

On Professors' Academic Power in Universities

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ABSTRACT: The university professors, as the main performers and representatives of the university's academic power, play an important role in the administration of the university and their participation in this embodies the democratic administration of the university. Therefore, to that purpose, we should further highlight the administrative style centered on the academic power, improve the construction of the inner administrative system, set up the Administration Mode of Professors' Having the Final Say on Teaching, and finally construct a multiple administration mode on the academic power.

KEY WORDS: professors, academic power, administration

INTRODUCTION

University, in its essence, is an academic institution and a place where knowledge is produced and passed on. The administration of the universities should include the important activities as teaching, scientific research, academic exchanges, subject planning, the education of students and the building-up of the teaching body. In this sense, the academic power entails the pursuit of the university's autonomy and the academic freedom, demonstrates the essential function of the university, and ensures the strict following of the academic standards. Only in this way, can the subject be developed on which the academic researchers live and to which they have been diligently devoted; and only by this means, can the rights and interests of them be secured.

THE CONNOTATION OF ACADEMIC POWER

If put simply, academic power just means the power possessed and controlled by the academic researchers. Since Wilhelm Humboldt started Humboldt University of Berlin in the 19th century and propagated the academic freedom, the famous universities in the world have influenced and innovated themselves. Thus, the higher education has developed by leaps and bounds and the teaching thoughts of academic freedom and academic autonomy have been widely accepted. For instance, the Headmaster of Stanford University has considered the academic freedom as the

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indispensable soul of a university. At the same time, he attributed the academic freedom as the third factor to the ultimate success of the school and configurized it as one of the administrative principles. During his term in the Peiking University, Mr. Cai Yuanpei, a well-known educationist in the modern China, has recruited a number of talents and explored courageously on education. He changed the old and outdated feudal administration style of Peiking University into the German university administration style where the Review Committee membered by professors, worked as the supreme authority institution. And all these rendered Peiking University as the academic center of China and it was recorded as the first one to practise the Professors' Having the Final Say on Teaching. Universities firstly are academic institutions and they can stand and go on only with the development of the academic ability. The teachers and researching staff comprise the main part and perform the main function in the supervision and rectification of the planning subject and discipline, in the rating and evaluation of the scientific research and teaching plan, and in the other related academic affairs. It is they who comprise the main part of the academic power. All the cited examples can obviously highlight the fact that the professors, the main part of the academic power in universities, to a great extent, have done a large part in the administration of the school. It is their participation in the university administration that embodied the democratic management of the university.

ACADEMIC POWER AND ADMINISTRATIVE POWER

According to the American Boton Clark's "Matrix Organization System Theory", university belongs to the two systems of colleges and subjects. In this vein, the academic and administrative power centers in the structure of power in a university. As a power that dominates the other factors, whether academic and administrative power points to the same direction and unite into one power, or points to different directions and separate into different powers will have completely different impacts on the university's development. Generally speaking, administrative power is a power bestowed by the superior and protected by the law, which relates to the planning, organizing, guiding, maneuvering and controlling of a university and regulates the daily operation. Overall, it gives enough and powerful insurance to the stable and healthy development to universities. Academic power is a kind of authority produced in the process of the scientific researches and formed in the process of exploration of development of laws of academy. It is supposed to lead the task of academic affairs and map the strategic development of higher education and encourage the innovation of academy. A university should not only stand as an academic institution which includes various subjects and fields but rather a soundly run administrative institution. That is to say, the operation of a university depends on the unity between academic power and administrative power, and they are co-supportive, co-compensable and well-coordinated. So, as an inner power, the academic power performs a dominating function and the administrative power, as an outside power in the form, helps the universities to exist and proceed. When the relationship in-between has been clarified and well-recognized, the development of the academy and the operation of universities can be facilitated. So overall, to clarify the relationship between the inner administrative power and the academic power is firstly of vital importance.

As to how to deal with the relationship between the academic power and administrative power, there are generally three modes in the administrative system of higher education abroad. If we analyze the connotation of these three and learn from them, it will benefit us a lot in our

innovation of universities. From the perspective of the some world administrative systems of higher education, three authoritative modes are typical:

1. German Mode—of academic power structure. In Germany, Professors are the first layer in the structural hierarchy, the only ones who can lecture in their fields and the ones that are in charge in any research institute. Teaching Department is the second layer and is consisted of all the professors and the receivers of professorship. A university is usually made up of four to six Teaching Departments. The university itself is the third layer and its main decision maker is the Review Panel which is consisted of the Teaching Department deans and representatives of professors. The power of the Review Panel limits to the academic affairs and is smaller than that of the Teaching Department. There is also a bigger Review Committee which is membered by all the professors and the teaching representatives, with a view to select the headmaster. The headmaster has to be a professor and at the same time, the chairman of the Review Committee and leader in the academic field. He is elected by all the professors and serves an office term of one year, showing the academic ability of the university. The colleges and universities in France follow the practice of Headmaster In-charge Under the University Committee or the practice of Headmaster In-charge. In those practices, the chairman of the University Committee is at the same time, the headmaster who is directly elected by the University Committee, the Science Committee, the Study and Entertainment Committee. The office term for the headmaster is five years and he is responsible for the three committees' daily operation. In a country like France where a centralized system is popular in education, the headmaster seems to be very important in the decision making while on the other hand, the role of professors have been weak but so strong in the Consultancy Committee that they can even decide the orientation of the school.

2. American Mode—administrative power structure. The first layer in the American university hierarchies is department. The power of the department has been decentralized and allocated firstly among professors and then secondly among assistant professors. Each teacher has the rights to participate in the decision making on the teaching matters. This mode takes a characteristic of collective management. College is the second layer. The position of dean often goes to one of the teacher in the college who takes the role of administrative functionary and work together with the assistant to the dean and the other auxiliary staffs. The headmaster is mainly responsible for the management of the academy of the whole college and is very influential in many occasions, especially in the matter of the recruitment of teachers. Besides, each college still has one or several organizations, like Arts and Science Professor Committee, Undergraduate College Professor Committee, Graduate College Professor Committee, etc. They hold meetings at times, listen to the reports from their committees and deans of the college, and make decisions by the means of collective voting. The administrative staffs are clearly distinctive from the professors, though closely cooperative. University is the third layer where the power of the Board of Trustees and the administrative staffs and the professors are sophistically interwoven.

3. British Mode. – of the Balance-striking Structure between the academic power and the administrative power. The first layer in the British universities is department. One discipline stands as one department and the power is given to one lecturer who has the highest power on the departmental level. The Department Committee underside is consisted of all the teaching staffs and work under the leadership of dean of the department. The second layer is college consisted of related members. The decision-making is responsible to the University Committee, which is usually membered by the whole body of the professors, non-professor departmental deans and

some times by all the assistant professors and the lecturers. Its duty lies in the guidance of the daily teaching, organization and management of the exams and academic researches. Elected by the committee members, the headmaster is usually taken by a professor and serves a two to three years term. Finance and academic affairs are his main concerns. The third layer is the university which includes firstly the University Committee and Board of Trustees and secondly the Review Committee. The vice-headmaster is the coordinator of the two layers and one of the main leaders of the university.

THE REALIZATION OF THE ACADEMIC POWER IN A UNIVERSITY

1. TO REFLECT THE SPIRIT OF ACADEMIC POWER CENTERED

The structure of a university basically requires that it could decentralize the power, whilst correspondently the decentralization of the power depends on the understanding, the respect of the basic levels and on the attachment to the basic levels. Hence, we should step up the adjustment of departments and colleges, implement the Collegiate Management and give enough academic, personnel and financial power. Different college should pay respect to each other and make the problems between them easier to solve. On the level of college, a healthy and harmonious academic atmosphere should be created by the form of well-combined flat structure to avoid a pyramid -like structure. It is a state in which the academic power of the basic levels is well performed and the teachers can better function in the self-regulation and self-development and eliminate to the greatest extent the influence of administrative power. The administrative management should shift the focus to the coordination of teaching, to the need and requirements of scientific researchers of different resources, to the better embodiment of "the Spirit of Servant", instead of passing on the orders from the superiors.

2. TO STRENGTHEN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE INNER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

During the serving term of the Chinese famous educationist Mei Yiqi in Tsing Hua University, a term "Three Strictness" is used to describe the situation at that time. It means to be strict in the recruitment and promotion, to be strict in teaching management, and to be strict in the management of students. The reasons that why the practice can be accepted and every agreed to that are they are done out of good grounds and the well-stipulated regulations. The main function of the inner management reform is to coordinate the different relationships and motivate everybody towards the overall purpose of improving the efficiency and the effectiveness of the school. Therefore, in order to coordinate the relationship between the academic and the administrative power, to provide organizational and systematic protection to the academic power, the inner management system should be further improved. We have to realize how important the Academic Committee, the Degree Rectification Committee, the Review Committee are. We should not only know how important it is to set up, improve them and to ensure the effective operation of them; but also realize that the individual academic power needs perfection and systematic protection.

3. TO SET THE PROFESSOR HAVING THE FINAL SAY ON TEACHING MODE

The professors in the Lecturing System have very high power and play an important part in the academic development. So, we need to explore for a new university management system based on the participation of the professors with academic power, build up a democratic organizational system and a management platform to facilitate the making of decisions on some important inner affairs and research issues. Among the above, to build up a professor committee is of great importance which is composed of representatives of professors and includes several sub-committees responsible for various teaching and academic affairs, such as discipline planning, degree rectifying, teaching guiding, building up of the teaching team and the approval of academic achievements, etc. In this way, the practice of Headmaster In-charge and the Mode of Professors Having the Final Say on Teaching can be well integrated. On one hand, the educational decision making of the school can be more scientific and democratic, and the policies can sure to be carried out. On the other hand, the innovation and initiative can be encouraged, with a view to promote the academic development and innovation of the education of the school. The combination of the two cans upgrade the academic and management level and the democratic pace of the university.

4. TO BUILD UP A MULTIPLE ACADEMIC POWER MODE IN UNIVERSITIES

To build up a multiple academic power mode will introduce more competition between universities and faster the development of higher education. For a long time, the academic affairs in universities have been interfered by the governments and suffered a lot from the ideological influence. The governments have taken a twofold role as the organizer of the university and also the administrator or the universities. Their role in a university has been exemplified unrestrictedly and they have taken many jobs that should have been done by the universities and baffled the development of the schools. In this vein, the government should shift their role in the academy and deliver more freedom to the schools. What they should do is to decentralize their power and function as an instructor, to let the universities run on their own, esp. in the aspect of academy, to create more favorable conditions for the universities.

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