

Research on Strategies for Improving the Educational Quality of MPA Training Based on Collaborative Education

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Abstract: With the continuous deepening of reform of China's public administration system and the advancement of modernization of social governance, MPA (Master of Public Administration) education shoulders the significant mission of cultivating high-quality public administration talents. The traditional single model of education has become difficult to meet the complex and changing demands of public administration in the new era, and the concept of collaborative education has emerged, emphasizing multi-subject collaboration, resource sharing and practice-oriented. The Public administration case competition, as an important practical platform for collaborative education, not only provides MPA students with a growth space that combines theory and practice, but also promotes the overall improvement of educational quality. Based on the perspective of collaborative education, this paper focuses on the Public Administration case Competition to explore the connotation of MPA training, educational dilemmas and path optimization, aiming to provide theoretical support and practical reference for the reform of talent cultivation in the public administration major.

Keywords: Collaborative Education; MPA Education; Case Competition; Public Administration

1. Introduction

With the continuous deepening of the reform of China's public management system and the acceleration of the modernization process of social governance, the quality and level of public management talent cultivation are becoming a key support for enhancing the national governance capacity system and the modernization of governance capacity. As an important way to specifically cultivate high-quality public administration talents, MPA

(Master of Public Administration) education carries the dual mission of connecting academic research with public practice. With the continuous focus on improving the quality of postgraduate education in China, many scholars have conducted in-depth discussions on the quality of talent cultivation and mechanism innovation, providing important theoretical support for the reform of MPA education. The improvement of the ability to cultivate talents independently is a new direction for promoting high-quality development of education. The traditional single model of education is difficult to meet the diverse needs of social and economic development in the new era. It is advocated to enhance the pertinence and adaptability[1] of talent cultivation through the construction of a multi-subject collaborative education mechanism. The ability to cultivate high-level talents independently is the key to the high-quality development of postgraduate education. The construction of the "industry-university-research-use" collaborative mechanism promotes the deep integration of universities with the government and industries and ensures that the content of talent cultivation is closely aligned with social demands, which provides a practical basis[2] for the design of the MPA collaborative education mechanism. Wang Juan analyzed the strategies for improving the teaching quality of universities through the higher education quality monitoring platform data, proposed data-driven teaching evaluation and improvement, and strengthened quality governance in the teaching process, providing technical paths and methodological references[3] for the quality monitoring and continuous improvement of MPA education. Wang Wei explored the application of smart education in the improvement of teaching quality in higher vocational colleges from the perspective of "Internet + education", emphasizing the innovation of teaching models brought about by the integration of information technology and

education, and suggesting that MPA education should actively utilize digital means to enhance the integration of teaching resources and the effectiveness[4] of practical teaching. Focusing on the field of MPA education, Li Qingjun systematically analyzed the problems existing in the cultivation of MPA in China, mainly including unreasonable curriculum setting and weak practical teaching, and proposed countermeasures to strengthen the cultivation of practical ability and the reform of the curriculum system, directly reflecting the urgent need[5] for improving the quality of MPA education. Qing Jing, from an international perspective, compared the development of MPA education models in the United States and China, pointed out that China's MPA should draw on the educational concept of emphasizing practical ability and application-oriented in the United States, and promote the transformation of the training model from theoretical imparting to ability cultivation, providing valuable reference experience[6]. Li Yan explored the management innovation of the application-oriented talent cultivation model, proposed the practical experience of integrating MPA educational resources into undergraduate teaching management, emphasized the construction of a cross-level and multi-dimensional talent cultivation system, and enriched the thinking[7] of MPA educational resource integration. Li Xin conducted an improvement study on MPA education from the perspective of risk management, suggesting that students' risk awareness and response ability should be enhanced, and the curriculum system should be improved to adapt to the complex and changeable public management environment, providing a new direction[8] for the curriculum reform and ability cultivation of MPA education. Xu Beishen, taking China Three Gorges University as an example, analyzed how local universities can promote the improvement of MPA education quality through an open and shared talent cultivation model, emphasizing the role of the collaborative education mechanism in resource sharing and the construction of practical platforms, providing a practical sample[9] for the reform of local MPA education. Chen Wenru conducted an innovative study on the teaching model of MPA education in ethnic areas, proposed an education model that is adapted to local conditions and emphasizes the integration of ethnic cultures, effectively improved the quality of education and the comprehensive

ability of students, and demonstrated the important influence[10] of regional characteristics on the improvement of MPA education quality. In recent years, the concept of "collaborative education" has gradually emerged in postgraduate education, advocating the joint participation of multiple subjects such as universities, governments, industries, and enterprises in talent cultivation, and creating an open and integrated education ecosystem through resource co-construction, task sharing, and result sharing. As a typical carrier of collaborative education, the public administration case Competition, with its unique mechanism of "promoting teaching through competition, promoting learning through competition, promoting reform through competition", has explored new paths for the integration of theory and practice in many universities, not only stimulating students' enthusiasm for participating in public affairs, but also enhancing their practical ability and comprehensive quality. In this context, based on the perspective of collaborative education, this paper takes the Public Administration case Competition as the research object, sorts out its specific mechanisms and practical paths for improving the quality of MPA education, and conducts problem analysis and strategy discussion in combination with existing literature results, aiming to provide theoretical support and practical reference for the reform and optimization of the MPA talent cultivation model in the new era.

2. Construction of the Connotation of MPA Training under Collaborative Education

In the context of the new era, collaborative education, as the core path to promote the development of high-quality postgraduate education, has transformed its connotation from the traditional "multi-party participation" to a more systematic and institutionalized "multi-subject deep collaborative education". For MPA (Master of Public Administration) education, collaborative education is not only a means to enhance the quality of training, but also an important support for the transformation of the MPA education mission and the response to the demands of modernization of social governance. Collaborative education emphasizes a four-in-one collaborative structure of "school - government - industry - enterprise", breaks the limitations of a single education subject, and builds a composite education system that is horizontally linked and

vertically integrated through institutional design, resource sharing, evaluation mechanism and cultural co-construction. Under this framework, the school, as the academic leader, undertakes the task of basic theory teaching and the design of talent cultivation programs; The government and public administration, acting as demanders and policy promoters, define the requirements for talent capabilities and provide practical platforms; Industries and enterprises act as application parties, providing real scenarios and practical cases to help students achieve ability transformation and quality improvement, as shown in Figure 1. MPA students themselves are characterized by diverse backgrounds and multiple roles, especially in the form of part-time study, their work experience and learning needs are more personalized and application-oriented. Therefore, the collaborative education mechanism also needs to take into account individual development differences and systematic training logic, and form a dynamic adaptation mechanism through the mentorship system, "dual mentorship" system, joint curriculum design, project-based practice, etc., to ensure that students can grow simultaneously at the theoretical, practical, quality and value levels.

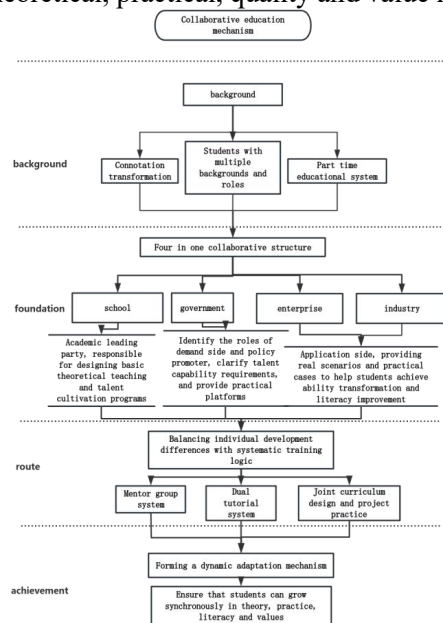


Figure 1. Framework Diagram of Collaborative Education Mechanism

3. The Practical Value of the Public Administration Case Competition

3.1 The Evolution of the Mechanism of Case Competitions Embedding Practical Education

As an innovative practice platform in MPA education, the evolution of the embedded education mechanism of the public administration case competition reflects the shift from "knowledge indoctrination" to "ability generation" and from "classroom instruction" to "real task-driven". With the institutionalization and branding of the case competition, its role in the MPA talent cultivation system has become increasingly prominent. From a mechanistic perspective, the case competition has gradually shifted from being organized spontaneously by institutions to being driven by the linkage of education authorities and industry organizations, forming a practical education platform jointly built by graduate schools, guidance committees, and industry associations to ensure its standardization and professionalism. In terms of content design, the competition closely follows major national policy issues and hot topics in public administration to ensure that the cases are realistic and challenging. In terms of the participation mechanism, the case competition is based on teams and implements a competition mechanism that combines guidance from both on-campus and off-campus mentors, cross-disciplinary team formation, outcome presentation and expert review, forming a practical closed loop with "theoretical learning - problem research - scheme design - presentation" as the main line. This process not only strengthens students' systems thinking ability and policy expression ability, but also promotes teachers' teaching innovation and academic reflection. It can be said that the practical value of the public Administration case competition lies not only in providing a platform for MPA students to showcase and practice, but also in the fact that the evolution of its mechanism has been integrated into the core educational links of MPA education and has become an important carrier for promoting industry-education integration, government-school collaboration and the integration of learning and application.

3.2 Innovative Approaches to Case Teaching Driven by Synergy

Driven by the concept of collaborative education, case teaching in public administration shows an innovative path throughout the entire process from content generation, curriculum organization to teaching evaluation. Traditional MPA case teaching relies heavily on teachers' personal experience, outdated cases, and weak interaction,

making it difficult to mobilize students' initiative and critical thinking. To break through this predicament, the introduction of the collaborative mechanism has led to the co-construction and sharing of case resources and the multi-integration of teaching forms. Relying on the platform advantage of the case competition, many universities have introduced methods such as "real cases + virtual simulation" and "online collaboration + offline presentation" in teaching to achieve innovative integration of teaching forms. The teaching evaluation system is also constantly improving, shifting from single grade assessment to process evaluation and multi-dimensional feedback, with a greater focus on the actual improvement of students in the application of research methods, teamwork, logical thinking and expression ability. More importantly, under the collaborative mechanism, case teaching is no longer a "dialogue" between teachers and students, but a multi-faceted collaborative process involving the government, industry, schools and students, which enables effective integration of teaching resources, efficient operation of the teaching process and continuous transformation of teaching outcomes.

3.3 An Analysis of Educational Effectiveness in Empowering the Comprehensive Quality improvement of MPA students

The Public Administration case Competition, as an important practical platform for collaborative education, has demonstrated remarkable educational effectiveness in enhancing the comprehensive quality of MPA students. On the one hand, the tasks of the competition are highly complex and realistic, requiring students to conduct research, analysis and strategy construction around real public management issues, promoting their deep growth in the application of theoretical knowledge, logical thinking expansion, policy expression, etc. By participating in the case writing, presentation and defense sessions, students gain multi-faceted experience and form an ability structure that emphasizes both practical skills and theoretical depth. On the other hand, the case competition requires students to carry out project practices under the dual guidance of on-campus and off-campus mentors, forming a "teaching - learning - research - application" community between teachers and students to promote the integration and improvement of students' professional qualities and vocational abilities.

The competition also focuses on cultivating students' sense of social responsibility and public values. The cases revolve around national strategic issues and social livelihood hotspots, guiding students to place their individual development in the broader context of public interests and national governance, and enhancing their sense of responsibility and mission of The Times. The results of the competition have been incorporated into the comprehensive assessment system as one of the indicators for evaluating the quality of talent cultivation in many universities, and the educational effect has been remarkable. A number of research data show that MPA students who participated in the case competition outperformed those who did not.

4. Educational Dilemmas in MPA Education Practice

4.1 Insufficient Adaptability of MPA Talents' Capabilities under the "Mismatch between Supply and Demand"

With the deepening reform of China's public management system, the demand for MPA talents from the government and the public sector has gradually increased, but the current MPA education has a significantly lagging response on the supply side, resulting in the structural contradiction of "mismatch between supply and demand". Specifically, on the one hand, the MPA curriculum system is still biased towards traditional public administration theories, textbooks are updated slowly, course content is disconnected from real-world problems, and teaching cases lack pertinence and timeliness, resulting in the knowledge system mastered by students being difficult to match the complex and changing demands of public affairs management; On the other hand, the government and enterprises expect MPA graduates to have comprehensive qualities such as good policy analysis ability and public resource integration ability, but the current MPA education is still insufficient in the systematic cultivation of these abilities, and students often face the predicament of "having more knowledge but less practice" in actual work. The career paths of MPA students are also changing quietly. More and more students expect to enter higher fields through MPA education, but the research and response of the education supply side to these career scenarios are not deep enough, resulting in graduates being in a "marginalized" or "hollow"

state in the workplace competition. This mismatch between ability supply and job demand has become a significant bottleneck restricting the improvement of MPA education quality and the effectiveness of talent cultivation.

4.2 The Ability Gap Caused by the "Blurring" and "Weakening" of Practical Teaching Links

MPA education emphasizes the unity of knowledge and action, and the organic integration of theoretical knowledge and practical ability. However, in real teaching, there is a widespread problem of "blurriness" and "weakening" in the practical teaching link, resulting in a serious gap in the process of students' ability generation. On the one hand, some universities view practical teaching as an embellishment of teaching, lacking systematic design. The practical content is mostly formal operations such as research reports and thesis writing, lacking the embedding of real scenarios such as field investigations, in which students have difficulty obtaining real operational experience and management perception; On the other hand, the teaching staff for practical teaching is weak, and some teachers themselves lack practical experience in the public sector, making it difficult to effectively guide students to deal with real problems and build action paths. The construction of practice bases lags behind, especially in part-time MPA education, where the time and space for practice teaching are limited and teaching plans are often compressed or even cancelled, further exacerbating the "idling" of ability training. This weakening of practical teaching not only fails to support the compound ability structure of "decision-making + execution + collaboration" that MPA talents should possess, but also makes it difficult to form a closed loop of "teaching - practice - reflection", seriously restricting the systematic construction of students' comprehensive quality and management ability. To address this issue, it is necessary to reconstruct the MPA practical teaching system, promote the "pre-deployment", "task-based" and "project-based" of practical teaching modules, and through in-depth collaboration with the government, think tanks and social organizations, create an integrated practical path of "real problems - teamwork - mentorship - transformation of results" to effectively enhance students' practical and innovative abilities in dealing with complex public affairs.

4.3 Ambiguous Educational Goals in the Context of Diverse Identities of MPA Students

As the scale of MPA education continues to expand, the composition of the student body is becoming increasingly diverse, including both working civil servants and public institution cadres, as well as full-time students aspiring to work in public administration. This identity disparity leads to significant differences in learning objectives, learning methods, and career aspirations, and places higher demands on the educational goals and paths of MPA education. At present, most universities still have problems of ambiguity and inconsistent standards in positioning their educational goals. Specifically, some MPA programs fail to fully consider the diverse needs of students in terms of course content and teaching arrangements, and still cultivate students with uniform standards, ignoring the different orientations of part-time students "learning with questions" and full-time students "expecting general knowledge of the workplace", resulting in a lack of precision and personalized support in the training process. The singularity of the evaluation criteria for education exacerbates this problem, with academic ability and thesis results being the core considerations, and students' practical performance in organizational coordination, public communication, social responsibility and other aspects being overlooked. The ambiguity of educational goals not only restricts the targeted development of MPA education, but also weakens students' own professional identity and development planning.

5. Optimization of MPA Collaborative Education Pathways based on Case competitions

The deep integration of the case competition provides a rich practical field for MPA collaborative education, but to truly unleash its effectiveness, it is necessary to solidify a complete and efficient practical teaching support system that breaks through the resource boundaries and model limitations of traditional teaching. On the one hand, the case competition should be used as a starting point to systematically design the entire process practice chain of "case writing - problem analysis - solution output - evaluation feedback", extend practical teaching from in-class to out-of-class, transform passive participation into active exploration, and form a learning community of

"real problem driven - teamwork solution". On the other hand, it is necessary to expand the supply of practical resources, break the situation of single, closed and insufficient resources within the school, actively link high-quality external resources, introduce real policy issues, grassroots governance cases, etc. as teaching materials, and form a dynamically updated case resource library.

4.2 Build a multi-dimensional and stereoscopic evaluation index system for MPA education

The education evaluation system, as a core link in the quality management of MPA education, is directly related to the feedback on teaching effectiveness, the implementation of talent cultivation goals, and the continuous advancement of educational reform. Most current MPA programs still rely on "course grades + graduation thesis" as the main evaluation basis, ignoring students' growth process and practical abilities in policy understanding, problem-solving, communication and collaboration, etc., making it difficult to fully reflect their public management literacy. Therefore, it has become an urgent task to build a multi-dimensional, three-dimensional and dynamic evaluation system that conforms to the concept of collaborative education. On the one hand, the evaluation dimensions should be enriched. Besides the examination of knowledge mastery, key qualities such as policy analysis ability, organizational execution ability, public communication ability, project management ability and social responsibility should also be included in the evaluation content system. In particular in case competitions, detailed indicators can be set around key links such as "problem identification - team collaboration - strategy construction - on-site expression - effectiveness feedback" to strengthen the assessment of the entire process of practical ability. On the other hand, the evaluation subjects should be expanded from a single evaluation by teachers to a multi-evaluation model of "in-school teachers + industry mentors + employers + students' self-evaluation" to achieve a three-in-one assessment of educational effectiveness in terms of process, development and feedback. In addition, the forms of evaluation should also be diversified, such as case defense, project presentation, etc., to promote the formation of a more real, diverse and dynamic feedback loop for education. In practice, integrate students' performance in teaching, practice, and competitions to form a visual and traceable record of their growth path.

6. Conclusion

The MPA training path based on collaborative education, with public administration case competitions as the carrier, has become a key breakthrough for improving the quality of talent cultivation. Through deep collaboration among multiple subjects and the organic combination of practical teaching and theoretical teaching, students' comprehensive qualities have been significantly enhanced. Problems such as the mismatch between supply and demand of talents, the weakening of practical links and the failure of collaborative mechanisms still restrict educational outcomes. It is necessary to continuously improve the practice support system, optimize the multi-dimensional evaluation mechanism, strengthen the collaboration among schools, governments, industries and enterprises, and create an educational ecosystem driven by both system and culture. Only in this way can MPA education better meet the demands of modernization of national governance, cultivate high-level public management talents with both theoretical depth and practical ability, and achieve a positive interaction and common development between education and society.

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