

# Research on Students' Participation in University Management from the Perspective of Rights Protection

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## Abstract

*Students' participation in management has not only become a normal mode of university management, but also an effective way for students to realize their power in the multi-dimension. However, in the practice of university students' participation in management in our country, there are a variety of problems. For example, students' narrow management authority and limited management scope and extent result in constraints in the enthusiasm and level of students' management, further affecting the management. Based on the perspective of safeguarding rights, this thesis tries to find effective strategies and methods to improve students' participation in university management from a new perspective of rights protection by examining current situation and problems of students' participation in management in our country, so as to further improve the practical effect of students' participation in management.*

**Key words:** perspective of safeguarding rights; students' participation; university management

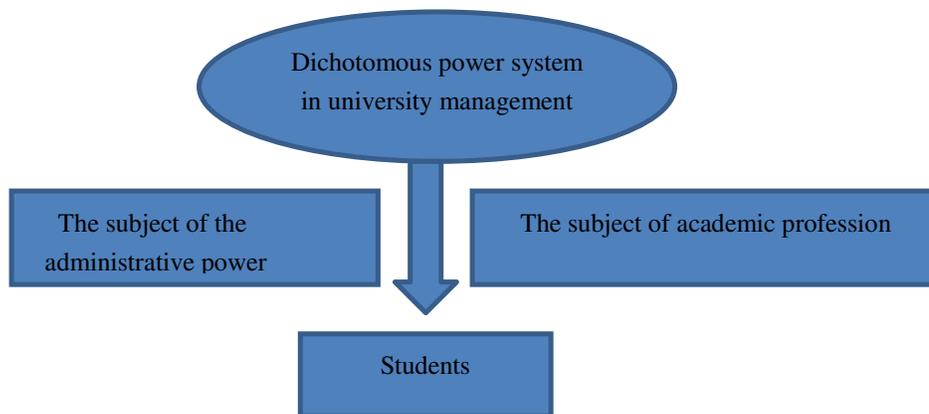
With the continuous improvement of higher education and further refinement of the division of disciplines, the scale of higher education in our country is also expanding. As people.com.cn reported, the number of college enrollment in our country reached nearly 7 million only in 2015, showing that China's higher education is moving towards the stage of mass higher education. Students, as the subject of colleges and universities, are also shifting from the recipient of passive education to the executor of university management. How to actively encourage students to effectively participate in university management and play their subject rights in the context of increasing awareness of safeguarding rights has become a necessity to improve the democratic level of university management and students' inner quality and personality.

**1 Definition of students’ participation in management from the perspective of rights protection**

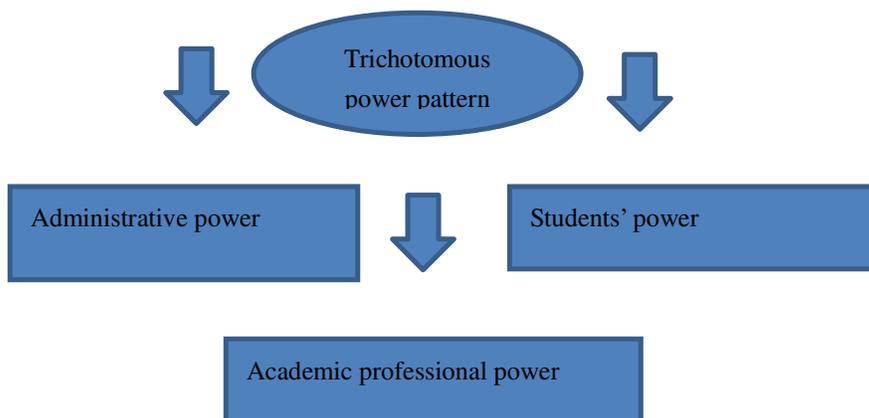
From the perspective of rights protection, students’ participation in university management refers to that in the course of university management, students not only have right to make recommendations, but also the decision-making power and veto. What’s more, when deciding major issues, they have right to propose some rights defending for themselves and all students. In addition, in compliance with the objective and development plan of university education, students have right to participate in the regulation of various resources in the university management system so as to improve the effect of higher management and the quality of higher education.

From the discussion above we can see that, students’ participation in management from the perspective of rights protection helps improve their role in university management in a way. The following figure shows the change of power system in the university. As it indicates, we can easily find the improvement of students’ status in university power system.

**1.1 Dichotomous power pattern in universities: administrative power and academic professional power**



**1.2. Trichotomous power pattern in universities: administrative power, academic professional power and students’ power**



On the other hand, full exercise of students’ rights can expand the depth and extent of university management.

When students’ position in university management is promoted and students’ power is of the same importance with administrative power and academic professional power, it will mean that they have absolute authority over university management. In this way, their management authority can be gradually expanded and can have decision-making power in previous unavailable areas, such as tuition management, scholarship allocation, credit system, etc. Subsequently, as students’ power expands, the protection of their own power will also improve. In the virtuous cycle of protection of rights – expansion of power - protection of rights - expansion of power, the scope and depth of students' participation in university management naturally continue to be expanded and deepened. The intervention of students’ power both invigorates university management and helps achieve scientific and democratic management, naturally fostering the validity and quality of university management.

**2 Current situation and problems in Chinese students' participation in management**

**2.1 The marginalization of students’ management is relatively serious**

Since the constraint that teacher is the manager while student is the managed lasts for a long time, students’ participation in university management has proceeded and developed, but the awareness of it still occurs deviation, whether in educational administrators or in students. As for educational administrators, they hold that students do not have the management capacity and cannot fully assume management responsibilities due to their young age and lack of management experience. Therefore, we cannot assign important management tasks to students. Moreover, they think that students’ participation will play a negative role in smooth implementation of university policies and hinder the management efficiency and stability in some special cases, especially involving some sensitive issues like the interests of students. As a result, even though some students are recruited as managers in some universities, they are only responsible for some minor work. Some core work and decision-making power remain in the hands of educational administrators. So the marginalization of students’ participation in university management is relatively serious.

The following is a survey of students as staff of Student Union in universities:

Item	Whether students have the opportunity to make a decision?		Whether students have the opportunity to make recommendations in terms of some important issues?		Whether students have the opportunity to participate in the management of some important issues?		Whether students have the opportunity to participate in general work?	
	Yes	0%	Yes	55%	Yes	50%	Yes	100%
No	100%	No	995%	No	50%	No	0%	

**2.2 The depth and extent of students’ participation in university management is limited.**

Students’ participation in university management is divided into two levels: the lower level is performed by understanding the situation, expressing their views and participating in the management of some trivial; the higher is performed by participating in decision-making or directly making decisions. Through actual investigation and searching for information, the author has learned that the level of students’ participation remains lower. That means students just get a general knowledge about university management and work. They can participate in the hearing and voice their views in terms of some important issues. While for some significant decision-making events, students are usually difficult to participate, and even have little opportunity to get information.

The extent of students’ participation in university management should theoretically cover all students in a comprehensive way. However, in the actual management, the areas for students to manage are very limited. Students’ management is concentrated in the management of daily class routines, dormitory management, teaching evaluation, and arrangement of activities organized by class, faculty or university while they rarely get engaged in university administration, planning and development and so on.

The following is a survey about the extent of students’ participation in university management:

Content	Proportion
1% University planning and development	 5%
1% University administration	 5%
Teaching affairs	 20%
The establishment and modification of university regulations	 18%
Dormitory management	 25%
Management of university cafeteria	 15%
Management of students’ daily routines	 60%
Management of important events	 70%

As can be seen from the table above, the so-called students’ management is just concentrated on the organization of regular activities and management of students’ daily routines. As for university’s development strategy, planning and administrative affairs, students’ participation is very little. In a word, the extent of students’ participation in university management is very narrow.

### **3 Necessity of students' participation in university management from the perspective of rights protection**

In recent years, although there are some limitations for students to participate in university management, we are gradually exploring the bottleneck problem of breaking the reality, *Higher Education Act, Provisions on the Administration of University Students* and other relevant laws and regulations have affirmed students' participation in university management. Major colleges and universities are also showing more respect for the dominant position of students, paying more attention to students' interests, and becoming more aware of the necessity for students to participate in university management.

#### **3.1 Legal system construction is the background factors of expanding students' participation in university management.**

With the advance of law-based governance, improved legal environment has become an important guarantee and background factor for students to participate in university management. Thanks to the implementation of *Higher Education Act, Provisions on the Administration of University Students* and other relevant laws and regulations, the rights of students are also expanding. Once their rights are violated, students can safeguard their legitimate rights and interests with a variety of laws, regulations and policies, even if they do not have permission to participate in university management, which means that students can indirectly participate in university management in another way - legal channels.

#### **3.2 Increasing awareness of students' rights is the internal factor of encouraging students to participate in university management.**

With the increasing awareness of their rights and their consciousness as masters of the university, to participate in management and to safeguard rights and interests are becoming an important part of university students' life. However, the limitation of management authority in reality is obviously contrary to the ideal sense of ownership, which will inevitably lead students to demand the expansion of their management authority and the realization of their master identity under the guidance of rights protection mechanism. In this case, if university administrators cannot meet students' interest demands, students' self-management and coordinate the mutual assistance and cooperation among students, it is difficult to achieve maximum management efficiency.

#### **3.3 Students' autonomy can improve the efficiency of management is the internal impetus to promoting students' participation in university management.**

The efficiency of university management is in essence the efficient cooperation between universities and students. Although the university is granted to govern all the students, it cannot reach every student in a direct way. The student organization acts as an intermediary in the management. It is set up by university itself, but it stands for students' rights and interests, aiming at better management and organization on the basis of safeguarding students' interests and serving students. Generally, the main form of students' organization is student union. Under the leadership of the Communist Party of China and the Youth League, it is attached to university administration and acts as executor of university policies. It has become the main way to achieve effective operation of university management.

#### **4 Strategies for students to participate in university management from the perspective of rights protection**

In view of current situation and problems in students' participation in university management, the author tries to seek the solutions by building a correct outlook on rights, improving students' self-management power organizations and establishing institutional security system, so as to ensure smooth operation of students' rights in university management.

##### **4.1 To help students establish a correct outlook on rights in the management**

As a result of the long-term constraint of traditional hierarchical leadership system in Chinese universities, educational administrators often hold absolute leadership over students or students' organizations in the management. Students' organizations shall be in complying with the arrangement and deployment of educational administrators, thus habitually becoming their management tools and passive conveyancers. As a result, their self-management concept seriously vanishes. For example, many members of students' organizations think that there is nothing with students' authority in terms of university's planning and development, the establishment of system, personnel appointment and removal, and other management-related work. In their view, student managers are only responsible for student management, dormitory management, class management and things alike. In addition, the awareness of rights in the maintenance and protection is also relatively dilute and even missing. Therefore, to help students establish a correct outlook on power in practice is a prerequisite for students' scientific participation in university management. As the major group and part of university, students are important for the survival and future development of university. Therefore, students must recognize their own status and value. They should not only get involved in university management as the subject of university, but also participate in university's decision-making and future development planning as the master. Students cannot only serve as a university management program or equipment. They should really play a leading role in decision-making, programming, and management involving the interests of all parties. Certainly, when students strive for their power, they should also pay attention to the balance of educational management. According to the principle of harmony and democracy, students should make right use of their power and participate in university management so as to advance the process of democratization and scientific management of universities.

##### **4.2 To improve the power organization of students' self-management**

In view of current management mode of colleges and universities in our country, student union is the main student management authority. Even though it is set up by educational administrators, it more represents the will of students, answers for students and accepts students' supervision. Students' associations are civil organizations formed on the basis of common interests or common will, mainly responsible for carrying out activities. They are also a part of university management. In the management, the administrative color of student associations is lighter, while that of Student Union is heavier as it operates under the dominance of university administrative authority. So students' rights cannot fully realize. To change the status quo and allow students to truly become the "spokesman" of students, it is necessary to further improve the power organization of students' self-management. Students' organizations should be granted more access to participation and decision-making, stand for

the interests of the majority of students and play a decisive role in some matters involving students' interests. For example, members of student union not only have right to know about the dynamic of university senior decisions, but also the right to put forward their views and opinions in matters related to students' interests according to their interests and needs, and can even run for university top leader, vote and make decisions in senior university affairs. In recent years, some universities are trying to recruit representatives of students to participate in university issues and express their views so as to improve the status of student union in university management and decision-making. Through a series of reforms and trials, it is expected to achieve equivalence and balance effect among university administrative power, academic power and students' rights and form a well-run management system to improve university management efficiency.

#### **4.3 To improve the legal status of and system guarantee for students' participation in management**

The lack of students' power in university management is a result of the ignorance of students' rights to some extent. But its fundamental reason is the lack of related laws and regulations. Among China's current legal provisions, there is almost no provision concerning students' power in university management, which results in lack of students' power. Therefore, the primary way to ensure the performance and use of students' power in university management is to strengthen legislation. Only with the strong legal backing, can students exercise their legitimate rights in various ways and protect their legitimate rights and interests from infringement. Secondly, to improve the rights protection system of college students is an important guarantee for students to participate effectively in management from the perspective of rights protection. In the practice of university management, maximizing the execution of students' management authority, it is necessary to shift students' and managers' ideology. Apart from it, we should try to build efficient power security system for students' management and establish a solid position to protect students' interests so as to form a balance among administrative and technical powers and ensure standardized operation of various regulations. As this being so, it helps change the situation in which educational administrators monopolize power and alter students' weak position, thus fundamentally safeguarding students' interests and rights. Thirdly, we should improve the talent training model to enhance students' comprehensive ability, especially management capability and allow students to manage with high intelligence, high level and high efficiency, to win maximum management authority. Usually college students are adults. Having experienced their elementary, junior and senior school, they have accumulated a certain amount of knowledge and experience. Together with studying of various disciplines in university, most students have developed basic quality and capacity. Moreover, social practice and multimedia learning such as the internet can enrich and deepen their knowledge in related fields. Teachers can scientifically guide, inspire, demonstrate in practice, and recruit students to get involved in teaching management, performance evaluation, logistics management, library management, etc., so that students can get a profound understanding of the operation of the internal management system of colleges and universities, and master management techniques and methods to cultivate and improve management ability. As a result, it further enhances the effect of students' participation in management, and ensures the sound operation of various powers in students' participation in university management.

As an important part of university organizations, students not only have right to participate in university management, but also have right to obtain more in-depth, wide and comprehensive participation and management, which helps to realize students' power in university management. It is also a way to promote benign operation of university management. What's more, it is an important and inevitable area for legal society.

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