

Academic Orientation: Governance Enlightenment of School Affairs Decision- making in the Republic of China

Taking peking university and tsinghua university as examples

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Abstract: The decision-making of university affairs should follow the principle and logic of academic orientation, which is also decided by educational and academic institutions themselves. The university affairs decision-making in the Republic of China was carried out by the president in charge and in the school academic committee and other power institutions under the system of professor management, basically following the principle and logic of academic orientation and reflecting the university decision-making mode and value criteria of “academic orientation” and the essential attribute of university as an academic institution. At present, in order to carry out governance reform of universities in China, we should discuss and summarize the decision-making of university affairs in the Republic of China, and provide an effective template for the return of academic orientation in universities.

Keywords: School affairs decision-making; Governance implications; Academic orientation

1. Introduction

At present, China’s university system is undergoing academic-based reform. The modernization of university governance capacity and governance system has become the core of university reform, and the change of internal governance in universities has received special attention. Under the background of student-oriented mainstream, new regulations of colleges and universities have been formulated and implemented, academic institutions have been established and perfected, and new governance systems, such as second-class professors’ conferences have been tried to make the internal governance of colleges and universities more and more perfect. However, from the current effect, most of them are partial improvements and mere formal changes, which is mainly due to the fact that colleges and universities have not yet really established an academic-based decision-making paradigm for school affairs. Therefore, from a historical point of view, this paper makes an in-depth analysis of the decision-making system and practice of universities in the Republic of China, taking Peking University and Tsinghua University as examples to seek governance enlightenment.

2. The Mode of School Affairs Decision - making in the Period of the Republic of China

The value orientation and mode of university affairs decision-making in the Republic of China are usually influenced by the rights and status of relevant stakeholders. The same is true of the current situation of colleges and universities in China. However, most of the colleges and universities in the Republic of China established a mechanism for professors to govern their schools, which was the mode of decision-making in the mainstream colleges and universities of the Republic of China and provided a basic institutional framework for their subsequent decision-making in school affairs or university governance. Therefore, choosing the main case of university affairs decision-making in the Republic of China - the creation and establishment of professors school management system is the best choice for the development of school affairs decision-making in our country at present. According to the development history of China’s colleges and universities, the mode of professor governing was established at Cai Yuanpei’s suggestion and implemented from 1917 to 1927. Later, Tsinghua and other universities also practiced the mode of professor governing. According to the formulation, implementation and inheritance of the mode of professor governing, it is the best case selection path for colleges and universities in China to analyze and study the mode, characteristics and value criteria of school affairs decision-making in mainstream colleges and universities in the Republic of China.

3. The Status of Professor Governing System in Peking University from 1917 to 1927

In 1917, University Order of Peking University stipulated that the professor governing has not been applied to practice. Cai Yuanpei systematically designed the management system of Peking University on the basis of his understanding of the management system of foreign universities, especially in Germany, and then used his principal identity and personal charm to carry out decisive decision-making on the school affairs, which was embodied in his leading reform of Peking University: First, in 1917, the Council was re-established according to University Order and was composed of two representatives of principals, senior students, chief faculty members and professors from various disciplines, "to give representatives of most professors to decide legislative matters"; Second, organize teaching committees in various disciplines, professors and the director of the public teaching committee serve as the educational administration. Third, the Executive Council, the Academic Affairs Council and the General Affairs Office are the highest administrative and executive body of the school (executing the resolution of the school council), the leading management body of the school academic affairs (composed of the department heads and their elected dean) and the personnel and affairs. At this point, the management system and power structure of professors in universities in Beijing have basically taken shape. Earlier, the situation where a few people, such as principals and supervisors, took sole charge of school affairs decision-making has been replaced by a decentralized system in which professors were the main body and different institutions exercised various decision-making and management powers in form: the legislative, administrative, educational and general affairs powers of the school were exercised by the Senate, the executive Council and its professional committees, the academic conference headed by the dean, and the general affairs office headed by the general affairs director.

As a matter of fact, not only did Cai Yuanpei's decision to establish a professor system during his tenure as president and the subsequent reform of Peking University protect and expand the rights and interests of the professorship group to a considerable extent, but also his decision on school affairs attached great importance to the participation of professors and the absorption of their reasonable opinions or suggestions. For example, Shen Yinmo, a professor at Peking University, recalled his contacts with President Cai, saying that when Cai came to Peking University to consult him on school affairs, Shen immediately put forward three suggestions to Cai, namely, to guarantee the funding of Peking University, to set up a council according to the school articles of association, and to send teachers and students to study abroad,

which were all accepted by Mr. Cai. It can be seen that President Cai Yuanpei fully consulted and listened to professors' opinions and suggestions in school affairs decision-making to create a professor governing system and carry out university reform accordingly. This style of leadership and style of work is in itself a powerful example of professor governing the university.

4. The Situation of Professor School Management System in Tsinghua University during the Republic of China

During the period of the Republic of China, only when the president could comply with the wishes of teachers and students in Tsinghua University and respect the tradition of professor governing of Tsinghua University could he ensure the stability of his position as president of Tsinghua University. Otherwise, he was not able to stand or be expelled or forced to resign.

In terms of the management system in Tsinghua University, the Tsinghua School Organization Outline adopted in April of 1926 emphasized "the principle of teaching and learning in organization", which was reviewed and agreed by the leaders of President Cao Yunxiang and Dean Mei Yiqi of Tsinghua University at that time. The National Tsinghua University Regulations promulgated by the Ministry of Education in June of 1929 obviously strengthened the government control over universities, strengthened the power of university presidents and relatively greatly suppressed the power of professors. Luo Jialun, the first president of Tsinghua University, insisted on governing the university according to the latter, which violated the tradition of professor governing of Tsinghua University and caused dissatisfaction among teachers and students, laying the groundwork for Luo's future dismissal. Since May of 1930, after teachers and students in Tsinghua University "expelled Luo (Jialun)" and "rejected Qiao (Wanxuan)", there was no president in Tsinghua University for 11 months, and all school affairs were handled by the school council. Since the members of the Council were elected by the Council of Professors, the school affairs of Tsinghua University were almost entirely under the control of professors.

In November of 1931, after the National Government appointed Mei Yiqi, the former dean of Tsinghua University, as president of Tsinghua University, the issue of the basis of President Mei's school management system became the primary issue of his school affairs decision-making. Out of respect for the tradition of Tsinghua University that professor governing and the consideration for the overall development of academic undertakings in school education, Mei Yiqi still chose to govern Tsinghua University according to the previous Tsinghua School Organization Syllabus to maintain the fundamental system and power structure of professor governing, thus ensuring the rapid stability of Tsinghua University

after three years of turmoil and the rapid development of academic undertakings in the future. In fact, in the inaugural speech, he clearly put forward “master theory” point of view: “the so-called college does not mean that there is a building, but that there is a master”; “We should respect professors in school.” There is no doubt that, to a considerable extent, President Mei Yiqi’s deep understanding of the strategic value of the master (professor) to the development of colleges and universities constituted the conceptual foundation for him not to covet the power of the president but to consciously comity to professors and to follow Tsinghua University’s tradition that professor governing. On the other hand, Mei Yiqi’s respect for Tsinghua University’s tradition that professor governing (which has won the support of teachers and students in the school) also constituted an important internal cause for his decades of governing Tsinghua University (including Tsinghua University of Taiwan after going there).

5. Enlightenment of Governing School Affairs Decision-making in Mainstream Universities of the Republic of China

At present, the highly administrative governance and operation of colleges and universities, the power structure in schools with strong administrative power and weak academic power, and even the tendency of administrative leadership and even “all - in - one administration” at the level of resource allocation have all shown a tendency of normalization or even institutionalization.

Through the analysis of the decision-making system of school affairs in the Republic of China and the case of school affairs decision-making, we have obtained the following three enlightenments.

Academic orientation was the value criterion of school affairs decision-making in the Republic of China. In the mainstream universities of the Republic of China, university professors naturally constituted the strategic stakeholders and the core subjects of internal governance of universities, and their status and role were affirmed. From the perspective of the decision-making model of school affairs in the Republic of China, the presidents’ awe and support for academics and scholars, as well as the sacred concept and supreme principle of academics were all reflected.

The internal management system and internal governance of colleges and universities are models for professors. The key point of the management of school affairs by the professor is decision-making, and the decision-making core of school affairs is decision-making of academic affairs. Therefore, in the decision-making of school affairs, professors should occupy the core governance position, and their decision-making power cannot be ignored. At present, many scholars think that the concept of “professors research” restricts the position and role of profes-

sors in governance, which is due to the academic-based reform and the return of the standard in colleges and universities. Judging from the operation of school affairs decision-making in the Republic of China, professors have played the role of the core governing body by participating in school affairs decision-making. This kind of internal governance based on the will of professors (in essence, it is also the logic and law of academic education) has fundamentally guaranteed the enthusiasm, initiative and creativity of the teachers’ groups, thus giving birth to brilliant academic achievements in education in the universities of the Republic of China. Therefore, the improvement of the internal governance structure of Chinese colleges and universities seems to draw on the essence of the value of professors governance to ensure the core and leading position of professors in academic governance, so as to ensure the “professional principle” of academic governance and the “academic standard principle” of university governance.

Academic orientation cannot be without supporting system and culture. The academic orientation of the universities in the Republic of China fully shows that it was supported by the mode of professor governing and the concept of academic supremacy. In the exploration of modern university system construction in China, various academic institutions have been set up in mainland colleges and universities, but the effect on promoting academic orientation is not obvious, mainly because some serious “vulgarization” alienation from organizational image, power structure to organizational culture has taken place in current colleges and universities. Therefore, in the internal reform of our country’s colleges and universities, we must not only change the structure of university governance, but also cultivate university governance culture. If we ignore the cultivation of university governance culture and only reform the decision-making power of college and universities from the institutional aspect, it will be difficult for us to achieve the goal of university reform - academic orientation.

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