

# The Application of Flexible Management in University Students Administrative Work

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## Abstract

*With the progress and development of humanities, science and technology, "people" as the main body in society appeal to more and more social respect. "People-oriented" has become a foothold and starting point for the work in the various areas of society. In terms of university administration, the traditional rigid management model has become fetters for student management, while flexible management has become the future development direction of the new model of university management. This paper attempts to define the scientific connotation of flexible management for university students, drawing management experience from some foreign universities to analyze the misunderstanding, to provide new measures of flexible management, to explore how to create a good environment for flexible management, and to innovate management methods for personnel training in modern universities .*

**Key words:** flexible management; universities; students management; application

As is illustrated in the "Book of the Later Han: The Biography of Zang Gong", "Huang Shigong said: 'the soft can overcome the hard, and the weak can conquer the strong.' The soft are more likely to invite aids, while the hard incur resentment". The idea "the soft can overcome the hard, and the weak can conquer the strong." reflects the ancient simple, flexible management philosophy, which implies that the flexible management philosophy is not a product of modern management science, and its ideology and culture has a long history. Rigid management is what's opposite to the flexible management, by contrast, flexible management shows more respect to the dominant position of the human beings. Flexible management features "people-oriented", adopting non-coercive approach in the process of management. By the method of

good model example, people could be influenced so much so that they can gradually receive the positive education, and internalize what they learn into conscious action. Flexible management can not only greatly stimulate people's enthusiasm, but also last longer.

As modern people in the new era, the university students are bequeathed with scientific knowledge and cultural heritage, and they are the hope and future of our country. The ideological characteristics and behavioral habits of today's college students, to a certain extent, represent the mental state of the young generation. They have ideals, pursuits, cheerful characters, and active thinking modes; under such a background, if using the traditional rigid management approach to impose restrictions on the conduct of students, we will fall short of reaching the anticipated effect; instead, the method might be detrimental to the talents training and development. With respect to the college student management work, "people-oriented" flexible management style has obvious advantages over the traditional rigid management-based approach based on the rules and regulations. Thus, it is more appealing to the majority of teachers and students of all ages. Therefore, the implementing of the "people-oriented" concept, and the application of flexible management in the college students management is an inevitable trend in the future higher education personnel training methods.

### **1. The connotation and features of flexible management in universities**

In his article "Flexible Management Discussion and Practice in Universities Educational Management", Ruan Wenjie points out that "flexible management approach is founded on non-mandatory basis in studying people's psychological and behavioral laws, which is to produce a potentially persuasive in people's mind so that the organizational commitment will be translated into conscious action." On the basis of the study of college students' mental and behavioral laws, flexible management approach is to generate inspiration and persuasion in students' mind through communication, model demonstration, psychological counseling, etc., thus bringing the organizational commitment into conscious action.

The most basic principle for flexible management is "people-oriented." In respect to the college students' management, teachers should prioritize the students body, taking students as the foothold and starting point in managing. Instead of sticking to the traditional rigid requirements like "DON'T or NOT PERMITTED", teachers should show full respect for the students, mobilizing the students' enthusiasm and initiative, and targeting at promoting students' more healthy, overall development while managing. What's more, the flexible management puts more emphasis on how to cultivate students' conscious behavior, which means generating internal drive in the minds of students, rather than relying on external power of repression, so that the students will be truly motivated from the heart, and their enthusiasm initiative,, pioneering and creative spirit will be brought into full play. Finally, flexible management defies all unified approaches, which requires that teachers give full consideration to the different characteristics of each student according to the characteristics of their thinking modes and behaviors, in line with specific environment and events [1].

### **2. The current problems and deficiencies in university students administrative work**

At present, the management of college students in China is on the same trajectory with the traditional ideological and political work; for example, most of the universities still resort to the "Code of Student Conduct," "School Administration Regulations" and other rigid management system as a reference, and

"discipline", "preaching" are still the main approaches of management. Nevertheless, with the progress of time, the colleges and universities are gradually changing management philosophy with putting forward a student-oriented management concept; yet in practice, rigid management style still reigns, which embodies in the following aspects:

First, the uniformed model ignores the personality development of students. Many teachers take students' management as a stylized business to carry out, simply focusing on the "business" itself while falling short of fully understanding and grasping the psychological, mental and personality development needs of college students in the new era; therefore, they can not stimulate students' enthusiasm, neither can they boost the development of students' gifts. In this way, the students' management needs are met while their personality development is long ignored.

In addition, the strict rules and norms straitjacket the innovation and development of students' management models. Many colleges and universities have strictly enforced the rules and regulations issued by the higher authorities; besides, they have also laid down a series of faculty regulations to cover all aspects of student management with the net-like institutional framework. "Unity", "rigor" and "order" are set as the best scenario for their students' management. The single-based management, limitations and constraints in all have imposed stress on motivating and inspiring students. Similarly, students' personality development has been restrained.

Finally, the management authority and condescending model has led to a serious lack of management services. Many colleges and universities have developed the habit of authoritarian thinking mode, so the atmosphere of democratic ideas is far from being nurtured. Against this backdrop, many teachers have been accustomed to taking coercive way for students to receive school management and organization, imposing students with the authoritative will without consideration of students' personal experience. This type of executive-order management has deprived many universities of tolerance and inclusiveness, which limits the freedom of students' thinking and behavior and is not conducive to the overall development of students [2].

### **3. Some suggestions proposed for the innovative application in universities in China of the flexible students management mode**

For talents training, especially the development of intelligence and comprehensive ability of talents in the community of colleges and universities, we should bear its particularity in the management methods. Flexible management is centered around the "people-oriented" tenet and aims at showing more respect for the students, understanding students, empathizing with students, giving full play to students' own will, focusing on its overall management and development of creativity, energy, knowledge, talent, and guiding personnel gradually transform into potential energy in community to provide a steady stream of power for the development of society. Since the flexible management has an irreplaceable role in the university administration, therefore, refining the flexible management experience to creatively apply it to university management work is the direction of future efforts of university management workers. The author believes that the following procedures should be followed one by one.

### 3.1 Cultivating flexible management awareness, changing the educational management modes

Fostering the flexible management awareness is a prerequisite for innovating the college student management model. University students are ideal, ambitious, enthusiastic, and creative new force, who are the main body receiving education and the major participants in education and management activities. Teachers should fully recognize that students and education managers are equal in personality and get rid of the conventional hierarchical concept. "People-oriented" should serve as the basic tenet followed by education management, so teachers should fully respect the students, empathize with students, and establish the correct flexible management awareness. To this end, the university should adopt different ways like delivering education courses, carrying out investigation, piloting to train the school administrators to cultivate their flexible management model awareness. By conducting comparative experiments between rigid management mode and the flexible one, the advantages of flexible management can be more vividly demonstrated in the face of the management workers.

The following chart is the experiment procedures of some university's contrastive research between rigid management mode and flexible management one

	Rigid management	Flexible management
Management processes	Once the regulations are set, they should be followed to the toe; and they bear no random changes.	Though set, the regulations are open to changes or restructuring according to the actual condition.
	The superior has absolute authority to the subordinate.	The specific cases are taken into consideration and the party concerned will make decisions in line with the actual situation.
	The management behaviors are easily quantified and evaluated.	The opposite to that of the rigid one.
	The upper management departments will seek the inherent logic behind each management procedure, making the management meet the set goals and anticipated effect.	The upper management departments will strive to find what stimulates, inspires the potentials, motivations and creativity of the administrators, and the effect is beyond anticipation.

By the experimental comparison and summary, the advantages of flexible management model is more prominent. This contrastive experiment is easier to expose the education managers to accepting and recognizing the flexible management model from the awareness level, and ultimately applying it to the management of colleges and universities.

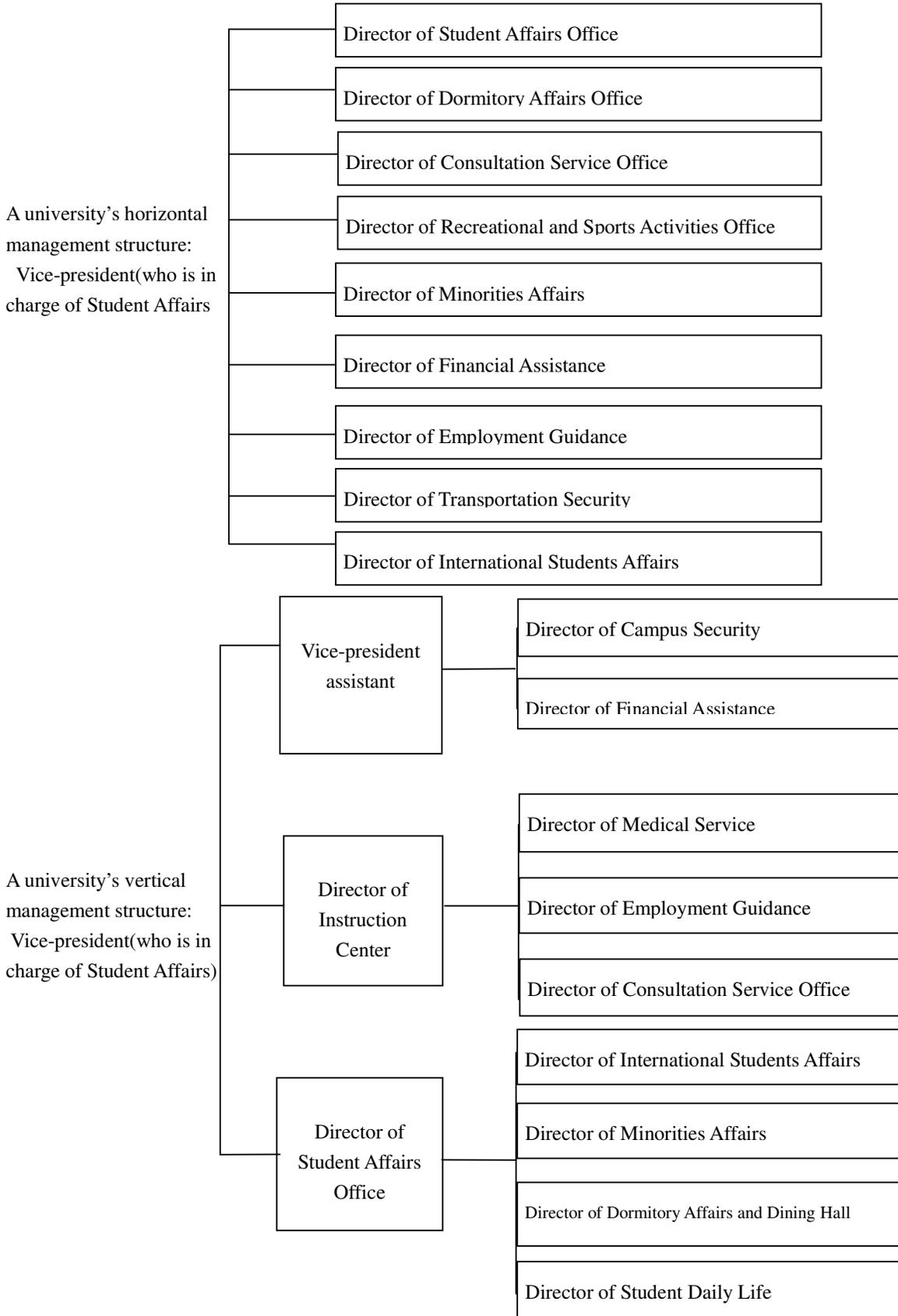
### **3.2 Nurturing the flexible management atmosphere, Creating talents-cultivating environment**

Efficient management workers should strive to create a good, flexible management environment that enables students to achieve their academic goals with collective efforts and high efficiency. Good flexible management environment should be multi-dimensional: the first dimension is the hardware environment, including educational spaces, teaching facilities, campus environment, campus transportation, information networks, culture and sports stadiums, and so on. The second dimension is the software environment, including campus culture, ethos and motto, scientific research, technology development, interaction between teachers and students, solidarity, healthy competition atmosphere and harmonious interpersonal relationships with each other. The third dimension is the psychological environment, where teachers should employ flexible management tools like communication, interaction, motivation, inspiration, education, etc., to enable students to form mental health, meanwhile they should create a comfortable, harmonious, friendly relationships for the students and a learning environment featuring sense of belonging, security and accomplishment. In this multi-dimensional and sound flexible management environment, students are not only able to emotionally accept the management of schools and education workers, and also able to identify their educational learning content, which can promote the physical and mental development of students and have a strong influence and a positive role in promoting students' academic progress. This is also the optimal approach to improve the efficiency of personnel training and to gain advantages in the relevant competition.

### **3.3 Constructing a horizontal management organization, building an equal and harmonious environment**

Rigid management is pyramid shaped with more obvious hierarchical levels, this features of which are multi-leveled, monotonous information flow, retarded reactions, and a clear division between the various departments with less contact, which might deteriorate into a rather fragmented situation. The organization of flexible management is horizontal with less levels and a wide range of management, ambiguous hierarchies, smooth horizontal communication, fast flow of information, and equality between the various departments, simplified but agile management with dexterity and full of flexibility.

The following are two Universities Vice-President (in charge of student affairs) management organizational structure:



As can be seen from the sharp contrast between the two management structures, flexible management tends to be more horizontal and a lot of unnecessary links are downsized compared with the vertical one, so that each department is empowered to deal with issues independently, the managers' enthusiasm, initiative and creativity can be brought into play to create a management mechanism featuring giving full scope to the talents and the formation of scientific management model can promote the personnel training.

### **3.4 Establishing a flexible management system, forming a long-term flexible management mechanism**

As the saying goes: "A great teacher produces a brilliant student", though not absolute, however, we can not deny the professionalism, cultural enrichment, work ability, management methods of the teachers are all reflected in the overall image and level of the students. Therefore, the improvement of the general level for the teachers can serve as a dynamo to the capabilities of the students. In addition, the overall level of teachers is an emblem of a university, which is an important indicator to measure and evaluate a college. Flexible teacher management system is aimed at enhancing teachers' flexible management capabilities, the overall quality of teachers and research level, and it attaches great importance to teachers' psychological and emotional factors, respecting and understanding teachers. In this system, guidance, motivation, inspiration are meshed to stimulate teachers' innovation on the basis of the pursuit of the campus culture and values, in return, they can achieve more in the teaching process, their sense of belonging to the school can be cultivated, and they can establish friendship featuring helping each other in the process. While accepting the flexible management mode, they can apply it to their students so as to form a virtuous cycle of flexible management, which means that "to teach is to learn" is embodied in the work of the university management. This shows that the establishment of flexible teacher management system is an effective means to form a long-term flexible management mechanism [3].

### **3.5 Building two-way communication channel, keeping clear the flexible management network**

Communication is the main channel of interpersonal relationships. In respect to the flexible management, the establishment of two-way communication channel is a significant means to ensure unblocked flexible management network and its effectiveness. The main purpose of two-way communication channel is to establish channels of communication between the managers and the managed, creating a harmonious atmosphere so as to identify each other in values and affections, of which the core is to eliminate negative emotions of the students in communication by producing psychological affinity of flexible management, stimulating their enthusiasm and initiative to cooperate with the teachers in practical management. In specific school management, communication can be varied, for example, the school can conduct the class discussion, student birthday parties, important events conferences, teachers reception day, etc. to directly interact with students, In addition, school can also resort to the information equipment like the forums, websites, micro letter to indirectly exchange with students, avoiding embarrassment elicited by face-to-face communication. When the two-way communication channels are open, the feelings will be harmonious, and the blocks impeding the problem-solving can be removed. Only in this way the students management will be easier.

### **3.6 Establishing an effective Incentive mechanism, injecting motive force source of flexible management**

Incentive mechanism is the most effective method in the management of college students. It falls into a variety of types including material incentives, as well as spiritual incentives. Material incentive method is relatively simple, which recognizes and rewards the students by scholarships and other prizes. Mental stimulation is constituted by honors, reputations and other aspects of incentives, including sense of belonging, value identity and other aspects. In specific management, the major method is “affirmative” one, appreciating students’ performance from the positive point of view, giving appropriate award if necessary in order to stimulate their intrinsic motivation to mobilize more enthusiasm and creativity. When the students are under-performed, the teachers should shun directly negating their efforts; instead, they should give guidance to rectify by adopting the methods of citing examples, analyzing and helping them to correct. Though double-sided, today's college students are positive, pragmatic and having a pursuit of excellence. Those factors constitute their mainstream thinking and the life-long pursuit of the majority of college students. As a university administrator, we should fully empathize with the college students and be aware of their advantages and strengths, showing affirmation and appreciation when they reap achievements to meet their spiritual needs, and therefore motivating their potential for greater success and helping them build self-confidence. In the specific management work, no doubt the effect of incentives is significantly greater than the negative criticism. However, this does not mean that in the future management, we have to keep our eyes shut when showing affirmation, instead, we should grasp the subtlety in choosing ways and means for being negative, which can savor the positive one.

That we strive to actively innovate flexible management model doesn't mean that we completely exclude the constraint of rigid management style; to the contrary, we are adherents for combining the rigid and flexible ones scientifically under the guidance of the "people-oriented" concept. As such, the overall quality of students can continue to be improved and their personality constantly refined, thus the ultimate goal of training the university talents can be realized.

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