

Deconstruction and Reconstruction of “Administration” in Local Undergraduate Universities

ZHU Xiaoli^{[a],*}

^[a] School of Foreign Languages of Yancheng Normal University, Yancheng Normal University, Yancheng, China.

*Corresponding author.

Supported by “The fund project of Research on Development and Reform of Yancheng Normal University” in 2021 “Research on the path of optimizing the establishment of internal administrative departments of local universities” (fg202110).

Received 21 August 2021; accepted 15 October 2022
Published online 26 December 2022

Abstract

The “administration” of local undergraduate universities is mainly manifested in the administrative tendency of the management of government to universities and the administrative tendency of the internal management of universities. By deconstructing the common administrative problems and their causes in local undergraduate universities, the path of optimization of administrative management in local undergraduate universities will be explored. The purpose is to reshape the relationship between the government which provides the service and universities which are served. Also, the internal governance structure of administrative power and academic power in local undergraduate universities can be reconstructed.

Key words: Local undergraduate universities; Administration; Deconstruction; Reconstruction

Zhu, X. L. (2022). Deconstruction and Reconstruction of “Administration” in Local Undergraduate Universities. *Higher Education of Social Science*, 23(2), 97-103. Available from: URL: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/hess/article/view/12879>
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/12879>

INTRODUCTION

The Outline of the National Medium and long-range

Educational Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020) comprehensively and profoundly summarizes the experience and existing problems in the development of China’s education, and plans the goals and specific ways of national educational development in the next 10 years. The outline highlights the need to explore and establish the management systems and supporting policies that conform to the characteristics of universities, overcome the administrative tendency, and eliminate the level of administration and model of administrative management. With the promotion of classified reform of national institutions.

The local undergraduate universities refer to those that are funded by the local government and subordinate to the local government. Also, they oriented at the undergraduate level and mainly serve the local economic and social development. How to realize the “de-administration” in local undergraduate universities is an important urgent and realistic problem faced by local educational administrators. It is extremely necessary to “establish a modern school system of running universities according to law, self-management, democratic supervision and social participation. Besides, it’s crucial to build a new relationship between the government, universities and society” (Zhong, 2010).

1. THE CONNOTATION OF “ADMINISTRATION” IN LOCAL UNDERGRADUATE UNIVERSITIES

The characteristics of higher education make administration of universities different from other organizations. The very quality that features its difference is that academic organizations and administration organizations coexist within one system, which means academic power coexist with administrative power. The system of the “administration” of universities, which

follows the rule of political administration, not only goes against the academic abstention but also prevent the universities from developing. Hence, it is meaningful to free education from its poor status and return it with autonomy and respect. Meanwhile, “de-administration” within higher education industry is also helpful for universities to overcome the difficulties in structural reform, regain the academic principle, construct modern education system and improve university’s science and technology development.

The “administration” of local undergraduate universities refers to the similar characteristics to administrative institution in terms of school-running concept, function configuration, operating mechanism, decision-making management, etc. The essence of the administration of local undergraduate universities is that the university has transformed or alienated from an educational academic institution into an administrative bureaucracy. The “administration” of universities can be divided into internal and external aspects. One is that the education authorities restricts and guides the university through administrative measures, and the other is that the universities implement administrative management internally.

The “administration” of government to local undergraduate universities mainly refers to the government’s excessive intervention in the operation of universities. The government penetrates into the work of universities through various of administrative measures, thus affecting the independent autonomy of universities. It is mainly reflected in the examination and approval of enrollment plan of universities, the limitation of professional settings, the management of scientific research and the use of universities’ funds. The “administration” of the internal management of universities refers to the dislocation of power utilization in the process of administrative management of universities, which are full of the color of government administrative institutions, and which use administrative power to replace or interfere with academic power to manage the universities.

2. THE ESSENCE OF DECONSTRUCTION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF “ADMINISTRATION” IN LOCAL UNDERGRADUATE UNIVERSITIES

It’s imperative to launch an innovation of “de-administration” of local undergraduate universities. The essence is to “deconstruct” the current situation of “administration” of local undergraduate universities, rather than to “eliminate” management of “administration”. Internally, it is necessary to eliminate the administrative tendency of management of universities, change the

situation that universities only put administrative power first. Finally, it’s natural to establish an educational management system that centers the scholarship and promotes the administration to serve the scholarship because “the administrative power of universities serves academic power, and is to achieve the organizational goals of universities to develop scholarship, cultivate talents and serve society more effectively”(Yang, 2015). Externally, it is necessary to weaken the administrative tendency of the government to the management of universities, and change the situation that the government manages the university as an extension of the administrative agency. Moreover, it’s important to break relationship of administrative subordination between the university and the government. Therefore, a new relationship of entrustment and agency can be established, which pays attention to decentralization, and let the university realize independent development according to its own laws.

The reconstruction of the “administration” of local undergraduate universities requires the joint efforts of the government, universities, society and other diverse subjects. First of all, the functions of the government should be transformed. To realize the “de-administration”, it’s necessary to clarify scope of authority and responsibility of government management, restore the autonomy of universities. It’s crucial to “use comprehensive application of legislation, allocation, planning, and information services, correct guidance and necessary administrative measures, and reduce unnecessary administrative intervention.”(Yuan, 1991) Second, the internal governance of universities should be improved. It’s necessary to reduce the number of leaders and management institutions, establish a council to make strategic decisions. It’s beneficial to rebuild the relationship between academic and administrative power to implement academic-based administrative management.

3. THE GUIDELINES OF “DE-ADMINISTRATION” IN LOCAL UNDERGRADUATE UNIVERSITIES

Basically, the purpose of the “de-administration” of Chinese universities is to build a scientific and standardized relationship between the government and the university, eliminates the excessive administrative interference of government departments in the internal operation of universities, implement the autonomy of universities, and achieve the upgrading and transformation of the mechanism of management and operation of universities. The general guideline is to guide the reform of “de-administration” of Chinese universities with the scientific concept of development.

Firstly, the core of the reform is “people-oriented”. The goal of running a university should be based on

the cultivation of talents, and the position of running a university should be based on the interests and aspirations of teachers and students who account for the vast majority of the population of a university, rather than the interests of a few leaders. Only in this way can universities never deviate from the right track and live up to the expectations of students, teachers, society and the country.

Specifically, the following three centers should be realized: to begin with, it's imperative to take "scholars as the first center" to ensure that the scholars participate in the internal governance of universities as the main body. As an academic organization, a university must follow the academic criterion. As the main body of the university, the scholars must be in the center of the university. Because the outstanding scholars are the soul of a university and a sign post to lead the university. As a result, it's necessary to center on the scholars to establish a mechanism of governance of a university, which ensures the scholars to participate in major affairs and have greater power of discourse.

Besides, it's crucial to take "students as the second center" to ensure that students participate in the internal governance of universities as the main body. The students are not only the object but also the subject of administration of a university. They are the core factor with the largest number and the largest variable in administration of a university. Therefore, the administration must focus on the central position of students and expand the scope of students' participation in the internal management of the university. On the basis of respecting students' ideas and patiently listening to their voices, it's significant to let the representatives of students fully participate in various governance institutions at the university level, and ensure that students' demands have timely access to senior management.

Finally, it's also significant to take "academic as the third center" to change the marginalization of the academic power. The center of academic power is relative to the center of administrative power that is actually prevailing in universities. The academic nature is the essential attribute of a university, and scholars of a university have the most important voice in university affairs. Let managers establish the administrative concept of "academic as the center", take serving and protecting academic power as their own responsibility in administrative activities, and take talent training and academic progress as the starting point and destination, so as to promote the prosperity and academic development. Therefore, it's necessary to reduce the administrative power. A set of operable measures should be designed, consciously regulate the omniscient administrative power within its scope of activities, so that the administrative power is in its place and seek its own governance instead of misplacing or off siding. Meanwhile, the academic power should be highlighted. The teachers have the right

to evaluate or criticize the policies or decisions of the university to ensure their academic freedom. In fact, the academic power of decision-making of teachers should also be guaranteed to ensure that they can have the freedom to take part in various academic affairs of the university.

Secondly, the fundamental method of reform is to make overall plans and take all factors into consideration. The "de-administration" of Chinese universities will deprive some people of their vested interests, which will inevitably be resisted and obstructed by those who suffer from the loss of interests. Therefore, in the process of "de-administration", it's necessary to carry out the reform "gradually", adhere to the principle of "launching a pilot first while consolidating at every step" and stick to the concept of "key breakthrough, overall promotion" to ensure the stability of the process of reform. The "administration" of Chinese universities can't be deconstructed in disorder or too quickly. As a result, the corresponding measures of reform should be established first step by step. The "de-administration" of Chinese universities is not just an issue of educational reform, but should be carried out simultaneously with social reform.

4. DECONSTRUCTION: ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT SITUATION AND REASONS OF "ADMINISTRATION" IN LOCAL UNDERGRADUATE UNIVERSITIES

Jacque Derrida put forward the theory of "deconstruction" in 1967. He believes that the "deconstruction" is a strategy because "deconstruction is not demolition or destruction." (Jacques, 1997) As a strategy, "deconstruction" is not to eliminate an object, nor to simply decompose an object. Actually, the strategy of "deconstruction" needs to dig deeper into the root of the problem, analyze it, and finally reconstruct it. Therefore, the "deconstruction" is an art of the "reconciliation". Firstly, it's based on "confrontation" and "analysis". Besides, it's "disassembling" due to "dredging". Finally, it's "constructing" for "reconciling". Generally, "deconstruction" ultimately serves "construction".

As a mode of management and a method of governance to ensure the scientific and orderly operation of educational activities of universities, the administrative management of local undergraduate universities conforms to the ideas and laws of higher education. However, the "administration" of universities violates the essence of higher education. It is the generalization or abuse of the administrative management with the basic characteristics of bureaucracy in the management of universities, that is, the university, whose academic affairs are managed as administrative affairs, is managed as an administrative

institution. There are not only the shackles of historical concepts, but also the choices of practical needs. Moreover, there is both the need for internal management and external political pressure.

4.1 The Internal and External Manifestations of “Administration” in Local Undergraduate Universities

4.1.1 The External “Administration” of Local Undergraduate Universities

The “administration” of local undergraduate universities is externally reflected in the administrative intervention of the government. The government does not separate its power of management to universities from its responsibility of serving for universities, which strictly restricts the autonomy of universities in making decisions, the power of policy implementation and the power of internal supervision. The university’s “autonomy in making decisions is violated, usurped and even castrated by various regulations and normative documents” (Yu, 2011). The government regards universities as the administrative institutions, and uses the administrative means to complete the interference and management of affairs of universities.

First of all, there is a strict hierarchy in our universities. For example, China’s universities of the level of “985” belong to the deputy ministerial level while the vocational and technical colleges belong to the deputy department level. Secondly, the leaders of colleges and universities in China are mostly appointed by the competent government departments. Because the colleges and universities in China have more contacts with the government in the process of management, the leaders of colleges and universities must have the ability to communicate with the government, leading to the administrative appointment of leaders of colleges and universities. Thirdly, the government has specific regulations on the specialty setting and the number of enrollment of colleges and universities. For example, the Ministry of Education will release the plan of enrollment of each college and university every year to specify its enrollment indicators. Finally, the government directly intervenes in the employment and post setting of colleges and universities, and stipulates the number of posts with different professional titles.

4.1.2 The Internal “Administration” of Local Undergraduate Universities

Internally, the “administration” of local undergraduate universities is reflected in the deep administration of the universities themselves, which is mainly manifested as “hierarchy of institutions, politicization of management and marginalization of teachers”(Gong, 2013). The universities are managed as administrative institutions and they handle daily affairs according to the provisions and principles of government institutions, with obvious hierarchical characteristics. The internal administration of

universities is reflected in the management of teaching and scientific research personnel according to the bureaucratic system. The bigger the officials are, the stronger the administrative ability is, which has led to the contempt of academia and the neglect of scientific spirit. At the same time, the counselors and teachers of universities, in order to facilitate the management of students, set up student organizations with different positions, such as the student union, to manage them administratively and promote the values of advocating authority.

Under the influence of internal and external administrative forces, “the universities are transformed into administrative institutions, and power is concentrated at the top level of universities”(Xu, 2013). There are five main bodies in local undergraduate universities, namely, the Party committee, the administration, the professors, the faculty and students. Correspondingly, five basic powers, namely, the leadership of the Party committee, the administrative power, the academic power, the democratic power and the autonomy of students, have also been formed. Among them, the leadership of the Party committee guarantees political orientation, democratic management and the autonomy of students reflect democratic participation. Besides, the administrative management and academic management are the specific implementation and embodiment of educational functions of universities, and also are the backbone of the powerful system of universities. Therefore, these two powers need to be deconstructed.

The power of administrative management mainly refers to a series of transaction management and powers of resource allocation set by universities to ensure the operation of the organization and implement the overall will, with positions and levels as the rank and vertical constraints as the performance. It mainly includes: development- planning power, policy-making power, personnel power, power of financial management, power of resource allocation, power of logistics support, power of inspection and evaluation, power of transaction coordination, power of external liaison, etc.

The power of academic management mainly refers to the judgment and decision made by universities on academic affairs in the process of realizing their own educational functions. This kind of decision is more dependent on a power and influence generated by professors, scholars or academic researchers based on their own knowledge, skills and academic authority. What’s more, the power of academic management is mainly embodied in professional and academic fields such as curriculum, talent training, discipline planning, teacher evaluation, etc.

4.2 The Causes for the “Administration” of Local Undergraduate Universities

4.2.1 The Historical Causes

Firstly, under the influence of traditional ideas such as “official orientation” and the belief that “a good scholar

will make an official”, the researchers have formed a reverence for power and status, and do not concentrate on academic research, leading to a decline in the level of higher education; Secondly, influenced by the traditional concept of “the rule of men”, the administrators of universities first consider the interpersonal relationship and then the method of carrying out their work. As a result, their work of management is highly administrative; Thirdly, the reform of educational “de-administration” in history is not thorough, which has intensified the process of development of higher educational administration.

4.2.2 The Internal Causes

Firstly, the power and responsibility of the organization of university management are not clear. The administrative department has transferred a lot of work to the academic department, which has seriously hindered the researchers in the process of academic research and seriously wasted human resources; Secondly, the administrative department occupies the top position of the pyramid in universities, with absolute advantages in salary and bonus, as well as the evaluation and selection of the best. Consequently, the incentive system is virtually non-existent, which can not fully mobilize the enthusiasm of teachers of universities, causing the efficient development of universities stagnant; Thirdly, the efficiency of management of universities is generally not high due to the great difference in the educational level of administrative personnel; Fourthly, the internal academic organizations in universities are not perfect. The construction of academic organizations is subject to administrative power, and the independence and autonomy of academic organizations are limited. This kind of defect not only makes the organizational structure of universities out of balance, but also makes academic organizations lose their autonomy in academic affairs of universities.

4.2.3 The External Causes

Firstly, the idea of administrative standard generated by the external administrative system’s performance of administrative functions and the exercise of administrative power has gradually penetrated into the interior of colleges and universities. The government and its competent departments have infiltrated the fields of running schools, scientific research, employment and other fields of colleges and universities by formulating and implementing management policies, formulating educational and academic evaluation standards and other means, eroding the academic standard of colleges and universities; Secondly, under the influence of the planned economy system, the government has taken over the management of colleges and universities, completed the allocation of various resources, and promoted the development of university administration; Thirdly, the excessive dependence of universities on the government has caused themselves lose the self-autonomy in every aspect. Moreover, the centralized allocation of educational

resources by the educational department has damaged the academic freedom and reduced the academic value.

5. RECONSTRUCTION: THE OPTIMIZED PATH OF “ADMINISTRATION” IN LOCAL UNDERGRADUATE UNIVERSITIES

5.1 The Reconstruction of Local Service-oriented Government

The core of management of the government to the local undergraduate universities is to properly handle the relationship between the three aspects of the release, management and service. It’s crucial to “clarify the authority and responsibility of the management of government and the boundary between the government and the universities”(Chen, 2010). The government should position the its relationship with universities in service and cooperation, and the starting point and destination of administrative management should be to ensure the autonomy of universities and improve the efficiency of running schools. There are three aspects to accelerate the construction of service-oriented government.

Firstly, the functions of government should effectively be transformed. Based on the Higher Educational Law and other relevant laws and regulations, the rights and responsibilities of the government and universities should accurately be sorted out. Besides, the boundaries of their respective responsibility should be clarified. Moreover, the role of the government as a “service provider” should be defined. Generally, the government should first change their power of regulation into power of service, and then strengthen its the supply level in many aspects such as the infrastructure for running universities, the standards of training talents, mechanisms of sharing information and so on to improve its service performance.

Secondly, it’s significant to further promote the process of streamlining the government and delegating the authorities. The government should reduce the micro-control of higher education, gradually implement the autonomy of universities in the construction of discipline, the setting of specialty, the academic research and other aspects, and vigorously strengthen the dominant university-running position. The process of streamlining the government and delegating the authorities does not mean giving up the management of the government to the universities. Actually, the government should strengthen its macro-management to the educational policies, the plans of development, the formulation of standards of universities and other aspects to ensure the direction of training talents in universities.

The third is to help the universities improve their ability to accept the power. At present, the state has delegated the power to evaluate the Professional Title, the power of setting up specialties, and the power of

setting up internal institutions, the power of further expanding the university-running autonomy. On the one hand, the government should strengthen the supervision of the use of decentralized power, on the other hand, it should help the universities “connect and use the power well”, and then enhance the efficiency of performance of administrative organizations and the academic organizations in universities. As a result, the power and responsibility delegated by the government can be stabilized and used well, which better reflects the “service-oriented” characteristics of the service-oriented government and also lays a good foundation for the delegation of other powers.

5.2 The Reconstruction of Paradigm of Service-oriented Management in Local Undergraduate Universities

The paradigm of service-oriented management of local undergraduate universities refers to a model that introduces the concept of “Administration Services” into the administrative management of universities. It takes the needs of teachers, students and other stakeholders as the guidance, achieves the goal of cooperation and co-governance through a mechanism of democratic consultation, and provides the services of high quality for the teaching and scientific research of the whole university. Through improving the internal governance of the university, it’s natural to “build a new structure of management of the university based on the principle of separation of administrative power, educational power and academic power”(Xiong, 2016).

5.2.1 The Confirmation of Power: Clarifying the Boundary between Administrative Power and Academic Power

The reform of “de-administration” does not simply deny the administrative functions of the university, because as “the objective existence of an administrative organization, the administrative team has improved the efficiency of management of the university, and the administrative power also has the basis of legitimacy for its existence”(Wu, 2012). Therefore, the key of the reform is to standardize administrative power and establish the authority of administrative organizations, so as to reduce the excessive interference of administrative power in academic power. It is necessary to restrict the power of the administrative organization within the university, and make clear that the administrative organization of the university is the essence of serving teaching, scientific research, teachers and students. For the latter, it’s significant to further enhance the status of academic power. What’s more, the academic community should have the right to dialogue with administrative forces. The key is to re-examine the role of the academic committee in the governance of the university, confirm its authoritative position in academic affairs on the power of decision, supervision, execution and accountability, and effectively

guarantee the checks and balances between academic power and administrative power.

5.2.2 The Orientation of Role : Reshaping the Subjects of Diversified Governance

The governance of university shows a trend of diversification. Core actors, professors and teachers, students, board of directors and other subjects should become an important part of in the process of governance of university. As the core actors in the university, “the president of university is centered on academic leadership while secretary of the Party Committee of university is centered on political leadership.”(Yan, 2015) They should cooperate and support each other, and work together to complete the dual tasks of scientific research and daily management. The professors and teachers are the practitioners of the spirit of autonomy of university and the builders of the free environment. The establishment of committees of professors and teachers can improve the rationality of the allocation of resource such as the professional setting, the talent introduction, the evaluation of professional title, and the funds of scientific research. As Clark Kerr pointed out: “The participation of faculty members in the common governance may reduce the progress of the decision-making process, but at the same time it ensures a more thorough discussion and provides some order and stability for the university.” (Robert, 2004) The board of directors, alumni association, council, etc. are the organizations with a certain universality, playing an irreplaceable role in the formulation of strategy, the major decision-making and financing. They can play a role of buffer as an intermediary between the government and universities.

5.2.3 The Reconstruction of Mechanism: Expanding the Space of Governance of Universities

The governance of university needs to be supported by the participation of a variety of mechanisms.

Firstly, a mechanism of democratic decision-making should be established. It’s crucial to “make scientific decisions by using the model of collective decision-making and the system of responsibility of leadership. Besides, it’s significant to give full play to the crystallization of the collective wisdom of committees at all levels and the advantages of facilitating the implementation of individual decisions of the leaders.”(Mou, 2014) At the same time, it’s necessary to gradually increase the presence and the right of professors, teachers, students, alumni and other stakeholders to speak in the process of decision-making, which can ensure that the decision-making is reasonable, beneficial and effective.

Secondly, a bargain mechanism for interest should be established. By innovating the channels of the expression of stakeholders, the dual communication between the governor and the governed can be realized, so as to ease the conflicts of interest and eliminate the misconduct in the equal and effective dialogue and communication.

Thirdly, a mechanism of disclosure of information should be established. Promoting the disclosure of information is an important part of deepening the reform of the mechanism of participation of university and building a service-oriented university. It's also an important measure to strengthen the supervision and restriction of administrative power and prevent the corruption from the source. The mechanism of disclosure of information should include: the disclosure of information, the disclosure of affairs, the disclosure of decision-making, the disclosure of power, the disclosure of procedure and so on.

Fourthly, a mechanism of accountability should be established. Because responsibility is the foundation of any process of governance, it's important to give full play to the accountability of the role of the government, the board of directors, the council, the association of alumni, students and teachers as well as other subjects. Besides, it's necessary to establish a system of accountability of the type of network crossing. What's more, it's also of great necessity to force the authenticity of responsibility, with the independence of the subjects, so as to prevent the abuse of power.

Generally, the trend of "de-administration" of the local undergraduate universities can be concluded as followings: firstly, it's crucial to improve the educational legislation so that the universities will have more rights of autonomy in running schools; secondly, in order to protect the autonomy of universities, the government needs to make a bigger concession in policy; thirdly, it's significant to balance the academic power and the administration power; fourthly, it's inseparable to let the society take part in the administration of the universities.

CONCLUSIONS

The "administration" of local undergraduate universities should be "broken first and then established". On one hand, the "Breaking" means a mode of gradually abolishing the actual administrative level and administrative management, including how universities and the government cancel the tendency of administration. On the other hand, the "Establishment" means to actively and boldly explore the establishment of a management system that conforms to the characteristics of universities, and issue the corresponding supporting policies. The management of the government to the universities has changed from control to service. The purpose is to ensure that the internal management of universities truly serves the development of teaching and research in the universities. Moreover, it's crucial to fully guarantee the rights of participation of academic organizations as well as teachers and students in the universities, and allows social organizations to give full play to the role of supervision and evaluation of the universities. Only in this

way can we better stimulate the innovation and vitality of universities as academic organizations, and give full play to the functions of teaching, scientific research and social services of universities.

Therefore, the essence of the administrative reform is not only just to cancel the administrative rank, but more to standardize the administrative power and supervise the administrative power to fulfill responsibilities and abide by the limitation. Meanwhile, in the academic field, the universities should also set up a set of evaluation system independent of the outside administrative power. Let the academic institutions distinguish between high standards and low ones according to their own evaluation system and win its respect according to its contribution to the universities. Only in this way, can academic power get rid of the bondage of administrative power and can administrative reform obtain powerful guarantee.

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