On the Currently Existing Problems and Corresponding Solutions of the Identification Method of Impoverished College Students

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Abstract: Funding for impoverished college students is an important criteria for assessment of education fairness due to that the precondition and key point of such funding lie in the accurate identification and ranking of impoverished students. However, there are, in practices, so many problems in the identification method of such because of the influence of ideas and thoughts, social environment, identification standards, operation mechanism and other factors. This article aims at exploring new solutions to these problems by analyzing the problems in the identification method of impoverished students and reasons therefore.

Keywords: Impoverished college students; Identification method; Quantitative index; Information integration

1. Introduction

Since the beginning of 2007, China has strengthened and improved the financial support for scholarships and student funding, which drives colleges to explore and establish respective identification method for impoverished students that is in consistency with local situations and practical necessities on the basis of existing identification mechanism. Therefore, with the development of over a decade, a relatively mature identification mechanism has been formed, and such mechanism has played a critical role in the funding for impoverished students.

However, it is undoubtedly that there are still many problems in the identification mechanism, and it does not completely solve the key problem, i.e. how to accurately recognize and rank impoverished students, and finally causes disputes and contradicts among students and teachers, and have negative effects on the harmonious campus relationship and education fairness. Therefore, it is significantly important to form and establish a scientifically effective and fair identification system for impoverished students with a view to guaranteeing the successful implementation of funding for impoverished students, enhance harmonious campus relationship and realizing education fairness.

2. Currently Existing Problems in the Identification Method for Impoverished College Students

2.1. Ambiguity in identification standards and lack of unified standards

As specified by the education department, a student in impoverished family, or the average monthly living costs thereof is equal to or less than the minimum living standard provided by the local government and that has difficulties in maintaining normal study and living expenses shall be recognized as impoverished student. However, the aforesaid definition is just a qualitative description, and the identification standards of impoverished student is still an ambiguous concept. In addition, the educational administrative department of China has not formulate a specific and convincing digitized standards yet. It is hard for colleges to establish definite standards without deep understanding of the economic development level of the places where students thereof live.[1] The lack of specific workable quantitative index creates large space for discretion, leading to different understanding and implementation of impoverishment ranking standards, and finally causes pro forma consistency in standard identification method but unfairness in practice.

2.2. Doubts in authenticity of identification basis

The knowledge and understanding of students' basic family economic conditions is the primary condition for identification of impoverished students, while in practices, information concerning students' family economic conditions are collected mainly from the college students, family condition survey and other relevant materials which will be filled in by students themselves. The examination and review of the information so collected by the aforesaid means will mainly be depended upon the basic civil administration department of the place where the student concerned lives. After examination

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International Journal of Intelligent Information and Management Science
ISSN: 2307-0692, Volume 7, Issue 3, June, 2018

and review, such governmental department will issue various proof of impoverishment, and afterwards, college of such student will get information concerning the student's family economic conditions through such proof, after which college will give a comprehensive assessment based on the student' application and relevant proof materials as well as the student' daily consumption.[2] Though such identification method seems fair and efficient, it requires authenticity of relevant materials. Practically speaking, there are inevitably many problems in the authenticity of such proof materials. First of all, most students will, more or less, tend to exaggerate the level of impoverishment. Secondly, non-impoverished students with rich social resources will have many channels to obtain proof of impoverishment. Finally, most local civil administration departments do not place enough attention on the authenticity of impoverishment proof materials. All of the above factors jointly cause the inconsistency of proof materials with the actual conditions.

2.3. Non-standardization of identification process

The currently applied identification method of impoverished students integrates the grade-, school- and college-review, which seemingly cautious and democratic, but greatly influenced by human factors. To be specific, there are two aspects. Firstly, the first review is carried out by the assessment panel comprised of counselor and some students. But such composition is not rational enough because most members of the panel are student leaders and representatives who are unable to efficiently access to the actual conditions of impoverished students and are prone to make assessment based on their individual impression or singly on impoverishment proof materials with respect to unfamiliar students, meanwhile, the factor of "relationship" will largely impact the assessment for people are apt to provide "convenience" for familiar students. Secondly, the existing school- and college-review procedures are under an unenforceable framework, the function of which is purely to give approval for list of impoverished students submitted by relevant grade without sequent supervision and examination. So the whole mechanism does not function normally.[3]

3. Analysis of Causes of Currently Existing Problems in Identification of Impoverished College Students

3.1. Regional and individual difference

Nowadays, the identification of impoverished family is not clearly defined and in lack of quantitative index for the reason that impoverishment is a counter-concept varying due to differences in regional development, individual consumption level and consumption habits.

Besides, relevant documents promulgated by the State Council are widely applicable directions for each college in carrying out of identification. Nonetheless, colleges fail to formulate definite and clear standards respectively in accordance with the regional and practical conditions due to their dedication to scientific researches and education and the high costs and workload as well as requirements of constant update. As a result, most colleges have not formulate effective and efficient identification standards, and finally causes the existence of different standards.

3.2. Reversal choice caused by information asymmetry

Since the identification of impoverishment is of great complexity and involves so many aspects, and both the places where students coming from and colleges are unable to completely understand the students' actual family conditions, some students without impoverishment attempt to take chances to misrepresent or conceal relevant information by taking advantage of the information asymmetry. Besides, some students are in excessive pursuit of money and cheat for funding for impoverishment via obtaining false proof through social relationships and resources. The aforementioned situation will cause real impoverished families unable to get impoverishment proof in case of quota limitations and finally results in unfairness in funding.

3.3. Complicated college situations and cumbersome impoverishment funding work

In order to simplify the impoverishment identification process, many schools and grades respectively form an assessment penal with student leaders which causes the so-called democracy misinterpreted. The closed identification process and non-anonymous material assessment will create hidden and unknown actions. In addition, the personnel of schools and colleges has limited capacity and resources, therefore it is impossible for them to carry out supervision on and review of impoverished students. The high review and supervision costs and information asymmetry among colleges, banks, civil administration departments and other institutions also pose obstructs for review and supervision.

4. Improvement Measures for Identification of Impoverished College Students

4.1. To quantify the standards for identification of impoverished college students

Colleges shall, on the basis of actual regional economic situations, subsistence allowances of students, professional consumption and other aspects, formulate a set of specific standards for the reference of schools and grades in identification of impoverished students and, at

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International Journal of Intelligent Information and Management Science
ISSN: 2307-0692, Volume 7, Issue 3, June, 2018

the same time, stick to dynamic update to advance with the times. In general, the standards for each student to identify his/her family as impoverished vary with the regional development level of his/her place of residence. Therefore, various evidences for financial difficulties obtained based on the family status of students are not entirely reliable. Colleges shall, for the ease of comprehensively inspecting the efficiency and effectiveness of funds for impoverished college students from a quantitative perspective, establish a qualitative and quantitative index system for identification of impoverished students. The index system shall, in addition to some special indexes, center on the economic and social conditions of the students concerned and their families to reflect the human resources, material resources, financial resources, natural resources, social resources and other aspects thereof.[4] Colleges shall, based on the nature, structure, management and debts of family, health conditions of family members, personal consumptions and other factors, establish quantitative assessment method for impoverishment level and classification method for impoverished students and formulate unified assessment standards. Furthermore, colleges shall also incorporate the learning performance, thriftiness, moral quality and other aspects of students into the assessment index system to ensure the funds for impoverished students play its due role.

4.2. To establish dynamic management record of impoverished student to realize information integration

On the one hand, colleges shall use the "Internet plus" mode to establish an information integration mechanism based on college, bank and the Ministry of Civil Affairs at the horizontal level and college, school and grade at the vertical level and construct a comprehensive, real-time and dynamic information network by virtue of the Internet, with a view to realizing information integration among all institutions. On the other hand, colleges shall enhance the collection of daily information of impoverished students to understand the students' thoughts and mental health status by communication between the counselor and the impoverished students, to understand students' daily consumption level by broad contacts of the counselor, student leaders, dormitory leaders and otherwise with the impoverished students and to pay close attention to the health condition of the impoverished students through medical records including the health examination results, medical conditions and otherwise, and to increase funds for impoverished students with relatively poor health. On this basis, colleges shall establish dynamic management archives for impoverished students to lay the foundation for identification, inspection and supervision of impoverished students and provide relevant information concerning campus card consumption, bank card consumption, family structure and otherwise [5] and shall formulate relevant management methods and systems to ensure the accuracy, promptness and effectiveness of archival information.

4.3. To build a professional team for impoverishment identification

Where human and financial support permits, colleges shall establish professional work team, provide staff with unified knowledge background of psychology, sociology, management, mathematics and otherwise in accordance with unified standards to specialize in identification of impoverished students and, at the same time, shall employ experts in mathematical modeling, investigation and other relevant fields as counselors of the identification work to be responsible for directing the establishment of analytical model of information concerning impoverished students, the construction of software system, and the sample selection, summary and analysis of field research to ensure the fairness, uniformity and scientificity of the identification work.

In case of no human and financial support, as the assessment standards adopted by the assessment panel are easily influenced by various human factors due to the relatively high mobility of group members during the specific identification process of impoverished college students, therefore it is essential to constantly improve the professional level of the assessment panel. Under such circumstance, it is extremely necessary to enhance the training of assessment panel members. However, in working practices, colleges often focus on making a series of instructions for applicants of impoverished student identification, but the training for student assessors participating in identification of impoverished students is far from enough and relevant training mechanisms and contents are to be established and perfected. Counselors in charge of organizing assessment shall implement training especially for such student assessors in accordance with unified training method and identify assessment basis and standards to prevent members of assessment panel from making arbitrary scores based on personal relationship. In the meanwhile, the full-time counselors in charge of identification of impoverished students shall also gradually improve their professional level and accept the training and examination concerning student identification policies carried out by the college fund management center.

4.4. To strengthen the ideological education of applicant of impoverished student identification

Relevant staff or counselors in charge of impoverished student identification shall, before the applicants voluntarily submit the application materials, carry out psychological guidance and honesty education for students

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International Journal of Intelligent Information and Management Science
ISSN: 2307-0692, Volume 7, Issue 3, June, 2018

concerned.[6] Psychological education can help the really impoverished students who are not willing to submit application materials due to psychological factors like self-abasement overcome psychological barriers, which is helpful for students to establish the awareness of gratitude and self-improvement, realize both spiritual and material support for impoverished students and make better use of the funds for impoverishment. The honesty education may contribute to eliminating the fluke mind of students who want to cheat in the identification process and alerting such students by informing them of the consequences of submitting false materials.

4.5. To perfect the examination, supervision and punishment mechanism

Colleges shall strengthen their supervision on impoverished student identification and randomly select a certain proportion of impoverished students in the lists of impoverished students assessed and determined by grades and schools to reexamine and supervise the actual situations of impoverishment. Firstly, colleges shall, based on the information provided by archives of impoverished students, examine the authenticity of impoverishment information by conducting field investigation on the actual family situations thereof; secondly, colleges shall, upon the issuance of funds, implement supervision on the consumption of such funds by the impoverished students. With respect to "faking impoverishment", colleges shall impose sanctions including but

not limited to cancellation of qualification as impoverished student, return of funds for impoverishment, cancellation of qualification for promotion and relevant punishment such as criticism, and self-review on assessors of relevant schools causing such omission.

5. Acknowledgment

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