

Innovation on University Management from the Perspective of “Life·Practice” Pedagogy

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Abstract: “Life·Practice” pedagogy is rooted in the Chinese education, combined with Chinese traditional cultural thoughts, and answers various problems in Chinese education to a certain extent. “Life·Practice” pedagogy is also applicable to the category of higher education. Especially in view of the common problems existing in higher education, such as the lack of deep cooperation between schools and enterprises and the ineffectiveness of management and education, this paper puts forward some innovative paths of college management from the perspective of “Life·Practice” pedagogy. The concepts of “self-education”, “education”, “development consciousness” and “social education power” of “Life·Practice” pedagogy can provide a good direction for these problems. Combining with some problems existing in college management.

Keywords: “Life·Practice”; Development Consciousness; Social Educational Power; Higher education management; Innovation Path

The quality of university management has a direct impact on the effectiveness of university management and education, and management education plays a very important role in the “Three-wide education” system. Management education also can create an important environment and institutional support for achieving “Three-wide education”. Currently, there are still many areas for improvement in the core concepts and top-level design of university management in China. The new era has made more and deeper demands in terms of university management. It is against this backdrop that this paper looks at several typical problems in university management and provides some innovative paths for university management based on the school of “Life·Practice” pedagogy.

1. The school of “Life Practice” pedagogy

The school of “Life Practice” pedagogy was founded and continuously chaired by Professor Ye Lan, mainly focusing on four core issues: educational theory, educational practice, educational research methodology, and pedagogical reflection and reconstruction. It continues to derive and develop in theoretical research and practical practice. Professor Ye Lan proposed the core outline of the “Life·Practice” pedagogy based on the actual situation of Chinese education and inherited the connotation of traditional Chinese cultural thought which highly conducts the nature of education. The school of “Life Practice” pedagogy has gone through many stages since its establishment in the 1980s, including the incubation period (1983-1991), the exploration period (1991-1999), the development period (1999-2004), the formation period (2004-2009), and the deepening period (2009-present). The development of the school has also witnessed the historical evolution of Chinese education and continues to deepen and evolve with the needs of educational reality. Based on the core theme, the “Life Practice” pedagogy continuously evolving and developing new concepts such as social education and teacher self education.

The “Life Practice” pedagogy starts from the genetic research of education, draws on the connotation of traditional Chinese culture, originates from the actual situation of Chinese education, and then deepens the basic theory and disciplinary connotation of Chinese education. Professor Ye Lan has always advocated starting from the times and asks the “questions of the times”. If we want to shape the “new people”, constantly keeping the education up with the new needs and requirements of the times is necessary.

The pedagogy of “Life Practice” also emphasizes that teachers should not only educate student but also “educate themselves”. Nurture oneself before nurturing others. The pedagogy of “Life Practice” believes that teachers also need to “self update” and “self-educate” in their constantly practicing teaching career, and promote their lifelong growth with continuously improving “development consciousness”. Only teachers with lifelong growth can educate students with lifelong learning.

As Paul Lengrand said, adult education is about providing him with tools, placing him in an environment where he can grow independently on his own, and enabling him to fully express his various personalities. Professor Ye Lan highly summarizes that education is a social practice activity that directly enlightens human life. For higher education, more emphasis should be placed on cultivating students’ lifelong learning abilities rather than teaching specific knowledge points. As the old saying goes, teaching people to fish is better than giving them a fish. Only by truly handing over skills to students is the meaning of education and the essence of higher education.

The deep practice of “social educational power” proposed by Professor Ye Lan is also the most feasible integration in the field of higher education. The development of education cannot only focus on increasing quantity, but more on improving quality. We need to integrate lifelong education and lifelong learning, gather social educational strength, and consolidate “development consciousness”. From this perspective, higher education links students, enterprises, and other social groups, and has inherent advantages in gathering social and educational forces. At the same time, the article believes that higher education institutions are also the most likely places and practical scenarios to systematically integrate different types of social educational forces.

2. The Importance of “Life Practice” Education in University Management

2.1 New Annotations on the Service Function of Colleges to Society by “Social Education Power”

Professor Ye Lan’s “social educational power” refers to the “educational power of society”, creatively pointing out that not only

education has the function of serving society, but also society has the responsibility to serve the education. This should be a bidirectional and interconnected relationship. Social educational power refers to the educational power possessed by society, which determines that this power is dynamically adjusted with the times. From this perspective, the school-enterprise cooperation and the school-school cooperation is a good practice in terms of gathering social educational power.

Indeed, the depth and breadth of the connection between universities and society still need to be improved. Under the guidance of “social educational power”, the cooperation between universities and social forces should not only focus on students practicing in social institutions, but also involve more social forces come into school for teaching. Hou Huaiyin believes that the educational power of society needs to enhance social consciousness, fully stimulate social educational initiative, and different social systems have different social educational powers. Of course, social educational power still needs further development. For example, as a social system, the social educational power of a company can be reflected in its ability to exert educational influence on every students in their company, allowing them to be influenced and perceived by corporate culture, management style, science and innovation, and striving to achieve “development consciousness”.

2.2 The concepts of “self education” and “life care” provide new direction for the innovation of university management

Professor Ye Lan pointed out that “education is a social practice activity that faces human life directly, passes through human life, and aims to improve the quality of human life”. It is the most reflective cause of life care in a people-oriented society.

The mission of “caring for life” in education coincides with the mission of “Nurture Morality and Foster Talent” in universities. The fundamental purpose of achieving adult success for students is also the starting point and foothold of all work in higher education. The fundamental education to achieve “life care” lies in the teachers themselves. As Wang Nan and Zhao Chengling have said, the “self education” of teachers is the need of the times, the pursuit of education, and the foundation of profession.

The pedagogy of “Life Practice” believes that teachers’ “self-education” is kind of self education activities which based on clear self-awareness and by promoting life growth in their professional career. But what is the motivation behind teachers’ spontaneous self education? The pedagogy of “Life Practice” believes that not only students are the masters of the school, but teachers are also the masters of the school. The role of teachers as masters has long been overlooked. Especially in the field of university management, scholars have conducted many discussions on how to manage and the forms of management, but few have truly paid attention to the role of teachers as masters in schools. Students have daily contact with grassroots teachers and counselors, not managers. The students’ growth and success is largely influenced and nurtured by the personal charm of teachers. And how to maximize the growth of teachers and enable them to fully devote to teaching and educating is to thoroughly mobilize their enthusiasm.

Professor Ye Lan also gave a insightful answer to this, which is ‘participation’. As long as teachers participate in school decision-making and management, they naturally become the masters of the school. The improvement of teachers’ sense of ownership and the continuous strengthening of their natural role in daily educational and teaching practices reflect a greater sense of enthusiasm, responsibility, and honor in educating people.

2.3 “Life practice” pedagogy plays an important leading role in activating campus culture

Campus culture has a great significance to the realization of education effect. However, the construction of campus culture has been neglected for a long time in the field of higher education management. When it comes to the reform of higher education, most scholars start from the perspective of system, teachers and so on. As few researchers pay attention to the construction of campus culture. In fact, a good school cannot be separated from a good campus culture. Good campus culture can edify students from many aspects. For example, good campus culture can invisibly enlighten students, conducive teachers’ lifelong growth and students’ lifelong learning. The core theme of “Life-practice” pedagogy also reveals the positive and up-forward campus culture guidance by enlightening and shaping people. With the great love for students and the great love for education, it integrates the vision of all the faculty and staffs, infects every student through the strengthening of campus culture, and can help them shape good characters that will benefit them for life.

3. Problems in Higher education management

With the arrival of the big data era, the improvement of informatization, and the emergence of the global education wave, high education management has become an increasingly complex topic which involving scientific research, education and teaching, student management, teacher growth, and many other aspects.

Admittedly, there are various problems in the management of universities in various regions, but there are also some problems in common. One is the outdated management concept. Many universities still have a relationship where managers are superior leaders, teachers are governed naturally, and the relationship between university managers and faculties is only a one-way management. This one-way pure management model can easily lead to a disconnect between managers and the actual education and teaching situation. And this kind of unreasonable situation leads to the policies always deviate from the actual teaching situation, policies do not conform to the real student management status. For example, some universities even hold small events once a week and big events once a month with multiple channels promoting and force students participating. This kind of management not only fails to liven up the campus atmosphere and enrich campus culture, but also causes strong dissatisfaction and resistance among students. This is a kind of typical situation where management is disconnected with reality. Managers must truly understand what’s going on in the forefront. The second problem is insufficient coordination between the teaching and management levels. Many universities have a state of long-term separation between teaching and management teams, with insufficient mutual understanding. Teachers can not fully understand the school policies, while school policy can not really

stimulate the enthusiasm of teachers to teaching and learning. There is less interaction between teaching and management teams. Because of this insufficient interaction, the management education in universities often became a vulnerable spot in terms of “three-wide” education. Sometimes, a good policy can be misinterpreted as bad policy. Sometimes, teachers not really keep up with the pace of the managers. Thirdly, the vitality of campus culture needs to be improved. Many schools lack distinctive campus culture and maintain a relatively low level of student participation in campus actions. Inadequate development of student unions and student activity centers also often been seen in campus. A vivid campus culture can create an up-forward atmosphere for student to develop themselves. On the contrary, the dull campus culture will suppress students’ thirst for knowledge and longing for a better life. The dull campus culture can imperceptible influence the reliability of the life-learning. So, the campus culture is a big topic which should attach importance to. Fourthly, cooperation between schools and enterprises remains shallow level. At present, the main form of school-enterprise cooperation is students interning in enterprises and participate in practical activities. This kind of cooperation has many problems, such as insufficient social education capabilities of enterprises. Students often connected with the companies when they are more likely graduating. At this points, even they realized where is the gap, they don’t have the channel and time to learn more which make a big resources waste.

4. The Innovation Path of University Management from the Perspective of “Life Practice” Education

4.1 Innovate management concepts and strengthen leadership training

There is a certain degree of “official oriented” ideology in the management of universities, and it is necessary to enhance service consciousness. College practitioners, whether grassland teachers or administrative personnel, are essentially teachers engaged in “Enhance morality and foster talents”, and they all need teachers to be “conscious”. To develop teachers’ self-awareness, it is necessary for them to consciously overcome job burnout, overcome management inertia, establish clear self-awareness and career development plans, and achieve self-awareness for self-development through various channels.

The requirement of “development consciousness” is not limited to administrative personnel, teachers also need to develop a new consciousness of serving students wholeheartedly and striving to run education that satisfies the people. Strengthen ideological and political training for leadership, and quantify management performance by incorporating indicators such as teacher satisfaction and student campus belonging is meaningful.

4.2 Establish a normalization rotation system for administrative and teaching systems

For a long time, there has been a phenomenon of administrative teaching management in schools. To do a good job in teaching management, it is significant to understand the true needs of teachers and understand the difficulties and pain points in teaching area. Both teachers and administrative personnel need to develop self-awareness.

At present, the job rotation system in many schools is only limited to the internal administrative system level. The most common way is transfer the teachers into administrative departments, but there is no windows for administrative personnel to get on touch with teaching or students. This article suggests establishing a rotation between the administrative system and the teaching system. Administrative personnel can delve into grassroots teaching practices, student management, and teaching management related work, understand the pain points and difficulties in implementing policies. And thus lay a solid field foundation for future management work. Bidirectional job rotation is not only about the transition from the administrative system to the teaching system, but also the tradition way of the teaching system coming into the administrative system still needs to be promoted. Teachers are more likely to discover new paths and methods in their work by taking temporary positions in administrative departments.

4.3 Activate the campus ecology and enhance the participation of teachers and students

The activation of campus ecology firstly requires “living” students. The so-called ‘living’ refers to students who have vitality and willing to change. Nowadays, many college students are in an extreme state of either “extreme introversion” or “lie flat”. College students often focus on the implementation of various indicators such as the postgraduate entrance examination and kinds of certifications. So called campus life is relatively dull, lacking the vitality that the younger should have. Professor Ye Lan said that education is a social practice activity that directly enlightens human life. The value of higher education lies in enlightenment. How to Enlightenment? It is necessary to fully mobilize students’ freedom and enthusiasm. The key to mobilizing freedom is also “participation”. Only when students truly participate in the construction of campus culture, and the school respects their true wishes, can they manage activities well and create a vibrant campus ecology.

4.4 Deepen cooperation between schools and enterprises, cultivate new forms of social educational power

The form of students participating in practical activities in enterprises, or business mentors involving some courses in schools, does not fully leverage the social educational power of enterprises as an important social type. As the education level with the most social connections by naturally, universities have an unique advantage in fully releasing “social educational power”. Strengthening the social education power of enterprises and public institutions can be attempted through the following three ways. Firstly, establishing industrial colleges through the model of order classes. By guiding enterprises to intervene in all aspects from students’ enrollment to graduation, students can perceive the comprehensive social education power of enterprises rather than professional skills, such as corporate culture, management atmosphere, and employment. The second is to establish campus incubation bases, introduce start-up companies moving in, and engaging in extracurricular practice and joint research activities with relevant professional students and teachers. Meanwhile, campus incubation bases can fully match

the dilemma of urgently needed talents in start-up companies and the bottleneck of the shortage of practical platforms for teachers and students on campus. what's more, incubation bases can also be used to further activate the campus ecology and form a thriving and proactive social education force. The third is to strengthen the mechanism of alumni nurturing the school. After employment, students belong to different social groups, and we can use students as a link to drive social groups and units to reconnect with the school, stimulate the social education power of social groups, and cultivate new forms of social education power.

In summary, by introducing the educational concepts of "Life·Practice" into the scope of high education management, and through "comprehensive development consciousness""social educational power", we can lead a clear conclusion that these concepts can enhance the efficiency of university management and improve the mechanism of university management. By doing so, teachers can have a more clear career path and self-development thoughts; students can have more room to develop themselves and grow more comprehensive; high education institution can run a more effective management progress which can be expected lead to more flexible and long lasting sustained outputs. "Life·Practice" pedagogy advocates take teaching as a life-long practice and pay more humanized care to educators and recipients. This kind of characters decided its long-term practical value. What's more the effectiveness of high education management and education can promotes the continuous and in-depth application of "Life·Practice" pedagogy.

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