

Discussion and Research on the Construction of College Student Affairs Management Team

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Abstract

In China, institutions of higher education are important bases to cultivate talents. Student affairs management is an important phase in the education work in institutions of higher education. When carrying out ideological and political education for college students, political counselors (hereinafter referred to as “counselors”), are not only the main body of the college student affairs management, but also the main performers and practitioners of ideological and political education for college students, playing an active role in talents cultivation in China. In the new situation, in order to ensure the smooth conduction of work in the student affairs management in China and to help students overcome difficulties and seize future potential opportunities it is high time we built a professional counselor team with high level comprehensive quality, strong sense of creativity and initiatives. However, from the actual situation of student affairs management in China, to construct a team composed of counselors with professionalization and specialization should be urgently highlighted.

Key Words: Student Affairs Management; Professionalized Construction; Management Team

1. Existing Problems in the Construction of Student Affairs Management Team in Chinese Institutions of Higher Education

1.1 The lack of Reference standard for the management team of student affairs

To deeply implement the spiritual nature of Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CCCPC) and State Council on Further Strengthening and Improving Ideological and Political Education, and to enforce the construction of university counselors team, in 2006, our country(ministry of education of the People's Republic of China) promulgated NO,24 Act, the Construction Rule of University Students' counselors Team, wherein, it noted clearly that “the institutions of higher education should take the construction of university students' counselor team as the primary focus of the construction of teaching staff

and management staff”.^[1] The construction of university students’ counselors team should comply with the rule of teaching being the basis and moral education being the very first so as to cultivate a group of students who are ambitious, moral, educated and disciplined for the construction of the socialism.

Yu Chengxue (2008) noted that in “the Expectation Insight of the Specialized and Professionalized Construction of Students’ counselors Team during the Transition Period” in China, there is no reference standard for the specialized and professionalized construction of counselor team. Since the universities set up political counselor group in early 1950s, the role and positioning of the counselors has changed a lot, which always involves the following three features:

- (1) The politicization is significant;
- (2) The comprehensive feature is outstanding;
- (3) The transition features do exist;^[2]

During the past 70 years since the set-up of the counselor team, they are mainly responsible for the ideological and political education for students, which is the show of their politicization, and the embodiment of their political orientation. Meanwhile, no matter in the theory or in practice, there is hardly any classification of students’ counselor team by their specialization and professionalization. Compared with other jobs, the profession of counselors demands counselors’ comprehensive ability, not confined to any specific professionalization, professional experience and professional quality. In terms of the specificity of the profession of counselors, their comprehensive qualities are highlighted. So, as for the work of the counselors, “generalists” can do a better job in the management of student affairs than “specialists” who are proficient in a single field. For a long time, the counselors, who are usually in charge of students regular study affairs and life on campus, lack the space of career development and corresponding policy support for them to develop. And during the slow professionalization process, the transition feature in this job is embodied, some well-performed ones being promoted to the leadership. Therefore, the replacement, change, and promotion of the counselors appear very frequently, which is detrimental to the sustainable and effective carry-out of student affairs management on account of the transitional feature of the special profession.

1.2 The inaccurate role location of the management team of student affairs-- “baby-sitter” or “life coach”

In 2006, the Ministry of Education promulgated the Regulations for the Construction of College Counselor Team in Colleges and Universities which clearly pointed out counselors are an important part of the teachers and management team in universities. Besides, counselors have the dual identity of being both teachers and the cadre, serving as the backbone of ideological and political education for college students. At the same time, they are also the organizers, practitioners and instructors of the daily ideological and political education for college students. Counselors should strive to become the students’ life mentors and intimate friends. Nevertheless, with regard to the daily schedule of student affairs management, it is far from easy. As the common saying on the Internet “counselors work all day, feeling down in doldrums” goes, counselors as the most direct duty officers and managers of student affairs management, and their role of “teacher” and “intimate friends” is gradually replaced by the role of “nanny”. They are engaged in a large amount of tedious work in their daily management. In the whole development process of college students from being freshmen to graduates, no matter in learning or actual life, the responsible counselors have to handle all the

chores related to students, which has resulted in the negative impact, lack of time to improve their professional quality and the level of student affairs management. Although they are willing to improve, unfortunately, they are short of time. Therefore, plenty of students' daily routine work undertaken by counselors has seriously hindered their career development and personal quality development, even hindered the whole process of the construction of the counselor team.

Taking all the problems stated above, it is pointed in this paper that the fundamental cause is the inaccurate role orientation of counselors in student affair management team. For counselors, they are supposed to not only get engaged in tedious routine work, but also guide and manage these routines, which is inescapable responsibility and obligation of counselors as student affairs managers. In "Regulations for the construction of college counselor team in colleges and universities", the dual identity of counselors as both "teachers" and "managers" is clearly defined. However, in the course of the student affairs management, seldom do counselors hold additional post of being teachers, which consequently gives rise to their deficiency in sense of achievement as teachers in daily education. Meanwhile, if counselors are simply classified into executives, mode of fixed thinking might be formed "students can look for help from counselors as long as they are in troubles", which may cause counselors to be trapped into a dilemma, counselors being obliged to assume all the issues related to students no matter whether they are big, small, simple, or complex. Hence, the daily routine works assumed by counselors are too many and miscellaneous, completely beyond their scope of its management.

2. The Professionalized Construction of College Student Affairs Management Team

In "The concept definition of college student affairs management", professor Cai Guochun pointed out that "university student affairs management is a kind of organizational activities such as nonacademic issues and extracurricular activities that colleges and university teachers carry out to exert educational influences to students so as to standardize, guide, serve students and enrich their campus life, and finally promote the healthy growth of students".^[3] Under the new situation, the concept of student affairs management in our country is positively changing from the "management" and "teaching" to "people-oriented" and "serving students". The new opportunities and challenges put forward higher requirements for the construction of college student affair management team in China. For college student affairs managers, they not only should assume the traditional ideological, political and educational work, but also have to adapt to the new management contents which are continuously incorporated into the category of management with the increasing demand of social development. In view of the complexity of college student affair management, the professional construction of college student affairs management team brooks no delay.

2.1 Necessity and Urgency of Specialized Construction of University Student Affairs Administration Team

According to Yang Cheng, Ding Zhenguo and Zhang Kuanyu's induction in the paper, Specialized Construction of University Student Affairs Management Team, "Chinese university student affairs management team can be divided into two categories of full-time and part-time teams. Among full-time team, its members are mainly undergraduate and postgraduate students whereas part-time team consist of upperclassmen, students in graduate school, administration staffs and teachers".^[4] Both full-time and

part-time teams have their own disadvantages. For example, in full-time team, its members are mostly youth with relative deficient working as well as social experience. However, the members in part-time team that specially engaged in psychology, education and politics are few. Meanwhile, because they have to consider both their own work and students' work, they would feel tied up with time allocation and are easily to appear phenomenon of playing favorites. In addition, the part-time members of students in graduate school lack professional knowledge and training experiences; thus, they are apt to deal with problems carelessly or improperly. Based on this practical situation, Chinese specialized construction of university student affairs management team shall be put on the agenda.

Under the new situation, as the managers of Chinese university student affairs and during daily student affairs administration, they shall not only consider their roles as managers, educators as well as servants but also change their characters flexibly according to circumstances in advancing with times. Due to the existing phenomenon of stressing discipline construction and construction of teaching team while neglecting the specialized construction of university student affairs administration as well as professional quality training, the circumstance of unsound development of college counselors' team construction appeared. Faced with this, the seventh part of "CCC PCC and State Council on Further Strengthening and Improving Ideological and Political Education" which issued in 2014, explicitly proposed to "improve the selection, cultivation and management mechanism of college students' ideological and political education team. Meanwhile, it also put forward to reinforce the construction of ideological and political education, cultivate the special talents of ideological and political education, implement talent cultivation project of college students' ideological and political education and establish the talents training base of ideological and political education".^[5]

2.2 To improve the vocational ability and comprehensive quality of the counselors.

The comprehensive capacity of people employing knowledge and experience, skill and technique to complete professional activities in accordance with the duty, task and activity methods specified by certain career is career capacity.^[6] While comprehensive quality,^[7] refers to one's comprehensive capacity of knowledge level, moral cultivation and all kinds of capacity. As for the university student affairs managers, the professional ability and comprehensive quality means flexibly using their knowledge, skills, and working experiences to well accomplish their job in the education, management and service for students, and the basic operational capability when they fulfill their tasks of students affairs management.

To build a team of counselors with professional quality and integrative competence is an indispensable part in the construction of professional university student affairs management team in our country. In the document *The CPC central committee and state council's opinions on strengthening and improving the ideological and political education of university students*, it encourages counselors to be professors in ideological and political education for students. However, because of the special circumstances of universities in China, the counselor group are pioneer soldiers, taking charge of a mass of multifarious trifles. More often than not, a counselor may manage tens of or hundreds of students, which nearly costs all of his time to manage multifarious kinds daily routines of students, making them have no time to improve their professional quality and integrative competence. Therefore, supportive policies and budget subsidy are supposed to be provided to develop a counselor team with professional quality and integrative competence.

First of all, we are supposed to attach more importance to fostering the professional quality of the counselors, the capability of communication, cooperation, learning, researching and management in a comprehensive way, for fostering their professional quality is an indispensable part in the innovative development of the university students affair management team in our country. If counselors want to go on wheels in daily routine, they have to possess the ability of management. Counselors' management ability has a direct influence on the result of student affair management. Meanwhile, as leaders of students, counselors' ability to communicate is a key factor to their vocational development. University students are from all directions with different family backgrounds. As a result, counselors are expected to master and improve their capability of interpersonal communication and language communication. In the management of the daily work, counselors should not only build credibility in front of student but also supply humanistic care. Only when they possess the good capacity of communication, can they handle problems appropriately. In the daily administration of students, counselors are main force who often contact with college leaders and administration department for cooperation to work effectively. Hence, capability of cooperation, team spirit and global consciousness are of vital importance to counselors. The Eighteenth CPC National Congress put forward a series of slogans such as life-long education and learning-oriented society. As executors of university student affair management, counselors are supposed to actively respond to and greatly carry out the new policy. At the same time, in order to keep pace with the changing of the world, counselors should try to improve themselves in an all-round way in their spare time, such as studying some practical management skills, renewing their knowledge system, etc.

Secondly, professional skills training for the counselor team should be carried out frequently.

(1) Adopting methods of training at campus both abroad and at home to expand counselor' outlook. Furthering the communication with universities abroad on the management issues of students is also a good option.

(2) Encouraging the counselor group to develop a kind of self-learning style in a positive way. By diminishing the workload and shortening working hours, counselors can get rid of tedious routine work, which can ensure they have time to do self-cultivation and foster their professional quality.

(3) Cultivating the counselor group to be a learning-oriented team and promote their quality. Counselors should be well-motivated to conduct researches on university student management, drawing lessons from their past practice continually and improving their own capacities, which can supply practical support to the development of university student affair management theory development.

2.3 To Establish and Perfect the Recruitment, Performance Assessment and Promotion Mechanism for Counselors

“CCCPC and State Council on Further Strengthening and Improving Ideological and Political Education” explicitly proposed to “improve the selection, cultivation and management mechanism of college students' ideological and political education team”. Moreover, it also pointed out “specific requirements for the construction of university student affairs administration team, which includes establishing and perfecting the motivation as well as security mechanism of university student affairs administration full-time team. It aims to improve the full-time positions of ideological and political education team and solve the problem of teachers' post appointment, encouraging them to be relieved in

their own works and becoming the specialists of ideological and political education”.^[8]

(1) As for the selection of personnel, it stresses professional counterparts. It shall both give preference to those with academic background of relevant specialties such as management, education, psychology as well as sociology and particularly pay attention to their comprehensive capacity, communication skills, abilities of dealing with emergency affairs and corresponding work experience.

(2) To improve scientific counselors’ performance assessment system. To adopt the combination assessment of functional department assessment, students involved evaluation and self-assessment to give full play to students as evaluation subjects and avoid the phenomenon of “walking through”. The evaluation contents shall include counselors’ personal political, morality and business abilities, organization and construction of students’ team, students’ ideological and political education, activities organized by counselors inside and outside universities as well as social practice, student affairs administration and innovated characteristic work. Based on the feedback of the combination assessment result to discover the achievements as well as shortcomings in student affairs management, work will be adjusted and regulated in time.

(3) To Explicit the promotion mechanism of the counselor team.

In our country, the position of the counselors is defined as both teaching and administrative cadres in Chinese institutions of higher education. The post of counselor is commonly known as “walk on two legs” and “double shoulder task”, they can choose both professional title and administrative ranks. But, such promotion mechanism has its disadvantages, the double identity of the counselors highlights the embarrassment of the role of the counselors, reduces the sense of status belongings. To be more concrete, if one chooses to be a teacher during promotion, then he/she will lay behind professional teachers in scientific research and teaching experience. If one chooses administrative post, the deposition of job experience and professional knowledge is much less compared with the cadres of the administration. So, they should choose the way of promotion according to tasks they assumed and job nature of the counselors. Adopting the method of career-advancing exam and peer-evaluation to recruit and select excellent management personnel and professional talents is also a kind of fair and effective way.

Thus, in terms of the reform of the university system under the new situation, to make professionalized construction for management team of students staff is therefore necessary and urgent. To make professionalized construction for management team of students staff is to meet the demand of the inner development of the universities and socialization environment development. We should actively improve the vocational ability and comprehensive quality of the counselors team, in the same time, further complete the employing mechanism, performance evaluation mechanism and promotion mechanism, so as to provide intellectual support for the management of the students’ administrators in universities.

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