

Revelations from Student Affairs Administration of Universities and Colleges with Student-centered Concept in the UK

—Taking University of Reading as an Example

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Abstract—the student-centered concept of student affairs management in British universities has a positive reference to the ideological and political education in Chinese universities. Universities of our country need to grasp the relationship between explicit education and implicit education, both as ideological and political education methods. Ideological and political education workers should make the transition from managers to servers, and students should realize self-development from the passive acceptance, jointly creating a student-centered education atmosphere, and improving the pertinence and effectiveness of ideological and political education work.

Keywords—student-centered; British universities; Affairs management; revelation

I. INTRODUCTION

Many people think that ideological and political education is that with Chinese characteristics, and there is no ideological and political education abroad. As a conscious educational activity, ideological and political education educates people and is actually the product of the development of human society. "The dominant position in class society can only be the ideology of the ruling class, which is caused by the political indoctrination of the whole people by the power in their hands. This indoctrination is also known as ideological and political education.[1] Therefore, ideological and political education has a strong ideological and class nature. From the perspective of historical development, ideological and political education plays an irreplaceable role in maintaining the stability of a country regardless of its nature.

Student work is a common term in Chinese colleges and universities, which generally includes two aspects, one is ideological and political education work while the other is daily affairs management among students. Student affairs management is an idiomatic usage of universities in western countries such as Britain, and their student affairs management often contains the content of ideological and political education. Student affairs management in British colleges and universities has started early, experienced development for a long period, and gradually formed a student affairs management system with the concept of student-centered. So-called

student-centered, is to stand in the students' positions and angles to consider problems, pay attention to their daily study, life and development, focus on their commonness and individuality, universality and particularity from the perspective of their thoughts, and behaviors. High quality services should also be provided to help students to realize themselves, and promote comprehensive development. The paper takes University of Reading as an example to sort out the characteristics of the student-centered concept in student affairs management in British universities, so as to provide reference and inspiration for ideological and political staffs in Chinese universities in the new era.

II. THE CONNOTATION OF STUDENT-CENTERED EDUCATION CONCEPT

The concept of child-centered from American pragmatic educator Dewey is the origin of the student-centered educational concept. As early as in the late 1980s, Dewey emphasized the importance of individual students in the educational environment for many times in his relevant articles. He pointed out that in order for students to lay a good foundation for their future, they must be in control of themselves, which can help fully exert their ability to contact the outside through their senses and realize the domination of their ability.[2]

In 1952, Carl R. Rogers, an American psychologist who founded the theory of humanistic psychotherapy, first put forward the idea of student-centered. He believed that student-centered means that students' learning and development should be the center, so as to realize the transformation from teaching to learning, and from the teaching mode to the learning mode, and improve students' learning quality and improve their comprehensive knowledge, ability and quality.[3] When in teaching activities, the concept of student-centered need to be emphasized, which requires students to be the first, and the teaching content and form only to be based on students' law growth of and their demands. A basic principle of teaching is to satisfy and adapt to students' law growth of and their demands and to achieve the unity of the teaching and learning.[4]

When it comes to specific student affairs management, the concept of student centered requires that education workers shall return the dominant position of education to students, and try their best to meet the demand of students, mobilize students' enthusiasm and initiative as far as possible in terms of characteristics of student's psychological development in thought and behavior, daily management, academic guidance, support services, psychological counseling, student community management, as well as employment guidance, etc. so as to make students' knowledge, ability and quality achieve comprehensive developments.

III. THE MAIN EMBODIMENT OF THE STUDENT-CENTERED CONCEPT IN STUDENT AFFAIRS MANAGEMENT OF BRITISH UNIVERSITIES

A. *The undergraduate tutorial system provides students with comprehensive guidance*

The undergraduate tutorial system is a time-honored and effective system in British higher education, which first appeared in Oxford University and Cambridge University. This system is a major feature of British higher education system and an important part of student affairs management systems in British universities. In University of Reading, every student will have his/her own tutor after he/she enters the university. In the employment contract, every full-time teacher has specific requirements on serving as a tutor, which shall be the obligation of each teacher and not included in the workload. Each tutor is expected to tutor about 8-10 students per year (Oxford and Cambridge tutors are expected to tutor only 2-3 students per year). Tutors are required to meet individually with students no less than three times a year (at Oxbridge, tutors need to meet with students no less than twice a week). They should not only guide students to develop their own learning development plans, help students to solve issues on such as life adjustment, career planning, career development, and psychological problems. Especially when students fail the exams, interrupt their studies, have discipline behaviors, suffer from severe mental illness, and so on, the opinions of the mentors have an important influence on school authorities how to deal with and take measures. Mentors infect students with their profound academic knowledge and professional ethics, making students conform to the expected quality structure of the British mainstream society. Therefore, from the perspective of job function, tutors take on the important task of students' thought tutors and growth tutors.

B. *The one-stop student affairs center provides convenient services for students.*

Student affairs management of British universities always adheres to the student-centered principle, and implements it in all aspects of teaching and student affairs management so as to promote the comprehensive development of students. Its work content mainly includes four aspects, first, specialized training, such as psychological counseling, academic and employment guidance; second, life services, such as dormitory management and service, catering services; third, financial aid, such as management and distribution of grants and scholarship, handling of student loans; fourth, management of campus activities, such as coordinating student organizations, security services, etc. University of Reading opened its one-stop student

services building in 2008. The building is located in the center of the campus and each floor has its own seating area for students. Valuable reading materials, small folding pages, and a signage system for student services can be found everywhere. The paper next mainly focuses on psychological counseling services and academic guidance.

1) *Psychological counseling service*

Different from Chinese universities, British universities begin to provide psychological counseling for new students before they enter the university. Learning counseling has become an important part of psychological counseling in University of Reading. Psychological counselors mainly provide psychological support for students through learning skills workshops, production of learning instruction manuals, one-on-one services and assessment of learning disabilities. Peer support is also a service that fully respects and considers students' needs. The psychological counseling center of University of Reading trains 30 peer counselors every year to provide psychological services for students. In addition, in terms of students' suspension, postponement and resumption of school, psychological counselors will intervene, especially during the resumption of school. Counselors will evaluate students to determine whether they can return to school, especially whether they have recovered mentally.

2) *Academic tutoring services*

There are three models of academic guidance at University of Reading - one-on-one interviews, quick inquiries and workshops. Students can make an appointment with their academic tutors through the website for one-to-one consultation. The interviews are confidential throughout the process, and the teachers propose personalized learning suggestions and strategies according to the students' situations. One-on-one interviews have solved many academic difficulties of students, especially those who are not good at communicating with others in daily life. One-on-one counseling also provides personalized services for people with dyslexia. The center has a quick consultation office in a prominent position, which is mainly to facilitate students' consultation at any time. There is a teacher on duty in the consultation office, where students can seek help and advice on learning, such as data analysis, literature citation and paper writing. Quick consultation is especially popular among students in the preparation period before exams. The workshops are mainly lectures of a certain scale for related courses, which are usually held in the departments. The center will also put forward learning suggestions and plans that are in line with the basic situation of the students in the school. In addition, the academic guidance center has set up a column on the school website, where elaborately produced videos on academic guidance and advice are on for students to download and learn by themselves, so as to realize a full range of academic guidance services online and offline.

C. *Student organizations have a high degree of autonomy to give full play to the main role of students*

As an independent organization of the university, the student union is the spokesperson of students' rights. It coordinates and negotiates student affairs management with the university on behalf of students. Take University of Reading as

an example. The President of the students' union and other four principals are elected by students who have graduated or are studying in the university. They are full-time employees who receive salaries like social workers and have independent office areas and business entities. On the one hand, the student union carries out activities in the form of student associations. It takes on the responsibilities similar to the associations of colleges and universities in China and undertakes the important mission of students' second class. On the other hand, it is responsible for the operation of campus supermarkets, cafes, restaurants and other places, which not only facilitates students' lives, but also provides opportunities for students to practice. The school provides free space for the office and activities of the student union, and subsidizes a considerable amount of activity funds every year. The student union has maintained close ties with the school. For one thing, it has actively negotiated with the school on behalf of students, and made student' voices on issues concerning students' major interests, such as complaints on improper punishment of the school, reduction of accommodation costs of students, concern about the rights of disabled students and international students, so as to safeguard students' rights and help students solve practical difficulties. For another, the union also cooperates with local communities to integrate college students into local communities and create a good living space through compulsory labor. This autonomous operation mode, which is at a distance from the school, has certain reference significance to the strengthening of student management services of the student union, community organizations, logistics services and other departments in domestic colleges and universities.

D. Achieve subtle value guidance in the implicit ideological education

As an important front to cultivate talents in line with social needs, British universities have adopted a more covert and indirect way to educate students' values. The implicit ideological and political education in Britain is embodied in the joint efforts of the whole society to build a more realistic educational environment for students, where various educational contents have been permeated.[5] Take Remembrance Day as an example. Remembrance Day, also called Peace Memorial Day, which falls on November 11 each year, is a Day of Remembrance for soldiers and civilians killed in world war I, world war II and other wars. It has a very formal ceremony---a national ceremony and two minutes of silence at 11 o'clock on November 11th. At University of Reading, a memorial service is held at 11 am on November 11th in its central square. The notice has been published in the school's home page. Students and teachers will spontaneously go to the square, wearing a poppy flower on their own to participate in the ceremony. The reason why poppy flowers are adopted is that it is said that in the bloody battlefield, when the war ended and everything went quiet, there were patches of bright and dripping poppy flowers on the ground, which not only show the tragic nature of the war to the world, but more importantly, represent hope and a new beginning. No one requests students and teachers and no one organizes a fixed number of students to participate in. In addition to the memorial ceremony, students have also paid tribute by placing donation boxes on campus and featuring poppy flowers on the newspaper of the student union.

Britain, of course, owns many traditional anniversaries or festivals with the characteristics of British culture themes and a rich historical connotation and meaning of education, such as Halloween, Christmas and so on. They have been formed in the inheritance, which is easy to make those who take part in the activities generate the same resonance in thinking and accept the educational content contained in it. As can be seen from the activities on cultural memorial days, the design of activities focuses on easy participation of students, according to the characteristics of young students. Wearing poppy flowers before the chest is consistent with students' daily lives of wearing corsages. Moreover, poppy flowers are aesthetic and easy to be accepted and implemented by students when worn before the chest. These activities guide students to participate consciously in a flexible way, and the process is simple but solemn, so that students can fully feel the educational significance of the activities.

E. The equal interaction in the teaching process reflects the harmonious and democratic relations between students and teachers.

In classrooms of British universities, it is common for teachers to use kneeling, sitting and other positions to communicate with students one-on-one or one-to-many situations. Teachers will often walk off the platform and walk back and forth among students to reflect the democratic and equal relations between students and teachers, making students more relaxed and more possible to become an indispensable subject in class. If they are not good at using eye contacts, it is difficult for them to win the trust and respect of students; without abundant body language, students will get bored soon. Such an equal and democratic way of communication poses a great challenge to the long-standing concept of respecting teachers and valuing education in Chinese culture, and maintaining a correct and dignified attitude to win the respect of students. Due to the cultural differences, teachers in China are not able to kneel beside students and communicate with them patiently. However, it is worth our reflection whether we can change the dignity that will cause teachers in the traditional mode far away from students to democratic and equal kindness of the student-oriented concept.

IV. REVELATIONS FROM STUDENT AFFAIRS ADMINISTRATION OF UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES WITH STUDENT-CENTERED CONCEPT IN THE UK

Student affairs management in British universities pays more attention to the personalized education and the development of students' learning, and chooses appropriate education and services for students. All of these reflect the student-oriented concept and provide more powerful support and guidance for the growth of students, which has important reference significance for the current ideological and political education work in China's colleges and universities.

A. Taking students as the center requires ideological and political workers in universities to realize the transformation from managers to service providers

Schools should take the initiative to change their own concepts, correctly understand the concept of student-centered education, build a professional and high-quality working team,

deeply understand the needs of students, improve the ability to serve students, and provide quality and efficient services for students. As for the work value of colleges staff on student affairs, the concept of manager should be weakened, while that of server should be strengthened. Staff shall consider managing students as an aid, and serving students as the main idea. They should not restrict students' life with deliberately strict requirements but should provide students with larger activity space to study and live. It is necessary to strengthen the system construction and build a benign and interactive platform between schools and students by employing information technology, so as to realize the informatization and institutionalization of student affairs management and better serve the needs of students' growth and study.

B. Student-centered learning requires students to transform from passive acceptance to self-development

With the further development of society, politics and economy, as well as the further promotion of the popularization of higher education, the relationships between students and schools or between students and teachers, have been quietly changed. The contemporary characteristics of student group are obvious, their independent personality and subject consciousness are being strengthened, and their interest demands are diversified. Objectively, this requires us to pay more attention to the main role of students on the basis of continuous improvement of the existing structure and details, give more development space to students, and guide students to better self-grow and more actively participate in university management. The school should strengthen students' self-management, strengthen the democracy of education management and exercise students' self-management ability through multiple-factor cooperation, communication, coordination and other means, and strive to build an education service system to encourage and guide students' self-development. Students should take an active attitude, rely on the existing objective conditions of colleges and universities, actively participate in the education and management of colleges and universities, strive to improve overall quality, enhance comprehensive ability and social competitiveness, and promote self-development.

C. Student-centered education requires universities to grasp the relationship between explicit education and implicit education

Ideological and political education in Britain is dominated by implicit education, while that of domestic universities is dominated by explicit education and supplemented by implicit education. Explicit education has its own advantages, such as comprehensiveness, depth and comprehensive coverage of educational content. However, in the current era of information

and network, the influence of multiple-culture on students and explicit education on young people tend to produce their habitual aversion. The implicit education in British universities is characterized by class of content, emotion of process, diversity of approaches and life of methods.[6] The process of forming a value system is driven by the organic combination of internal needs and external needs, but the final effect must be internalized. On the premise of improving the dominant education, therefore, we should follow the rules of ideological education, the rules of students' growth, learn from the implicit education and implement value infiltration and build characters invisibly. We should keep the pace of education, balance the relationship between explicit and implicit methods of ideological and political education, make them play a relevant role and complement each other, give full play to the advantages of the two methods, and jointly fulfill the important mission of training builders and successors of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the guidance system, one-stop service center, high degree of autonomy of student organizations and implicit ideological education of valuable guidance in British universities are of great significance to domestic universities. This requires colleges and universities to focus on the fundamental task of cultivating people by virtue, establish the concept of student-centered education, give full play to students' subjectivity, grasp the relationship between implicit education and explicit education, and promote students' growth and study.

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