

Views and Analysis on the De-administration of Chinese Universities

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Abstract: In the process of reforming Chinese universities, the Chinese government has gradually systematized the management of universities, and the internal management service system of universities has also gradually become systematic. However, as the interaction between universities and administrative bodies becomes closer and closer, the tendency of administrativeization of universities becomes more and more prominent, which leads to a contradictory relationship between the administrative power and academic power of universities. This has led to a contradictory relationship between administrative power and academic power in universities. The administrativeization of universities will weaken the academic research in universities, dilute the academic atmosphere and make universities deviate from their original intention, making it difficult to achieve the most important academic goals. This paper analyses the root causes of the administrativeization of universities by studying the nature and performance of the administrativeization of universities, and comes to the conclusion that the administrativeization is due to the internal and external institutional structure of universities, as well as the traditional thought of “officialdom” in China. It also explores effective measures to promote the de-administration of Chinese universities from several aspects, such as transforming government functions, creating a service-oriented government and joining third-party organizations. The aim is to find effective ways to weaken the administrativeization of Chinese universities and to integrate and optimize the power structure of Chinese universities in the context of contemporary society, so as to improve the quality of Chinese universities and create a good academic atmosphere.

Keywords: de-administration, section system, party-government structure, section system, management and service reform

1. Introduction

With regard to the administrativeisation of universities, this paper analyses it from the perspective of the degree section view and the party-government isomorphic view. According to Max Weber’s theory of hierarchy, as a system of rule and management, Weber believed that in such a system, the organisation must have formal regulations, a clear division of labour among its members and departments, and a clear hierarchy between the various powers assigned; the organisation must be based on official relations, forming a professional and technical official management, without the intermingling of The organisation should be based on official relations, which are professional and

technical, and not mixed with private relations. In particular, I believe that Weber's view on the hierarchy of power is closely linked to the administrativeisation of higher education. The hierarchy of power, according to Weber, is "a pyramidal hierarchy of power based on organisational efficiency and the achievement of organisational goals. In accordance with the principles of hierarchy and power hierarchy, a stable and orderly command system is formed." The administrativeisation of higher education institutions reflects this characteristic. The administrative hierarchy within higher education is well-defined and the hierarchy of administrative power is also clear; this is to some extent to achieve an increase in the efficiency of organisational administration, but excessive hierarchisation of power and the formation of a pyramidal hierarchical structure is not conducive to the overall development of higher education. The excessive hierarchical system, forming a huge administrative structure, has led to an imbalance between academic and administrative power, making the administrative discourse of universities larger than the academic discourse, which seems to go against the philosophy of universities and the original intention of academics, and does not play the greatest role in the development of national education [1]. Take our vice-ministerial universities as an example, the president and secretary of the university are at vice-ministerial level in terms of administrative rank, responsible for implementing relevant resolutions under the leadership of the party committee and fully responsible for teaching, research and administrative work; while the director of the State Key Laboratory is at full divisional level, in charge of key research and experimental activities; the vice-dean of the second-level college is at vice-divisional level, generally responsible for guiding and promoting various academic research activities under the approved leadership of the higher administrative section level, etc. It can be seen that an overly sectionalised and over-emphasised pyramidal power hierarchy will in fact lead to an excessive upward shift of decision-making power in terms of academic research in universities, or even a high degree of concentration at the top. This can, to a large extent, lead to excessive interference by the university administration in the academic bodies of the university. After the conception and planning of an academic project has been completed, it still needs to be approved by the higher decision-making section before it can be implemented. This creates resistance to the activities of academic institutions in relation to academic research, reduces the efficiency of implementation, and can damage the academic climate in universities [2]. The clear hierarchy of authority increases the influence of some subjective factors and reduces the diversity of academics in universities. In such an overly hierarchical situation, there is often a tendency to equate 'academic affairs' with 'administrative affairs', making university administration more important than academics. This administrativeisation of universities is not conducive to the overall development of universities.

The second is the homogeneity of the party and government. Some universities have the same internal system and structure as the government administration, and due to "the convergence of organization, resource dependence and conceptual choices, a homogeneous, homogeneous and isomorphic organization has been formed." First of all, Chinese universities belong to the system of presidential responsibility under the leadership of the party committee, and the presidents and secretaries of each university are appointed by the resolution of the party committee at the higher level and are responsible to it. The composition of the party and government organs in China is strongly rational and logical, and highly effective in the handling of party and government affairs. Moreover, the authors argue that the core leadership of the Party Committee must be the prerequisite for the implementation of all decisions in universities. However, attention needs to be paid to the special nature of the subject of universities. As an institution of higher education, academic research and scientific experiments are the parts in which it should mainly invest its strength. It is different from the decision-making macro of the higher party and government organs, so universities should form an institutional structure that is in line with the characteristics of university operation on the basis of the structural learning of the higher party and government organs. In this homogeneous

structure of party and government, the first thing that tends to happen between universities and the education sector is over-interference. The education department's management power is concentrated, which results in the education department's restriction on the independent power of universities and academic power, which is reflected in the fact that the independent power of universities and academic power requested by universities must pass the administrative approval of the education department [3]. This has caused certain procedural obstacles for universities to realize their academic power efficiently, which has greatly weakened the academic research enthusiasm of universities; furthermore, this homogeneity of party and government is reflected in the administrative structure of universities. The administrative structure of many universities is identical to that of the party and government, and is a Chinese hierarchical system with a clear hierarchy of power. The orderly administrative structure is certainly conducive to the internal management and services of the universities, and the system of clearly defined powers and responsibilities and hierarchy of powers also improves the management efficiency of the universities. However, a high degree of homogenisation of the party and government will highlight the "top-heavy" administrative system of universities. In the process of implementation, it will be found that the administrative power in this model is mostly concentrated at the upper level, where the decision-making power is more authoritative [4]. In contrast, academic power, which is a characteristic of universities, is dispersed at the lower administrative levels of the hierarchy. Thus, the approval of an academic research project has to be conceived and planned by members belonging to the academic side, then reported up the hierarchy, approved by the hierarchy, and finally approved by a resolution. It can be seen that the person in charge of the main academic project, the proposer, is not actually the owner of the power to allocate resources to the university. Ultimately, whether an academic activity can be carried out or not requires the decision of the leaders at the top. In this way, on the one hand, the holders of academic power will be demotivated by the numerous procedures of deliberation; on the other hand, the holders of administrative power will be too busy because of the many procedures of deliberation and decision-making, the wide range of powers and responsibilities, and the wide range of management.

The administrativeisation of higher education is also evident in reality. For example, the implementation of quantitative assessment and management rules in higher education. The upper echelons of the university's internal administrative system regarding the workload required of teachers include teaching workload, laboratory and internship base construction workload, pedagogical and methodological research, workload in all areas of work, and the subsidised workload of teachers who also work as administrators [5]. The assessment of workload in all areas is quantitative and has strict quantitative criteria. After quantification, the results are audited by the Department of Teaching and Research and the workload management statistics system is fully implemented. And this is also taken into account in the title system. Although this is conducive to improving the management efficiency of the university, it will lead to members within the university taking the performance assessment as their work goal, which gradually deviates from the initial goal of running the university and intensifies the administrativeization of the university. Therefore, this paper will analyse the causes of the administrativeisation of universities from two perspectives: the power relations in the structural setting and the traditional Chinese ideology and culture, and explore feasible solutions on this basis.

2. Analysis of the Causes of Administrativeization of Higher Education Institutions

2.1. Setting of the Institutional Structure

Before exploring the solutions to de-administration of universities, the causes of administrativeization of universities should be analysed. Firstly, there is the institutional structure set up. Externally, there is a concentration of governmental authority over the universities, and the party leaders of the

universities are appointed directly by their superiors and managed in accordance with the management methods of the national party cadres. Secondly, the internal management system and the operation of the administrative bodies in the universities have also caused the administrativeization of the universities [6]. In the internal management of colleges and universities, the division of administrative power between the head and the foot makes academic power subject to administrative power in practice, resulting in some academic affairs of colleges and universities becoming almost administrative affairs. In the administrative system of universities, which is the same as that of the party and the government, some academic research may also appear to be “academic” to “administrative”. In this case, the academic research has lost its original intention and cannot accomplish the academic goals of the university well. This is because academic research in this case is aimed at “meeting the administrative review criteria”, and most of it is directed towards administrative requirements, considering the review rate of academic research projects and putting academic goals on the back burner;

2.2. Traditional Historical and Cultural Factors

Furthermore, the administrativeisation of universities is closely related to the historical factors of China. Dating back to the reign of Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty, the ‘taixue’ officially became the ancient national university of China, and as the highest educational institution in the country, these ‘ancient universities’ produced a large number of talents for successive dynasties. They became the mainstay of the ancient Chinese bureaucracy [1]. So it can be seen that in ancient China, Confucianism was the dominant orthodoxy, and under this influence, the concept of “learning is superior” became deeply rooted in people’s minds. As a result, the idea of bureaucracy in education was to some extent ingrained in the mindset of the members of the organisation. This has given rise to the cultural roots of “officialism”. This cultural influence will lead some members of the university to aim at “being an official”, so there is a trend for professors and associate professors in the university to pursue titles in the university administration. In such a situation, academics are no longer the goal of universities, but rather the pursuit of official positions. The residual sense of power worship is also one of the reasons for the administrative force of the situation in universities. The pursuit of official positions by the members will slowly evolve into the expansion of the administrative bodies of universities, and accordingly, the academic bodies of universities will be suppressed. This further leads to an imbalance between administrative and academic power, causing many universities to regard academic affairs as administrative affairs to be audited. This has exacerbated the culture and degree of administrativeisation in universities.

2.3. An Exploration of Solutions to the De-administration of Universities

Through the analysis of the connotation of administrativeization of colleges and universities and the reasons for its emergence, plus the elaboration and explanation about the specific embodiment of administrativeization of colleges and universities. This paper argues that the focus of the de-administration of universities lies in the integration and optimisation of the power structure of universities. In this regard, Lin Jianhua, who once held the post of president of Peking University, argues that: being able to remove the ranks within universities is conducive to de-administration; there is little difference between employing deans and professors, and both can use the employment system. By using the employment system, the decision to employ someone is made through democratic discussion among the members of the university. In recent years, the state has taken specific measures to de-administrate universities by abolishing the administrative rank of institutions. In the context of the “administrative reform” promoted by the central government, the administrative departments of universities have been simplified and integrated under the premise of a clear division

of labour, in order to improve the operational efficiency of universities. In other words, after the completion of the academic concept and planning of the university, the resistance to the approval of the project is reduced, the academic efficiency is improved, the academic objectives are accomplished, a strong academic atmosphere is created, and the motivation of the members of the university for academic research is increased.

Secondly, under the influence of the “reform of management and service”, the transformation of government functions and the creation of a service-oriented government also have implications for the de-administration of universities. For the external administrativeization of universities, the higher education authorities can promote their own transformation from management-oriented to service-oriented. By improving the service mechanism, universities should provide higher quality services to their clients and realise the establishment of a high-quality “service-oriented” management system. This will not only improve efficiency, but will also help to maintain a healthy academic atmosphere in universities. To a certain extent, the authority will be shifted downwards to avoid the formation of an overly “top-heavy” pyramidal structure of university administration. It also helps to reduce administrative approval procedures, avoid centralised decision-making and use democratic decision-making methods to increase the participation of all members of the university and to de-administrate the university. In this respect, Wuhan University has also been de-administrated internally by increasing the democratic decision-making component. This has led to an expansion of the scope of academic power in universities and an improvement in the academic environment.

Transformation of government functions and cooperation with multiple parties. The emphasis here is on cooperation with third-party subjects. Cooperation is carried out with the help of third-party assessment bodies as well as international organisations. The introduction of third-party subjects between the governmental education departments and the universities will, to a large extent, alleviate the direct confrontation between the governmental education departments and the universities, and between the administrative power and the academic power. Furthermore, the introduction of third-party subjects, who are also involved in the supervision of the management and operation of universities, is not only beneficial to the implementation of management methods and the improvement of operational efficiency. In the process of the third party’s intervention, the direct intervention of the government education department in the academic activities and scientific and educational research of the universities is also reduced to a certain extent. It plays a role in achieving academic freedom in universities. This approach starts from the aspect of external administrativeization and can effectively solve the problem of administrativeization of universities.

The author argues that there is a mutual relationship between the administrative power and the academic autonomy of universities. If the education department intervenes too much in the management of universities, and if the scope of administrative power is too large, and if the degree of implementation is too detailed, the administrative power will interfere excessively with academic activities, resulting in the imbalance between administrative power and academic power and the external administrativeization of universities. In the same way, if the administrative power is concentrated at the top and the autonomous academic power is neglected, it will lead to an imbalance between the internal administrative power and the autonomous academic power. This paper argues that an effective solution to the problem of administrativeisation is to address the issues of ‘excessive interference’ and ‘loss of academic autonomy’. First of all, to address the excessive interference of administrative power in academic research activities of universities, we can adjust the direction of separating administration and academics in universities. The difference between administrative and academic affairs can be clarified and the administrative and academic affairs can be separated, which directly reduces the administrative intervention and gives room for the academic power to play, and can effectively alleviate the phenomenon of administrativeization of universities. Secondly, in response to the problem of “loss of academic autonomy” by members of the academic section of

universities, we can move towards expanding the academic autonomy of universities and dispersing or shifting the administrative power concentrated in the upper level to achieve a balanced relationship between administrative and academic power within universities. This will reduce the interference of the upper echelons of the administration in academic research and scientific activities. This not only solves the problem of administrative staff's complicated and numerous affairs under the administrativeization of universities, but also clarifies the respective powers and responsibilities of administrative and academic levels, liberates the autonomy of academic power, creates a good academic atmosphere for universities, and effectively alleviates the problem of administrativeization of universities.

As mentioned earlier, one of the reasons for the administrativeisation of universities is the influence of the traditional "officialdom" ideology, which is the residue of the cult of power. In this situation, the government's management of universities and their internal operation is influenced by personal thoughts. As a result, the bureaucracy makes some policies and systems in the universities run wrongly. Therefore, in order to achieve the de-administration of universities, it is necessary to provide protection in terms of law and supervision system [7]. The government should improve the supervision system for implementing the operation of the internal administrative system of colleges and universities, and improve the supervision system in order to form a system to ensure that the internal administrative operation of colleges and universities belongs to the rules and regulations, enhance administrative efficiency and improve the effectiveness of management and services. Secondly, it should strengthen the supervision and guarantee of the law on the operation of colleges and universities, improve the relevant laws and regulations, provide the cornerstone for the scientific operation of colleges and universities, and promote the modernization and legalization of the supervision system. This on the basis of guaranteeing the scientific management and university services at the administrative level within the universities, and expanding the autonomy of academic power at the academic level to achieve the effect of de-administration of universities.

3. Conclusions

The emergence of the phenomenon of administrativeisation in higher education has caused damage to the academic climate in higher education. The concentration of administrative power in higher education in the upper part of the hierarchical structure that forms the pyramid has resulted in the power regarding the disposition of university funds, whether academic projects are approved or not, and how resources are allocated being decided in the upper administrative level. And with separate administrative levels and complex approval steps, this leaves a large number of barriers to academic research. This undermines the enthusiasm and vitality of academic research in universities and is not conducive to reaching results in university academics.

The administrativeisation of higher education has exacerbated the negative influence of bureaucracy, the cult of power consciousness and other ideas. One of the manifestations of the administrativeisation of colleges and universities is the expansion of administrative bodies within colleges and universities. Many members of colleges and universities are in pursuit of administrative power because of the power held by administrative departments, so it is not uncommon for members of colleges and universities to compete to join administrative departments and become administrative officials. This can create an unhealthy culture in universities, making them pervaded by bureaucracy. Not only this, but students are also influenced by bureaucracy, and many of them will aim to become officials and join student unions and school committees in their university life, instead of aiming to serve their peers and train themselves. The administrative nature of higher education is not conducive to the development of student values.

In the preceding analysis, it can be seen that the upper management of each university is directly selected by the higher government departments, which is one of the reasons or manifestations of the

administrativeization of universities. This administrativeisation will lead to administrative indicators becoming the most important indicators in the running of universities. As a result, various teaching and research activities at the academic level may be designed according to the preferences of the administrative level. At this point, the academic and professional nature of university provision is lost. At a broader level, the idea that most universities are run on the basis of administrative preferences will be formed. As a result, there are no major differences between universities and universities, and universities cannot develop their own characteristics and educational styles. The administrativeisation of higher education institutions has resulted in a 'uniformity' of universities.

Therefore, the de-administration of universities is one of the topics we urgently need to deal with. As mentioned above, the de-administration of universities should integrate and optimise the administrative power distribution structure within universities, and improve the operational efficiency of academic activities in universities; furthermore, it should transform the functions of administrative departments within universities and create a service-oriented administrative department. Democracy should be used to de-administrate universities. It also focuses on the cooperation with third parties to reduce the direct intervention of government education departments in the academic activities and scientific and educational research of colleges and universities, while achieving the supervision of the internal operation of colleges and universities and promoting the academic freedom of colleges and universities; separating the administration and academics in colleges and universities, reducing the intervention of administration in academics and solving the problem of excessive intervention. At the same time, expand the academic autonomy of universities and shift down the administrative power to maintain a balanced relationship between administrative and academic power within universities; play a fundamental role in the formulation of laws, establishment and improvement of supervision mechanisms, improve relevant laws and regulations, promote scientific university operations and promote the modernization and legalization of the supervision system.

This paper focuses on the causes of the administrativeization of Chinese universities from two perspectives: the institutional structure and the ancient traditional thought. This paper only selects two perspectives, namely, the power relations between governmental organs and universities outside Chinese universities, the power relations of the internal structure of Chinese universities, and the historical and cultural ideological roots of Chinese tradition. In addition, from the unique and long historical background of China, the influence of traditional bureaucratic ideology on the administrativeization of Chinese universities is clarified through the analysis of the roots of the traditional bureaucratic ideology of "officialdom". Therefore, the limitation of the perspective leads to the restriction of the analysis of the causes. This paper does not include other perspectives in the study of the de-administration of Chinese universities, for example, the administrativeization of universities should also be influenced by the contemporary Chinese social and humanistic culture.

In addition, in the exploration of solutions, this paper considers that the focus is on integrating and optimising the power structure of universities. We have also explored the possibility of transforming government functions and creating a service-oriented government through the "administrative reform" to facilitate the de-administration of universities, and the inclusion of third-party institutions to carry out supervision and supervision to facilitate the de-administration of universities. However, there is a realistic cost associated with the inclusion of a third-party body to exercise control and supervision. The introduction or establishment of third-party institutions involves costs of establishment and cooperation, and it is difficult to determine whether a range of costs can support the effective implementation of the de-administration of Chinese universities. Therefore, there are limitations in this paper in terms of researching the causes and exploring the ways to solve the problem, such as limited perspectives and practical difficulties in implementation.

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