

Exploration and Research on Educational Governance in Higher Vocational Colleges

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Abstract. The thesis explores the relationship between governance theory and organizations, and helps improve the understanding of educational governance for organizations to find “Good Governance” approach and to promote healthy and orderly development of organizations. According to the method of governance theory and combined with the practical problems in the author’s organization, the thesis explores the educative purpose of governance, the ways educational governance can be planned and acted, and tries to analyze the relationship between educational governance and government, problems of the appearance of governance, failure of governance as well as the plans and action measures adopted by organizations during the process of educational governance etc.

Keywords: Educational Governance; Organization; Vocational Colleges; Good Governance.

1. Introduction

At present, educational governance is the process of common management of the public affairs of education, which presents a new type of democratic form. An important approach for pushing forward the development of vocational colleges is through efficient governance. The direct goal of education governance is “Good Governance”. The ultimate goal is “Good Education”, that is, to establish an efficient, fair, free and orderly education new pattern. On the basis of practice from the author’s organization and combined with the “Governance Problem” that higher vocational colleges face, the author explores the educative purpose of governance and the ways of efficient educational governance for achieving and promoting scientific development and management of higher vocational education.

2. The Educative Purpose of Governance

2.1 Definition of Governance

Since the beginning of late 1970s, government management in various countries has seen extensive changes from domination to governance, emphasizing that the governance theory of cooperation between market, enterprise and various civic organizations in the process of governance has been widely recognized in the world. Governance, as a way of paying attention to the function of governments and the mutual cooperation and management of social organizations, formally ascended the stage of history in the 1990s. The word “Governance” in English derives from Latin and ancient Greek, the ancient Greek word “kubernetes” meant “steersman” or “helmsman” and was used to refer to “exercising authority, control and direction.” [1] The concept of governance is more widely used in various fields, but there are differences in the interpretation of governance. Chhotray and Stoker (2009) think, “Governance is concerned with the practice of making collective decisions.” [2] While Bevir (2012) defines governance to be “all processes of governing, whether undertaken by a government, market, or network, whether over family, tribe, formal or informal organization, or territory, and whether through laws, norms, power, or language” [3] It is very difficult to define a uniform, universally applicable definition of “governance”. Scholars study governance from the perspectives of different subjects, such as economics, management, sociology, political science, etc., which lack of interdisciplinary research between different disciplines. Thus there are differences of understandings among every context.

2.2 The Educative Purpose of Governance

Referring to the educational aspect of governance, educational activities at all levels refer to the subject and object of educational activities, the contents of educational activities (courses, textbooks), the methods, processes and environment of educational activities. No matter what kind of education, it is to help learners improve and change their “understanding, attitudes and/or behaviour”. Learners would once again raise their levels in many aspects of their nations, countries even the world such as values, habits, attitudes and knowledge and do well for the succession of generations. It can be said that the learners have created conditions that are conducive to the economic and cultural growth of their organizations or society through education. Therefore, educational governance is beneficial “to benefit learners, organizations and wider society” [4]

Nixon, Walker and Carr (2004) argue that the “governance of learning” is about the regulation and control by educational institutions of learning, as well as how citizens learn to participate with others, in various ways in civil society, which “is indispensable to a deliberative democracy.” [5] MacNeill, et al. (2003) identify that successful leadership in schools has outcomes which “...and the engagement of students in learning.” [6] Therefore, in my organization, the views of the college leaders, the diversity of service objects, vary for everyone stands in different perspective on how the college should be developed and how to better serve learners. But everyone agrees that the college should provide better accommodation for the learners and be able to get along with others in the apartments. In fact, it is a complicated process for the college to build better accommodation condition and student apartments that involves the allocation of funds throughout the college. From this perspective, to meet governance issue of the author’s college, governance is not “just a matter of structure and system but also of process and action.” [7] Might we realize the governance of learning “through the human capacity to learn and live together, to flourish, in difference”? [8]

3. The Ways that can be Planned and Acted in Educational Governance

3.1 Achieve the “Good Governance”

The “Good Governance” should be adopted in educational governance, Good Governance focuses on three interrelated areas: performance orientation; openness, transparency and integrity; and effective collaboration. [9] Governance is characterized by multiple participations for achieving the joint and common governance namely “Common Governance”. Good Governance has been embraced by the corporate sector aiming to decrease poor business practices and make procedures and obligations transparent, in order to gain the trust of stakeholders and the public at large. To restore trust in institutions, governance arrangements clarified the process of decision-making and defined responsibilities in order to help different actors embrace good governance. [10]

Stoker (1998) emphasizes on the essence of governance as “concerned with creating the conditions for ordered rule and collective action.” [11] In this principle and spirit of governance, the first job is to improve the collective decision-making system in colleges. Taking the student apartment governance issue of the author’s college as an example, the management should improve the rules and procedures of collective decision-making in the whole school, promote the scientific, democratization and legalization of decision-making, and avoid individual arbitrariness. Secondly, improving the management system of students’ participation, perfecting the coordinative system between workers and teaching staffs, giving full play to its role of democratic supervision and participation in school management; reforming and perfecting the system of General Membership Meeting, carrying out the students’ democratic election right, independent decision-making power, formulating the management rules of student service or involving students’ interests, and fully soliciting the students’ opinions. Finally, establishing parental participation in school governance system and working to establish the family committee so that parents can participate in the school management activities, supervision of school management services etc., thus promote home-school cooperation.

3.2 Strengthen Interaction and Communication with Government

3.2.1 Coordination and Relationship to Government

Organizations must strengthen interaction and communication with local government in all areas, to be in compliance with the central and local government laws and regulations, and work for efficient and legal procedures to achieve that the local government be included in the main body of educational governance for future development of organizations. As governance is a voluntary activity, with no extrinsic rewards, there may be difficulties in recruiting sufficient numbers of governors of an appropriate quality.

Rizvi et al. (2010) proposed that the shift in governance involves a move from government to governance, suggesting “that national governments are no longer the only source of policy authority.” [12] Educational governance involves many subjects, multi-level, multiple factors and many links in management. The majority and multi-level are related to the government, including the central government and local governments. About government decentralization of powers in education governance, the original government as a single administrative body of the educational management power, will be supposed to decompose and transfer multiple subjects to participate in the common governance, and such decentralization mainly includes the government’s decentralization of power to schools, the “transfer” of power to social organizations and the “transfer” of power to the market. It means the change of educational administrative function. This idea of decentralization is suitable for the reality of Chinese vocational education. The main argument in favour of decentralization is that local communities should be able to control their own schools, and that they know best what policies and programs suit the community.

3.2.2 “Problem” Represented to Being

This seemingly simple “problem” of student apartment presents the defect of the author’s organization. The college obtains the land use right of the student apartment building from the local government, then, collective decision-making should be made within the organization based on the number of students and the number and needs of future students, and finally, submit land use application to local government according to laws and regulations. The way to recognize different forms of government rationalities is through identifying problematisations. In order to understand the thinking behind forms of rule, we need to see how particular issues are thought about, or problematised. We are governed through problematisations rather than policies.

What is the problem represented to being? In educational governance, neglect of the local government is often the problem of college governance since government still plays a leading role in the multi-party system of common governance. In developing countries such as China, the government is still regarded as “the elder of the same generation”, which does not have the highest absolute authority, but undertakes the task of determining the direction, target and standard of education development, and provides common action goal and code of conduct for the multi-party participation in college management.

3.3 Avoid Failure of Governance

In the author’s organization, among leaders, management and governance, there is no clear border on their positions and organizational structure. People tend to think that the work of college governance is the matter of leader’s, even some people think it is the result of the leader’s personal charm. However, these problems and failure had been presented by theorists before. Sonnenfeld argues that governance failure may not be about procedures used in governing nor the skills of the people who participate, but the ways in which they work together. [13] Beavis argues, governance “and management are three separate domains the nevertheless form a single complex Braid of Administration.” [14]

In developing countries such as China, higher education institutions have become the subordinate institutions of the governments. This kind of governance pattern inevitably has more malpractice, which causes a kind of governance failure. Market and social forces are hard to intervene. In this case, there is a closed relationship between the government universities and the society. Hence after

China's reform and opening-up, the government began to decentralize its rights, and now, the question becomes how much power the government should put in place, how much power of the government should be properly allocated between schools, and the society and market, and how government, school powers and responsibilities should be redefined. Seeking "Good Governance" provides a new perspective for us to solve these problems in organizations.

Maxine Greene suggests that in determining our relationship to the "idea of the good" in education we must understand our lives as a quest "for a better state of things for those we teach and for the world we all share. It is simply not enough for us to reproduce the way things are." [15] In the context of Chinese culture and current environment, organizations shall effectively avoid the failure of governance and the deviation from the track of educational cause in the complex background, and try to perfect the college's systems under the leadership of the party committee in order to cultivate better students, in order to achieve the goal of "Good Governance".

4. Conclusion

Through the discussion of the above questions and actual case analysis of the author's organization, a conclusion can be drawn that under the new situation and background, government, universities and the society should positively establish the cooperative partnership, form the measure of "Good Governance", keep up with the spirit of "performance orientation; openness, transparency and integrity; effective collaboration." [16] "Participation", "Negotiation" and "Consultation" should be the main ways to realize common goals of higher vocational education. Perfecting educational governance system is the key to promote education management and to solve the problems such as insufficient social participation, insufficient autonomy of school running, and lack of macroscopic management ability from government and imperfect internal governance structure of organizations.

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