

The Restriction and Supervision of the Power of University Presidents

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A university president has both academic and administrative powers. The power of the president of a university is considered absolute. Due to defects in institutional arrangements, confusion of occupational orientation, temptation from social environment, unrestricted exercise of power and confusion about one's own cognition, it is possible for university presidents to abuse their power. Therefore, the president becomes the primary object of the power restriction and supervision in the university. This study puts forward some suggestions for restricting and supervising the power of university presidents from such aspects as "strengthening institutional construction", "implementing the professionalization of university presidents", "strengthening the influence and function of fine culture on presidents", "promoting democratic governance of universities", "strengthening the education and supervision of in-service presidents", etc.

Keywords: university, the power of presidents, restriction, supervision

Introduction

Montesquieu believed that

constant experience shows us that every man invested with power is apt to abuse it, and to carry his authority as far as it will go. To prevent this abuse, it is necessary, from the very nature of things, power should be a check to power. (Montesquieu, 1995, p. 154)

The same goes for university presidents. As the master of the future and destiny of a university, university presidents have almost absolute powers both administratively and academically. Whether it is intentional abuse or not, the university president has the possibility and risk of power abuse. In order to avoid abuse of power as much as possible, we must deeply analyze the background and causes, explore measures and methods, and solve the problem of power restriction and supervision of the university presidents.

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Background

Everything happens with deep background and for deep reasons. If the problems existing in institutional arrangement, career orientation, social environment, power exercise, and self-cognition are not dealt with well, it is possible for university presidents to abuse their powers.

Defects in Institutional Arrangements

Institutions are formal rules or operating paradigms formed under certain historical conditions to regulate individual behavior and organizational actions. John Rawls (1988, p. 50) believed that institutions were a system of norms that defined duties and positions and their rights, obligations, powers, immunities, and so on.

The purpose of establishing institution is to achieve the specific goals of the organization, so it is natural for relevant social members to comply with and implement it. However, “if a specific system or a set of systems has only behavior instructions but no behavior punishment instructions, it will not be mandatory” (Han, 2014, pp. 34-39), then the implementation effect of the system will be greatly reduced, or even not implemented at all.

Generally speaking, the selection, appointment, and daily management of university presidents shall be based on the issuance of the Interim Measures for the Management of Leaders of Higher Education Institutions¹ by the Ministry of Education and the Organization Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China for specific operations. The “Measures” stipulates tenure conditions, selection and appointment, term of office, target and responsibilities, assessment and evaluation, career development, incentives and guarantees, supervision and restraint, and exit mechanisms for university presidents. The qualifications of employment determine what kind of university president to choose. The selection and appointment process determines how and whether a qualified university president can be elected. Objectives and responsibilities, assessment and evaluation, incentives and guarantees, and supervision and restraint are the guarantees of how a university president can manage the university well.

Tenure conditions are the conditions framed for the selection of the new university president. From the perspective of the importance of the president’s work and job requirements, these conditions are absolutely reasonable, but for the selection and inspection of specific personnel, it is absolutely difficult to have a comprehensive understanding of a person in a short period of time. This requires a lot of thorough investigations, field trips, process tracking, and even unannounced visits; otherwise, only a superficial understanding, or the conclusion is far from the truth.

Regarding the selection and appointment of university presidents, the document stipulates that “methods such as internal selection, external selection, competition (recruitment) for posts and open selection are generally adopted, and other selection methods conducive to outstanding talents can also be explored.” But in practice, “internal selection” and “external selection” are the main methods, while methods such as “competition (recruitment) for the post” and “open selection” are rarely used.

Assessment and evaluation are the audit and evaluation of the actual performance and work performance of the university president. However, due to

the assessment method is relatively simple, the orientation of the assessment needs to be strengthened; the assessment content is relatively simple, with more qualitative assessment and less quantitative assessment; the assessment method is relatively closed, and the openness of the assessment needs to be improved; the application of the assessment results is

¹ *Interim Measures for the Management of Leaders of Higher Education Institutions* [EB/OL] (2017-1-23) [2022-4-27].

insufficient, and the assessment incentive mechanism needs to be improved. (Fu, 2016, pp. 94-98)

the assessment and evaluation are often reduced to a formality.

Supervision and restraint mainly start from “political discipline and political rules, power operation, style of work and integrity” and other aspects. But in reality, it is often beyond the reach of the superior supervision, the peer supervision is nonexistent, and the subordinate supervision is weak and powerless, so that the binding force of supervision is basically in a state of seeming absence and dispensable.

Confusion in Occupational Positioning

The famous British educator, Ashby, pointed out that the prosperity of universities depends on who controls them internally (Clark, 1994, p. 121). Who controls a university depends on what sponsors see it as an institution. From the perspective of the origin and development, universities are academic organizations, educational institutions, and research places. Universities are institutions of learning, and academic power should be the leading power of universities. The purpose and value of administrative power is to serve academic development and ensure the good exercise of academic power. However, the role of the university president that the organizational attributes required and the official status of the university president, make the university president confused about their professional orientation extremely.

From the perspective of morality, “the moral attribute of a university is congenital, its constituent elements are full of moral attributes, and its operation is the main way for morality to play a role” (Liang, 2010, pp. 103-105). A university is a moral community. From the perspective of knowledge, a university is a specialized place for inheritance, dissemination, and creation of advanced knowledge. “Advanced knowledge is a necessity for the birth, existence, development and evolution of higher education, there will be no higher education without advanced knowledge” (Zhang, 2015, pp. 22-23). A university is an academic community; from the perspective of interests, the university involves the overall interests of the school and the personal interests of faculty and students, political interests and economic interests, academic interests and administrative interests, as well as internal and external interests. The university is a community of interests.

It can be seen that the multi-dimensionality of university relations and the diversity of responsibilities make the university an extremely complex social organization. Based on the increasing size of universities and the extremely difficult and complex relationships, Clark Kerr believes that university presidents should play at least four roles: first, as a mediator, he should resolve various conflicts and disputes; second, as an initiator, he should promote the work of the school; third, as a fighter, he should fight for freedom and quality; fourth, as an image creator, he should create a good social image for the university (Wang, 2019). The university president should be a complex of multiple roles.

As we know, university presidents themselves are regarded as administrative officials, having the same administrative rank as government officials. The selection and appointment processes of presidents and government officials are highly similar, and the daily management, performance evaluation and supervision and inspection are also similar to those of government officials. Therefore, a considerable number of university presidents consider themselves as administrative officials of the corresponding rank, and some presidents often deliberately highlight their administrative rank, and take pride in their official status. The confusion of the president’s occupational orientation also creates a serious misunderstanding of the occupational cognition of the subordinate administrators.

Temptation From Social Environment

For a long time, the American modern enterprise system has become a classic case of economics in the world's top universities.

The moral laurel of honesty and trustworthiness is always cheaply worn on its head. Many people use it to demonstrate the internal consistency of market economy and morality, which seems to throw the most powerful 'trump card' to their opponents. (He, 2002, pp. 14-19)

However, at the beginning of this century, the global financial crisis made the economic fortress and moral edifice of some countries in Europe and the United States suddenly lose its solid foundation. Faced with this situation, George Soros, the American financial "magnate", has to admit that the recent violations of accounting rules by large American companies reflect that American culture values success over ethical principles (Liang, 2002, pp. 6-7). The American *Business Week* also emphasized that the biggest crisis of American capitalism in a century is coming. "Because it is not just an economic crisis, but also a moral crisis, a crisis of confidence, and a suspicion of human nature itself. People can't help but ask: have we really entered an era of moral deprivation?" (He, 2002, pp. 14-19).

The "moral deficiency" in economic society has become the inducement of power abuse. With the gradual advance of the reform, the phenomenon of power rent-seeking is increasingly serious. Those in power commercialize power and take power as capital to participate in commodity exchange and market competition, to seek money and material benefits. Power rent-seeking brings benefits to individuals and becomes the motive force and the source of power corruption.

It is a major test for university presidents as to whether they can resist the temptation of various large and easy-to-obtain interests with their own strong willpower.

Unrestricted Exercise of Power

According to Lao Kaisheng,

In the process of social transformation, three forces are gradually forming in the field of education, which are academic force, political force and market force, among which the market force is a newly emerging one that has a huge impact on education. (Lao, 2002, p. 6)

In China, political force is a long-term, lasting, and stable force, which continuously plays a role in education. Academic force is a force that needs to expand its influence and play a rational role in the education system itself. Market force is a powerful force that has gradually deepened in China's education system for the past two decades, then taken root, and advanced rapidly, and further continued to exert its strength and has shown an overwhelming trend. Almost every time college people interact and work with relevant personnel in enterprises and government departments, they are faced with the test of conscience and morality.

According to the Higher Education Law (2018), the president of the university is fully responsible for the teaching, scientific research, and other administrative work of the school, and is given the right to formulate school development plans, teaching activities, scientific research and ideological and moral education activities, the right to set up internal institutions, the right to recommend the appointment and dismissal of the vice president and the person in charge of the internal organization, the right to appoint and dismiss teachers and other staff, the management of student status and the right to reward and punish, the right to formulate and execute the annual budget, the allocation and disposal of school assets rights and all other powers related to the operation and

development of the school². The university president must rely on a high degree of consciousness, self-control, and noble sentiment and realm in the exercise of these powers to ensure “power for the school, for the benefit of teachers and students”. However, even highly binding powers cannot be guaranteed against abuse. How much of the power that relies on self-consciousness and self-control will not be abused?

Confusion About One’s Own Cognition

Gerhard Casper, honorary president of Stanford University, sees American university presidents as playing at least nine roles: university president, CEO, trustee, fund-raiser, educator, academic in university service, public figure, social worker, and entertainment partner (Casper, 2003, pp. 115-122.). Many of the affairs and functions of American universities are partly or entirely undertaken by the society. In contrast, more affairs and more complex relationships exist in Chinese universities. Some scholars in China believe that the president of a modern university should play four basic roles: one is the spokesman of academic interests, the other is the executor of national education policy, the third is the model of teachers, and the fourth is the active reflection of social interests (Wang, 2009, p. 34). In a word, the president should be all-rounder. For the professorial presidents who are good at academic, professional, and scientific research, it is hard for them to do a difficult job beyond their reach. But from the nature of the post of university president, university president itself is a kind of occupation, the president of the university is a profession. University governance is a profession, and the operation of institutions of higher learning is a unique system. Most of the majors studied by presidents are not related to university governance. Even if the president is fully focused and fully committed, it is not always possible to govern the university well. For a president who sees himself as an official, does not want to give up his academics, and tries to manage Chinese universities well, it is difficult to play a role and do a job well. In fact, they are full of confusion about their own cognition.

Methodology

Compared with quantitative research, qualitative research is more suitable for this topic. For research, the acquisition of data and materials is important but also difficult. Because of the importance of the post and the particularity of the object, it is not easy to study the individual and group of university president. The availability of comprehensive, true, and objective information and materials is related to the accuracy of research problems, the suitability of cause analysis and the pertinence of improvement measures. Therefore, members of the research group mainly use observation method, literature analysis method, and qualitative research method, in order to see the essence through the phenomenon, find the context in the mass of information, and obtain information and sense the truth through personal experience.

It is convenient for researchers who work in universities to observe the behavior of university presidents in close proximity. Through observation, it is possible to discover the practice and decision of university president in dealing with some problems, and analyze the implementation and effect of the practice and decision, from which we can see the starting point and key point of the president’s use of power. At the same time, by observing and interviewing the opinions and reactions of the executors, the effect of the operation of power is analyzed. In addition, various documents and regulations issued by the university in response to various problems and situations are the operational requirements and rules of various affairs of the university. Most of these documents

² *Higher Education Law of the People’s Republic of China* [EB/OL]. (2019-1-7) [2022-4-27]. <http://www.npc.gov.cn/npc/c30834/201901/9df07167324c4a34bf6c44700fafa753.shtml>.

are discussed and approved by the president's office meeting, and basically reflect the president's thoughts on running schools and governing schools. The style and orientation of presidents in the process of using their own power to carry out work can be obtained through literature analysis. Due to working relationship, researchers often work in close contact and exchanges with many presidents. They can deeply understand the thoughts and intentions of each president in terms of views and decisions on some issues, and can perceive the primitive dynamics and root cause of the presidents' work and decision-making. However, it is impossible for this study to fully, deeply, and thoroughly understand and analyze the problem.

Solution

Since there is the possibility of university presidents abusing their power, the primary object of restriction and supervision in the operation of internal powers in colleges and universities should be the university presidents. The restriction and supervision of the power of the university president should start from two aspects: "internal restriction" and "external restriction". External measures can promote internal change and improvement. The restriction and supervision of university president's power should start from the following aspects.

Strengthening Universities' Institutional Construction

People live in a certain institutional environment. Comrade Deng Xiaoping once said, "Good institution can prevent the evildoer from arbitrarily rampant, but bad system may discourage good people from doing good deeds sufficiently, and they can even go to the opposite side" (Deng, 1994, p. 333). In fact, a worse institution is to allow bad people to do bad things without being limited and punished (Yang, 2012). Therefore, great care must be taken in the design of the university institution.

"Rogue principle" embodied in the institutional design of universities. Each kind of institutional design has a certain theoretical presupposition in the initial stage. This presupposition often becomes the logical starting point of a system theory. In the design of the system, the most famous hypothesis is that the British philosopher David Hume's "rogue principle":

The politicians have established a rule that we should regard everyone as rogue who has not any purposes other than seeking self-interest in all his actions when design any governmental system and determine the restriction and control of several constitutions. (Elkin, 1997, pp. 27-28)

This principle tells us that "good man politics" does not exist. The institution should be designed to take positive precautions against potential "rogue" behaviors by all people equally.

The purpose of institutional design should be: no matter how greedy a person is, through the clamping function of perfect systems and mechanisms, people can serve the public welfare "in good manners" (Qin, 2002). In this case, James Buchanan has a more explicit statement:

when political behavior is considered as the pursuit of self-interest, like their behaviors in other aspects, the constitutional challenge becomes a challenge which constructs and designs the system and rules that can limit the pursuit of self-interest to the maximum extent and guide the individual interest to promote the whole social interest. (Buchanan, 1989, p. 39)

The "rogue principle" requires the institutional designer to start with the worst situation.

Selection of qualified presidents and successful governance guaranteed in the construction of university institution. Two points should be guaranteed for a good university institution: one is to ensure to produce a qualified president with high morals, who understands education and who can manage. The other is to

ensure that the president is able (whether voluntarily or compulsorily) to put aside personal feelings and self-interest and to manage the university in an ethical manner according to the university's unique laws and characteristics, taking into account the principles of efficiency and effectiveness (Liang, 2014). This should be the wisdom hidden deeply in the modern university system.

The higher education system determines whether a qualified university president can be produced, meanwhile a president of the university impacts the generation of a good university internal system. "To some extent, the most direct and greatest source of administrative intervention that really harms the ideal operation of the university is probably mainly from the internal system design and academic behavior orientation of the university." (Huang, 2011, pp. 115-116). Obviously, the university president's design concept and implementation strategy of the university's internal system are the key factors determining the quality of university governance.

Operational mechanism improved and legal guarantee strengthened in the implementation of the university institution. Good operation mechanism is the guarantee of the validity of the system and the effective weapon to restrain the vicious tendency of humanity. Institutional economists often tell the story of "monks sharing porridge", which eventually sets up a mechanism whereby the porters must be the last to receive porridge. By applying such an approach, it not only solves the problem of fairness and efficiency, but also establishes a fair implementation of the self-control mechanism so that "the executors of the institution can fairly implement it through the internal motivation rather than the external pressure, changing the situation of being reactive into being proactive" (Chen, 2007, pp. 107-109).

As an important part of the institution, law and institution always reflect and complement each other. Modern university institution should be the sum of a series of laws, rules, regulations, methods, and measures to adjust the internal and external relations of the university after "deliberation" and "rational choice" under the current social background. Establishment and improvement of modern university institution should start from two aspects: one is to improve the corresponding regulations, procedures, and methods according to the nature, characteristics, laws, and attributes of the university, and to act in accordance with the regulations; the other is to raise the universal, regular, unique, and fundamental requirements and stipulations in the university's regulations to the level of law according to the actual needs, and to govern the university according to laws.

Implementing the Professionalization of Presidents

Every occupation has its own specialized knowledge, which requires leaders need to grasp the corresponding professional knowledge and carry on the job in the professional idea and method. This is especially suitable for university presidents.

Professionalization of presidents: A successful experience of American universities. One reason for the success of American universities is the professionalization of their presidents which is quite mature. Composed of stakeholders of all aspects of school, School Board and President of the University of the Selection Committee, in different historical periods, choose presidents with different aptitudes to run the university according to the social needs and the needs of the development of the university. From the history of American higher education, we can notice that the same higher education groups will need different types of leadership at different times. These different types of leaders operate professionally.

Through comparative study, some scholars consider the professionalization of the president has the following advantages (Liu, 2012):

- (1) it promotes the change of the university president's perception from the position to the profession;
- (2) it defines the role and identity of university president from experts to educators;
- (3) it adjusts the evaluation goal of university president from academic ability to leadership;
- (4) it expands the path of professional quality from self-improvement to institutional guarantee;
- (5) it realizes the rational return of the president's term of office from the unified appointment to adjusting as needed.

Under the background of "rejuvenating China through education and science", Chinese universities urgently need a professional "school-governing president" who "use the whole heart to be the whole president" (Yu, 2020, pp. 12-17). And the selection of presidents with different abilities and types according to the different development stages of each university is an issue that the university authorities should seriously consider and accurately operate.

Professionalization of presidents: A mature operation mode. The professionalization of president is a mature operation mode in the United States. The selection of university presidents in the United States has the following characteristics:

First, a high degree of autonomy. The selection of university president completely is an autonomous behavior of school; Second, professionalism, with the specialized 'Executive Recruiters' members as consultants to participate in the selection; Third, democracy. The selection committee includes representatives of professors, students and alumni; Fourth, universality. It is carried out in a wide range through the media and the like. (Ji, 2013, pp. 24-27)

The selection system often pays special attention to the quality of the candidate and the ability of leadership and management other than individual scientific research and academic achievements.

There are some corresponding standards in the various stages and links during the professional operation process (Liang, 2014): First, to confirm professional standards and qualifications, which is the core of professionalization. Second, to establish a standardized and procedural selection system, which is the sign of the professionalization of university presidents. Third, to establish a reasonable salary system, which is the guarantee for the professionalization of university presidents. Fourth, to establish a scientific evaluation and supervision mechanism, which is the guarantee of the working process of the president of a professional university. Fifth, to establish a withdrawal system for professional presidents, not just going up but not down, not only going in but not out, so as to ensure the survival of the fittest and the fittest to take charge of the school. Only the professionalization of presidents can solve many problems in the internal governance of colleges and universities.

Professional presidents capable of concentrating on running universities. The university's operation and development desperately needs the education leadership needed by "university" rather than the political officials needed by the "government".

The professionalization of presidents can enable presidents to have the internal needs to abide by professional ethics, fulfill duties and missions, follow the laws of education and management, and effectively promote the solid development of schools, under the guarantee of external systems, to transform the "external pressure" of "others want me to do well" into the "internal motivation" of "I want to do well myself", to integrate personal goals into the overall development of the university, to concentrate, to promote the real development of the university with professional spirit, the realization of external value, and to promote the improvement of internal value through the realization of external value, so as to achieve a win-win situation for both the individual and the university.

Strengthening the Positive Influence and Function of Fine Culture

Culture is like the air and soil in people's social life. We should attach importance to the influence of fine culture on university presidents, and reform and promote the personal qualities and morality of university presidents by reforming and upgrading culture.

To discard decadent cultures. Dr. Salazar Bandy, a Chilean intellectual leader realized that in many developing countries committed to achieve modernization, after a long period of modernization pains and dystocia, the psychology and spirit of the nation are still firmly locked in the traditional consciousness, which poses a serious obstacle to economic and social development (Yin, 1985, pp. 3-4.). In the process of modernization practice and construction, people only pay attention to the exploration and research in the political and economic system, but ignore the attention and care on human beings. History and reality have proved that:

No matter how much a country introduces modern economic system and the management mode, if those who implement these systems and make them into practice do not realize the transformation from traditional people to the modern people in terms of psychology, thought, attitude and behavior, and don't really conform to and promote the sound development of the modern economic system and political management, then the modernization of this country is only illusory. (Yin, 1985, pp. 3-4)

In order to make people "go through a transformation to modernization in psychology, thought, attitude and behavior mode", it is necessary to criticize and abandon the mentality, thought, attitude, and behavior inherent in the decadent traditional culture, establish new concepts, accept and practice the new culture.

To eradicate corruption culture. Corruption is a social and universal problem. In the last century, Mr. Fei Xiaotong put forward the concept of "differential mode of association". China is a typical "acquaintance society". The "acquaintances society" emphasizes the

rule of man rather than the rule of law. Work processing mostly depends on the familiarity and depth of feelings between people. The more intimate they are, the more likely it is used to achieve the profitable goals by the central members. Here, the boundaries of responsibility, rights and interests are blurred, and the rights of others are easy to be violated. In public affairs, seniority, cronyism, favoritism and fraud are easy to occur. (Sun, 2006)

Moreover, "pulling strings" and "running a clique" are the basic means of "maintaining personal morality" in the "acquaintance society" (Wang, 2019, pp. 177-184), which provides fertile soil for corrupt culture.

Corruption is a historical and cultural problem. At a certain stage in historical development or at a certain time in a country, corruption will become the focused problem of the country development. It can be said that "The decline and fall of any dynasty in China is directly related to corruption, which is true for every dynasty"³ (Liang, 2002, pp. 6-7). The culture of corruption deriving from corruption is not only inherited and recognized by generations of Chinese, but also seems to be carried forward from generation to generation.

Corruption is extremely corrosive and dangerous. Some scholars listed the five major hazards of corruption⁴ (He, 2002, pp. 14-19): "harm to the Party", "harm to the people", "harm to the country", "harm to the family", and "harm to oneself". In addition, corruption is of highly corrosiveness and infectiousness. With the influence of corruption culture, the thought and behavior of a considerable number of university leaders are seriously corroded. Obviously, the negative harm of corruption is so serious that we have to curb the corruption and

³ *The Historical Origin of Corruption in China* [EB/OL]. (2008-11-18) [2022-3-31]. <http://bbs1.people.com.cn/post/60/1/2/124593462.html>.

⁴ *Enumerating the Five Hazards of Corruption* [EB/OL]. (2010-9-18) [2022-4-1]. http://news.xinhuanet.com/comments/2010-09/18/c_12582802.htm.

eradicate corruption culture.

To promote the noble culture. Shaping and promoting a noble culture required by the times and practical work has become a necessity for the development of society and universities. To achieve this, we should start with three aspects:

To inherit fine traditional culture. Fine traditional culture is the thought and culture formed in the long course of development of the Chinese nation, which plays an important historical role in national development and individual progress, and is still of positive significance and important value today. Mr. Qian Xun said, in the traditional culture, the spirit of benevolence and unceasing self-improvement; the spirit of independent personality on “neither riches nor honors can corrupt him; neither poverty nor humbleness can make him swerve from principle; and neither threats nor forces can subdue him”; the patriotic spirit of concern for and dedication and loyalty to the country and the people; the highly conscious moral spirit of “Careful in one” and the respect for the old and love for the young, honoring teachers and respecting rules, being cordial, upright, courteous, temperate and complaisant, etc., are all “traditional virtues” of China (Qian, 1996, pp. 21-24). Fine traditional culture is a good theoretical source and practical guidance for university presidents to inherit and carry forward.

To learn from advanced foreign culture. Cultures from different countries and regions are of different characteristics. The foreign advanced concepts and cultures of philosophical theory, ethical thought, management concept, leadership theory, the way of great learning, etc., Aristotle’s thought of “goodness”, many viewpoints and ideas of moral virtue and rational virtue, Kant’s theory of “good will”, “responsibility idea” and “deterministic command” and other theory, Burns, Sergiovanni and many other scholars’ research on the fundamental issues of moral leadership, such as the meaning, the way and the goal of moral leadership, and theoretical inquiry and practical exploration of American university management are of practical need and special significance for China’s university governance, president’s administration of the university, and ruling universities by virtue, etc.

To create noble contemporary culture. Human beings are the product of environment, as well as the molding of culture. The key to human development lies in how well he is educated and civilized. Man’s outlook on world, life, and values determines his level of literacy and civilization. The high level of material civilization does not necessarily mean the high level of spiritual civilization. The modernization of a country is, first of all, the modernization of people. While making painstaking efforts to create material civilization, a person, a nation, or a country must also integrate traditional fine culture and advanced foreign culture to create a matching spiritual civilization and noble culture, so that individuals can have philosophical thought, values, moral sentiments, and volitional quality that match the times and can represent the trend of future development, and realize the transformation from “traditional people” to “modern people”.

Actively Promoting Democratic Governance of Universities

Exclusive power certainly leads to autocracy. Both the nation and the university have been deeply hurt by autocracy. Democracy is the successful experience of universities. Democracy is a necessary condition for university governance.

Autocracy being extremely harmful. As to the harmfulness of autocracy, Tocqueville has a wonderful description:

in the society where people are preoccupied with their own interests, and public morality is completely stifled.

Despotism, instead of fighting this tendency, allows it to go unchecked. People has been inclined to think only of themselves in the first place: despotism now isolates them from one another; People used to be like autumn frost to each other: despotism now freezes them into ice. (Tocqueville, 1997, pp. 34-35)

The educational system has always been an extension of the political system. The thousands of years of authoritarian system in China is also reflected in the fact that the power of the school is monopolized by the principal alone. Cai Yuanpei has a deep understanding of this:

There is a kind of magic power in the old morality, which is determined by laws and regulations. Whether it is deserved or not, there is no room for disobedience and change. The monarch of a country, the head of a family, and the teacher of a private school are so strict in their orders that one has to obey passively, and doesn't have the freedom of his mind to make judgment. The stranglehold of this kind of thinking has lasted for thousands of years, and it still exists today among university presidents. The whole school followed the president's judgment. Therefore, school spirit is in turbulence, the ethos of the country is growing, and the ideology in China is not free, which is far different from those in other countries with developed ideas. (Cai, 1984, p. 47)

Autocracy is opposite to democracy.

Democracy being a successful experience for universities. The ability and energy of the president himself is limited. In order to complete the work of the university and realize the goals of the university, he must rely on the strength and wisdom of the masses, and "in a sense, to fully realize the purpose of the university, the policy of the university must be decided by all the faculty." (Ashby, 1983, p. 92). Despite the diversity of ideas, different objectives, and conflicting opinions, the role of the president is to maintain the balance between centrifugal and centripetal forces at school. Moreover, the president's "success in decision-making does not depend on his mastery of the right knowledge, but on his ability to navigate through the sea of ignorance." (Ashby, 1983, p. 92). Giving play to the wisdom of the masses and carrying out democratic management are the fundamental guarantee of teacher and student satisfaction, school development, and career success.

In European universities there is a tradition of "professor governance". Both Cai Yuanpei and Mei Yiqi recommend the views and roles of professors in school management. Mr. Tu Youguang believes that "professor governance" is not an "exotic product", but the traditional management mode of Chinese higher education since ancient times, which "has both university flavor and Chinese flavor". The reason for the success of Cai Yuanpei and Mei Yiqi's "faculty governance" is that it conforms to the spirit of "democratic centralism" and "mass line" (Tu, 2003, p. 315). Some scholars also believe that democracy, to some extent, can make up for the deficiency and lack of "human nature":

If human nature is good, democracy is the best system, because everyone can make the right decision; if human nature is evil, democracy is more necessary, because only by restraining each other, can the ruler with power be restrained from doing evil. (Yang, 2012)

Democracy being the prerequisite for university governance. Some scholars believe that

there is no good or evil in human nature, but the social and cultural influences after birth can induce people to do good or evil. To be good, we need good social environment and correct education; To be evil, it mainly relies on the system to limit. This is the necessity of democracy. (Yang, 2012)

In fact, the democratic situation and atmosphere in the school are influenced by external factors which do not play a decisive role, and the principal's actions are the key. In this regard, some senior presidents have a deep understanding of this:

Whether the president's power is operated in the direction of university ideals and academic laws, whether he is responsible to professors and students or to higher administrative departments, whether he is an inertial force of education administration that adheres to the principle of higher performance and lower performance, or whether he governs the university based on multiple thinking such as university autonomy, academic freedom, and professors' research, is the boundary between judging whether the president regards himself as a scholar or a bureaucrat. ... Of course, to do so means that they must not only have the quality of educators who stand up for the purpose, personality and academic honor of the university, but also pay the price of responsibility far more than power. Without the spirit of democracy and freedom, it is impossible to build a university with ontological consciousness. (Huang, 2011, pp. 115-116)

Strengthening the Education and Supervision of In-Service Presidents

The university president is the person in power, accepting the education and supervision is the guarantee of the good operation of the power.

Receiving Education and Self-education: The Practical Need of Presidents' Work

The management of universities is increasingly complicated. Because

the development of modern science has made knowledge more and more specialized and the division of academic work more and more detailed, this has made the perspective of experts more and more narrow. Modern social management tends to be technology worship and technology politics, but it often lacks the overall vision and long-term planning, lack profound humanistic care for culture, society, tradition and spiritual life. (Zhang, 2006, p. 90)

Only when "a university president is a leader with a comprehensive view and concept of society, culture and education, and a person with a profound sense of history, ideal and will for the future and strive for it" (Zhang, 2006, p. 90), can he deal with complex situations and lead the university to move forward continuously.

Among the university presidents with a scientific and technological background in China, there are very few who can not only stick to their own scientific and technological studies, but also make some achievements in school management and education theory. Because the vast majority of the presidents are not education majors or have received education unrelated to school governance, plus their limited experience, few presidents can have a comprehensive and profound understanding of the governance, education, and teaching of the university. In addition, each school has its own uniqueness and characteristics. Therefore, it is necessary for in-service presidents to receive relevant education and strengthen self-education.

Strengthening Supervision: The Necessary Guarantee for University Presidents to Exercise Their Power Correctly

The university president will not have the same high level of self-control and self-restraint because of his high academic level and management ability, so the restriction and supervision of the president's power is necessary and inevitable. If, through education and self-education, the president of a university understands that as a president of a university, he is engaged in a noble cause, a cause that needs to be responsible for the future of the country and the nation, a cause in which he can give full play to his wisdom and talent to make far-reaching and even shocking achievements, and then he feels heartfelt "respect" for the presidency, education has played a "guiding" and "driving" role, so that the president under the "pulling" effect is inspired by the "good" side of human nature to rack his brains, spare no efforts, and go forward for school affairs. At the same time, there has to be a way for the president of a university to understand that he is engaged in a high-risk profession, that even though he is the most powerful person in the university, he has his own limits, he has untouchable "absolute prohibitions", so that when he does something inconsistent with his status as a president, he will have a "fear", which plays a role of "supervision" and "restraint".

In terms of how to supervise the power of university presidents, system construction is fundamental, democratic governance is the foundation, and effective implementation is the key. The focus of supervision is on “personnel” and “money”. In the form of supervision, the proportion of third-party supervision should be increased, so that teachers, students, parents, enterprises, and society are stakeholders of different depths and direct supervisors from different perspectives. Let power run in the sun, no matter how dark the figure will be illuminated.

Discussion and Conclusion

Most university presidents want to make a difference in their posts, but there is a strange phenomenon that when they devote themselves to the public interests and the development of the university, they are often unable to get what they want due to the different ideas of the leadership and their own agendas. Realizing that they are unlikely to accomplish much in their short tenure, some presidents simply use their power to benefit themselves or people on their own side. Therefore, for the expectations of university presidents, we can use high-line thinking to encourage and reward; However, the management of university presidents must use bottom-line thinking, restraint, and supervision. Of course, for the restriction and supervision of the power of the university president, many problems need to be further studied and actively discussed. This study is just a primer. Hopefully, more people will participate and more results will emerge in the follow-up research.

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