

The Development Status and Educational Effect of “Area and Country Studies” in China's Higher Education

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Abstract: The discipline of “Area and Country Studies” is a new discipline that has been established in many colleges and universities in China in the past ten years, and it has strong competitiveness. “Area and Country Studies” is a promising interdisciplinary subject with unique educational functions and obvious applied characteristics. The purpose of country and regional studies is to cultivate interdisciplinary professionals who meet the urgent needs of today's society, country and world development. The education of this subject has achieved great results. In 2021, the Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council of the People's Republic of China will add “Area and Country Studies” as a first-level discipline in Chinese institutions of higher learning. At present, there are 163 Chinese universities that enroll postgraduates in “Area and Country Studies”, of which 41 are enrolling doctoral students.

1. Introduction

“Area and Country Studies” is a science, and it is a comprehensive interdisciplinary science. In terms of research objects, the research content of country and regional studies has humanistic characteristics, and generally studies items related to human activities, that is, the relationship between human activities and the geographical environment in a region, the similarities and differences between humanities and society in a region, and the mechanism of development and change. The center of its research, first of all, is the people, that is, the residents of this area. The human factor is considered to be the main factor that exists in any socio-political or historical-cultural area, as distinct from geographical or natural factors. It studies the people or peoples in the living area, studies their main cultural characteristics, and explores the characteristics of their development and survival [1]. “Regional country research is a comprehensive and in-depth study of the humanities, geography, politics, economy, society, and situation of a specific country or region” [2]. Since China proposed the “Belt and Road” initiative in 2013, the demand for national and regional research talents has continued to expand. In order to meet the needs of national development, some famous universities in China have successively opened national and regional research departments, which have shown their unique educational efficacy and attractiveness.

2. Manuscript Preparation

2.1. The Development Status of “area and Country Studies” In China's Higher Education

In Chinese colleges and universities, “Area and Country Studies” are generally set up in the “School of Foreign Languages/School of Foreign Languages/Department of Foreign Languages” of the university. This setting is also based on the documents of the National Ministry of Education. In April 2018, the Ministry of Education promulgated the “National Standards for Teaching Quality of Foreign Languages and Literatures”, which pointed out that foreign language majors are an important part of the humanities and social science disciplines in Chinese higher education institutions. It has interdisciplinary characteristics with regional studies, comparative literature and intercultural studies. Foreign language majors can be combined with other related majors to form compound majors or directions to meet the needs of social development. This standard is the basis

for the admission, construction and evaluation of foreign language undergraduate majors. Foreign language majors in colleges and universities should formulate training programs that meet the needs of social development and reflect the school's positioning and school-running characteristics according to this standard [1].

The biggest difference in the revised “Standards” is that the major of “Area and Country Studies” is newly added, and it is clearly pointed out that the characteristics of this foreign language major are “interdisciplinary”. The “Standard” stipulates that the training objectives of foreign language majors emphasize that foreign language majors aim to cultivate various foreign languages with good overall quality that are suitable for China's foreign exchanges, national and local economic and social development, various foreign-related industries, foreign language education and academic research. Language professionals and compound foreign language talents. In terms of knowledge requirements, it is emphasized that students majoring in foreign languages should master foreign language knowledge, regional and national knowledge, be familiar with foreign language and culture knowledge, understand relevant professional knowledge and basic knowledge of humanities, social sciences and natural sciences, form an interdisciplinary knowledge structure, reflect Professional Features.

Colleges and universities can also be established in the School of International Relations, the School of Economics and Management, the Institute of Ethnic Studies, etc. according to the research characteristics of the school. As far as colleges of foreign languages are concerned, generally in the teaching plan, “foreign language” is its advantage, and the course “intercultural communication” is offered. This course occupies a special place throughout the curriculum. The purpose of this course is to study in further detail the cultural characteristics of the countries in which the students study the language. Furthermore, if “Area and Country Studies” study culture only through language and similar courses, then it often has a practical character, as does the study of culture internationally. In this context, the concept of “culture” is understood in a broad sense. It is historically formed with a type of national life organization. Therefore, foreign language talents not only pay special attention to the special achievements and outstanding representatives of this country, but also study the daily life of ordinary people in this country or region [3].

The research unit of the national and regional research department in a university should be an interdisciplinary unit that breaks the single traditional classification of departments. It brings together teachers and scholars from different disciplines, such as historians, linguists, literary critics, psychologists, economists, art historians, political scientists, etc., to jointly study regional issues, especially regional business culture Characteristics, characteristics of urban development, history of cultural relations, cross-cultural communication and cooperation in different regions, issues of mutual perception, and general studies of disciplines, such as the methods and methods of regional studies, the theory and practice of regional studies, etc. University administrations can also develop “Area and Country Studies” at their institution by forming a team of scholars and teachers [4]. In this team, teachers are not limited to the direction of their own regional research, but cooperate with each other to complete teaching or research tasks. In this team, if the research object is foreign country and regional studies, then foreign language is essential.

Since 2017, 163 Chinese colleges and universities have opened the major of “regional country studies” and recruited postgraduate students, of which 41 colleges and universities have recruited doctoral students.

2.2. Educational Purposes of “area and Country Studies”

In 2017 the Chinese Ministry of Education issued the “Notice of the General Office of the Ministry of Education on Doing a Good Job in Country and Regional Research in 2017” [3]. It is pointed out in this “Notice” that the country and regional research work carried out by colleges and universities is of great significance to serve the national strategy and the overall situation of diplomacy and comprehensively promote the construction of the “Belt and Road”. Country and regional research in colleges and universities will be a new growth point for the opening up of Chinese education in the new era. [5]This is not only the need for colleges and universities to

implement the five functions of talent training, scientific research, social services, cultural inheritance and innovation, and international exchanges and cooperation, but also the need for colleges and universities in the new era. To serve the needs of national strategies, improve self-construction, adapt to changes in the international situation, and strengthen mutual learning and communication. The mission and challenges of country and regional studies in the new era, strengthen country and regional studies, and improve the modernization level of China's diplomacy [4].

Today, with the globalization of the world, the establishment of the discipline of 'Area and Country Studies' in China is in line with the development of today's society, the country, and the world, as well as the concept of building a new type of international relations and building a community with a shared future for mankind. With the implementation and advancement of the "One Belt, One Road" initiative, the importance and urgency of the training of national and regional research professionals has become particularly prominent. China's higher education should follow the trend to add "Area and Country Studies" disciplines, change the traditional foreign language talent training model and single talent training direction, and establish "Area and Country Studies" with Chinese characteristics. Regional and country studies is a multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and integrated field that requires the integration of many knowledge from the social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences. History, Anthropology, Linguistics, Sociology, Political Science, Economics, Law, Geography, Environmental Studies, etc., all form the disciplinary basis of this field [6].

Chinese scholars Qian Chengdan believe that "As an emerging academic field, "regional country studies" has grown rapidly in China, showing a surging trend." [7]. On July 29, 2020, the National Postgraduate Education Conference decided to add interdisciplinary subjects as a new discipline category, making it clear that postgraduate education should "accelerate the cultivation of high-level talents that the country urgently needs", and promote the pattern and deep-level changes in postgraduate education. On September 22, 2020, at the Ministry of Education's Golden Autumn series of press conferences, the Ministry of Education, the National Development and Reform Commission and the Ministry of Finance jointly issued the "Opinions on Accelerating the Reform and Development of Postgraduate Education in the New Era", clearly proposing to promote interdisciplinary development, explore and establish Interdisciplinary development special zone, set up a number of interdisciplinary centers, and cultivate high-level talents with core technologies in key fields. The 36th Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council reviewed and approved the setting of interdisciplinary categories, and also proposed to formulate new interdisciplinary management measures. Regional national studies is a typical interdisciplinary subject. Only by establishing substantive teaching and research institutions in colleges and universities, especially in the cultivation of master's, doctoral and post-doctoral talents, can we step into a benign track of sustainable development. Chinese scholars Wu Xiaolan believe that regional country studies are not only a characteristic invention of Chinese studies, but also a research creation with Chinese characteristics [8].

2.3. Educational Effectiveness of "area and Country Studies"

Chinese scholars Luo Lin believe: "Area and Country Studies" are "great power studies" in which a country moves from regional to global, observes the world in depth, and constructs its own strategy [9]. Graduates of "Area and Country Studies" can better serve the "Belt and Road" construction. One of their educational tasks should be to focus on the needs of national development, keep up with reality, and especially focus on regional development related to national strategies and interests Dynamic, to provide professional judgment and basis for relevant policy recommendations. The establishment of the discipline of "Area and Country Studies" will not only provide important support for promoting the construction of the "Belt and Road" academic discourse system and the establishment of international discourse power, but also its academic characteristics will naturally assume the important mission of serving the national strategy.

The subject education of "Area and Country Studies" reserves multi-level and diversified talents

for the construction of the “Belt and Road”. This discipline focuses on cultivating comprehensive and interdisciplinary national and regional research talents, and cultivates outstanding interdisciplinary talents urgently needed in the construction of the “Belt and Road” that is needed in the country's foreign exchanges. The subject education of “Area and Country Studies” has cultivated a group of foreign students in the professional field for the world. These professionals are an important part of China's establishment of a “Belt and Road” research think tank. The subject education of “Area and Country Studies” is in line with the practical needs of China's rise and the promotion of major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics. The process of building China's international academic discourse system has enhanced China's academic international discourse power. The subject education of “Area and Country Studies” has achieved great results in China. There are more and more Chinese colleges and universities offering the subject of “Area and Country Studies”, attracting more students to apply for the exam. Graduates of this discipline serve in various fields, providing a guarantee for China to further enter the international stage. Chinese scholars Jiang Shixue believe: “The upgrading of regional country studies to the first-level discipline “regional country studies” is both academic inevitability and a necessity in discipline construction, because one of the characteristics of China's education system is the discipline system” [10].

3. Conclusion

The “Belt and Road” Initiative is a major measure for my country to open up in an all-round way. In practice, promoting the joint construction of the “Belt and Road” is inseparable from the research on regional dynamics of partner countries. In particular, our research foundation for many countries along the route is weak and mainly concentrated in traditional fields. This requires considerable research effort and a lot of research energy in similar countries, especially in non-traditional areas. The education of this discipline meets the practical needs of China's rise and the promotion of major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics. It is the basic requirement of cultivating innovative talents, improving innovation capabilities, connecting national strategies, and serving national development under the conditions of the new era, and vigorously promotes the construction of China's international academic discourse system. The process of China's academic research has enhanced the international discourse power of Chinese academics. In 2021, the Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council of the People's Republic of China will add “Area and Country Studies” as a first-level discipline in the “Regarding the Catalogue of Disciplines for Doctoral and Master's Degree Granting and Talent Training and Its Management Measures”. The science will usher in new development opportunities.

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