Research on the Role of College Counselors in Minority areas
—from Perspective of the Equalization of Basic Public Education Service

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Abstract. With the further reform of education, the importance of higher education in cultivating talents has been more and more highlighted. From the perspective of equalization of basic public education service, this paper analyzes the roles of college counselors in the cultivation of college students, through analyzing the specific functions of college counselors in cultivating college students in minority regions, especially in those aspects of cultivating applied talents, ideological and political education, military training and handling emergent events. Accordingly, this paper lays the foundation to further enhance the construction of counselors in minority regions and to promote the realization of equalization of basic public service in education.

1. Introduction

“The relative backwardness of cultural education is one of the most important factors of affecting the social development in border minority regions. Thus, there exist two significant tasks in these areas which are promoting the economy development of minority regions and paying every effort to strengthen cultural construction.”[1] As a developing country, China has been paying more attention to the development of education. Especially since the Twelfth Five-Year Plan, China proposed to increase the intensity of providing public service by government and specially proposed that realizing the equalization of public service is an important task for this country in future development.

Education, as one kind of basic public service, unquestionably becomes the focus with most attention. Notice on Printing and Distributing Plans of Promoting the Equalization of Public Service in the Thirteenth Five-Year Plan issued by state council in January 2017 clearly pointed out that "China should improve the basic system of public education, balance the development of compulsory education in urban and rural areas, ensure that all school-age children and adolescents can enjoy equal access to education, and constantly should improve the basic cultural quality of the people.”

This notice also put eight projects into the scope of service. Those projects include free compulsory education, improvement of students’ nutritional status in rural compulsory education stage, subsidy of boarder, subsidy in inclusive preschool education stage, state grant in secondary vocational education stage, exemption of tuition and miscellaneous fees in second vocational education stage, state grant of ordinary high school education stage, exemption of tuition and miscellaneous fees of students who have established files and cards with financial difficulties and so on in ordinary high school education stage.[2]

For multinational countries, national problems are not only significant social and political issues, but also social and political phenomena in special forms. These problems play a fundamental role for those countries in the unity, stabilization and development of countries. Furthermore, these problems have significant constructiveness.[3] Compared with China, the service is available in a large range in some foreign countries. For instance, equalization of education in Canada is detailed as eight parts
including profile of education administration, primary education, secondary education, higher education, vocational education, teacher training, social education and education trends. Education from primary to higher is totally free in Sweden, Finland and Denmark, so as to ensure equalization of education.

Along with the development of economy, this paper holds that more and more Chinese students will choose to enter university campus after finishing their compulsory education. Therefore, the equalization of higher education is as important as compulsory education. Higher education plays an important role in promoting the equalization of basic public education service. More importantly is that the job of college counselors in minority regions play a key role in solving educational issues in these areas. College counselor play a special role to guide college students who are in the stage between adolescent and adult to make better use of the existing education resources, and explore all kinds of available ways to gain education opportunities. By this way, equalization in education opportunities, courses and results of students can be promoted.

2. Definition of relative concepts

2.1 Concept of institutions of higher learning

Institutions of higher learning are similar to the colleges and universities, and are based on national setting standards and approval procedures. These institutions mainly enroll graduates from ordinary high schools through the National College Entrance Exam and Adult College Entrance Examination. These institutions include Full-time University, Independent College, Vocational and Technical College, Junior College, Radio and Television University, Open University, Staff University, Spare-time University, Workers Medical College, Management Cadre College, Education College, Continual Education Institute in ordinary institutions and Adult Education College.

At present, there are many definitions of institutions of higher learning. This paper cites three examples. The first one is defined according to the investors and financial resources. Professor Pan Maoyuan mainly uses the investors and financial resources as standards of distinguishing between public schools and private ones. He thinks, compared with that colleges and universities are manifestations of public ownership, private ones are school running systems that property rights and management rights are private. Clark believes that there are three standards for differentiating private and public universities which are whether the school ownership belongs to the state or the private, whether the management of government is directly or indirectly, whether the school funding comes from official funding or folk raising.

The second one is defined according to operation right and ownership. Professor Huang Teng regards "who operate the college" as a yardstick to distinguish private or public institutions. He believes that the right of management is not in the government but run-independently, whether the government provides funds for schools or not, such institutions can be called private universities. Institutions of higher learning can be divided into private universities, public universities, cooperative universities, enterprise affiliated universities and community universities. Also, it can be divided into public ones and private ones according to operating objects and institutions.

The third one is defined according to the property right. Generally, property right of public institutions belongs to the state while the private one belongs to legal person of the school. All these distinctions have their reasonableness, but still cannot fully reflect the reform of whole education system of private colleges and universities in our country.

In this paper, institutions of higher learning are confined as colleges and universities established with the approval from state, and are based on the education in high school. According to the set standards, these institutions mainly enroll students who finished the education in normal senior middle school. According to the main body, financial resources and ownership, they can be divided as public ones and private ones.
2.2 Concept of college counselor

The regulation about Construction of the College Counselor Team in Regular Institutions of Higher Learning issued by the ministry of education in 2006 pointed out that Counselors are an important part both in instructor team and the management team. Counselors have dual identity of teachers and thousand. Counselors are the backbones in carrying out ideological and political education. They are the organizers, practitioners and mentors in the daily work such as ideological and political education and student management. Counselors should strive to become life mentors and good friends who will accompany them in growing course. From the Regulation, we can find out that work of the college counselors consists three parts of ideological and political education, management of students’ daily affairs and guidance about students’ development. It is also the most scientific and authoritative explanation for the current definition of counselor.

This paper holds that the college counselor is a kind of primary-level worker in institutions of higher learning. Their works mainly consist of ideological and political education, management of students' daily affairs and guidance of student career planning. Generally, college counselor is a full-time job, which is different from general teacher in charge of a class. However, in practical cases, many full-time teachers are also counselors in institutions of higher learning, doing some works of counselors. In this paper, the counselor refers to a full-time counselor, as well as a part-time head teacher who takes on a counselor's office.

3. Roles of college counselors in minority regions

3.1 Role of college counselors in cultivating applied talents

Currently, development of regional economy and structure of industry in minority regions are rapidly becoming technology-intensive and knowledge-intensive. In the process of the transformation of knowledge-intensive industries, the demand of application-oriented technical talents is becoming increasingly diversified now. Along with the social development, application-oriented technical talents are the objective requirement for the overall development of society in the future. The transformation of undergraduate colleges and universities, the cultivation of the application of new technologies, is not only the urgent need of the national government in minority areas, but also the real desire of students and their parents.

Firstly, the role of college counselors in leading students to set life goals. Only by setting their life goals and find some specific directions, can college students constantly enrich themselves and broaden their horizon in largest extent to improve themselves. With life goals, students will continuously learn knowledge of basic theory and combine the theory and practices in their internship, to be prepared before they begin their real careers. Closely associated with students, counselors can lead students to set their life goals and find the struggle direction through all kinds of ways as lectures, academic exchanges and career planning.

Secondly, role of counselors in training work ability of students. Through forms like student union or student community of the department, counselors organize all students to join the work of departments. For instance, in an institution in Inner Mongolia, the student union is consisted of learning department, living department and other ones. Through selecting, some talented students will be chosen to be ministers or officers in these departments, to cultivate their work ability such as office software usage and daily processing ability. All these experiences can lay a good foundation for students in later career after graduation. At the same time, there are many activities need all students to join in such as the 12·9 activity which is commemorating a history event. These activities can encourage students to positively take part in and cultivate their sense of unity, social responsibility and patriotism.

Thirdly, role of college counselors in training innovation of students. By absorbing talented students as participants in the development process of colleges and universities, the college
counselors establish different platforms for students. No matter transaction management, academic study or innovation cultivation, these platforms give good opportunities for students to strengthen their abilities. These platforms mainly focus on improving innovation and comprehensiveness of college students. By means of extension of interest and using the project as a link, these platforms form a practical mode of integration of teaching groups, strengthen the position and role of student assistants in practice teaching, innovation and entrepreneurship, discipline competition. At the same time, these platforms cultivate ability of students to cooperate, innovate, practice and solve practical problems. Particularly, college counselors play an important role in the innovation of national characteristics.

3.2 The role of instructors in ideological and political education

Ideological and political education is an important part of work in all kinds of school, let alone the institutions of higher learning. Ideological and political education can not only cultivate positivity, enthusiasm and initiative of students towards learning, but also can cultivate correct view of thought, outlook on life and values of students. Counselors act an important role in ideological and political education in institutions of higher learning. Ideological and political education in colleges and universities in minority areas is so important for promoting harmonious and stable development in these areas.

Firstly, counselors take the responsibility to guide the public opinion. Through software such as blog, QQ, WeChat and official accounts, counselors publish some information full of positive energy to build a new platform of ideological and political education. Good political education in colleges and universities in minority regions can keep false information, especially some information inciting ethnic conflict out of students’ mind and can avoid bad influence. For instance, counselors in an institution in Inner Mongolia publish pioneer thought, advanced characters, advanced deeds and so on to improve ideological and political level of students constantly.

Secondly, counselors act as an important role in training college students to master the comprehensive quality. By guiding students to participate in colorful campus activities which are organized by student unions, student communities and classes, counselors cultivate comprehensive quality of students. For instance, counselors who are in an institution of Inner Mongolia encourage students to participate in different campus activities such as student union in department or college, basketball competition, soccer competition and so on. All kinds of activities nearly are organized by student communities. These activities can cultivate comprehensive abilities of organization, communication, coordination and innovation of students.

At last, counselors can't be replaced in cultivating confidence of students and helping students to combine theory and practice.

3.3 Role of counselors in handling emergencies

College counselors are first-line workers in management of students and they also have the closest links with students. They understand well about the characteristics and behavior of students. Thus, they play an important role in practical management of students, especially in handling emergencies. So, it is different from other areas in geological conditions, economy and ecology, counselors in these minority regions will face more challenges.

Firstly, counselors act a positive role in emergency prevention. Through observing details of students in ordinary time in campus, counselors can grasp psychological dynamics and thought conditions of students through all kinds of channels. Thus, counselors can find out unstable factors which may cause emergency from various information. With analyzing risk information effectively and monitoring the crisis, counselors can take appropriate measures to control and resolve problems. If necessary, counselors should report the information to the higher authorities and relative departments of the school in time to act as a mediate role in communication and coordination.
Secondly, counselors act as an important role in handling emergencies. When emergencies happened in school, counselors should deal with them in time. Counselors need to organize students or officials in student unions to rush to the scenes and protect them. By doing these, they can quickly control the development of the situation and minimize the impact of these emergencies. At the same time, communication groups should be set up immediately. These groups need report to the authorities in school at the first time, seek help form units such as public security, fire control and rescue units, strive to ensure that the foreign aid can rush to the scene and make sure that communication with the school authorities is smooth. When staffs of security departments in school arrived, these groups need to help them to implement site alert, prevent irrelevant personnel from entering the school or the scene and maintain order on spot. For instance, a student in an institution in Inner Mongolia got paroxysmal disease at midnight. His roommates contacted with the counselor in time. The counselor rushed to his dormitory at the first time and dialed the phone of the school hospital in time. In the meantime, the counselor contacted with the principal of students administration. After the initial diagnosis of the school hospital, the doctor advised to send the student to another hospital. While awaiting the ambulance, the counselor tried to get more information about conditions before and after this emergency, and to do the psychological work of other students. When the ambulance arrived, the counselor and other students companied the student to the hospital. After in-time diagnose, the counselor contacted with parents of the student in time.

Thirdly, counselors play an important role in guiding public opinions after emergencies. An emergency will cause certain influence in public opinions. No matter the students who experience emergencies or others, emergencies will produce certain influence on public opinion. After emergencies occurred, counselors need to publish all handling information and summarize them in time to guide students to understand the emergencies correctly.

3.4 Role of counselors in employment of students

With the expansion of institutions of higher education, the number of graduates from colleges and universities has been increasing year by year. College graduates face increasing pressure with the mounting number of graduates. Graduates also face a dilemma between "employment first or selection second" and "selection first or employment second". In employment of students, counselors play a positive role.

Firstly, counselors act a positive role in decreasing the pressure of students when they are faced with employment. As more and more college graduates enter the society every year, graduates are facing a lot of job opportunities in different industries. Meanwhile, they may be confronted with salary problems in their jobs. All these factors are easily for them to feel pressured. Counselors can help students to reduce their employment pressure in time by listening to the wishes of students and timely channeling all kinds of problems they faced in employment.

Secondly, counselors take the responsibility to provide all kinds of employment information and channels to students. Through education of career planning for freshmen, counselors can lay solid foundations for students in employment. At the same time, counselors can discriminate all kinds of employment information and publish the information in platforms which are available to graduates by QQ, WeChat group, official accounts in WeChat and microblog. By doing these, counselors can help students to get employment information in time. What's more, counselors can also appropriately guide students to establish good employment consciousness and let them have the right moral quality to choose jobs correctly and never cheat others in employment.

4. Conclusion

Minority regions are different from others in geography, economy and ecology. Thus, college counselors in these regions will face more challenges. Apart from playing an irreplaceable role in learning and life of students, college counselors need to play more a positive role in cultivating talents,
ideological and political education, handling emergency events, employment and so on. College counselors in minority regions better play various roles, which is helpful to improve the quality of teaching and ability of students. It is also helpful to promote the equalization of basic public education service further.

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