

Application of Education Evaluation Reform in the Management of Annual-Salary Teacher Employment at Colleges and Universities

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Abstract: *In October 2020, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the General Plan for Deepening the Reform of Education Evaluation in the New Era. This plan put forward directional requirements for China's future education evaluation from three aspects: general requirements, key tasks, as well as organization and implementation. This study adopts the management of annual-salary teacher employment at a "double first-class" university as an example and the relevant requirements of education evaluation reform in the new era as the benchmark. The current situation and application of the education evaluation reform in the introduction of teachers, the assessment of the employment period, and the evaluation system of "pre-employment-tenure-track employment" are analyzed from the aspects of grasping the basic principles, implementing the whole-process quality management, and improving the quality of orientation.*

Keywords: Education Evaluation Reform; Management of Teacher Employment at Colleges and Universities; Human Resources of Colleges and Universities

1. Introduction

Education evaluation refers to the value judgment process of educational activities meeting the goals and requirements according to certain educational goals and evaluation standards. At the National Education Conference in 2018, General Secretary Xi Jinping highlighted that it was necessary to deepen the education system reform and improve the implementation mechanism of fostering virtue through education. The unscientific orientation of education evaluation could only be reversed in this way, along with the resolute elimination of the mania surrounding scores, enrollment rates, academic diplomas, papers, and titles in the education sector, and fundamentally solve the baton problem of education evaluation.

In October 2020, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the General Plan for Deepening the Reform of Education Evaluation in the New Era. This plan outlined directional requirements for China's cause of education evaluation in the future from three aspects: general requirements, key tasks as well as organization, and implementation. Ma et al. (2020) [1] argued that there are issues with the current world university rankings, such as "overweighting scale over quality," "overweighting input over output," "overweighting scientific research over teaching," and "overweighting natural sciences over humanities and social sciences." Chinese universities have long been plagued by the lack of reasonable, accurate, and systematic evaluation standards. Sui Yifan (2021) [2] proposed that the evaluation of "double first-class" universities should not focus too heavily on the basic conditions for running schools and the proportion of "academic performance" but should focus on the quality of talent cultivation and scientific research, especially the

cultivation of innovative talents, knowledge innovation, and so on.

This study adopts the management of annual-salary teacher employment in a "double first-class" university as an example and uses the relevant requirements in the General Plan for Deepening the Reform of Education Evaluation in the New Era for reference. The application of education evaluation reform in the total quality management of teacher introduction, employment period assessment, and "pre-employment-tenure-track employment" evaluation system is evaluated in depth, and the establishment and development direction of the high-quality talent evaluation mode is explored.

2. Current Situation and Problems of the Management of Annual-Salary Teacher Employment at Colleges and Universities

In the context of changes in the size of governmentally registered personnel from being planned to being flexibly adjusted, changes in the contract employment from vagueness to clarity, and the salary system from invariableness to flexibility [3], a few colleges and universities experimented with the annual salary system for some personnel in the late 1990s. Since 2000, to deepen the distribution system reform and meet the needs of the situation, some colleges and universities have begun to implement the annual salary system one after another. As a result, the groups of teachers with different models of annual salary systems have been on the rise every year [4]. Take a university as an example. In a bid to achieve self-dependent development and further stimulate the vitality of new teachers, the pilot labor contract and annual salary systems for overseas-returned teachers have been gradually expanded to all incremental

teaching and research positions. Through several years of reform and exploration, a dual-track model in which teaching and scientific research personnel enjoyed either a governmentally registered identity or annual salary system has been gradually formed on the premise of treating stock and increment differently. At the same time, to standardize the management of annual-salary teachers, improve the quality of introduced talents, and scientifically and effectively incentivize the career development of teachers, the tenure-track employment system has been established and implemented to reduce the legal risk and talent turnover rate for employers of colleges and universities.

The tenure-track system mainly originates from the system established in American universities in the early 1900s. It is generally believed that this system can achieve “the best use of people” and the optimal allocation of resources. Liu [5] suggested that the access mechanism of the tenured (tenure-track) teacher status was mainly reflected in standardized recruitment procedures, strict assessment standards, and certain elimination mechanisms. In recent years, many colleges and universities in China have followed the example of the aforementioned system. For example, Tsinghua University, Peking University, Zhejiang University, Shanghai Jiaotong University, Shanghai University of Finance and Economics, and so on, have adopted the employment system with a six-year assessment period for all or part of their faculty members. This system improves the sense of belonging and motivation of teachers and facilitates the reasonable flow of talent. It also promotes the internationalization of the reform of personnel and talent management systems in colleges and universities. The tenure-track system is mainly characterized by labor contract system management, strict assessment, special promotion paths, and relatively high salary [3]. At present, when the tenure-track system is prevalent and in line with internationalization, the establishment of scientific evaluation standards and evaluation systems is a gauge for measuring annual-salary teachers.

3. Construction of the Assessment and Evaluation System for Annual-Salary Teachers in a University

3.1 Benchmark of the Basic Principles of Assessment and Evaluation

The General Plan for Deepening the Reform of Education Evaluation in the New Era highlights that we shall “persist in taking the effect of fostering virtue through education as the fundamental standard” and “the professional ethics of teachers as the first standard” [6]. Take University A as an example. Since education evaluation was reformed, it has continuously improved the leadership system and working mechanism of the university’s Party committee on personnel and talent. It has also effectively fulfilled the responsibilities of the committee to “determine the direction, manage the overall situation, make decisions, and ensure the implementation.” Regarding the assessment and evaluation standards, the reform has sought to eliminate the phenomena

of overweighting scientific research over teaching and overweighting imparting knowledge over cultivating people, improve the rules and regulations of teachers’ ethics, and draw the “red line” of teachers’ ethics. During the induction inspection of annual-salary teachers, assessment of the feasibility of their continuing employment, and evaluation of their candidacy for tenure-track employment, this university strengthens the political gatekeeping role of the Party organization. It has also added procedures to review the ideological and political performance of the grass-roots Party organization and the professional ethics of teachers. It always takes the ideological and political performance and the review of teachers’ professional ethics as the primary standard. It promotes the normalization and long-acting construction of teachers’ professional ethics. Meanwhile, it regards performing education and teaching duties conscientiously as the basic requirement for evaluating teachers. It attaches great importance to the evaluation proportion of teaching performance in the formulation of employment contracts, the assessment of the feasibility of continuing employment, and the evaluation of tenure-track employment. For example, educational and teaching achievements such as teaching hours and courses, reform projects, achievement awards, and material compilation are all included in the assessment and evaluation system.

3.2 Implementation of Quality Management on the Whole Assessment and Evaluation Process

The General Plan for Deepening the Reform of Education Evaluation in the New Era states that we should “improve the scientific research evaluation of college and university teachers and formulate quality-orientation standards... we shall adhere to classified evaluation according to the characteristics of different disciplines and posts” [6]. The annual salary system is a distribution system in which income and remuneration are calculated on an annual basis [4]. Annual-salary teachers and those on the traditional salary model enjoy different salary structures. The main difference is that the former is based on the contracted working performance, while the latter model is based on the level of posts. Therefore, in the management of annual-salary teacher employment, classified evaluations and standards based on contracts should run through the whole process. The PDCA Cycle Theory of Total Quality Management proposed by Dr. Shewhart, an American expert in quality management, divides quality management into four stages, namely, Plan, Do, Check, and Action. This theory can also be applied to the total management process of annual-salary teacher evaluation; that is, the contracted task formulation and salary determination in the P Stage, the mid-term development evaluation in the D Stage, the assessment of the feasibility of continuing employment in the C Stage, and the post-assessment new task formulation and salary determination in the A Stage. Regarding the current management of annual-salary teachers in a university, it has been exploring and innovating education evaluation methods and scientific evaluation systems. From the perspective of the whole-process management, the following characteristics are presented:

- 1) **Multidimensional Considerations in the P Stage.** Multi-dimension refers to the discipline layout, peer comparison, academic potential, actual contribution, and so on. In the contracted task formulation stage, considerable importance should be attached to the “one person, one policy” approach and the evaluation standards of different disciplines, specialties, and research fields should be respected. A directory of the personalized achievements of secondary teaching and research institutions should be established. Under the framework of maintaining the general requirements of the scientific research management department of the university, this directory makes minute adjustments in line with the characteristics of disciplines and talents and implements the quality-oriented and classified evaluation principles of contracted tasks. Concurrently, to implement the salary mechanism of different dimensions, the salary standard is determined based on the differences between disciplines. Within the same discipline, different salary levels are determined according to the market conditions of different directions and the job tasks and abilities of candidates. The exact match between contracted tasks and salaries should be achieved.
- 2) **Orientation of High Quality in the D Stage.** High quality means that we should not just emphasize the number of achievements but change the traditional assessment method of “recording work points.” Annual-salary teachers, especially those who return to China after graduating from overseas universities, should be encouraged to calibrate their research directions, emphasize signature results, and focus on capabilities and performance. The integration of basic and innovative research should be advocated, all the research should contribute to the implementation of China’s major strategies, and the academic innovation contribution and social service value of those achievements must be emphatically evaluated. In the assessment stage, attention should be paid not only to papers and publications but also to research topics, works, and textbook compilation as a whole.
- 3) **Peer Evaluation in the C Stage.** Peer review is to ask “small peers” to assess the quality of talent development. In the assessment stage, the extramural peer-expert review system should be enforced to “let insiders evaluate insiders.” A database of extramural peer experts, including national major talent project candidates and undertakers, and other experts such as corresponding discipline leaders, professors, and doctoral tutors from “double first-class” universities, should be built to support the implementation of “small peers” review according to subdivided disciplines. The on-campus selection and employment should then be finished with the help of this university’s teaching committee, academic committee, talent evaluation, and selection committee.
- 4) **Hierarchical Implementation in the A Stage.** Hierarchical implementation is the summary and improvement of the previous contract period. Through classified evaluation, the results can be divided into four levels: A, B, C, and D. Level A can be fully paid upon completion of the contracted employment period of the first contracted

employment period, and given the second employment period and a moderate salary increase. Level B can be fully paid the performance of the first contracted employment period, and the salary of the second contracted employment period will remain unchanged. Although Level C can be given a second employment period, it should be urged and warned, and the contracted performance of the employment period should be given as appropriate. Level D should not be given the contracted performance of the first employment period, and the termination of the labor contract will be properly considered.

3.3 Improvement of the Assessment and Evaluation Oriented Quality

The General Plan for Deepening the Reform of Education Evaluation in the New Era stated that we should “set up a correct orientation to employ people... and build up a talent utilization mechanism oriented by virtue and capability and targeted by job requirements” [6]. In the process of selecting and training annual-salary teachers, it is also necessary to highlight the echelon construction and the laws of the talent growth cycle. Strict contract management and employment period assessment not only put teachers under some pressure but also bring their inner potential into full play. Teachers with some academic potential and good research ability can be assigned tasks, such as teaching core courses and cutting-edge courses, promoting teaching reform, undertaking fine-designed courses, planning the construction of teaching materials, and so on when employment contracts are being signed. They can also be invited to preside over clear tasks and requirements, such as conducting innovative and groundbreaking research in response to major national strategic needs and academic frontiers and organizing innovation-oriented teams. The university should adhere to dynamic adjustments and employment period assessment, strengthen the performance management of contracted tasks, and give full play to the incentive and restraint function of performance evaluation so that annual-salary teachers can transform contracted objectives into actual effects of talent cultivation within a relatively short time and make academic breakthroughs. At the same time, the university is continuously optimizing and integrating various on-campus talent projects, and constructing a multi-level talent echelon cultivation system, so as to ensure on-campus talent projects are in agreement with national ones. It should also adhere to the principle that “the salary must be paid according to higher but not lower standards, and various incomes should not be added up,” and implement the post-based employment system by taking the university’s actual needs of discipline construction, talent cultivation, scientific research, and teaching staff construction into consideration.

Cheng [2] argued that the high-quality development of education needs to adjust the focus of education evaluation, and it is essential to construct a scientific education evaluation standard system. The dynamic incentive and comprehensive evaluation of annual-salary teachers and even all the teachers at colleges and universities has always been a

systematic and complex historic proposition that balances fairness and efficiency.

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