On the Role of College Educators in their Service and Regulation

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Abstract. Rapid economic development of China has been, especially from the 1990s of last century, accompanied by the advocacy of people-oriented policies. Consequently, the idea of humanistic care draws more and more attention from the people in Chinese society. This trend has been reflected in our colleges and universities with more emphasis on the improvement of services to the students, which, if without proper handling, may result in the unfavorable situation of loosening in the regulation of the students’ behaviors. Social environment and features of college students within consideration, college educators nowadays should put more efforts in seeking the ideal balancing point between “service” and “regulation” in their educational practices, so as to establish an upward academic atmosphere as well as a healthy campus culture.

Introduction

The word “education” comes from the Latin educo meaning to lead out or develop qualities which are within. Education thus produces the fully rounded individual with a healthy mind in a healthy body. One of the major purposes of the education system is to socialize the students. Besides some practical skills, students at school learn the rules and values they need to become good citizens, to participate in the community, and to contribute to the overall prosperity of the societies they are living in. Because of the importance of values to human action, one of the outcomes of higher education should be that a highly educated person will have a highly educated set of values. By this we do not mean a list of dos and don’ts but that the educated person would understand that they can think critically about their own values and that they have the capacity to develop insight into the value decisions they make. In other words, making value judgments about one’s own values, perhaps as ethical, moral or ideological choices. [1]

The reform and opening-up policy in China has vastly boosted the development of Chinese higher education, which thence brought about a change in the thinking mode and practice in specific educational management. Higher educational institutions in China nowadays are paying more and more attention to the psychological counseling and humanistic care, and this phenomenon, to a certain extent, make people believe that the key principles of college educators in their job are embodied in the idea, content, and the quality of their service to the students. However, too much emphasis on the idea of service may result in the loosening in the regulation which is equally important to the young people who are studying at colleges and universities. Consequently, we are facing the question of the balancing point between “service” and “regulation” in higher educational practices.

Social Environment and College Students

To answer this question, we should beforehand consider the following two aspects of situations, namely the changing society and the changing young generation group. First, the reform and opening-up policy has witnessed not only the rapid development of Chinese economy, but also different thinking modes with Chinese people’s more and more frequent communications with the outside world. Chinese government has been making efforts to promote the fundamental principles
such as traditional virtues, Chinese dream, core values of socialism, and etc. However, it is a stubborn fact that the process of reform of the country did break down the old system without establishing the ideal new system in many aspects of people's social lives, which by and by resulted in many inequalities as well as the unreasonable status between mental and physical labor.[2] That is the very reason why Chinese government advocates the combination between moral governance and law governance in its administration. The latter one focuses on regulating people’s behavior and guaranteeing the rights of the majority in the society.

Second, young generation in China, due to the different social environment in which they are growing up, also show us different trends of values and lifestyles accordingly. Many of these young people, because of the idea of strong family bond in China, have been regarded as the seeds of their family continuation, and treated as the center of their families, being indulged with too much care and love from their parents as well as grandparents. As a result, these students, in their self-centered thinking mode, take it for granted that they should become the center of attention in different groups and communities, and they are less self-disciplined and less independent in their school lives. Some of them, facing the different realities in their campus life, and feeling no satisfaction in their expectation, are very much likely to fall into a disastrous situation, such as the state of melancholy, self-abandonment, and etc. The behavioral manifestation of this situation proves to be the increasing number of absences of classes, internet addiction, worse performance in their study, no interest in extracurricular activities, and inability in getting along well with others.

Understanding the Meaning of “Service” and “Regulation”

The above-mentioned features of the young generation, as well as the social environment they are living in, lead us to come to a conclusion that “service” and “regulation” are equally important in the educational practices of college students. And only through the ideal combination of these two aspects, can colleges and universities help all-around development of their students.

“Service”, to a large extent, can be understood as “caring” or “providing” in this context. The reasons why we should put more emphasis on “service” are as follows: on the one hand, it is to meet the demand of the national policy which embodies the principle of humanistic care; on the other hand, students nowadays are accustomed to be taken care of, to be considered as the focus of attention. If these cares and attentions suddenly disappear in their college life, some of those students may have difficulties in coping with the new environment, which may cause certain psychological problems. Therefore, in the process of college administration, the importance of “service” to the students can never be overemphasized, and this has become one of the major thinking modes in establishing a harmonious society in China.

The word “regulation” here implies the ways of “imposing and maintaining disciplines”. The reason why we should strengthen the necessary measures of regulating students with a firm determination attributes to the social background as well as the features of students mentioned above. The major purpose of these measures lies in the improvement of students’ self-discipline, group identity, and the willingness of cooperation.

Balance between “Service” and “Regulation”

Then how can we find the balancing point of these two concepts in the administration of higher educational institutions, or how can those college educators find that combination point between the role of a “servant” and that of a “regulator”? All of the related elements within consideration, we can draw a conclusion that a good college educator should be the one who has the idea of “regulation” in his mind, while at the same time delivering a strong message of “service” in his behavior. More specifically speaking, a college educator should never loosen the string of “regulation”, and thus impressing the students with the authority and severity of school rules both in words and in exercises. Students must have a definite awareness of their rights and responsibilities, with a clear understanding
of the importance of setting good values at school. Only through this way can we help college students improve their sense of self-discipline and responsibilities. At the same time, during the process of specific exercise of those rules and regulations, a college educator should always carry with him the attitude of “service”, from which students may acquire the feeling of humanistic care, and the feeling of being regarded as the real master of the school.

Rules and regulations of the school penalty system show us a good example of further explanation of the role that a college educator should play. The exercise of disciplinary punishment, one of the extreme ways of school regulation, proves not only to be of one important aspect of school administration, but also to be an effective way of educational practices. However, it is with no doubt that punishment itself is not the ultimate goal of the school education, but giving a student a lesson in the process of punishment is. Then how can we make the idea of “service” stand out in the process of punishment? First, the idea of equality as well as reasonableness, and also evidences of the student’s bad behavior should be displayed clearly before the student who is in face of punishment, so that he may admit with no reservation the fact of his violation of school rules, and of the responsibility he has to take. A student should have a good understanding of the common sense that each and every one on campus has his own obligations in the school community, and therefore he must improve his sense of discipline and contribution. Second, during the whole process of carrying out the exercise of punishment, the educator, both in his words and in his attitude, should touch the student’s inside world with his caring attitude and earnest expectation of the student’s future improvement.

The Role of College Educators

From the explanations made above, we can infer that a college educator himself plays a crucial role in the process of an ideal combination between “service” and “regulation”. And in order to do a good job in this aspect, the educator should become a composite body made up of a strict tutor, a caring tutor, and a good friend.

A strict tutor in this context refers to an educator who bears in his mind a high expectation of his students, and who has a high sense of fundamental principles and can show the students his determination as well as authority in the process of exercising school regulations and administration. The big challenge the college educators are facing nowadays comes from the social environment in this fast developing post-figurative era, in which the new and authoritative information is no longer an advantage of an educator. However, the authoritativeness of an educator can be achieved through his attitude of being conscientious and responsible. The word “strict” in this case should be understood as the one which has the similar connotation with that in “a strict father”, “a strict monarch”, “a strict parent”, and etc. [4]

On the other hand, an educator should try to become “a caring tutor and a good friend” of the students. And this identity fully exhibits the idea of “service”. To serve the students means to help and take care of the students, so that they can accomplish their study with a healthy body and a healthy mind. In this aspect, a caring tutor plays the role of a caring parent, of a brother or a sister to the student; the feeling of a good friend creates, between the educator and the student, a harmonious atmosphere, in which the former may fully understand what the latter thinks, and provide him with a precise service accordingly.

Conclusion

All in all, the ideal combination of the idea of “service” and that of “regulation” will be a long-lasting principle in the future higher educational practices. To reach that ideal state, Chinese college educators should at first have the full awareness of the social environment, in which the traditional virtues and the idea of a law-ruled society should be carried on steadily. Under this circumstance, college educators should, in their educational practices, exert themselves to find the ways of better exercising the idea of “regulation in mind, service in practice”, or “inward regulation, outward service”. Only when the college educators become the composite bodies of “servants” and
“regulators”, can our higher educational practices be carried out along a smooth path, and help the students’ all-around development.

Understanding the idea of values in “service” and “regulation” has consequences for the college educators in their practices as researcher, teacher and provider of services to students. College educators help the students learn about right or wrong, and teach them core values through their everyday activities and interactions with students. Thinking about these ideas, however abstract they may seem from time to time, creates a new awareness of the purposes of a higher education.

References


