

On the Research Paradigm of Chinese Higher Education Management

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Abstract: As to the application of paradigm concepts, at the specific application level, there are not only corresponding requirements of the standard system, but also continuous innovation that change as the application objects. And in terms of Chinese higher education management system, in recent years, it has been constantly changing with the overall development of higher education; therefore, there are also dynamic changes at the level of the paradigm system. On the basis of a brief description of the connotation and function of the paradigm, this paper aims to analyze the transformation process of Chinese higher education management research paradigm with regard to characteristics of higher education development and changes in the past decade; moreover, it is to explore a new paradigm system, with a brand-new view to providing the better paradigm for Chinese higher education management, so as to provide a theoretical guidance for specific development in this field.

1. Introduction

As higher education can be affected by many factors such as social, economic and cultural development, the management theories must be updated simultaneously during the development process, in order to ensure that the higher education maintains stable and sustainable development. In the past ten years, the number of applicants for higher education in China and the admission rate have maintained in a relatively stable growth, which makes the corresponding management paradigm develop simultaneously and a new paradigm system is gradually being explored. However, as the factors that affect the development of higher education are more complex, a comprehensive research paradigm should be constructed to promote the improvement of higher education management^[1].

2. Definition and Function of Paradigm

The original meaning of the paradigm was “side-by-side display”, which was later defined as the theoretical basis and practical norms on which the development of conventional science relies in *Structure of the Scientific Revolution* written by the American philosopher Thomas Kuhn. That is to say, in scientific research, the worldview and behavior mode that the workers engaged in research should follow them both. The paradigm is constituted, involving not only the holistic belief, value and technology, but also the specific elements in the whole. Its essence is the individual worldview.

The basic function of the paradigm is to ensure the standardization and continuity of scientific research. However, in the context of the continuous transformation of specific applications from natural scientific research to the field of social science, its specific functions have also undergone specific changes. Based on the research requirements in this paper, the functions of the paradigm are defined in the following aspects: First, it provides methodological guidance for specific research. Specifically speaking, paradigm can provide guidance on research concepts, which can clarify research assumptions and the analysis between habits and traditions, providing a prior methodology for research advancement. Second, it can provide detailed support for specific research in that the paradigm is a comprehensive concept covering the macro and micro system, which can provide more support for dynamic research in specific applications^[2].

3. The Process of Higher Education Management Paradigm after the Reform and Opening Up

3.1 The Early-Stage Paradigm of the Discipline System

Generally speaking, the research on the management paradigm of Chinese higher education starts with the restoration of the college entrance examination system after the reform and opening up. On account of the great changes in the higher education policy system at that time, the discipline system paradigm must be the basic guide in the initial stage. The content of the disciplinary system paradigm mainly includes three levels: firstly, the development of higher education must follow the corresponding scientific management laws; secondly, the scientific nature of management activities should be used as the criterion for judging the maturity of higher education management; and finally, on the basis of achieving subject independence, the higher education management can be ensured to meet the requirements of scientific standards. In the 1980s, the disciplinary system paradigm experienced a process from being proposed to mature and finally to an empirical practical effect paradigm^[1].

3.2 Fast Empirical Effectiveness Paradigm

The empirical effectiveness paradigm focuses more on the solution of specific management on practical problems. The basic propositions of the system include several aspects: First, higher education theory does not need to strictly follow scientific rationality. In practice, it should focus more on technology and artistry; second, it should focus on the effectiveness of education management activities and also introduce multidisciplinary research methods into management activities; third, the ultimate goal of higher education management is to provide guiding strategies for higher education management practices based on principles, guidelines and policies.

In addition, the rapid development of the empirical effectiveness paradigm is closely related to several factors. Firstly, as the reform and opening up in the late 1980s and economic development have entered a new era, reforms of higher education have also been deepened simultaneously, but the original paradigm system has been unable to solve problems of reality in the reform. Secondly, although higher education management researchers continue to increase their investment in the research in this area, on the whole, their achievements in related areas are minimal, and they even continue to doubt the paradigm of the discipline system in their research^[1].

3.3 Highly-Formed Paradigm of Cultural Value

The emergence of cultural value paradigm began in the mid to late 1990s, and it also emerged under the dual factors of higher education management and economic system reform. In the cultural value paradigm, the importance of the value factor is elevated above the technical factor, and the actual situation of China's higher education development is the basic starting point to establish a higher education management theory with Chinese characteristics. At the same time, more and more forms of social science epistemology and methodology have been introduced into specific research. The cultural value paradigm has carried out specific research from the two perspectives of traditional culture and organizational culture, which organically integrates macroscopic and microscopic research and hopes to reveal the shared values and norms existing in university organizations by emphasizing values. As far as the cultural value paradigm has existed for more than two decades, it has promoted the rapid improvement of Chinese higher education management level to a certain extent, which has played a positive role in promoting the development of Chinese higher education. However, under the background of the stable enrollment scale and ratio of Chinese higher education, the development of higher education itself has also shifted from simply pursuing scale expansion to a new historical period that emphasizes both the scale and quality. Under this circumstance, a new type of research paradigm to ensure that theoretical research is compatible with higher education development practice, which can provide strong theoretical support for the management practice^[4].

4. The Complexity Research Paradigm of Higher Education Management

4.1 Proposal of a New Research Paradigm

As new characteristics in the development of higher education come into being, the development of new research paradigms continues to drive the proposal of new research paradigms, in which the paradigm system is featured by the relatively clear and individual paradigm, flexible management paradigm and complexity paradigm. Specifically speaking, the personality paradigm focuses more on the personal experience of higher education management research, as well as on the experience of researchers and individual universities. It is believed that it is more important to pay attention to the status of individualization and humanization in the research paradigm. Compared with the rigid management model, the flexible management paradigm focuses more on the guiding role of the people-oriented teaching concept and it builds a new paradigm covering various aspects such as teacher-student relationship, administrative unit leadership and education mode transformation. In a word, these two paradigms are relatively narrow and cannot meet the needs of higher education management; and the supporting role in management practice is extremely limited. In this case, based on complexity theory, the complexity research paradigm has become an inevitable requirement for the construction of a theoretical system.

4.2 Causes of the Complexity Research Paradigm

The total number of ordinary colleges and universities in China has reached 2,663 by the end of 2018, with the total number of students has almost doubled in ten years. In terms of higher education admissions, the admission ratio was 57%, while in 2018, the admission rate increased to more than 81%. Higher education have become more obvious in terms of characteristics of the popularization stage, and higher education management have been faced with more complex situations^[3]. In addition, although in China, emphasis on the quality control of higher education continues to increase, but the overall quality of higher education still has many deficiencies compared with the forms of higher education in foreign developed countries. How to stabilize the overall management scale of higher education under this background, the overall improvement of management quality has become a problem that needs to be solved for the development of higher education.

4.3 Complexity Paradigm Employed into Higher Education Management

Although complexity theory itself is still in the initial stage of germination and development, it has achieved obvious results in philosophy and social sciences. To solve the problems of higher education development in our country, it is of importance to take the complexity theory system as the framework and construct the complexity research paradigm of higher education management. The construction of the complexity paradigm of higher education management includes four basic levels: First, the level of research concept. Under the background of increasing complexity of influencing factors of higher education management in the new era, the overall system presents obvious nonlinear characteristics, relationship characteristics and innovative requirements, which requires managers to be able to clarify key issues in the management field in a simplified way from the complex problem system, and also be able to analyze different elements in different relationship types or backgrounds, thereby effectively enhancing initiative and individuality of managers. Through this method, it is to realize the essential purpose of higher education management to realize human liberation and free and comprehensive development. Second, in terms of the research community, not only must it be able to build a system that covers the three elements of a benign interaction between managers and researchers, but it must also be able to deeply integrate the research of higher education management with related disciplines. Moreover, the development of higher education management must integrate the research content of economics, management, psychology, human resource management and other levels into actual work to ensure the scientific management of work in a complex system. Third, in terms of research horizons, we should first insist on starting from the practicality of higher education management activities. In the development of research work, we should be able to combine macro-analysis with micro-analysis,

and to deeply study what is happening and experience personal experience. For the problems and fields to be obtained, it is necessary to be able to organically combine case studies with regularity studies, and continue to innovate research fields. On this basis, the management research level can be improved.

5. Conclusion

As higher education management is a basic component of the development of education and science and technology and it has become an important content of national competition, under the background that the management level of higher education has lagged behind its own practice, researchers must start from the reality in China, construct and perfect new research paradigms as soon as possible, so that they can more clearly recognize the complex environment faced by higher education management. In addition, researchers should have a clearer picture of recognizing the necessity of improving the internal control of higher education management, relying on new research paradigms, so as to promote the rapid development of Chinese higher education and lay a foundation for cultivating talents in China.

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