and regulations to create a favorable policy environment for professional degree master cultivation. At the same time, they should expand financial support to fund the relevant universities and enterprises to encourage them to develop deeper cooperation in professional degrees masters’ education. They also should cooperate actively to meet the needs of colleges and enterprises in the cultivation of talents.

4.4. Angle of professional degree masters

Universities should strive to establish cooperation with high-quality enterprises to improve the quality of practical training. They also need to improve the assessment standards of practical ability to make students attach importance to the cultivation of it. On the other hand, students also should accept the universities’ education arrangement and devote themself to study.

5. Conclusion

In order to stimulate all participants’ initiative to realize professional degree masters' education goals, stakeholders are identified according to the method of stakeholder management in this paper. According to the four types of operation points, we score the role of each stakeholder in the project, get core stakeholders. Then this paper analyzes their interest demands and puts forward countermeasures accordingly. Those countermeasures with higher pertinence and enforceability will realize a satisfying effect.

Acknowledgment

In this paper, the research was sponsored by Project of postgraduate education and teaching reform in Jiangsu province(Project No. JGLX19_020).

References


