

Analysis of the Influence of Inheritance and Innovation on the Quality of Postgraduate Training of Basic Theory of Traditional Chinese Medicine

Xiaowei He¹, Zhiming Zang², Han Liu², Li Wu², Hang Xu^{3*}, Man Zhang^{4*}

¹College of Zhuang Medicine, Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine, Nanning, China

²College of Basic Medicine, Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine, Nanning, China

³Guangxi Traditional Chinese Medicine School, Nanning, China

⁴Office of Ethics, The First Affiliated Hospital of Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine, Nanning, China

Email: *245090908@qq.com, *106018230@qq.com

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Abstract

Postgraduate education is the highest level of TCM education, and the core problem of TCM postgraduate education is how to improve the quality of training. Based on the current situation of postgraduate training in the basic theory of traditional Chinese medicine, this paper makes some thoughts on improving the quality of postgraduate training: The training of postgraduate students majoring in the basic theory of traditional Chinese medicine takes “inheritance” as the cornerstone and “innovation” as the javelin. The combination of inheritance and innovation is the only way to improve the quality of training, so as to produce a higher level of innovative academic achievements and help the construction of an innovative country. In the process of academic research, it is particularly important to train graduate students to insist on original topic selection and novel ideas, and explore abnormal findings.

Keywords

Basic Theory of Traditional Chinese Medicine Major, Graduate Education, Pass on, Innovation, Quality of Culture

1. Introduction

Postgraduate education is the highest level of TCM education, and the core problem of TCM postgraduate education is how to improve the quality of train-

ing. The basic theory of traditional Chinese medicine is the cornerstone of traditional Chinese medicine and the backbone of traditional Chinese medicine education. The quality of graduate education in the basic theory of traditional Chinese medicine is not only related to the personal future of graduate students, but also directly affects the development prospect of Chinese medicine in our country.

China began to enroll postgraduates in the basic theory of traditional Chinese medicine in 1978, formally set up the master's degree program in 1979, and set up the doctoral degree program in 1997. After 40 years of development, graduate education in the basic theory of traditional Chinese medicine has accumulated a lot of valuable experience in cultivating high-level talents in traditional Chinese medicine. It has played a huge role in promoting the inheritance and development of traditional Chinese medicine and has become an important force in the inheritance and innovation of traditional Chinese medicine. In recent years, the scale of postgraduate education has been expanding, which is beneficial to the development of TCM and the inheritance of TCM to a certain extent. However, the expansion of scale and the increase of quantity cannot be at the cost of the decline of quality.

As for the factors influencing the quality of graduate education in the situation of expanding enrollment (Li et al., 2021; Yang, 2021), there are mainly several aspects, including the graduate students themselves, the graduate supervisors, the universities, and society. Among these, the impact of graduate students themselves on the quality of education is undoubtedly the most fundamental and crucial. Regarding the specialty of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) basic theories, it is worth our profound consideration on how to better improve the quality of graduate education in this field through a balance between “inheritance” and “innovation”.

2. “Inheritance” Is the Cornerstone of Postgraduate Training in the Basic Theory of Traditional Chinese Medicine

Graduate students majoring in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) basic theories take delving into TCM classics as their primary academic task. TCM classics can be regarded as the wellspring of vitality for traditional Chinese medicine, containing profound philosophical concepts that deeply influence the values of the Chinese nation. Graduate students in the TCM basic theories field should firmly root themselves in TCM classics, draw nourishment from them, and cultivate the essence and soul of TCM culture, internalizing it within themselves and manifesting it outwardly. As a discipline deeply rooted in traditional Chinese culture, TCM is intricately connected to various aspects of Chinese traditional culture, such as Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, and the Book of Changes. It is the integration of these cultural elements that have given rise to its unique thinking system, including concepts such as “putting people first” as the subjectivity perspective, the values of “medicine as an act of benevolence”, the

moral outlook of “great physicians act with sincerity”, the holistic view of “harmony between heaven and humans”, the balanced perspective of “seeking equilibrium”, and the dynamic perspective of “integrating movement and stillness” (Mao & Xiong, 2018). TCM classics embody boundless vitality and represent the harmonious fusion of natural and humanities sciences, forming the foundation of TCM’s clinical thinking and establishing a comprehensive and effective system of TCM (Zhang & Duan, 2020). Therefore, at the ideological level, TCM graduate students should actively seek the roots in TCM classics, strengthen their confidence in TCM, and gain inspiration for TCM dialectical diagnosis and treatment.

Some scholars have pointed out that in recent years, the proportion of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) classics courses in TCM education has been too small, and there has been insufficient allocation of faculty resources. As a result, students have not given adequate attention to the classics, leading to a decline in their enthusiasm for studying them. This phenomenon is even more pronounced among graduate students majoring in TCM basic theories (Wang et al., 2018a). The underlying reason for this trend is the advancement of science and technology, which has caused the study direction and research tasks of graduate students in TCM basic theories to gradually shift towards micro-level research. Indeed, in the process of carrying out TCM research activities, the application of modern science and technology has refined the traditional concept of TCM and interpreted the connotation of TCM from a new perspective. Under the background of globalization, this has greatly promoted the acceptance of TCM in the international community, but we cannot ignore the traditional nature of TCM. The reliable curative effect under the guidance of traditional Chinese medicine classics has been verified for a long time. Showing the unique charm of traditional Chinese medicine classics to graduate students is the basis for establishing their interest in learning, and it is also a breakthrough to establish their self-confidence in traditional Chinese medicine culture.

Cultural self-confidence has a more basic, extensive and profound connotation, is a more basic, deeper and more lasting strength, is the spiritual pillar of the long history of Chinese culture and is the source of strength of the Chinese nation for thousands of years (Lu et al., 2021). For the cultivation of graduate students majoring in TCM basic theories and even for the entire TCM education, having confidence in TCM culture holds particularly significant importance. As an important carrier of national information symbols, culture reflects the spiritual face of the nation and the atmosphere of The Times, and the culture of traditional Chinese medicine is a precious cultural treasure of practical significance formed by the continuous practice and accumulation of precipitation of the Chinese nation for thousands of years. Therefore, the most fundamental way to establish the self-confidence of TCM culture is to carry on, develop and innovate on the basis of tracing the origin and combining it with the requirements of modern technology and The Times.

3. “Innovation” Is the Javelin in the Training of Postgraduate Students Majoring in Basic Theory of Traditional Chinese Medicine

With the continuous advancement of the national “Belt and Road” policy, high-level compound TCM talents with international communication ability, high professional level, innovation and entrepreneurship ability will be more in line with the needs of the development of The Times (Wang & Wang, 2021). In order to go to the world stage with a better attitude and a more spiritual outlook, traditional Chinese medicine must realize the diversification of talent training. Therefore, it is of great significance to explore a training model of the basic theory of traditional Chinese medicine that conforms to the development of The Times and the trend of the development.

The innovative talents nurtured through diversified training should integrate theory, clinical practice, scientific research, humanities, and communication skills. However, most training models primarily focus on theory, scientific research, and clinical aspects, neglecting the development of abilities in humanities and communication (Gong & Zhang, 2019; Huang et al., 2021). Xiang et al. (2021) found that in the cultivation of graduate students majoring in TCM basic theories, students’ communication skills and humanities literacy are often overlooked. Developing communication skills and humanities literacy requires not only a solid foundation of medical theory and humanistic knowledge but also active exploration based on practical experience, independent thinking, and seeking solutions under the guidance of teachers. Cultivating students’ humanities qualities is of utmost importance for fostering reverence for life, strengthening professional confidence, and enhancing a sense of responsibility. Effective communication skills are also crucial for fostering fruitful interactions between teachers and students, among peers, and for academic exchanges both domestically and internationally. It significantly contributes to the development and global dissemination of Chinese medicine and culture. Therefore, integrating theory, clinical practice, scientific research, humanities, and communication skills are essential for cultivating comprehensive abilities in graduate students majoring in TCM basic theories and promoting the healthy and comprehensive development of TCM and its culture.

Currently, China’s TCM talent cultivation system includes various types, such as the “5 + 3” integrated program, combined master’s and doctoral studies, and the nine-year direct doctoral program. The training also encompasses professional degrees and academic degrees based on different training objectives. To further improve the training mechanism for graduate students majoring in TCM basic theories, institutional reforms should be actively pursued. This entails diversifying and individualizing the graduate training models to enhance targeted improvements in various abilities according to specific developmental needs. The goal is to elevate talent competitiveness and adapt to the fast-paced developments of the new era.

4. The Combination of Inheritance and Innovation Is the Only Way to Improve the Quality of Postgraduate Training of Basic Theory of Traditional Chinese Medicine

The General Secretary pointed out that: “We should do a good job in maintaining the integrity, innovation, inheritance and development of traditional Chinese medicine, establish a service system, service mode, management mode and talent training mode in line with the characteristics of traditional Chinese medicine, so that traditional Chinese medicine can flourish”. Whether there are high-level talents or not is the key to revitalize the cause of traditional Chinese medicine. Therefore, the cultivation quality of TCM talents should adapt to contemporary development, strengthen the confidence in TCM culture, and formulate a post-graduate training program in line with the development of the new era under the guidance of the education concept of people-oriented. Only by actively exploring and carrying out the new model of personnel training can we bring up pillars for the vigorous development of traditional Chinese medicine.

4.1. Inheritance as the Foundation and Driving Force of Innovation

Inheritance is the foundation of the development of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), while innovation serves as the soul of a nation’s progress and the inexhaustible driving force for a country’s sustained development. Improving independent innovation ability and building an innovative country is the core of our country’s development strategy. The key to building an innovative country lies in talents, especially innovative scientific and technological talents. Graduate students are the most active new force in colleges and universities, and also an important force in building an innovative country in the future. Their innovation ability directly affects the country’s overall independent innovation ability. Innovative thinking and innovative ability are important components of the comprehensive quality of graduate students, important indicators to measure the quality of graduate education, and important factors to cultivate high-level innovative talents. Innovative thinking ability requires the comprehensive application of various thinking modes, and innovative thinking is the most important form of thinking (Lin, 2021). Alternative thinking is a higher complex psychological phenomenon, which refers to the thinking process and method of exploring different answers to a problem from different directions or even opposite directions. One of the hallmarks of alternative thinking is the questioning of widely held stereotypes of perfection.

4.2. Seeking Uniqueness as the Soul and Direction of Innovation

A significant difference between graduate education and undergraduate education is that graduate education is no longer a simple increase in the amount of knowledge, but focuses on cultivating the research ability of graduate students, that is, the ability to innovate knowledge and the ability to explore and

discover new knowledge, new ideas and new theories (Wang et al., 2018b). However, due to the restriction of the traditional education system in our country, graduate students have formed the set thinking that they can only passively accept correct and authoritative knowledge in the long-term process of education, and only take scores and further education as the goal, and their “curiosity” and “question” are suppressed and worn out for a long time. As a result, graduate students are more inclined to do some simple repetitive work on the basis of previous research and are not good at putting forward significant improvement ideas for previous research, let alone dare to question previous research. Some graduate students have come up with novel ideas based on their own curiosity, but they are forced to give up and follow the trend and choose more mainstream research topics for fear of becoming an “outlier” or “non-mainstream” in the academic community or being questioned by supervisors or other academic authorities. Some graduate students also found some abnormal experimental phenomena or inconsistent results with expectations in the process of scientific research. Although they had been confirmed many times, they did not dare to persist or even change to other topics to carry out new research for fear of not being accepted by the mainstream academic community. On the contrary, these abandoned novel ideas or abnormal discoveries are often the sources of some leading original achievements, and it is likely to produce from zero to one disruptive technological innovation. Graduate students are the main force and backbone of academic research in universities. The dilemma of seeking diversity in the process of academic research is an important obstacle to produce high-level innovative academic achievements and build an innovative country.

Therefore, for postgraduates majoring in the basic theory of traditional Chinese medicine, it is particularly important to improve the gold content of their dissertates, produce higher levels of innovative academic results, and help the construction of an innovative country. In the process of academic research, it is necessary to cultivate postgraduates to adhere to original topic selection, novel ideas, and deep exploration of abnormal findings.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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