

Harmonious university construction demands internal and external endeavors

LUO Xiang-yang¹, ZHI Xi-zhe¹, LU Jin²

(1. Institute of Higher Education, Northwestern Polytechnical University, Xi'an Shaanxi 710072, China;

2. Faculty of Education, Hubei University, Wuhan Hubei 430062, China)

Abstract: Universities play an irreplaceable role in the process of harmonious society construction. It becomes a critical task to construct harmonious university because of strain relations among universities, governments and society, and internal unbalance of universities. To construct harmonious university demands internal and external endeavors: autonomy and cooperation are the foundation and way of external harmony of university; equilibration and coordination afford fundamentality and guarantee to internal harmony of university.

Key words: harmonious university; autonomy; cooperation; balance; coordination

1. Harmony, harmonious society and harmonious university

Being a kind of ancient thought sources, harmony is the core of the traditional Chinese culture, in which the concept of harmony not only taken as an artistic and external pursuit of beauty appreciation, but also raised up to the height of political ideas, ethnics and the universe. Harmony is not only a kind of evaluation in history and in reality. What's more important is that it is a kind of expectation to the future world. This kind of harmony in pursuit of ideology gives the plain life the hope and provides the imperfect real life the perfect contrast to encourage people to run for the perfectness (XIAO Hai-tao, 1999).

In the past twenty-five years, the policy of reform and opening up has made China more prosperous than ever before. The system of socialist market economy has been gradually improved, the socialist material civilization, political civilization and spiritual civilization have been continuously enforced, comprehensive national strength has been improved drastically, the living of people has been ameliorated markedly, social politics has been maintained stably. At the same time, although per-capital income is four-fold growth, and the Gini coefficient is two-fold growth, there are some problems that we need to pay attention to and reflect on in China. The rural basic medical system has broken up, while the social security system is not established yet. More and more people are out of work, the urban poor appear again. Different areas developed unevenly in education, arbitrary collection of fees and dishonorable conduct in academic field frequently appear in newspaper etc. All these problems and conflicts are always threatening the development and stability of our society and constraining the development and happiness of us individuals. Therefore, China, which is in the condition of unprecedented social reform need harmony, that is to say, building harmonious society, has become the main goal of modern China.

LUO Xiang-yang, lecturer of Institute of Higher Education, Northwestern Polytechnical University; research fields: education institution, higher education.

ZHI Xi-zhe, director of Research Office, professor of Institute of Higher Education, Northwestern Polytechnical University; research field: higher education.

LU Jin, graduate student of Faculty of Education, Hubei University; research field: basic theory of education.

Essentially, education is the reproduction of human being and the source of the social civilization process. Education does not only produce laborers meeting the social demands, but also produce specific social structure and relation. Therefore, education is great importance in the construction of a harmonious society. University, which aims at explore, pursuit, protect and spread truth and knowledge, undertakes the mission to guard social value, to standardize social behavior. University, as an educational institution and organization, has a great influence on the improvement of human qualities and the development of social civilization. University, which is the science backbone, moral conscience and cultural hope of human society (SUI Yi-fan, 2006), should play a more important role in building up a society of harmony, and this role can be better played by the prerequisite of university's inner-harmony.

2. Autonomy and cooperation: The foundation and the approach to reach outer harmony of the university

Currently, the self-development of university is affected and restricted by many external factors, with the result that the function of the university can not be realized in the most effective way, which led to the self-confusion of university and the tension of relationship between the university and the outside world. This tense relationship is manifested in the mutual vigilance between the government and the university and in the complaint to each other between the university and the community.

2.1 The mutual vigilance between the government and the university

China has had centralized political tradition from the ancient times, so various aspects of reform and change are forced to be carried out in the top-down mode in which the government represents the society and political elite represent the overwhelming majority of the people, but the voice of low-class are seriously obscured and their needs are digested. In China, the government has always played an important role in guiding and advancing the reform and development of the university. In the change of direction from the centralization of power to the decentralization, from "almighty government" to "limited government" and "responsible government", although the university has got much more space in the autonomous development, Chinese university has only limited autonomy, while comparing with those universities in foreign countries. In the game of getting the power between the university and the government, both sides lack of Adam Smith's "compassion" and show mutual mistrust to each other. On the one hand, on the ground that the university should shoulder more social responsibility to make greater contributions, the government should be constantly strengthen controlling to the university with the executive, legislative and financial ways. On the other hand, the university, from the point of view of academic tradition and ideal of university, emphasizes its independence and autonomy in the process of shouldering the responsibility and making contribution to the community, so as to reduce the intervention which is considered to possibly damage the university from the government (XU Jie, 2007).

2.2 The complaint to each other between the university and the community

The long-term "strong country but weak society" model causes public society dysplasia and the direct management of state to the university barricade the effective exchange between the university and the society, thus the necessary interests motivation and normal interests expressive mechanism is lacked between the two sides. But with the increasing depth of political and economic reform and with the public's awakening of the awareness to the main social rights and the division of interests, the disharmony between the university and society gradually

emerged. The whole community believes that the university has not brought about a satisfactory output after gaining tremendous resources and plays dereliction in the aspect of sticking tradition, achieving social equality, moral model and knowledge innovation. Enterprises consider that the university nurture students who lack practical ability, professionalism and the capacity of sustained development, failing to meet the needs of industrial structure adjustment and upgrading. Parents think that they pay a high tuition, but their children are unable to find stable and satisfactory jobs. The university believes that its function is generalized. It bears too much responsibility, expectations, unnecessary allegations and injury, and also the community lack understanding and tolerance to the university because of chasing the instant success.

Obviously, if the university, the state and the society can not be transposed to consider for each other, the tensions among them will be got into a vicious cycle and will continue to be increased. To eliminate this tension, it needs multilateral cooperation. But we must understand that the cooperation should be based on necessary autonomy of the university.

2.3 University autonomy

Autonomy is one of the longest traditions in universities. The university autonomy is a kind of academic value with long history. Edward Shils (1983) considers that, the university autonomy refers to the university as a corporate body that can enjoy a freedom without the interference of government, church, any other official or non-official corporate body and even any individuals. The freedom is the university staffs' freedom. These members use representative qualifications rather than individuals to decide affairs of university. The university autonomy is decided by the nature and function of university itself. It is not only the social farsighted benefits' need, but the need of self-existence and development when the university facing social service directly (LENG Yu-sheng, 2004). The university is the habitat of advanced knowledge. So, the advanced intelligence activity in the basic claim of "the frame of system" constitutes one source of legitimacy of university autonomy. Another source is that university claims the self-defense to outer corporate and individual's "rational ignorance". University has frame boundaries. People outside have difficulty in overcoming the rational blemish resulted from the information asymmetry. The inner decision of university has powerful information advantages. At the same time, the decision itself encourages effectively the people inside (ZHOU Qi-ren, 1997). The university autonomy also provides a premise for the diversity of university and avoids the situation of same faces without special characters. The competition among universities is formed and provides the exterior motivation. A famous expert in higher education of the United States once wrote that the university needs self-management and makes inner decisions itself so that it can accede to the row of world class (Altbach, P. G., 2001). It is thus clear that the university autonomy still achieves outstanding essential condition.

2.4 Multilateral cooperation based on university autonomy

The university autonomy, as a kind of principle, is a powerful weapon to guarantee academic freedom and promote academic development and prosperity. But the outer relations of university cannot make itself get away from direct or indirect supervision and constraint of the government and the society. So the university autonomy can only be a relative autonomy with keeping its basic spirit and a certain limitation. If university abuses autonomy, the result is that university autonomy is not deprived by others but by itself (SUI Yi-fan, 2006). University autonomy is not for the benefits of teachers in university but for the society and at last for the whole human-beings (JIN Yao-ji, 2001). The significance of government existence is to provide norm and order for the society and people so as to avoid "Hobos Bush". Owing to the consistence of aims, the cooperation among

university, government and society is possible and necessary. And this relation of cooperation has solid theory foundation—"governance theory". Governance is defined in a report as "our global colleagues relation" published by world governance committee in 1995 as the combination of ways to run their common affairs by every kind of public organization or individual. It is a sustaining process to conciliate mutual conflicts or different benefits and take consociation measures. The nature of the governance lies in over-emphasizing on the mechanism not depending on government's authority or sanctions. The basis of governance process is not controlling but consultation. Governance is not a kind of formal system but a lasting interaction (YU Ke-ping, 2000).

Under the background of governance, the university will no longer be managed by scholars themselves but all walks of the society. And the government will no longer be an authority but a cooperator. As a result, it will break the power myth of the government, disintegrate the power of administrating university, provide conditions for everybody to take part in, form a balance pattern which not only share but also divert the power and determine together the blueprint and long-term plan of the university through negotiations and consultations. Concretely, university autonomy will be limited to a degree that university will do the best to carry the role given by the society. On one hand, university adopts actively the wishes and suggestion about their development which comes from the society. Within the field of autonomy, university will cultivate more and more talented-people and get more and more research output. On the other hand, as a rational critic and a thinker, the university should also carry the responsibility of correcting those bad social value and remodel the social sense to ensure the community not deviate from its good orbits. At the same time, the government should put its authority on somewhere the university truly needs and provide funding and institution supports. The main body such as business, the parents of students, should change their concepts, overcome their short-sights and standardize the utilization tendency from the view of social well-being so that they can create a relax environment for university to help it follow their own logic.

If the organic interaction and cooperation among the university, the government and the society which are stakeholders can be realized, they can certainly develop a good external environment for building harmonious university. But what is worthless is that the social understanding and support is the function of university's own quality. The government and society will not believe in such university without creative spirit and sense of duty, without the basic faith and the social morality, without the great love to people, and without the convincing success. Fundamentally speaking, university autonomy is built on the basic of not only the trust of the country, the society and the public but also the satisfaction coming from society (HAN Yan-ming, 2006). Thus the more important direction of the university's development now is to enhance the quality and function through the internal balance and coordination. By this way, it can add up the trust of people and get more support coming from the government and society.

3. Balance and coordination: The fundamentality and guarantee of inner harmony of the university itself

3.1 The imbalance aspects

On the influence of traditional political culture and the evaluation mechanism at the present time and other factors, serious imbalance problems appear in university which cause the process of harmonious university construction to meet challenges. It's shown in the following.

3.1.1 Power imbalance

On one hand, administrative power is abused in the university. It interferes or replaces academic power in nearly all aspects. The most common performance is that administrative power intervenes in the affairs of academic too much, the academic power does not be fully implemented. On the other hand, there is a fuzzy boundary between administrative power and academic power. They often intertwine with each other. All these lead to the responsibility unclear and the mutual offside between them (ZHONG Bing-lin, etc., 2005).

3.1.2 Function imbalance

Now many universities are fighting for becoming research universities because of the research-guiding of national assessment, funding policy and social evaluation. Under this situation, the teacher's classification and the distribution of interests lead to nearly all teachers devote their time and energy to research but ignore their teaching job which is centre work in colleges. As a result, some universities do not boost their research, however, the quality of teaching has declined.

3.1.3 Interest imbalance

Because of the bureaucracy and efficiency-oriented, teachers and students are limited and disregarded in a large scope to take part in all kinds of activities. Some of the existing mechanism for teachers objectively caused the competition and conflict among them. Besides problems about sole child, the gap between the rich and the poor, and rewording students make strong mentally unbalance among students. Moreover, students give marks for their teacher's teaching, signature on the academic paper and some other problems bring about the tensional relation between teachers and students.

3.1.4 Value imbalance

Instrumental rationality and value rationality deviate from each other seriously in the university. Instrumental rationality results in knowledge orientation in education practice. Education as a whole system is gradually becoming another one which emphasizes the professional skills. While the value education is suppressed and marginalized. In recent years the education reform that from subject specialty setup to the curriculum reform makes people feel that the university is cultivating a large number of cheap, available professional workers for the society. In the process, the university reduces the scale of logic drill for students in the basic ethical norms, beliefs, aesthetic taste, the traditional order, and lacks the training for the ability to cope with complex social matters (LEI Qi-li, 2007). Objectively and necessarily it causes students become people like instrument who have nothing but their professional knowledge.

3.2 Coordination aspects

From imbalance to balance, the university needs to coordinate effectively in the following aspects:

3.2.1 Power coordination

The binary power structure with the coexistence of academic and administrative powers is greatly different in authority arrangement from non-academic organizations such as enterprises and governmental agencies. Academic nature, the basic attribute of university, should be ensured by the academic authority system in teaching, research and relevant affairs. Meanwhile, administrative authority system is essential for a normally-organized and effectively-operated university. A good knowledge of the respective functional scopes of academic and administrative authority systems is the first step to make them function well. According to Higher Education Act and other rules, College Regulations should be formulated to confine academic and administrative authority and their running programs. It is necessary to reinforce academic and democratic system construction, establish and

perfect the system in College Board, faculty congress and other professional committees, form the coordinated mechanism of academic and administrative authority, and assure professors and scholars' participation in academic policy-making and staff's rights of democratic management.

3.2.2 Function coordination

The fundamental mission of the university is to cultivate students and its central work is teaching. Meanwhile, the university is responsible for developing knowledge and scientific research, the relation of which is vital to mutual development and losses. The teaching will remain as the essence in any universities, but the investment in scientific research should be varied. Compared with other institutions, research-oriented ones possess more resources and capacity to engage in scientific research, while others should limit the excessive impulse (XIE Fei-hou, 2004). Only by the proper orientation, policy-regulation and the reform of income distribution can universities settle the imbalance between teaching and scientific research and build a long-time and healthy mechanism of the two.

3.2.3 Interest coordination

Students and teachers, the masters of the university, should be respected in their legal rights and the university is capable of solving various interest conflicts between teachers and students and the conflicts between them and schools. Because the groups with dissimilar ideas are in different positions in the structure and hierarchy of the university and have their own specific demands for interest, schools should focus more on the multi-level, multi-form formation and mainstay of interest, setting up and improving mechanism in interest-expressing and interest-coordinating.

3.2.4 Value coordination

Man is the measure of all things. Man itself is the end. The aim of education is to shape men with perfect and well-rounded personality and enhancing the harmonious development of students is not only requirements of our teaching goal, but also a reflection of Marx's theory on "all-round development of human being". Students should be guided to be qualified citizens with rational and sound mind, attitude of self-reflection and sense of criticism, but not just work force to fill in the market. The courses are a direct factor in the form of personal quality. It is essential to reinforce the reform in course system under the guide of value rationality and change the traditional improper notion (more emphasis on science & technology, majors and text book, but less emphasis on liberal arts, foundation and practice) (YANG Shu-zi, 2002). Thus it is attainable to establish core-course system, advance the cooperation between liberal arts and science, strengthen practical teaching, and accomplish overall development of students in knowledge, ability and quality.

4. Conclusion

The university is not only a complex self-organized system, but one part of complicated social system, so harmonious university construction as a tough project needs participation and efforts from all aspects. Institution matters, so harmonious university construction needs multi-level institution innovation. It should integrate with the two kinds of institution innovations. One innovation is that the government and the society are to provide better external environment for the university, the other is that the university is to realize its internal balance and cooperation. The stakeholders should do their best to improve the university's lasting dynamic evolution in the direction of harmonious development through their "synchronic game".

References:

- Altbach, P. G. (1998). *Comparative higher education*. Greenwich, CT: Ablex.
- Edward, Shils. (1983). *The academic ethic*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- HAN Yan-ming. (2006). Rational meditation on academic freedom of contemporary universities. *Educational Research*, 2, 16-21.
- JIN Yao-ji. (2001). *The ideal of university*. Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company.
- LEI Qi-li. (2007). From elite education to mass education. *Wenjin*, 4.
- LENG Yu-sheng. (2004). Confusion on university spirit. *Journal of Higher Education*, 25(1), 1-5.
- SUI Yi-fan. (2006). Why universities initiate and defend idealism. *Educational Research*, 2, 11-15.
- XIAO Hai-tao. (1999). *The idea of universities in China*. (Doctoral dissertation, Huazhong University of Science & Technology).
- XIE Fei-hou. (2004). The relation between scientific research and teaching at non-research universities: The reality and proposals. *Journal of Higher Education*, 25(1), 52-56.
- XU Jie. (2007). Reestablishing the theory of university self-determination of market orientation: From new public management to governance. *Jiangsu Higher Education*, 3, 1-4.
- YANG Shu-zi. (2002). Five emphases and five neglects of Higher Education. *China Reading Daily*, 9th Oct..
- YU Ke-ping. (2000). *Governance and good governance*. Beijing: Social Science Press.
- ZHONG Bing-lin, ZHANG Bin-xian & LI Zi-jiang. (2005). How do universities coordinate academic power and administrative power. *China Education Daily*, 4th Feb..
- ZHOU Qi-ren. (1997). Return of control and enterprise controlled by entrepreneur. *Economic Research Journal*, (5), 31-42.

(Edited by Lee and Lily)