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PROS AND CONS OF UNIVERSITY MERGER AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES: A CASE STUDY OF JILIN UNIVERSITY IN CHINA

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Abstract. In 1993, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council made a decision to gradually promote the reform of the higher education system, put forward the eight character policy slogan of “readjustment, restructuring, consolidation, and improvement”, and successively merged 637 colleges and universities into 70 multidisciplinary and comprehensive colleges and universities. Jilin University was formed on June 12, 2000 by the merger of the former Jilin University, Jilin University of Technology, Norman Bethune Medical University, Changchun University of Science and Technology and Changchun Institute of Posts and Telecommunications. On August 29, 2004, the former Quartermaster University of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army was transferred to Jilin University. Jilin University is a typical case of university merger. It has been more than 30 years since the “wave of university merger” in the 1990s. Timely summarizing the relevant experience and lessons is conducive to providing reference experience for university decision-making in the future. Firstly, this paper analyzes the reasons for the merger of colleges and universities, analyzes the necessity of the merger of colleges and universities from three aspects: the lack of educational resources, the discipline structure not meeting the requirements of the time, and the reform of government institutions. The authors take Jilin University as an example to summarize the benefits of the merger of colleges and universities from both theoretical and empirical aspects. As a mode of university development, merger also has its problems in the choice of merger policy and the process of merger. Finally, in view of these existing problems, this paper summarizes the relevant solutions of Jilin University, and puts forward supplementary measures from the perspective of the government, universities and teachers and students, hoping to provide experience for the practice of university merger.

Keywords: Colleges and universities, Merger of colleges and universities, Jilin University, Cultural inheritance, Reform in education, Higher education in China.

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Научная статья

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ПЛЮСЫ И МИНУСЫ СТРАТЕГИЙ СЛИЯНИЯ И РАЗВИТИЯ УНИВЕРСИТЕТОВ: НА ПРИМЕРЕ ЦЗИЛИНЬСКОГО УНИВЕРСИТЕТА В КИТАЕ

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Аннотация. В 1993 году ЦК КПК и Государственный совет приняли решение постепенно продвигать реформу системы высшего образования, выдвинули восьмизначную политику «совместного строительства, корректировки, сотрудничества и слияния» и последовательно объединили 637 колледжей и университеты в 70 многопрофильных и общеобразовательных колледжей и университетов. Цзилиньский университет был образован 12 июня 2000 года в результате слияния бывшего Цзилиньского университета, Цзилиньского технологического университета, Медицинского университета Нормана Бетьюна, Чанчуньского университета науки и технологий и Чанчуньского института почты и телекоммуникаций. 29 августа 2004 г. бывший квартирмейстерский университет Народно-освободительной армии Китая был переведен в Цзилиньский университет. Университет Цзилинь – типичный случай объединения университетов. Прошло более 30 лет с момента «волны слияния университетов» в 1990-х годах. Своевременное обобщение соответствующего опыта и уроков способствует предоставлению справочного опыта для принятия университетских решений в будущем. Во-первых, в данной статье анализируются причины слияния колледжей и университетов, анализируется необходимость слияния колледжей и университетов с трех сторон: нехватка образовательных ресурсов, структура дисциплин, не отвечающая требованиям времени, и реформа системы образования государственных учреждений. На примере Университета Цзилинь суммируются преимущества слияния колледжей и университетов как с теоретических, так и с эмпирических аспектов. Как способ развития университета, слияние также имеет свои проблемы в выборе Политики слияния и процесса слияния. Наконец, с учетом этих существующих проблем, в этом документе суммируются соответствующие решения Университета Цзилинь и предлагаются дополнительные меры с точки зрения правительства, университетов, преподавателей и студентов, надеясь предоставить опыт для практики слияния университетов.

Ключевые слова: Колледжи и университеты, Слияние колледжей и университетов, Цзилиньский университет, Культурное наследие, Реформа в образовании, Высшее образование в Китае.

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Introduction

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, China's colleges and universities have experienced two large-scale mergers and adjustments. In the autumn of 1952, the Ministry of Education carried out the adjustment of the departments of colleges and universities nationwide in accordance with the principle of "focusing on the cultivation of industrial construction talents and teachers, developing specialized colleges, Beijing's" eight colleges "and rectifying and strengthening comprehensive universities". After the adjustment of colleges and departments, the number of colleges and universities in China decreased from 211 in 1952 to 183 in 1953. In 1993, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council made a decision to gradually promote the reform of the higher education system, put forward the eight character policy



slogan of “readjustment, restructuring, consolidation, and improvement”, and successively merged 637 colleges and universities into 70 multidisciplinary and comprehensive colleges and universities. The first adjustment of colleges and departments aimed at cultivating professional talents to promote the industrialization development in the early days of the founding of the People’s Republic of China. Therefore, the merger measures mainly focus on the merger of similar items: merge the same majors of colleges and universities into new professional colleges and universities. The second University Merger focuses on the establishment of comprehensive universities, which has new significance and value of the times.

The second wave of merger began in the 1990s and has a history of more than 30 years, which has a far-reaching impact on China’s higher education. Today, the comprehensive merger of colleges and universities is still the strategic choice of many colleges and universities. On this basis, it is necessary and important to explore and summarize the advantages, difficulties and experience of university merger.

Method

Starting with the second merger of colleges and universities, and based on the archives collected by the school history museum and archives of Jilin University, this paper attempts to use the methods of quantitative history and interdisciplinary history, take the common problems related to disciplines as the research object, and use multidisciplinary theories and methods to explore the experience provided by the merger of Chinese colleges and universities to the reform of world higher education. This paper analyzes the “system effect” brought about by the merger of colleges and universities, and provides suggestions and schemes for other countries in the world on such issues as China’s higher education reform cases.

This paper mainly adopts qualitative research on the merger strategy of colleges and universities. At the same time, it analyzes the merger of Jilin University by means of case investigation. The three researchers themselves are members of Jilin University. They can personally experience and understand the current development status of the research object, and describe, explain and analyze the research object through interpretive understanding. During the research process, the research team gradually felt the hardship, uncertainty and high anxiety of qualitative research. Although I am in Jilin University, I can’t equate my daily work with research, nor can I directly use my work experience to understand the subject of the research. That is to separate myself from “the role of a member under the school system”, otherwise I will not be able to experience the feelings and reactions of the subject of the research. Some viewpoints in this paper come from the research team’s research in Jilin University. Through interviewing students, teachers (working in six universities before the merger and working after the merger in 2000) and administrators, the research team have obtained a large amount of first-hand material. At the same time, the research team collected the relevant meeting summaries published by the University, the web news about the merger of Jilin University on the Internet, contacted the school history museum and archives to check the school development archives of the past years, and verified and analyzed this material. The team also searched the most discussed content about the merger of Jilin University on the network, and found the content most concerned by different groups through data statistics and analysis of the solution of various problems.

The research idea of this paper is: file investigation - refining problems - analyzing problems - countermeasures and suggestions. Through the time sequence of the merger development of Jilin University, this paper deeply reveals the overall logic of University Merger layer by layer by taking the strategies and their influence on Jilin University in different stages of merger and integration as variables. Then, the article summarizes and analyzes the research results of academic circles in terms of reasons, advantages, problems and solutions.

Reasons for the merger of colleges and universities

The educational resources are insufficient and the potential is difficult to fulfil.

First of all, in the 1990s, there were more than 1000 ordinary colleges and universities and nearly 1000 adult colleges and universities whose funds were fully borne by the government. In the face of such a large



scale of colleges and universities, it was really difficult for the government to invest enough school running resources [1]. Facing the lack of new educational resources and insufficient use of existing ones, the government was in an urgent need to implement resource sharing and improve the efficiency of running a school.

The “Project 211” and “Project 985”¹ in the 1990s were carried out against this background. In 1995, the “Project 211”² was officially launched. It is committed to greatly improving the educational quality, scientific research, management level and school running efficiency of about 100 colleges and universities and a number of key disciplines. In addition, they have made remarkable progress in the reform of higher education, especially the reform of management system, and have become a platform for cultivating high-level talents, solving major problems in economic construction and social development. On May 4, 1998, when celebrating the 100th anniversary of Peking University, on behalf of the Communist Party of China and the Central People’s Government of the People’s Republic of China, President Jiang Zemin announced to the whole society: “in order to realize modernization, China should have several first-class universities with world advanced level”. A total of 39 Universities under the “Project 985” were approved by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance. In this context, the merger of colleges and universities has become a solution to complement each other’s advantages, obtain financial support and improve the efficiency of running a school.

The professional structure of colleges and universities does not match the needs of the development at the time

After leading an education delegation to the United States in 1979, Liu Dan, President of Zhejiang University, proposed: “In 1952, with the adjustment of departments of national colleges and universities, some old universities with good foundation and colleges of liberal arts, science, engineering and agriculture were divided into universities of liberal arts and science, multidisciplinary industrial universities and some professional schools. As a result, there is no comprehensive university with complete colleges of liberal arts, science, engineering, agriculture, medicine, law and normal education in China. For a large country with a population of one billion, it is not commensurate, and it is also a major defect of China’s higher education. Because the general trend of the current development of science and technology is the mutual penetration of various disciplines and the continuous emergence of new marginal disciplines. Due to the collection of various talents and more complete books and instruments, it is easier for multidisciplinary comprehensive universities to attract and organize by means of cooperation in all aspects. Such higher education is conducive to breaking through the framework of traditional disciplines and effectively developing interdisciplinary scientific research and graduate teaching. Therefore, it can quickly adapt to the trend of world science and technology development. At the same time, teachers can teach better, the students can learn more flexibly and improve faster in such universities than in single discipline colleges and universities of liberal arts and sciences, which is more conducive to high quality talent” [4].

Indeed, on the one hand, the adjustment of colleges and departments in 1952 imitated the Soviet model, reformed the national college system, developed engineering colleges and split comprehensive universities, made the setting of colleges and universities basically meet the needs of national construction. For example, Nanjing University split in 1952, only retained the colleges of liberal arts and sciences, separated other colleges and departments, or established an independent system, or merged into other colleges and departments. For example, Nanjing Institute of Technology (now Southeast University) is established based on the Institute of Technology of Nanjing University; the Philosophy Department of the College of Arts of Nanjing University was adjusted and incorporated into the Department of Philosophy, Peking University. After adjustment, by the beginning of 1953, 215 majors had been set up in colleges and universities across the country. Later, after continuous specialization, 1039 majors had been set up in colleges and

¹ “Project 985” refers to the major decision made by the Communist Party of China and the State Council of the People’s Republic of China at the turn of the century to build first-class universities with world advanced level.

² “Project 211” refers to the construction project of about 100 key universities and a number of key disciplines facing the 21st century. It was officially launched after being approved by the State Council in November 1995.



universities across the country in 1980 [10]. The proportion of multidisciplinary comprehensive universities in colleges and universities decreased from 23.9% in 1949 to 10.9% in 1952. In 1986, this proportion fell to 4.3%. On the other hand, in the contemporary era, the development of science and technology has the characteristics of intersection and diversity, and the development trend of natural science and social science is becoming increasingly integrated. Against such a background of scientific development, only cultivating comprehensive and compound talents can meet the needs of the development of the times. Xue Tianxiang and Wang Peijun of East China Normal University pointed out that under the background of the transition of China's economic system from planned economy to market economy and the diversification of economic structure, the original school running mode of national investment segmentation, closed development and repeated construction formed under the planned economic system can no longer meet the needs of the development of the objective situation. In contrast, comprehensive universities have more advantages due to the collection of various disciplines and teaching resources [3]. Wang Guojun of Zhejiang University also pointed out that a significant advantage of a comprehensive multi campus university is that it has many disciplines and complete categories, promotes knowledge innovation and multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary research, so new knowledge, new disciplines and new categories will emerge one after another [11]. This trend can well meet the needs of the rapid development of China's social and economic construction, and truly make the university an "axis organization" in "post industrial society", as Bell said.

Requirements for the reform of government institutions and the change of management functions.

Xu Xiaozhou of Zhejiang University proposed that after the transformation from planned economy to market economy, the government's political system has been adjusted accordingly. One of the important measures is the streamlining of government departments and the transformation of functions, which also promotes the adjustment of the structure of colleges and universities to a certain extent [1].

Analysis on the advantages of University Merger

Theoretical research

Based on the necessity of university merger in the 1990s, the academic analysis and views on the advantages of university merger are similar in the existing research. The comprehensive summary is as follows.

1. Merger makes the discipline coverage of colleges and universities more extensive, which is conducive to the intersection and integration of disciplines. The merger of colleges and universities shortens the distance between different disciplines and is beneficial to the cross- and integrated development of multiple disciplines.

2. The merger makes the influence of the teaching staff of colleges and universities unprecedented and strong. On the one hand, the merger of colleges and universities is the aggregation of educational resources, which is reflected in the increase in the number of college teachers. On the other hand, the merger is conducive to the exchange and integration of high-level college teachers and the creation of a free, open, inclusive and equal competition academic and teaching environment. In this context, higher education can easily cultivate comprehensive talents, which is more in line with the requirements of the times.

3. The merger strategy strengthens the relationship between colleges and universities and society and attracts various funds. Colleges and universities can take the opportunity of merging to establish a mechanism for mutual adaptation and mutual promotion between colleges and universities and society, expand funding sources, and lay a foundation for colleges and universities to provide social services.

Case analysis

Based on the research process of qualitative research, this paper determines the research phenomenon as university merger, the research purpose is to explore the effect of University merger strategy, and constructs the research framework from four aspects: background exploration, cause analysis, effect analysis and problem analysis. In terms of specific research methods, this paper adopts the case investigation method in qualitative research. Firstly, the investigation team collects the original data of the respondents in many ways. At the same time, on the basis of data collection, the researchers set up an interpretation



framework from three aspects, and use specific data and examples to reasonably explain the phenomenon. At the same time, through the narrative method, the material is placed in the natural situation to describe and analyze the merger of Jilin University.

Firstly, this paper will describe and summarize the basic data of the merger results of Jilin University. Then, this paper will extract the problems easily to occurring in the merger from this case. After that, this paper will analyze these problems and put forward solutions.

In the tide of University Merger in China's second higher education system reform in the early 1990s, Jilin University, which was formed by the merger of six universities and colleges, is a typical case. On June 12, 2000, Jilin University was formed by the merger of the former Jilin University (under the Ministry of Education), Jilin University of Technology (under the Ministry of Education), Norman Bethune Medical University (under the Ministry of Public Health), Changchun University of Science and Technology (under the Ministry of Land and Resources) and Changchun Institute of Posts and Telecommunications (under the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology). On August 29, 2004, the Quartermaster University of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, formerly under the Logistics support department of the Central Military Commission PRC, was transferred to Jilin University³. Jilin University is one of 78 colleges and universities directly under the Ministry of Education. There are 47000 full-time students, including nearly 7000 doctoral and master's students. The campus covers an area of around 3.33 million square meters and the school building construction area is more than 2.5 million square meters. The library has a collection of 7.43 million books.

There have been many studies on the effectiveness of merger. Using those investigation methods for reference, combined with the latest data [4, 9], this paper provides a case analysis for the merger results of Jilin University from three aspects: academic construction, scientific research and talent training.

First, from the perspective of academic construction. Colleges and universities are the organizational units of academic construction. The number of national key disciplines, the authorization centers of master's and doctor's degrees and the construction of qualified teachers are all important indicators for colleges and universities. Through data statistics, it can be seen that the number of key disciplines of Jilin University has increased significantly, involving a wider range of disciplines, and the doctor's degree authorization centers and master's degree authorization centers have increased significantly. The disciplines of new Jilin University cover 11 disciplines such as philosophy, economics, law, pedagogy, literature, history, science, engineering, agronomy, medicine and management. There are 137 undergraduate majors, 12 first level discipline degree authorization centers, 192 master's degree authorization centers, 105 doctor's degree authorization centers and 15 postdoctoral research mobile stations. The number of postdoctoral research mobile stations of Jilin University increased from 15 in 2002 to 42 in 2021, with a net increase of 27. In 2000, Jilin University had 16 national key disciplines and 34 key disciplines in Jilin Province. There are 5 key research bases for humanities and social sciences of the Ministry of Education, 4 state key laboratories, 4 key laboratories of the Ministry of Education and 10 key laboratories of other ministries and commissions. From 2000 to 2019, the number of state key laboratories of Jilin University increased from 4 to 5; the number of humanities and social sciences research bases of the Ministry of Education increased from 5 to 6; the number of national basic science research and talent teaching bases increased from 7 to 9. From the perspective of teachers, the school has strong teaching staff after the merger, including 15620 teaching staff and 5600 teachers (among them 1072 professors, 1647 associate professors and 425 doctoral supervisors). Since 2000, the number of academicians of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Chinese Academy of Engineering owned by Jilin University has increased from 10 to 65 (including 54 external distinguished professors)⁴.

Secondly, from the perspective of scientific research. Colleges and universities are important scientific research institutions. Measuring the input of scientific research funds and the output of scientific

³ Data quoted from the Jilin University, "Historical Evolution", Available at: <https://www.jlu.edu.cn/xxgk/lsgk.htm>.

⁴ Data quoted from the Jilin University, "Statistical Information", Available at: <https://www.jlu.edu.cn/xxgk/tjzl.htm>.



Research and Development Projects of Jilin University (2009-2017)

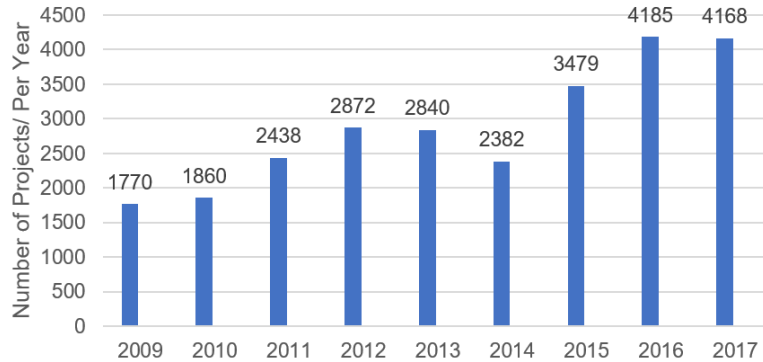


Fig. 1. Research and Development Projects of Jilin University (2009–2017)

Jilin University Science and Technology Funds Appropriation (2009-2017)

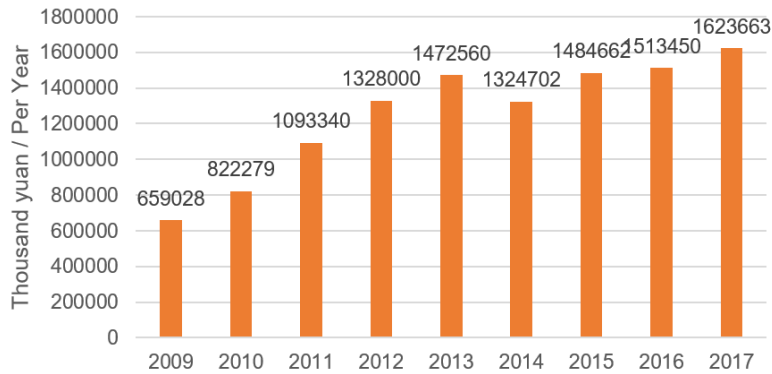


Fig. 2. Jilin University Science and Technology Funds Appropriation (2009–2017)

research achievements can roughly evaluate the scientific research level of colleges and universities. In the first eight years of the merger, Jilin University received a total of 1,108.54386 million yuan for humanities and social sciences research and 3,351.6 million yuan for natural sciences. In the field of philosophy and social sciences, Jilin University has obtained 1,636 scientific research projects of various levels and various types; in the field of natural sciences, it has obtained 7,648 scientific research projects of various levels and various types. During the “13th five year plan” period, the accumulated funds for the research projects of philosophy and social sciences of Jilin University amounted to 469 million, an increase of 35% over the “12th Five Year Plan” (347 million). In 2020, Jilin University won 682 research projects in philosophy and social sciences, with an annual payment of 101.6636 million yuan, breaking the 100 million yuan mark for the first time, realizing a historic leap⁵. According to the data of “Compilation of Statistics on Science and Technology of Higher Education Institutions” from 2009 to 2017, the number of science and technology allocated funds and research projects of Jilin University show an upward trend, as shown in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2.



Thirdly, the perspective of talent training. Colleges and universities are organizations that continuously supply labor force to the society. The evaluation of talent training quality in colleges and universities can also reflect the construction achievements of the University. The admission score line is an important indicator of the quality of undergraduate students. The study found that the merger of colleges and universities significantly reduced the minimum admission score of liberal arts and sciences and significantly improved the average admission score. From the enrollment situation in 2000 and 2001, the enrollment scores of undergraduate freshmen were significantly higher than those in previous years, and even increased significantly in many provinces. Generally speaking, the merger behavior makes the discipline system of colleges and universities better, the advantageous disciplines more prominent, improving comprehensive strength and the average admission score [8]. The employment rate is an important indicator to reflect the graduation destination of college students and the social demand for college graduates. Taking 2020 as an example, the initial employment rate of undergraduates in Jilin University exceeded 90%, reaching 90.03% [12]. Jilin University graduates have a high degree of social recognition. 97.87% of employers are satisfied or relatively satisfied with their graduates' work performance⁶.

Problems with the merger of colleges and universities

As a model of the development of colleges and universities, merger has its inherent advantages, and there are also problems of limited and uncertain effect in its application. Since the merger of colleges and universities in the 1990s, scholars in relevant fields have made a more comprehensive analysis of the problems existing in the merger of colleges and universities. The summary has the following two points. These problems can also be seen in the case of Jilin University.

First of all, in the choice of merger policy, decision makers are prone to blindly pursue scale expansion without understanding the merger policy, which results in differences of opinion among the schools, as well as between schools and the government on the development direction, positioning and objectives after the merger. First, because the school does not understand the complexity of the merger or because of the short preparation period of the merger, it is very difficult for the university to deal with the problems after the merger. This makes the internal parts of the school extremely uncoordinated, the apparent affinity and separation between disciplines, and the discipline integration is difficult to deepen. Such merger has weakened the original advantages and characteristics of each school before the merger, resulting in "1 + 1 < 2". For example, Liu Jirong of Zhejiang University proposed the "negative synergy" brought by the merger of colleges and universities [6]. He pointed out that synergy is a symbiotic and shared relationship between two or more schools participating in the merger. Once the synergy is excluded, the strength of disciplines will be more dispersed, and the merged universities will actually become a loose consortium. Moreover, against the background of a certain impact that the merger has on the vital interests of the original schools, the different objectives and the choices of the focus of development disciplines are prone to conflict and disharmony, which has a huge negative impact on the effect of the merger. Unlike Zhejiang University and Yanbian University, the new Jilin University has no historical origin before the merger, so it is more prone to problems. At the same time, coordinating the relationship between the government and schools is also very important for the positioning of colleges and universities.

Secondly, in the process of University merger, each university will also face complex management problems, which will not only test the educational experience and management level of university leaders, but also directly related to the effect of merger. These issues include issues in terms of internal system integration, teacher team adjustment, management system, multi-campus management and integration development, cultural inheritance, budget funding and other, which are directly related to the effect of the merger and the development of the school. Among them, Xue Tianxiang and others emphasized the importance of the integration of teachers [3]. It is recognized that the original concept, professional level, research direction, material treatment and work focus of teachers in each school are different. They pointed out that the merger does not necessarily lead to the improvement of education quality and the integration of teachers.



The integration of teachers and the integration and development of various disciplines is not easy. Data statistics show that a new breakthrough of scientific research brought by the integration of disciplines is difficult to produce in a short period and takes longer time [7]. In his speech, Liu Zhongshu, president of Jilin University, pointed out that after the merger, the discipline status of Jilin University is extensive, but not strong or refined, the development of discipline status and academic level is also unbalanced, and the phenomenon of discipline overlap is serious.

Solutions

On the basis of recognizing the limitation and uncertainty of the role of University merger, Xue Tianxiang and Wang Peijun put forward six basic conditions for University merger. First, universities should complement each other's advantages. Secondly, colleges and universities should determine the interest mechanism with the government and society, and make a reasonable positioning and scientific development plan for themselves. Thirdly, colleges and universities should speed up the reform of internal management system and improve management level. Fourthly, they should integrate teachers. Fifthly, they should inherit and carry forward the traditions and characteristics of the original colleges and universities. Sixthly, schools that are geographically close have an advantage in the merger [3].

Zhang Junsheng referred to four macro development elements in the analysis of the merger effect of Zhejiang University. The first element means that after the merger, we should put forward unified goals, inspire people's hearts and morale, and promote integration through development. Next, we need to timely adjust the discipline structure according to the law of discipline construction and development, formulate development plans and seriously organize the implementation. Furthermore, various policies need to be handled carefully, there can be no haste to ensure the stability of school order. And finally, continuous improvement of the school running conditions is required to ensure the rapid development of various undertakings of the school [4]. From the perspective of reviewing the history of university merger in Australia, Britain and the United States, Niu Fangyi et al. of China Education Research Center of Columbia University put forward the factors affecting the merger from three aspects: political factors, economic factors and organizational factors. They put forward relevant experience and measures on this basis, for example, the success of the merger needs the strong support of teachers and staff. Also, it points out that colleges and universities should continue to check and evaluate the merger situation and summarize the experience, which can be used for reference for the merger and development of domestic colleges and universities [5].

Combined with the problems prone to occur in the merger of colleges and universities and the specific measures of Jilin University, this paper puts forward the following suggestions from the perspective of different subjects.

First, the government needs to intervene actively in the process. The merger of colleges and universities is an important measure of China's higher education system reform, which needs the government's intervention from the perspective of macro strategic layout. However, relying mainly on the government and promoting merger from top to bottom, without macro-control, it is objectively easy to produce uncoordinated phenomenon. The government should make full feasibility demonstration and public opinion publicity on the premise of realizing the benefits of merger. The government can adopt intermediary means such as legislation, investment and evaluation, or impose certain administrative intervention measures to promote merger [2]. At the same time, the interest mechanism between colleges and universities, the government and society should also be established, and the differences between colleges and universities and the government in school running objectives should also be coordinated. These measures can promote the development of colleges and universities towards a more stable and prosperous direction. In addition, the government should also provide corresponding financial support for colleges and universities to avoid the problem of the rapid expansion of the scale of higher education and the disproportionate resources provided by the government in this process. For example, as early



as 2001, the Ministry of Education and Jilin Provincial People's Government (hereinafter referred to as Jilin Province) decided to sign an agreement on key joint construction of Jilin University. In 2005, the Ministry of Education and Jilin Provincial People's Government jointly issued "Decision on Continue to Focus on Jointly Building Jilin University", which more clearly pointed out that Jilin Province announced that it would continue to incorporate the reform and development of Jilin University into the overall planning of the province's overall construction and social development, and give corresponding policy support. The Ministry of Education also supports and encourages Jilin University to provide stronger education, scientific and technological support for the economic construction and social development of Jilin Province while serving the whole country⁷.

Secondly, the school should strive to improve their management ability and enhance synergy. First, each school needs to negotiate and determine the clear development objectives and development plans after the school merger, specify the development direction of the school after the merger, provide direction and guidance for the whole school staff to determine the objectives and forge ahead after the school merger, and promote the smooth operation and mild development of the whole school after the school merger. Secondly, the school should focus on building a new discipline construction model, promote the cross penetration of discipline resources, and truly give full play to the integration effect of discipline resources. Since the merger, Jilin University has attached great importance to discipline construction, always adhered to the strategy of using discipline development to promote school development, deeply explored the discipline platform system mode, actively integrated agricultural discipline resources, made effort to build a national scientific research platform, and gradually gave full play to the comprehensive advantages of disciplines⁸. As early as the beginning of the merger, Jilin University took the adjustment of disciplines and departments as the focus of the joint work. After investigation, the research team has formed the guiding ideology and integration scheme of discipline construction, namely: "based on the foundation, give play to the advantages; maintain the characteristics, highlight the application; optimize the allocation and share resources". Based on the guiding ideology, Jilin University has further formulated the basic ideas and countermeasures of discipline integration. Thirdly, the school should timely and carefully deal with many problems in the merger, such as personnel management, system differences, fund budget and so on, and also reform the management system and improve the management level. Jilin University is formed by the merger of six universities and colleges, with scattered campuses, a large number of students and faculties, and high school running cost. The merger produced Jilin University, which originally had tens of thousands of students, being the largest key comprehensive university directly under the Ministry of Education in China. Jilin University has improved the infrastructure, improved the treatment of all teaching staff to the original highest level, and increased teacher subsidies and reduced brain drain through loans. However, it also generated about 3 billion yuan of debt. In the end, Jilin University has achieved remarkable results by reducing operating costs through centralized school running and construction of intensive campuses. The bank loan of Jilin University reached 2.755 billion yuan at its peak, and it had been fully repaid by the end of 2015⁹. Since the merger, Jilin University has compiled and printed "Compilation of Job Responsibilities of Jilin University's Institutions and Directly Subordinate Units", which defines the post responsibilities of various functional departments and unifies the basic policies on personnel, distribution, teaching, scientific research, finance and so on. At the same time, Jilin University timely strengthened the information construction, formed a network information platform with advanced hardware equipment, strong technical force, wide network coverage and powerful function, greatly integrated the resources in

⁷ Data quoted from the Ministry of Education and the People's Government of Jilin Province, "Decision of the Ministry of Education and the People's Government of Jilin Province on continuing to focus on building Jilin University", Available at: http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A14/A14_other/200508/t20050825_75738.html.

⁸ Data quoted from the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, "Jilin university constructs a new discipline construction structure model, and the discipline resource integration effect is obvious", Available at: http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/s6192/s133/s161/201004/t20100420_86953.html.

⁹ Data quoted from the Xinhua Daily Telegraph, "Nearly 3 billion bank loans of Jilin University have been fully repaid", Available at: http://www.xinhuanet.com//mrdx/2016-06/22/c_135456482.htm.



the university and improved the work efficiency¹⁰. Fourth, for the issue of cultural inheritance, the merged universities need to specifically analyze the cultural and spiritual connotation and characteristics of the original schools, and on this basis, integrate, innovate and sublimate the culture of each school, reduce the cultural differences between schools, forge good interpersonal relations and enhance the identity of teachers and students for the merger. In 2011, in order to enhance the cohesion of campus culture, Jilin University launched the collection of its stories and the search for school history and culture. By mobilizing students to widely participate in the collection, sorting, processing and refining of campus culture and the stories of Jilin University, to stimulate the sense of honor and pride of teachers and students, promote the substantive and creative integration of school culture.

Finally, teachers and students should actively promote integration. The good result of discipline integration is not only in the macro-control of the government and schools, but also in the concerted efforts of teachers and students. Colleges and universities should actively provide opportunities to integrate teacher resources and build teacher teams. For example, in 2008, through major scientific research projects, Jilin University guided and supported academicians and other high-level teachers to lead the formation of interdisciplinary academic teams and scientific research groups¹¹. College teachers should also start from themselves, actively carry out academic exchanges with teachers in various schools, hold academic activities, promote discipline integration and enhance interpersonal relations. Students of all schools should also actively organize cross-campus learning and cultural activities to promote students' learning exchanges and promote innovative development.

Conclusion

Through the method of qualitative analysis and case analysis, this paper concludes that, generally speaking, under the current background, the university merger policy is a policy measure in line with the development trend of the time, but some problems still need to be paid attention to in the implementation process. This paper puts forward the corresponding solutions.

This article first analyzes the reasons for the merger of universities under the specific historical background. Then this article takes Jilin University as an example to summarize the benefits of the merger from both theoretical and empirical aspects. Afterwards, this article combines academic research to summarize the problems in the merger policy selection and merger process. Finally, in response to these problems, this article proposes solutions from the perspective of the government, universities, teachers and students, and integrates the corresponding solutions of Jilin University, hoping to provide experience for the practice of university mergers in the future.

Thus, this paper explores the reasons for the merger of colleges and universities against the specific historical background. "As one of the important ways of higher education management system reform, university merger is a form of reform with the greatest adjustment". To discuss the logic of the university merger, we must first investigate the higher education reform as the background [15]. First, against the realistic background of insufficient educational resources, the original system makes it difficult to achieve full potential of educational resources. Secondly, with the development trend of the integration of natural science and social science, the original single professional talent training method fails to meet up-to-date needs in development, and only by cultivating comprehensive and compound talents can we better promote the development of the country. Thirdly, the requirements of government departments to streamline institutions and transform functions also promote the structural adjustment of colleges and universities to a certain extent.

¹⁰ Data quoted from the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, "Jilin University has achieved remarkable results in strengthening the construction of student work information platform", Available at: http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/s6192/s133/s161/201004/t201004-19_83986.html.

¹¹ Data quoted from the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, "Jilin University carries forward the main melody of teaching work and explores new ideas for the construction of teaching staff", Available at: http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/s6192/s133/s161/201004/t20100419_83986.html.



Taking Jilin University as an example, this paper concludes that the merger model has its unique advantages both in theory and in practice. Theoretically speaking, for colleges and universities, merger makes their discipline coverage more extensive, which is conducive to the cross and integrated development of multiple disciplines. It can also strengthen the teaching staff, enhance the communication between teachers and enhance their influence. Furthermore, it can strengthen social ties and attract various funds. From a long-term perspective, the merger of colleges and universities promotes the exchange and integration between disciplines and teachers, and creates an inclusive, pioneering and innovative academic environment, which is of great help to the cultivation of high-level compound talents. In the empirical analysis of Jilin University, it can be seen that the merger of colleges and universities has a certain positive effect on its academic construction, scientific research and talent training.

Nevertheless, it can also be seen that the merger model is not a cure-all medicine, and its role has its limitations and uncertainty. The main case of this paper is the merger of Jilin University, which took place 20 years ago. Today, there is no way of giving a definite conclusion for each university for they have their own special attributes. Universities with a long history that have unique characteristics in school culture and discipline research tradition face special difficulties in the process of merger. In the choice of merger policy, colleges and universities are prone to blind pursuit of scale expansion, resulting in differences among the schools, as well as between the schools and the government on the development direction, positioning and objectives after merger, which may further cause conflicts within schools and affect the process of merger. During the implementation of the merger policy, there will be some complex management problems, such as the adjustment of teachers, management system, multi-campus management and so on, which are directly related to the effect of merger and the development of the school. Therefore, in the application of the model, it is not only difficult to give full play to the advantages of the merger model, but quite easy to produce counteraction, and lose the advantages and characteristics of the original schools. However, in terms of the scale of administrative personnel, according to the relevant experience of China and other countries in Europe and the United States, the merger of colleges and universities generally does not lead to the reduction of administrative personnel. After the merger of colleges and universities, more administrative resources will be needed to bring these institutions together, because different aspects of these institutions must be coordinated and controlled [14].

In view of the problems arising from the merger, this paper summarizes the merger experience of Jilin University, and provides measures from the perspectives of government, school and individual. The government needs to play an active role in intervention with respect to macro strategic layout and establish the interest mechanism among the government, universities and society. As for the colleges and universities, they need to clarify the development direction and objectives, strive to build a new discipline construction model, timely and carefully deal with many problems such as personnel management and so on, and carry out integrated development of each school's culture on the basis of specific analysis of the cultural and spiritual connotation and characteristics of the original schools. From the perspective of an individual, teachers and students need to communicate actively in daily teaching, scientific research and everyday life to promote integration.

In recent years, both Chinese and Russian universities have begun to pay attention to the ranking of major universities in the world. The competent education departments and universities in both countries have introduced a number of measures to improve the ranking (the "211", "985" and "double first-class" projects launched by the Ministry of education of China and the "5-100" plan issued by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation). Of course, improving the ranking is not the ultimate goal of universities. Universities mainly hope to obtain more development resources through the ranking to ensure the development of schools, teachers and students. As a method of educational reform, the merger of colleges and universities has become a measure jointly selected by the competent education departments of China and Russia. But as China's president Xi Jinping said, "advancing the cause of reform to hitherto unknown breadth and depth, the reform should be carried out throughout



the whole process and the overall situation should be traced”. In order to lead social development, education itself needs continuous reform and innovation. Therefore, the need for educational reform is constant, and the reform of higher education should also be perceived as a natural process to adapt to the new problems.

To sum up, in today’s society, where the development of science is cross cutting and natural science and social science are increasingly integrated, the merger of colleges and universities is a reform model to meet the needs of talent development. It is conducive to promoting the integration of disciplines and cultivating high-level compound talents. However, we also need to deal with various problems that may arise in the merger to give full play to the positive effect of the merger and promote further development of colleges and universities.

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