Construction of Culture of College/School/Department

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Keywords: College Culture, School Culture, Department Culture, Campus Culture, University Culture.

Abstract. College culture is university subculture, and a unique organization culture form is created, discovered and developed from long-term teaching management practice, generally accepted, recognized and followed by teachers and students of college/school/department. To better build up college culture not only can enrich the cultural connotation of the university, carry forward the university spirit, and maintain university tradition, but also plays an important role in constructing college core values, enhancing college’s soft power, optimizing college educational environment, highlighting college characteristics, cultivating college teamwork spirit, shaping college external image, building a harmonious collective life. From three aspects of content, principle, approaches, college cultural construction in universities and in vocational colleges is respectively analyzed.

Introduction

Since the late seventies of last century, a wave of culture studies themed “organizational culture” (“corporate culture”), “campus culture”, “university culture”, etc. come one after another in rapid succession. Along with beginning to expand the autonomy of running universities since the mid-eighties, especially the continuous reform of “college system” and implementation of two-level (university and college) management system since the enlarged enrollment and amalgamation of universities in the ninths, they stimulated people’s concern and interest on “college culture” (referring to college culture, school culture, department culture).

What’s College/School/Department Culture

College culture “is university subculture, and a unique organization culture form created, discovered and developed from long-term teaching management practice, taking all faculties, teachers and students of college/school/department as main roles and knowledge and profession (academy) as basis...generally accepted, recognized and followed by college/school/department teachers and students...it is embodied in the teaching activities, student work and a variety of affair management, and reflected through spiritual outlook, way of thinking and behavior patterns.”[1]

College culture can be concluded in “academic culture”, “administrative culture”, “association culture” based on “functional form of culture”, or “teacher culture”, “student culture” and “administer culture” according to “the subject form of culture”. [2] Except “classification”, college culture can also been leveled according to components status and relations to display its unique “onion” structure—from outside to inside, it can be divided into “material”, “institution” and “spirit” three levels[3], or “material”, “institution”, “behavior” and “spirit” four levels[4].

College culture, compared to campus culture, is a subculture, but has its independence and dissimilarity. Independence comes from college’s relative independence from university currently; dissimilarity comes from college’s academic features, rather than simple and homogeneous chunk.[5]
At management aspects, college culture has directing function, cohere function, constrain function, incentive function, coordination function, assimilation function. At social aspects, college culture has radiation function and image-building function. At education aspects, college culture can have an impact on students’ professional qualities, moral character, and personality growth.

Necessity and Feasibility of College Cultural Construction

Necessity

College culture is “the soul of the survival and development, the root of vigor, the source of power”[6]. To better build up college culture not only can enrich the cultural connotation of the university, carry forward the university spirit, and maintain university tradition, but also plays an important role in constructing college core values, enhancing college’s soft power, optimizing college educational environment, highlighting college characteristics, cultivating college teamwork spirit, shaping college external image, building a harmonious collective life.[7]Numerous facts at home and abroad have showed that elegant and sophisticated college culture can not only effectively enhances all faculties’ identity of college/school/department, achievement sense of career and happiness of life, but also strengthens the vigor and vitality of the college/school/department.[8]

Under the current circumstances, university culture is faced with a test of its adaptability to the new requirements of the social dominant cultural development, and shouldering a glorious mission of leading the social-culture changes, promoting socialist culture development and prosperity through its own cultural innovation. The secondary colleges under university are the specific undertakers and practitioners of university functions, and have the responsibilities.[9]Especially in universities with big population, large scale, relatively fixed college activities range, increasingly diverse disciplines and majors, it encountered new challenges to construct overall university campus culture, and even more difficulties to carry out culture activities with the whole university participated. And an effective strategy to resolve this contradiction is to strengthen college/school/department cultural construction under the auspices of unified university spirit, thus can fully exert the activeness of colleges, and ultimately enrich the whole campus culture with their own distinctive college/school/department cultures[10].

Feasibility

After a massive merger and reorganization of Chinese universities, many universities implemented the two-level(university-college/school) management system, which means subordinate colleges of the university have become the basic teaching and research base, with more autonomy in personnel domination power, property domination power, education and scientific research management, and fully functional party, government, workers, youth and other grassroots organizations. The characteristics of these systems and organizations determine the reality and feasibility of college dominated cultural construction. University leaders can take a role of macro guidance, information exchange, as well as experience summary, etc., to promote the cultural construction work of college.[11]

Of course, “the cultivation of college culture is not an overnight thing”[12], but “a difficult systematic project, like education, is a continuous work which cannot be interrupted, and can never be done once for all”[13], “must keep pace with the times, be innovative and replenished continuously” [14].

College Cultural Construction in Universities

Construction Content

Material environment culture is the foundation of college cultural construction, institution culture is the guiding principle of college cultural construction, and spirit culture is the core of the college
cultural construction. During material environment cultural construction, teachers and students should be encouraged to work together to create special environmental culture; in institution cultural construction, various management institutions and responsibility institutions should be improved; in spirit cultural construction, attentions should be paid on the refinement of college spirit, and construction of academic culture. [15] The construction of college/school/department culture should put its emphasis on the teaching style, study style, the college spirit[16]; it should fully condensate college/school/department spirit culture, vigorously promote college/school/department academic culture, and actively foster college/school/department education culture[17].

Construction Principle

College/school/department cultural construction should be conducted adhering to the principle of “overarching and guiding”, “materialization and enrichment”, “specificity and characteristic”, relying on the appropriate platform and window, and centering around college-running orientation, philosophy, ideas, and goals of college reform and development. [18] Particular attention should be paid on the principle of “characteristic” or “personalized”, as each college has its own characteristics in the disciplinary fields, training objectives, teaching and research, which is different from other colleges. These characteristics constitute the personalities of college culture.[19]

College cultural construction is a systematic project, involving many areas, comprehensively dealing with several relationships. First, it’s the external relations. First of all, it should comply with the spirit of the university, and conduct around the general requirements and major tasks of campus culture construction. The college culture should be built with its own distinct personalities, and coordinated with the overall campus culture. Secondly, it should coordinate the relationships with other colleges, and strength the bonds and cooperation. They laterally exchange and interact through a variety of ways, learn from each other and complement each other, but maintain their own personalities and characteristics, constitute together colorful and unified campus culture.

Second, it’s the internal relations. Firstly, it should resolve the relationship between historical heritage and cohesive training. It is necessary to root on original traditions, in line with objective reality, but also advance with the times, focusing on the future development. Secondly, it should properly handle the relationship with other constructions of the college. It should combine all the constructions together complementarily, like ideology construction, institution construction, discipline construction, etc., and a lot of content that is something inherent in the concept of culture construction. [20]

Construction Approaches

College cultural construction needs proceed step by step with designed plan, according to its internal rules: analyzing internal and external cultural environment → designing new cultural framework → constructing surface culture → penetrating and nurturing deep culture conceptions.[21] “College cultural construction...needs managers’ active involvement” [22], the process of cultural construction is essentially “cultural management”, that is the process of respecting college culture, and promoting the continuous development of college with culture power on the basis of scientific management. [23] In practice, “cultural management” should pay particular attention to “college leaders’ personally practice and advanced person’s demonstration”, “demonstration of advanced person in the college, teachers and students”, “formation and accumulation of intangible assets”, “design and construction of college environment”, “recognition and communication of graduate student”[24]. From the perspective of the overall university, “university-college secondary campus culture management linkage mechanism should be built…to lead secondary colleges strengthen links with university and other secondary colleges in the cultural construction…to strengthen the guidance and supervision of secondary college cultural construction, and establish a perfect assessment, appraisal and incentive mechanism” [25].

Primary party organization in the university, as the leading and political core of college work,
must play roles of leading, supporting, condensing, and promoting college cultural construction.[26] The integration of grassroots party organization construction in the university and college cultural construction can be conducted by the following methods: firstly, with the socialism core value system as the core to build common values of the college; secondly, with the party style leading teaching style and study style to build positive mental outlook; thirdly, with the improvement and construction of college system as the key to build rule-based and morality-cultivated institution culture; fourthly, with thematic party and league activities as the carrier to build positive and competitive environment. [27]

College Cultural Construction in Vocational Colleges

Construction Content

College/school/department cultural construction in vocational colleges must firmly grasp the characteristics of vocational education, adhering to the socialist core value system as the lead, comprehensive qualities cultivation as the goal, professional characteristic as the unique feature, and college philosophy as the guide, adhering to the idea of getting out of the teachers and students, and then into them. College/school/department culture should be reflected in all aspects of spirit culture, material culture, institution culture and behavior culture, forming an overall layout of material culture as cornerstone, institution culture as roof trusses, behavioral culture as bricks, spirit culture as pillar.[28]

Construction Principle

College/school/department cultural construction in vocational colleges should adhere to the principles of adapting with professional characteristic, in harmony with college-running orientation, consistent with social development[29]; it should be combined with the construction of campus culture, students’ psychological health, student awards, aids and loan, college-enterprise cooperation and professional construction[30]; to focus on enhancing cultural power of starting business, making efforts, striving for priority; to focus on stimulating cultural vitality of pioneering and openness, dedicated and proficient, innovation and excellence; to focus on promoting cultural charm of education, magnanimous and generosity, beauty and harmony. [31]

Construction Approaches

Vocational colleges’ advancement and professionalism determines college/school/department culture should be a blending outcome of campus culture, professional culture and corporate culture. The penetration and integration of campus culture, professional culture and corporate culture should be advanced continually in material culture, institution culture, behavior culture, and spirit culture construction. Campus culture can be constructed through “enjoy”, “dedicated”, “employed”, “career” four stages; professional culture can be constructed through “refined”, “management”, “communication”, “implement” four aspects; corporate culture can be introduced through “identity”, “understanding”, “penetration”, “practice” four steps. [32]

The construction of college/school/department culture in vocational colleges, may take five measures (playing the guiding role of teachers, leading the spirit culture; playing the role of public opinion effect, standardizing carrier culture; playing the role of student organizations, building institution culture; playing the role of education through environment, improving artifact culture; playing the role of combination of learning with working, building skills culture), and implement six projects (implement “image planning” project, building brand awareness; implement “high-quality and excellent” project, cultivating moral character; implement “civilization fostering” project, enhancing the cultural conservation; implement “curriculum and teaching reform” project, innovating educational philosophy; implement “enterprises mutual communication” project, integrating into enterprise spirits; implement “safe construction” project, building harmonious schools and departments). [33]
Acknowledgement

This research was financially supported by Humanities and Social Science Research Project of Ministry of Education (Grant No. 15YJA880069), Research Project of China Academic Degrees & Graduate Education Society (Grant No. 2015Y11), and Independent Innovation Foundation of Shandong University (Grant No. IFW12116).

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