

Research on Student Management Innovation of Implementing “All Members’ Management System” in Independent Colleges of China

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Abstract This paper employs a contrastive analysis method, proposes an innovative idea of implementing “all members’ management system” to the student management work in independent colleges of China. From the author’s point of view, the current student advisors management system adopted by most Chinese universities and colleges does not meet college’s humanistic spirit. Thus by analyzing the current student advisors team building and current students’ status in independent colleges of China, this paper creatively points out an “all members management system” concept of taking student self-management as a base, supplemented by full-time lecturers and student advisors’ counseling work; students take turns to work part-time in different administrative departments as their job practice and all the college’s staff work together which make a real “all members management system” in dealing with student management work. This concept oversets the traditional student advisor’s team building system. This new idea also has a significant impact on helping out those independent colleges which are puzzled and struggling in the student management’s bottleneck.

Key words Independent colleges; Student management; All Members’ Management System

1 Introduction

Up to April 20th of 2010, there are 316 independent colleges in China. Meanwhile, the total number of public universities and colleges who provide undergraduate degrees in China is 792. That means 39% of the country’s public universities had built cooperation relationships in running independent colleges with private organizations. From the quantitative point of view, since the first independent college in China named Zhejiang University City College was founded in July 1999, So far, growing out of nothing, the independent colleges developed from few to many, which had shown a rapid growth rate during the short 11 years. But the current depressing level of student management in those colleges clearly lags far behind its growing speed which became a significant issue heavily concerned by many independent colleges. Compared to the public universities who provide the umbrella to those independent colleges, we can say that the students of independent colleges are ‘not under an effective control of the college.’

From the viewpoint of student advisors team building, it is difficult to adapt to the rapid development of independent college’s management requirements no matter in its quantity, quality or working methods. Indeed, independent college’s student advisory work encountered serious confusion and bottleneck. According to the statistics, the total number of student advisors in independent college is less than 5000, but what they face is up to 150 million enrolled students in those colleges. In addition, at the same time, student advisors are struggling to cope with more than 30 items daily affairs, which pointed out the current students’ management situation in independent colleges is the weak link showing in helplessness.

At present, there are plenty of research articles related to Chinese domestic student advisors in independent colleges. From these papers, we can drag some clues about the struggling situations of student advisors or difficulties in student management of independent colleges. Kang and Yang (2009) and the other study (Zhang, et al., 2004) pointed out that independent college is a newly formed academic institution, along with its students who had relatively weak academic foundation, complex and changeable characters and low self-control level, meanwhile they held very high expectations for future lives. All of these made student advisors in independent colleges face big challenges and stressful workload (Li, 2010).

According to the other study (Zhang, et al., 2004), the top management team of independent colleges should be well aware of the importance of student advisors’ team building. Kang and Yang (2009) gave a few solutions like improving student advisors’ knowledge level and scope, strengthening their performance evaluation system and diversifying the selection and distribution methods. However, those methods were showing in less practical and it did not discuss the real way to implement those ideas. According to Zhang, et al. (2004), Liu (2009), Li (2010) and Wang, et al. (2010), they suggested

that colleges should provide more professional trainings to those student advisors to form them a research type and innovative student management team; carry out a strict selection process of student advisors, at the same time enhance the communication and cooperation level among different colleges' student management departments. Furthermore, Tian (2008) also mentioned that student advisors in independent colleges should realize the importance of freshmen's student management. Finally, Wang, et al. (2010) pointed out that independent colleges should improve student advisors' working environment and living conditions and increase their whole salary level to stabilize this team in order to stimulate their student management's work passion which seemed not practical since independent colleges as a private corporation will always work for its owner's profit maximization as well as focusing on the cost control level.

By summarizing some of the core ideas proposed by previous studies related to this research field, we can easily see that among these papers, only few domestic reports regarding to discussing the effective methods of student advisors' team building in accordance with the latest developing status of those independent colleges. And it did not show any research achievement about the innovative model on student management in independent colleges yet. There are no such Chinese type issues about student advisors or independent colleges overseas, thus it has no such kind of foreign researches on this topic until now.

2 Current Students' Status in Independent Colleges

2.1 Open-minded and highly-motivated personality

Independent colleges' students in China are a special group relatively. As their college entrance examination results are not good enough, alternatively, the next best thing for these students is to choose the colleges with higher tuition fees, lower grade requirements and teaching quality: Independent Colleges. Generally speaking, the educational foundation and overall quality of those students are lower than the students in other public universities, but it does not mean they have poor ability or no competency. In fact, most losers who failed in exam are simply the winners in career. Those students are open-minded and actively thinking, have a broad field of view, strong hands-on skills with practical abilities. They care about the country's development, major's specialized application value and future employment's prospect. They are also keen on club activities and active in political progress. According to a survey, there are 37% students in independent colleges who write an application to join the Communist Party. They actively attend the Communist Party's learning class, strongly request to join the organization. Moreover, they are highly-motivated in study in order to contribute for China in future, with strong confidence and faith to become mature and successful.

2.2 Desperate for quickly joining in the society

Compared to the students enter the top universities with the determination of making big academic achievements, most of independent colleges' students feel tired of classroom learning. They are often attracted by things outside the classroom with the self-feeling of being an adult. Therefore, they do not want to rely on the college or family too much, hoping to quickly join in the society so that they could show their independence and talents through various channels. Highlighted in this aspect, it shows that the class absent rate of independent college students is generally high whereas they are showing positive attitudes and passions towards starting their own business with remarkable results other than study. Moreover, rich varieties of activities of different on-campus cultural societies or clubs are taking place, the number of participants even account for about 80% of total students in many colleges. Many of these societies even become a base or center for business or enterprise set-up. Some of those clubs successfully simulate the daily operation as real company operations which generate very well economic and social effects. Also some parts of students find part-time jobs to 'feel' the real society on weekends, summer or winter holidays, which also reflects their desire for quickly joining in the society.

2.3 Lack of the desire to pursue knowledge

Small part of independent college students are self-abased when the current reality heavily hit their dreams in childhood, their performance is often like the rock falling down with crash from the hillside. They have poor self-control ability, feeling at 'cheap' level, coupled with comparably weak knowledge foundation and lack of proper learning strategies and methods. Therefore it comes up with the fear in facing the high density college study mode for those independent college students. Thus, the phenomenon of not study, lack of discipline and waiting to get the certificate without any effort which have a great negative impact to students management and the whole college. Particularly, some students

are late for class, simply absent without any reason, smoke and get drunk or mad about internet games, etc. Small part of them even groups a team to start street fights or college fights which seriously disturb the normal college operation and other students' campus life.

3 Current Student Advisors' Status in Independent Colleges

3.1 Quantity shortage

In the paper of 'The opinion on strengthening the team building of college student advisors and class instructors', Ministry of Education of China pointed out that to strengthen the team building of student advisors and class instructors is an important organizational guarantee and long-term mechanism for improving and reforming college students' ideological and political education. It also has a significant influence on fully implementing the Communist Party's education policy and carrying out the ideological and political education to college students. According to this paper, universities and colleges should carefully complete the selections on student advisors and class instructors. Overall the ratio of students to full-time student advisors should set at 1:200 in order to ensure each school has a certain amount of full-time student advisors served for students enrolled in different years. Simultaneously, each class should have a part-time class instructor. However, in reality, it is difficult to achieve this standard. From cost consideration side, a lot of independent colleges only have one student advisor for every 250 to 300 students. Take Guangdong Province as the example, this average ratio is 1:230 of total 47 private colleges in entire province.

3.2 Unclear job descriptions

To clearly define a student advisor's role is the foundation of effectively carrying out student advisors work within the boundaries of their basic responsibilities. Are the student advisors in independent college teachers or administrative staff? Or tied these two identities? In practice, their role is defined unclear even misplaced, which results from both people's misunderstandings and many college's internal objective factors. In the independent colleges in China, student advisors often play a role of 'nanny', or sometimes act as 'firemen'. Because student advisor works as a communication bridge directly connect with the college and students, a lot of internal jobs need their coordination. As long as the things related to students, student advisors must be responsible for them which lead to a difficult and unclear job description of student advisors' obligations and responsibilities.

3.3 Unstable team status

'There is no future for this job, and I am taking it just treat as a transitional and temporary job...' a lot of people hold such ideas after taking the student advisory jobs for a period of time. And it followed by the consideration of changing to a different career or new jobs. Many student advisors teams in Guangdong Province' independent colleges show a high mobility rate. The student advisors turnover rate always lie at high level—they quit, apply for postgraduate degrees, change jobs to lecturers or administrative staff, etc. Some independent college's student advisors turnover rate even reach over 50%. Some colleges even change their student advisors every month. When at the end of a semester or a school year, the change will become significant. Because of student advisors' team instability with great mobility; it's difficult for independent colleges to develop an effective long-term training and improving plan for this team.

3.4 Low professional level

Ministry of Education of China has repeatedly emphasized that student advisors team should be a specialized and expert team. Although many independent colleges set professional, expert-based planning direction to build their student advisors team, and based on each person's background and interest to send some of them join in professional training program. However, because of the previously mentioned three reasons above, these student advisors are struggling with complicated affairs all day long, they couldn't achieve specialization, yet they are unable to become the experts. For instance, among student advisor's eight duties, career counseling and psychological counseling are the professional knowledge that many student advisors are lack of, so that they couldn't solve those kinds of problems in time when students met and asked for help.

4 Building Up "All Members' Management System"

After analyzing the status of students and students advisors in independent colleges in China, we can find that students from independent colleges has their own characteristics which are different from

those in public universities, therefore the student management job in the independent colleges is a comprehensive project. Practice proved that, any single educational group within the independent college is unable to complete this student management job independently. It needs all members involved in this project making concerted efforts. The core idea is: lecturers teach and educate students with knowledge, skills and professional ethics; administrative staff train students with real job practice; student advisors ideologically guide students; and students manage themselves independently. All members work independently as well as coordinate with each other in order to establish a structure of taking student self-management as a base, supplemented by full-time lecturers and student advisors' counseling work; students take turns to work part-time in different administrative departments as their job practice and all the college's staff work together which make a real 'all members management system' in dealing with student management work. Such a brand-new 'all members management system' model will completely solve the problems occurred in independent college's student management such as students are far away from social practice, student advisors are weak in professional knowledge, lecturers are not familiar with knowledge from ideological, political, psychological and career aspects.

4.1 Student self-management

Legally, college students are already the citizens with full complete civil conductive capacity. We cannot always hold and hug them. We need to trust them that they have already grown up. A lot of tasks can be handed over to them, and they may complete them with better performance than us. Thus, colleges should give certain freedom to students and allow them to manage themselves independently, starting from freshman in year one. Student societies from each major and school, each class commission should play an important guidance role in the whole student self-management process. And the members in each department should implement directly election with maturity period, clearly define the term goals and establish democratic student self-management system. Eventually, through this 4 years self-management period, students will grow and continuously make progress from this learning process which will surely make a positive impact for their future career and lives.

4.2 Lectures act as class instructors

The main responsibility of a college lecturer is to teach and educate students both with knowledge and morale standard and professional ethics. The student advisors team belonged to the teacher series, so from this concept, it should ask every full-time professional lecturer works as one specific class instructor and in fact, based on their standard weekly lecturing hours, every lecturer has at least half day a day to deal with student management work.

In accordance with the requirement set by Ministry of Education of China, each class can allocate 2 to 3 lecturers as their class instructors. Based on each lecturer's education background, experience and major lecturing subject, it can arrange them to act as students' professional instructor, academic instructor and career instructor separately. It shows the advantages that each instructor can focus on one aspect of every 40 to 50 students in one class, which is easy to manage. On the other side, because of most of lecturers have master degree with senior or higher certificate in their major, it will significantly improve the quality level of student advisor team which make them can truly fulfill the 8 duties requirements. Furthermore, in this process, working as class instructors can fully represent their roles in teaching and educating students with knowledge and morale standards.

Colleges can act according to their own actual situations, providing lecturers with instructor allowance and performance bonus as an incentive payment to encourage lecturers' instructing work. And the cost can be easily control within 40% to 60% of current student advisors' salary level. But from a lecturer's viewpoint, the instructor allowance + lecturer position salary $>$ current total income, therefore it should be able to work as a strong incentive for them to join in this class instructor team.

4.3 Student advisor's role of coordination

The existing student advisor's function must be changed, changing from the 'nanny' to 'government official'. 'Nanny' means every child has one, but the 'government official' represents minority people serve for majority people with the main duty of coordination. Therefore, it only needs to select small part (i.e. 1 to 2) of current outstanding student advisors and appoint them as student advisors who take charge of the overall management of different year's students in different majors. And the independent colleges can also learn from the successful management method adopted by a lot of oversea universities, which is to set a so called 'Student Service Center' or 'Student Care Hall'. In that center, student advisors can work as on-site consultants to answer different questions from students. They can both complete the routine job allocated by student management department to coordinate with

class instructors and also solve students' problems and quickly submit the feedback to each related department.

For the student advisors, they must be the members of Communist Party, part-time working with each department's job related to Communist Party. And their existing salary standards and bonuses remain unchanged after win in the fair competition. For those extra student advisors, convert them to administrative staff by all staff competition system with two-way job choice rule. After this process, for those student advisors with poor performance, their employment contract will be no longer extended.

4.4 All members' management system

Who should manage the college on earth? The traditional view thinks it must be the principle or president of the college with its actual operation agent of administrative departments. But from my personal point of view, the managers should be all the members including students, lecturers and other staff. Therefore, in order to build a capacity-oriented modern college, selecting student assistants is an important part of the idea of 'all members' management system'. It can appoint 1 to 3 student assistants to each school, department, and office and also for the positions of student advisor, class instructor and administrative staff. Those student assistants not only can spend their free time to participate in college's management, but they can also treat it as a good opportunity to contact the society by getting trained from those senior staff with rich experience.

However, student assistants should obey the rule of regularly position rotation in order to maximize the scope of participating students of this college management and social practice team. This brings a significant benefit which is by allowing students to fully take part in the college management process, they will have better understandings of running a college and the difficulties of college management. At the same time, they have the chance to contact with various departments, meet different personality types of administrative staff which will increase their training and work experience and finally it will play a great positive impact for their future career life.

4.5 Better application of information technology

From the above analysis, we can find that all members' management system is simply asking for all staff's participation with student self-management. Therefore, it requires better application of network and IT knowledge in designing a good effective program and completing a Key Performance Indicators (KPI) statistical analysis in order to manage and monitor the whole student management system through the local computer network system. It will make student management work remain at a regulated controllable condition to continuously improve the efficiency of relevant departments' student management work.

4.6 Strengthening regularization's construction

The key to help the student management work out of the puzzle is regularization's construction. As the independent college is a cooperative product of private funds and public universities, it must come with a traditional management style of Chinese private companies. Most of them implement the family management method rather than modern professional expert management style. Therefore, it is vital to use regulations and standardized rules to guide the student management work, rather than simply using the owner's mind or head for decision-making. After determining the 'all members' management system', it needs to build up different regulations and rules according to different independent colleges' actual situations, which is essential for continuous improvement of student management work in the long run.

5 Conclusion

From the whole paper's analysis, it comes up with a clear conclusion. That is the establishment of the student management structure of 'taking student self-management as a base, supplemented by full-time lecturers and student advisors' counseling work; students take turns to work part-time in different administrative departments as their job practice and all the college's staff work together' make a real 'all members management system' in dealing with student management work. It will be an effective solution to deal with the situation of imbalance and 'out of control' in student management of independent colleges in China. For those independent colleges failed in effective student management and student advisors management work, instead of struggling with those student affairs, it's better to quickly catch up with this new 'all members management system', by allowing everyone in college to have the equal opportunity of being a manager in order to improve the overall student management efficiency and it will also benefit every participants.

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