

Comparative Analysis of Nurturing Mode for Undergraduates between China and Canada

Chunxia XU

¹ School of Economics, Shandong University of Finance and Economics, Jinan 250014, China

^a chunxiayu2003@163.com

ABSTRACT. Research on Nurturing Mode of undergraduates is much important to university, it related what kind of talents will be cultivated. In this paper, we compare the differences for nurturing students between Shandong University of Finance and Economics in China and Dalhousie University in Canada, such as credit system, Tutor System, Academic Integrity etc. We find independence and flexibility to students is an effective way for students growing, and management system also plays an important role in nurturing students.

KEYWORDS: Nurturing mode, Undergraduate, Credit system, Tutor system, Academic integrity

1. Introduction

Talents are the hope of a nation and the power of a country, at modern time, if you get more talents, you will get and achieve more values from the world. The key point is how to nurture talents, university performs an important function in this issue, and it is one of the places which provides a whole lot of talents to society. Meanwhile, the effective way of nurturing undergraduates is a thoughtful and meaningful subject. Lots of experts have already presented different views on how to nurture undergraduates. In this paper, it will take two universities separately in China and Canada as an example, comparing the difference of the modes of training undergraduates in the two countries. Shandong University of Finance and Economics(SDUFE) is one of universities in China, and Dalhousie University(DAL) is one of universities in Canada, they are related in this paper.

2. Comparing of Nurturing Modes between Sdufe and Dal

2.1 The Setting of Courses

Training programs are the rules of nurturing students, and the setting of courses is directly related to cultivate what kinds of talents, and the quality of training. We will compare the course-setting in DAL and SDUFE in the following.

Generally, in the first year, students in Dalhousie should pick courses that include a social science, like economics or sociology and a humanities course such as language, philosophy or music. They choose their major at the second year. If students have not received the credit they need, they may take summer school courses. There are two regular semesters a year at Dalhousie, one that goes from September to December and another that is from January to April. The university also offers some courses in May/June and July/August, so if a student fails a course in one of the regular semesters they can repeat it in summer school (if it is offered). Otherwise, summer school is for students wanting to get through their study program more quickly. A normal program of study, that earns a degree, takes four years, and students take five courses a term for eight terms (four academic years) to complete a normal undergraduate program of study. Students can change their programs of study or their major at any time but may have to take extra courses to fulfill the requirements of their new program. Students at Dalhousie also have a lot of elective courses, and not very many compulsory courses, even in their major. Students at Dalhousie have ten years from their date of first registration to satisfy the requirements for an undergraduate degree.

At SDUFE, all the students must finish their study in 4-6 years. Each major has its own program, including 3 sections such as general education, professional courses, and independent practice courses. The professional courses contain professional basic courses, professional compulsory courses and professional elective courses. Most of the general education courses are taught in the first year, the professional courses happen in the second and third year, and in the fourth year, all the students must do graduation papers and graduation practice. At Dalhousie, the fourth year

includes the same number of courses as the first three years of study but this is not the case at SDUFE (or most Chinese universities).

If students at Dalhousie fail a course, they must repeat the course and pay for it. At SDUFE, if a student fails, they can write a supplemental exam if the course is compulsory and if they fail the supplemental, then they can repeat the course. Students in SDUFE only have one chance to switch their major, at the beginning of their second year. If they do not use this opportunity, they will have no further chance to change their majors. When the students change their major, they have to study some of the courses of the new major which they did not study in their first year.

2.2 The Credit System

Credit system^[1] is broadly implemented in most of universities all over the world, Harvard University is the first university to implement the credit system. The credit system is a kind of teaching management system which takes the minimum total credits for graduation as a measure of students' learning amount and graduation standard.

Students at Dalhousie require 120 credit hours to earn a degree and then graduate; these 120 credits are normally completed in three stages. The first stage is the first year of study and students should pick up 30 credit hours in general classes. Almost every course at Dalhousie is one semester and is valued as three credit hours, so 30 credit hours represents ten courses worth three credit hours each, which means five courses in one semester and two semesters a year. The second stage starts in the second year of study and represents courses in the major field of study. It includes 42 Credit hours of study as a maximum, but students do not have to take this number of credit hours in their major if they choose not to. There is a minimum they must take which is less than the maximum. The last stage is normally in third and fourth year but may also start in second year and involves elective courses and involves 48 credit hours or more if the credit hours for courses in the major are less than the maximum. In general, Dalhousie students can select almost any class in which they are interested.

Students normally will pick up all the required credit hours in 4-5 years. They can prolong the time, but must finish in 10 years from when they start. If the student did not pass a course, it can be replaced by another course if it is an elective, rather than a compulsory course, even if it is in the student's major.

At SDUFE, all the students have a program of study which is fixed at the beginning of their entrance to university. For most majors, students are required to complete 155 credit hours in total before graduation, including 64 credit hours for general education courses, 64 credit hours for professional courses and 27 credits for independent practice courses. There are 21 credits for professional elective courses, and the students can only choose electives in their program of study, whether they like the courses or not.

Students at SDUFE must complete all the required credits in at most 6 years. If they do not finish within this deadline, the students will never get their bachelor degree. Dalhousie has a 10 years limit and this can be extended in some cases.

2.3 Tutor System

Tutor system^[2] is another kind of education system, which is the same as credit system and class system, they are the three famous education systems.

In Dalhousie, they have advisor groups including faculty advisors and academic advisors. Normally, academic advisors run several programs and focus on the study skills required in different programs, so they can advise students in different programs. They may also do project work and other types of work that can support student success.

If students get in academic trouble, advisors will help them, personal affairs is also possible, recognizing that personal problems can affect a student's academic performance. A student who has troubles normally arranges to meet the advisor through an email message and the advisor will set up a personal meeting for the student. Sometimes, a student's professor will report a student to the advisor if the professor feels the student is not doing that well.

In the Faculty of Science at Dalhousie, there are 3 types of advisors. The first category is an Assistant Dean, the second category is about 8-10 advisors who work in the Bissett Student Success Centre, and the last is program advisors, who are all faculty members and work with students who have declared a major in the faculty advisor's field of study.

There are other offices at Dalhousie which also provide advice to students, such as the International Student Centre, the Student Accessibility Centre, and the Registrar's office.

SDUFE has just started a new system for advising students called Methods for the Implementation of Undergraduate Academic Tutoring. This has replaced the old management method. In the new system, every student is assigned an academic tutor in their first year, and the tutor is in charge of the students' academic program over their four years of

undergraduate study. Under the old method, the tutors only dealt with the students for graduation papers and graduation practice.

2.4 Academic Integrity System

Academic integrity^[3] means that students are honest and accurate in creating and communicating all academic products. Acknowledgement of other people's work must be done in a way that does not leave the reader in any doubt as to whose work it is. It also means trustworthy conduct such as not cheating on examinations and not misrepresenting information.

At Dalhousie, there are many possible forms of academic dishonesty, such as plagiarism and other types of cheating. The discipline process and penalties of Academic integrity follow:

(1) The first step occurs when the professor suspects that a student has committed an academic offence such as a plagiarized assignment or paper, unauthorized collaboration or cheating on an exam.

(2) The instructor submits a statement outlining the basis for the allegation to the Academic Integrity Officer of the Faculty.

(3) The Academic Integrity Officer first determines whether or not there is a minimal basis for the allegation. If there is none, no further steps are taken in relation to the allegation.

(4) If a prima facie case is established, then in most cases the Academic Integrity Officer will convene a meeting with the students, the students' advisor, if any, and the instructor within 5 working days of the student receiving the allegation. This time may be extended at the request of the student, instructor or Academic Integrity Officer in appropriate circumstances.

(5) Following the meeting, the Academic Integrity Officer decides whether there is sufficient evidence to support the allegation, and if so, recommends what he or she feels is an appropriate penalty.

(6) The Academic Integrity Officer then provides the student with the option of accepting the finding and the recommended penalty, or of proceeding to the Senate Discipline Committee for a full hearing. The option is presented to the student within 5 working days of the meeting, and the student has 2 working days to respond.

If students are found guilty of an offence, a penalty will be assigned ranging from a warning, to failure of the assignment or failure of the class, to expulsion from the University. Penalties may also include a notation on the student's transcript that indicates that they have committed an academic offence. Notations may be for a specific period of time or in some cases, they may be permanent.

The situation at SDUFE is mostly similar to Dalhousie, but with at least two differences. The first difference is that SDUFE transcripts do not indicate the academic offence. The second difference is that, if a student at SDUFE is found guilty of cheating in an exam, he will never get his bachelor degree.

2.5 Academic Warning, Checking for Graduation Qualifications, Graduation Ceremony Arrangement

It is not allowed to make public a student's transcript at Dalhousie, because of Canadian privacy laws. But at SDUFE, there is an academic warning^[4] system that means the school will inform the exam-failed students' parents about their children's academic appearance in school every semester. This is based on the hope that parents will then do more to make the students improve their study habits.

At Dalhousie, the academic affairs office checks the academic performance of students manually. Especially with so-called double majors, this is seen as important. Students have to have a cumulative GPA of at least 2.0 to graduate. And if they do not maintain a GPA of at least 2.0 all through their program of study, they can be placed on academic probation and if their GPA falls below a further level, they may have to leave the university for a year, i.e., they may be subject to academic dismissal. They only check the students in the College of Arts and Science; other faculties will check their own students. They have two graduation seasons, spring and fall, and they check about 1100 students per year in Arts and Science. This work is done by 2 staff persons. They will work for students as much as they can to make it possible for them to achieve their graduation. They will notify the students about their credit hours early, so the students still have chance to change their courses. For example, they check the credit before the winter semester of the student's final year starts, and they tell the students they are missing, say, 3 courses. This gives the student time to choose extra classes for the winter term so he or she can still graduate on schedule. They tell all the students the checking results "yes or no", including the students who have no problems for graduation. Definitely, they tell "no" with specific reasons. Specific schools in SDUFE do a similar job.

The graduation ceremony at Dalhousie is grand and impressive. There is a special team that arranges the ceremony. If a student who is graduating from a faculty of Dalhousie in Halifax, then he will attend his convocation ceremony in Halifax for both the spring and fall ceremonies. Graduates from the Faculty of Agriculture attend a convocation ceremony in Truro, where the Faculty of Agriculture is located, if they are graduating in the Spring and in Halifax if they are graduating in the fall. The fall ceremony usually involves fewer students than the spring convocation. One feature of the graduation at Dalhousie, especially the Spring graduation, is that every student who wishes to walk across the stage and receive their diploma, is able to do so. In addition, every student is allowed to invite up to four persons, who may be parents, grandparents, brothers or sisters, or just friends, to attend the ceremony and see them receive their degree. This means that there are many graduation ceremonies every spring, usually organized separately for each faculty, so that the number of graduates in each ceremony is kept to a manageable number and guests can be accommodated in the size hall available. This is a very good arrangement for the students and their families but means that the President and senior officers of the university spend a whole week doing nothing but attend graduations.

At SDUFE, not all graduates attend the graduation ceremony. Rather, for undergraduates at least, student representatives are invited to the convocation and actual diplomas are not distributed at the ceremony but are given to the students by their individual school. Also, SDUFE has only one large ceremony for all graduates and this takes only one morning.

2.6 Student Success Centre

The Bissett Student Success Centre at Dalhousie is a source for both academic and career advising support and information. The team does more than support students with their academic planning—they can help students reach their educational, career, and life goals. Students can make an appointment with one of the Student Success Advisors, peer advisors, career counsellors, study coaches or tutors. In SDUFE, there is a Student Centre which is only in charge of mental and administrative education, and does not deal with academic advising.

3. Conclusions

3.1 Independence and Flexibility to Students

One of the most important functions of a university is cultivating talents, and we hope students are independent and creative when they are apart from school. Every student at Dalhousie must be deeply familiar with their training programs, they must set their study schedules themselves, select courses themselves, concern credits themselves, apply for graduation themselves, and no one will do that for them. There are strict academic integrity systems which all the students must obey, otherwise they will be punished, so they must study diligently and pursue innovation. Some of the management rules of Dalhousie give the students a great deal of flexibility, especially for selecting courses. Students can select almost any course they are interested in, and they can change their major at any period of their study, except the first year, since a major does not have to be declared until second year.

3.2 Thorough and Effective Administration

What is the purpose of administration in an university? Different people give different answers, but in my opinion, the purpose of administration is to ensure the smooth and effective operation of teaching, the health and well-being of students, the success of students, and the achievement of other parts of the mission of the university, such as research and community service. How to administrate? It is definitely by policy and system, and not by people. People are important but the success of the system should not depend on the people versus the policies and the organization or system.

In order to guarantee the effects of administration, there must be a system of rewards and punishments. There are all kinds of rules and regulations posted on the official website of Dalhousie, which fully describe all sorts of issues that may occur; they list the solutions to problems, and whom to go to in order to solve certain problems. When teachers and students become members of the university, they are told to learn these systems. Rewards and punishments are essential and indispensable for administration, both to encourage teachers and students to act in certain ways and to discourage them from acting in other ways.

3.3 Policies Made from the Bottom Up

It is hard to say whether Dalhousie's system is better than SDUFE's or the other way around. Because of differences

in the two countries and the two cultures, everything that is good for one university will not always be best for the other and what is bad for one may not be for the other. But regardless of which is better, we can see that Dalhousie allows more room for administration policy and practices to come from the bottom up, rather than always from the top down and I think this is a general practice which should be adopted by other universities in China when it is appropriate in the future.

Acknowledgement

I would like to finish by giving my heartfelt appreciation to Professor Barry Lesser and Madam Shannon Peng, who are in charge of the Dalhousie-Shandong University of Finance and Economics Joint Program in Economics, and they gave me greatly help during my visiting in Dalhousie.

References

- [1] Wang Ping. Thoughts on strengthening educational administration management in Colleges and Universities under the full credit system in Science public (Science Education), Vol.12, No.2, pp.141, 2016.
- [2] Sun Kehui, Zhong Xudong, Wu Jianhao, et al. Improving undergraduate tutorial system to cultivate students' innovation and entrepreneurship in Education and teaching forum, No.12, pp.32-34, 2018.
- [3] Zhou Hui, Liu Yanchun, sun Pengfei. Analysis of the causes of College Students' lack of integrity and education countermeasures in Asia Pacific Education, No.31, pp.171-171, 2015.
- [4] Ma Chengyao. Operation status and improvement direction of academic warning system in Colleges and universities in Ideological and theoretical education, No.3, pp. 98-102, 2016.