Exploration of Tutor Role in Graduate Moral Education: An Example in a Polytechnic University of Guangdong Province

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Abstract. Tutor plays an important role irreplaceable in postgraduate training process. Developing the tutor teaching function, exploring a new model of moral education of graduate students, and realizing new conversion mentor role are important to cultivate innovative talents to adapt to the development of Marxism with Chinese Characteristics and enhance the quality of postgraduate training.

Introduction

Tutor is the primary responsible person of graduate students, whose political accomplishment, scholarly research spirit, academic accomplishment, personality exemplar, not only affects the personality perfect, knowledge structure enhancing, scientific research ability raising of graduate student, but also affects the career planning and life direction of graduate students. The special role put forward higher, newer and more specific requirements for tutors: tutors should not only have educated professional knowledge, rigorous and innovative attitude, but also should have generous, and persuasive communication skills that good at teaching. Most important is teaching and nurturing organic combination, and throughout the whole process of postgraduate training.

The role of tutor in the graduate students’ moral education

(I) Exceptional advantage conditions

The training modes are different between graduate and undergraduate students. Graduate cultivate according more detailed professional as the second-rate disciplines set. Research direction of each are not identical. Training mode is usually under tutor guidance alone or laboratory (teaching and research office) collective guidance. Tutors develop training plan according to their own research direction and each student own characteristics and research interests. Tutors often arrange students to travel research or practice in graduate second year, especially for full-time professional degree of master of engineering graduate. Comparing with undergraduate, graduate student are more decentralized, more freedom. They identity with experiments or academic research team that mentor as the core, but with less faculty collective concept.

With respect to the university ideological and political theory course full-time teachers and front end full-time and part-time instructors, contact time between tutors and graduate students is the longest; and more extensive in communication content, exchanges field. More in-deep understand degree in own students, with more natural and gentle in carrying out ideological and political education, as can avoid the conventional theoretical instillation and mechanical expound of ideological and political theory course teachers and counselors. In the graduate student's daily study life, the tutor can understand the grasp the situation more timely, more accurately. Also can seize the intrinsic nature of postgraduate ideological and dynamic changes more effectively, so as to provide strong support in carrying out the moral education of graduate students.
(II) Leavening Influences

A tutor plays a recessive role on the moral education of postgraduates, infiltrates moral education into the overall process of learning and life, and educates students imperceptibly, evolutionarily and intangibly. On Learning points out “Students study with their teacher and follow him”. The tutor and postgraduates are kept in the opposite and uniform relation of educating and being educating, instructing and being instructing. As an educator and instructor, a tutor should have an influence on postgraduates by virtue of his rigorous educational spirit and noble integrity, so that postgraduate could receive favorable academic and personal edification in a silent transforming influence.

The development degree of a tutor’s educating moral education of postgraduates is impacted by macro environment of social economy, politics and culture, but “but teachers must improve teacher morality and business level, passionate in their job, impart knowledge and educate people, become a model for students, impact and educate students with good ideological and political quality and moral manners.”[1] The creation of the great microenvironment also has possibility and feasibility, while the formation of the microenvironment depends on a tutor to a great extent and relies on academic foundation, personality charm and behavioral norms of a tutor. Therefore, a leavening influence of a tutor in postgraduate teaching and scientific research guidance is vital to group up and become an excellent talent for postgraduates.

(III) Far-reaching and Lasting Efficacy

A teacher has been assuming the heavy task of “educating people and guiding for the perplexed” since the ancient times. Therefore, cultivation and development of a real teacher troop is the key to successful or failed moral composition. “The relationship between a tutor and postgraduates should be the complicated guidance-oriented learning social relation, including the relation of instructing and being instructing in academics, emotion relationship, and topic cooperative relation, and so on. Moreover, with the change of postgraduate educational objectives and modes, the teacher-student relation will be equipped with a new feature.”[2] A tutor not only is a “Confucian classics teacher” on the academic road of postgraduates, but also is a “moral teacher” on the life road of postgraduate. The growth experience, academic achievements, and career development degree of a tutor will cause high attention of postgraduates. They experience growth from the experience of a tutor, comprehend life from his life achievements, internalize in their heart, externalize in their actions, and implement things learnt in their thinking habits and actions, lasting for a long time.

In institutes of science and technology, scientific research will have lasting efficacy to carry out moral education of postgraduates. A tutor should be good at applying the platform of scientific research practice, blend moral education into it, cultivate science spirit of postgraduates, exercise their volition and ability, transmit the scientific concept of looking for the truth and being practical and refusing academic corruption to postgraduates, appeal and infiltrate into postgraduates and benefit them for the whole life.

The problem analysis of tutor’s moral education role

“Tutor is a direct and the most beneficial living model for students.”[3] During the period of graduate, it is the tutor that has most intimate and frequent contact with students and has great influence on students. However, according to our survey, only 29.6 percent students think that education from tutor exert much influence and is practically helpful;44.8 percent graduates think that the education from tutor is influential but with no practical help. This indicates that the teaching and cultivating function of tutor has not been given full play, far from the expectations of students. To explore the reasons, there are some major reasons as followings:

(I) Tutor pays attention to research guidance but neglect moral education guidance

Tutor has comparatively high attainments on academic level, has a strong ability to guide professional learning of the graduates but pay inadequate attention to the understanding of graduates’ ideas,
grasping the management of organization and judgment of the abnormal condition. Our survey shows 
that up to 97.35% tutors focus on scientific research of students, but pay less attention to daily life of 
students and career planning of students. Some tutors even think that "graduates are already adults 
who are psychologically, ideologically mature and have formed a relatively stable outlook on life and 
values, have a certain amount of self-education and self-management skills. So they no longer need to 
be educated ideological and political."[4] However, from the view of the actual needs of graduate 
groups, in addition to guidance in the academic scientific research, they also want tutor to care about 
the employment internship, interpersonal relationship, psychological emotion and life. 

Some tutors regard the scientific research achievement as the only standard to measure the quality 
of graduates and they believe that the main tasks of graduate level are academic research, joining 
student organizations, participating in cultural and sports activities, but regard social practice and primary 
testing exercise and other behaviors as “improper tasks”, which make students lose the 
opportunity to accept social practice in the second classroom and improve comprehensive quality. In 
addition, a qualified doctoral tutoring some popular majors, interdisciplinary admissions have more 
than 20 students. On this occasion, it is difficult for the tutor to take into account each student, not to 
mention they would have the time to talk intimately with students. The tutors either pay no attention to 
their ideological and political situation, either tale with students but not discipline them or with loose 
discipline, thus losing the initiative to educate the graduates on the ideological and political level. 

(II) Lacking in Communication and Inadequate in the Exchange of Affective Interaction 
Many tutors believe that graduates, after four years of undergraduate study and life, are all basically 
mature and stable, and are able to proceed self-education and self-management. Its direct 
consequence of this situation is that the graduates' tutors relax in ideological and political education, 
and ignore the communication with graduates. According to our survey, frequency of up to 53 percent 
of graduate students communicating with tutors is 1 time every six months or even more, and only 10 
percent of graduate students communicate with tutors 1 time every 1 week or more. Only 10.4% tutors 
often take the initiative to communicate with graduates, and those less active or even ignorant reach as 
much as 60%. In our research on "other than professional knowledge, to who will graduates pour forth 
the difficulties and depression to the first time they meet?" Only 4.1% of graduates will pour forth to 
their tutors at the first time. This is a true reflection of the lack of communication between tutors and 
graduates, especially inadequate in the exchange of affective interaction. 

In the guidance or trainings, tutors focus on academic achievement, but look down on and even 
ignore moral education, causing some graduates growing in research capacity but not enhancing in 
psychological and moral characters. Graduates’ thinking is sharp but emotion impulsive, and they are 
thirst for knowledge but relatively weak in dialectical thinking ability. If impacts from complex and 
diversified social environment, coupled with the mental confusion, cannot be timely and effectively 
resolved, this will lead to the increasing graduates' suspension and drop-out of schooling recently, and 
suicide and homicide and other serious incidents frequently hit the newspapers. 

(III) The employer role of tutors becomes distinct, the relation between teachers and students 
is with alienation 
According to our researches, up to 47% of the postgraduates think that their tutors are more of their 
“boss” while themselves are the “employee”, and they name supervisor as such under the table. For 
one thing, “bossism” has indeed caused some benefits for the management of scientific research and training to students’ relating capacity while the fact lacking of moral education in this kind of “bossism” has been reflected. The popularization of “boss” is just an outward feature, to the 
disappointment, the tendency of utilization, lack of affection, and alienation of teacher-student 
relations is sprouting. Tutors take students as the cheap labor force to develop projects, caring about 
students’ completion of tasks, showing no concern to things outside study, setting up few 
communications with students, and giving little help to them; postgraduates gradually hold more 
complaints to their tutors, not to mention the improvement of their relationship.
Role Transformation Mechanism of Tutors in Moral Education of Postgraduates

(I) Starting Point—Cultivating People by Morality and Nursing People by Teaching

Firstly, it should improve the political accomplishment of tutors, so as to change their concept of emphasizing on business education while neglecting the moral education. Tutors’ academic level in scientific research is the premise and foundation for “nursing people”. However, to cultivate well-rounded postgraduates, “moral education” is essential. A considerable part of tutors do not clearly understand “give full play to the primary responsibility of mentor in ideological and political education of postgraduates” [5]. They put their major task and all efforts into the professional guidance of postgraduates, who partially consider that the moral education work should be the job of secretary in charge and counselor. To let tutors take the initiatives in the work of postgraduates’ moral education, it must “grass both teaching and education at the same time and attach sufficient importance to both”, which should become the common sense of tutors, so as to promote them to emphasize on improving their political accomplishments. Moreover, they should positively take the advantage of working advantages, academic prestige and personality charm, so as to help postgraduates form good ideological and political characters.

Secondly, it should strengthen the self-cultivation and set up the consciousness of cultivating people. During the progress of shaping academic qualities and moral cultivation of postgraduate, tutors are irreplaceable. Tutors should set up the consciousness of nursing people, implement the moral education into every link of cultivating postgraduates, take education and cultivation as their own work more consciously, care for and respect students, promote physical and psychological health of students to coordinately develop, and promote students to grow and become excellent.

(II) Taking Scientific and Reasonable Rules and Regulations as the Supporting Point

First of all, it should develop scientific and reasonable rules and regulations, and then construct a scientific and effective performance evaluation system of mentor education. Currently, some universities and colleges have no rules and systems about tutors’ management of ideological and political education. Even some universities and colleges have related systems, they have quite vague requirements about the tutors’ responsibilities in ideological and political education. Therefore, while formulating paper, it must standardize and strengthen the tutors’ responsibilities in the ideological and political education. The moral education of tutors should be included into the mentor performance evaluation system, which breaks the system taking the scientific results and scientific research project fund as the major evaluation indicator. Mentor’s implementation of moral education should be linked with recruitment indicator, allowance and incentive, and also promotion. As those tutors with bad moral education who have serious problems of educating style, they should be warned. It should even adopt the “one-vote veto” to cancel the qualification of tutors. As those postgraduate tutors who have quite brilliant moral education, they should be given the material and spiritual rewards, who can be doubly satisfied from the internal spiritual requirement and external material reward. Moreover, it should vigorously publicize their advanced thoughts and excellent deeds, try to form a good fashion of responsible teaching and cultivation among the team of postgraduate tutors. The cultivating responsibility of tutors can be actually implemented. Meanwhile, universities and colleges can set up special funds. By the form of organization, communication, project grant and establishment of postgraduate mentor forum, it can strengthen the communication of tutors in educating experience, study and discuss the dynamics and development orientation of postgraduate education; as the improvement of on-the-job training for tutors, it should focus on strengthen the education of new mentor’s morality, further to strengthen their responsibilities and abilities of ideological and political education.
(III) Taking Daily Emotional Communication between Teacher and Student as the Acting Point

Tutors should not merely be good teachers for postgraduates, but their helpful friends, who should focus on caring about the daily life of postgraduates, understand their problems in learning, life and job, and also positively pay attention to the negative moods and thoughts of postgraduates. Tutors should communicate with students as friends. Under the non-obligatory and non-authoritative atmosphere, the communicative situation can let postgraduates feel equal. Students cannot be restricted by traditional concepts, relax themselves and speak out with tutors. Dialogue or communication is the foundation to establish and maintain care from others. While communicating or discussing about various problems with students, such as job, love or belief, tutors should not have to be free chatting. Of course, it is not the situation that one speaks unceasingly and the other listens with respectful attention. Communication and dialogue between the teacher and student have no fixed answers, which should be an open process that both parties pursue the understanding, accept and admire each other. By caring about and understanding the daily life of students, teachers and students are connected with each other, further to maintain the harmonious, steady and good relationship between both parties. Of course, tutors’ care for postgraduates should not be aimless. Through communication and subtle observation, tutors discover and master the thoughts and behaviors of postgraduates, and also offer actual help to their problems confronted in psychology, life, emotion and work.

(IV) Taking the guidance of scientific research as the starting point

The patient and serious-minded communication and guidance from tutors is needed in each step from the professional course study to the development of scientific research and to the choosing of topic and writing of the thesis during graduate school. The relationship between teachers and students is the one of guiding and learning through mutual interaction.

Tutors should teach graduate students in accordance with their own aptitudes. To be specific, tutors should acknowledge each graduate student’s learning ability, the way of thinking and personality and take different development methods to stimulate their learning potential, making them better understand their own strengths and weaknesses in the aspects of professional learning and academic exploration, guiding them to bring their subjective initiative into play and helping them overcome the shortcomings from study and learning, so that they could make substantial progress during graduate school. Besides, tutors should respect and care for their graduate students with their practical actions, providing a certain level of material condition and learning guidance for them on the one hand and educating them with sufficient time and energy on the other hand. Furthermore, tutors should also encourage them to combine their personal ideas with social responsibility and realize their own personal values in the context of social values really in the process of doing scientific research and academic guidance.

(V) Taking the linkage mechanism between instructors and tutors as the key point

Firstly, the linkage system should be established and improved between tutors and the group aiming at graduate students’ Moral education. It is an inevitable trend of the social development and graduate students’ Moral education to establish the linkage mechanism between the full-time instructors and professional tutors. The joint education system between the full-time instructors and professional tutors is a concrete representation of the joint Moral education. The full-time instructors and professional tutors are two important educational forces in graduate students’ Moral education. On the one hand, taking advantages of organization and carriers, instructors could carry out Moral education depending on some collective activities and graduate students’ daily affairs, such as party building, the communist youth league building and class building. On the other hand, with the characteristics of authority, convenience and demonstration, tutors could integrate Moral education into some teaching activities, such as scientific research guidance and project collaboration. Therefore, the mutual parties must strengthen communication about graduate students’ ideological
dynamic information in Moral education, establish the work linkage system and convene the regular seminars about Moral education to inform and share Moral education information, improving tutors’ initiative and enthusiasm for participation in graduate student management.

Secondly, tutors should participate in party construction actively and strengthen the effectiveness and pertinence of the work of party building, promoting the optimum combination between graduate student development and the work of party building. Tutors could exert their unique charm to impress graduate students during the participation in activities of the party branch, in which tutors give advices and suggestions and make an example as a party member in “A good” activities. They also should focus on graduate students’ difficulties in exchange conversazione of the party branch and solve it on the principle of “detecting in time, responding in time and solving in time.” Besides, they should collaborate with the full-time instructors to help graduate student Party members improve ideological consciousness, quality of scientific research and work ability.

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