

## University campus culture connotation, characteristics and functions

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### Abstract

University campus culture is a comprehensive reflection of people ideology, behavior rules, norms and spiritual pursuance. During their research, teaching, studying or work, teachers, students and people on campus commonly have their beliefs, norms and regulations which create a kind of special behaviors and culture. As an existing form of culture, university needs to pay attention on its Campus Culture which is the combination of several cultures. The aims of this paper is to analyze the meaning, features and main roles of Campus Culture, especially in Higher Education Institutions environment. Through this study, the author tries to emphasize on the fundamental necessity of a good Campus Culture particularly in the University.

**Keywords:** Higher education institutions; University; Campus culture; Connotation; Characteristics; Functions

### 1. Introduction

According to "A Dictionary of Education", culture refers to "the Values, beliefs, customs and creations of people who regard themselves as a coherent group"<sup>[1]</sup>. Culture is the product of human social practice, culture is also one of the ways of sustainable development of human society. Culture in the new era of international competition is like a "Soft Power" because it is not only an important part of national economic development, but also a symbol of the level of development and national civilization. Etymologically deriving from the Latin word "Field" and firstly used in 1770s in its current sense in Princeton University, the word "Campus" refers to where an institutional buildings are situated. As repositories of culture, colleges and universities have the mission to educate people and cultivate talents. Therefore, universities have not only to become the driving force of the spirit of talent cultivation, but also an important base for the construction of spiritual civilization in the whole society. In this period of information, the construction of campus culture in Higher Education Institutions includes the construction of the system, spiritual culture, material culture construction, cultural construction, network culture construction and so on. These construction make teachers and students have a great effect on the judgments and choice of values. Therefore, how to strengthen the construction of university campus culture, improve the actual effect of the construction of campus culture in universities and ensure the correct direction and orientation of the development of higher education become a great challenge to all universities in the process of their campus culture construction nowadays.

### 2. The Origin and Connotation of Campus Culture

Campus culture is a special cultural representation, a unique form of culture. The campus culture refers to a particular spirit atmosphere and cultural environment<sup>[2]</sup>. According to this description, the campus culture of

colleges and universities originates from the school with the meaning of university education. It is accompanied by the appearance of the school, which generally is an external form of materialization of the University. In China, as<sup>[3]</sup> wrote, the source of campus culture starts in September 1977, within the authority of the Political Leader DENG Xiaoping, the State Education Commission held a national high school work conference in Beijing. During that meeting, they decided to reestablish and restore the national University entrance examination which has been stopped for 10 years. Having a unified examination as a best way to select talents to enter into university. Campus culture is sometimes called also "school culture". As the first Westerner to systematically study the school culture, Waller W. believes that the school culture is a special culture formed in school<sup>[4]</sup>.

The "Campus culture" not only refers to the extracurricular activities of the students or teachers and students' amateur cultural activities, but also should be the material aspects of the campus construction, system level of management regulations, the Spiritual thought of School, morality, traditional ideas, style of study, including the hardware and software of the external culture. The University campus culture refers to the school administrators, teachers and students in education, teaching, management and service activities to create all the material formation, spiritual wealth and process in the area of University campus. People usually separates the campus culture into three levels:

- i) The Material Culture (also known as the carrier of culture): Campus material culture takes a particular form of facilities and environment. It materializes the external view, panorama of the university.
- ii) The Spiritual Culture It specifies the mind, ideas, beliefs, ideals, values, moral emotion, psychological quality, aesthetic consciousness interpersonal relationship, traditional habits, etc. of the campus environment in colleges and universities; the spiritual

culture of campus is the soul of the culture, the core of campus culture. The spiritual culture can include various other culture like mental culture, behavior culture, written culture.

iii) The Institutional Culture: It is the special school regulations and rules system, management and restriction mechanism, the concept of Standardization. The connotation of campus culture diversity is also very rich mixture of campus environment, time and construction. Building the concept system of a school culture or campus culture needs also to be materialized. The campus culture includes also educational goals, educational facilities, student organizations, and public school motto, vision (standardization, office supplies, classrooms, orientation plaque, reminder plaque and so on), corridor, office, classroom, wall. It includes also a public hearing (song, break music etc.) The famous educational theoretician Vasily Alexandrovich Sukhomlinsky once said let each side of the wall speaks. If all quotations thought is not associated with the collective concerned about all these remarks will not enter to the student's mind, and thus become empty. While the material campus culture is the external representation and symbol of campus culture, the spiritual campus culture is the core principle of campus culture, while the institutional campus culture tries to undertake and ensures an organized evolution and development of campus culture. The campus culture through its specific environment has its unique form and law of development.

### 3. The Characteristics of Campus Culture

The culture of higher education institution is a collective culture jointly created and enjoyed by all the members of the group: teachers, students and employees in a certain College or University. Campus culture is not only influenced by their own inherent development rules, such as the urban culture, corporate culture, but also by the regulation of social dominant culture, such as nationalities or tribes, social classes, and so on. <sup>[5]</sup> Campus culture in a university is characterized by individuality, academic feature, opening, leading, variety and creativity. The basic characteristics of campus culture in Colleges and universities are as follows:

#### 3.1 Academic

The most obvious difference between Higher Education Institutions campus culture and other types of culture is its academic nature. The university is a strong social and cultural organization which is responsible for the transmission and creation of human cultural tradition. The culture of University is different from other social organization identity, University cultural attribute is invariant. Without a cultural heritage, the university no longer has a true sense of the word "University". If the University deviates from the cultural aspect, it is no longer a place for the continuation of education and academic prosperity. It is precisely because of this concept and aspect of culture, that the University has gradually formed an academic tradition and has standardized teaching and education. From the university itself, it is responsible for personnel training, teaching

and scientific research, knowledge innovation, social functions and so on. The university is a place which has a rich number of books and reference materials, research projects, resources, a higher level of cultural experts and scholars. All these academic characteristic of a university determine the environment of a university campus culture which is bound to have a unique academic characteristic. The academic features of campus culture are shown by the final aim of boosting the social and economic development of a community.

#### 3.2 Innovation

The "vitality" and "essence" of Higher Education Institutions is also its innovation aspect. University soul of campus culture is bound to be the pursuit of innovation. The realization of innovation in a university is achieved through the creation of new ideas, new concepts, and new capacity resources. Therefore, as an important place to create advanced culture, the university should not only absorb different cultures, draw lessons from different cultures, inherit the culture, but also make criticism, judgment, choice and even create a new culture. Teachers as a part of campus culture subject, during their teaching and researches can have the potential sense of innovation, stimulate students' innovation consciousness to create new theories, new ideas, new research methods and so on. The national science and technology competitiveness is largely based on university scientific research and innovation ability, and the scientific research and innovation ability of University derives from the academic potential of scholars, and also from their perseverance and the pursuit of science and the fact of having a scientific spirit of creating the university spirit, system and cultural environment.

#### 3.3 Openness

In the context of globalization and network, the university campus culture innovation need to improve its level of opening up. As a part of the society, the university campus culture and other cultures, material and environment constantly are in contact, in communication. And with the development of information and communication technology, the university campus culture is becoming more and more open. Under the impetus of the network technology, the influence of the communication between the university campus culture and the society is over the control of time and space. This shows that openness has become one of the characteristics of the campus culture. Therefore, in today's open era, if the university campus culture need to exist and develop, it is impossible to break away from the community.

#### 3.4 Times

Every culture reflects the essential characteristics of the times in a certain manner, it has a special interpretation of a determined period of its development. The campus culture of Higher Education Institutions is not existing out of a determined space but it is formed and developed in a certain social space, environment and time. The campus culture cannot be free from the influence of

social culture. Campus culture tends to be restricted by some social factors such as economy, politics, education, social structure, and so on. Therefore, campus culture reflects often the ancient and modern, the domestic or national and foreign, the spirit of the times etc. The times features of the Campus Culture includes: content, the form (continuously innovate, such as in the globalized world and Internet era, mobile phone, QQ, WeChat, WhatsApp, Facebook, Micro-blog, are become a popular, fashionable means of information in the life of universities students.

One of the most remarkable characteristics of the university is its education function and the high quality cultural education, which is very suitable for the dissemination of new science and technology, research results, and so on. The change of the time and the influence of foreign culture are usually reflected firstly in the University, so the university campus culture should have the characteristics of the times to be attractive, innovative and adaptable to the period. "Time is a resource that must be managed, an efficient use of time is a key component of organizational effectiveness" [6]. The duration that needs an activity, temporal units for the various activities for example the class meeting time, length of class period, length of course, school calendar, deadlines of activity all are the time characteristics of campus culture. Briefly, there are many cultural orientations to time such as duration, periodicity, timing, tempo etc. which has impacts on teaching and learning norms on University Campus.

Nowadays, everywhere in the world people are talking and thinking about the construction of World First Class University and World First Class Program, we should know that an excellent university campus culture is inevitable for the construction of these great initiative. We could notice and confirm it through the following various role of campus culture.

#### **4. The Function of Campus Culture**

The function of campus culture in Colleges and universities is noticeable through the influence of the campus culture on the main participants of school (teachers and students) and the other cultures of the society. The different characteristics of the cultural style of "University City" people are mostly based in their background of knowledge, thinking, behavior, values. The difference between university campus culture and another social organization culture lies in its own unique function. Campus culture, as a distinctive and unique subculture under the whole society's cultural background is an important part of social culture [7]. Overall, the campus culture has to be present in the three major functions of a university which are education, scientific research and social services.

##### **4.1 The Educating People's Function of University Campus Culture**

Nowadays, the global competition is all about the competition of culture, and the competition of culture depends on "Talent", and the talents are mostly produced by the university. This means that the university is the most important place to cultivate talent, it is the ultimate

goal of the university. University campus culture has a direct impact on the environmental factors of learners' growth, which has great influence on their cultural accomplishment and cultivation. As some scholars have said, the real valuable thing for the students is their living environment. The university campus culture education and training requirements includes moral, intellectual, physical and aesthetic education. Therefore, the need to form a good style of studying and teaching is to combine virtue and wisdom, body and beauty into education culture.

The moral education function of university campus culture is the "Ideological Education" function. It needs to be in accordance with the correct values, the correct outlook on life, the correct outlook on the world, the ideological and moral character. So in order to let students go in the right direction, we need to create the correct campus culture.

Naturally, people know that the duty and responsibility of Higher Education Institutions is the "knowledge tradition" and "knowledge innovation". And for students, learning is their first priority. Thus, the core connotation of the campus culture: "teaching and learning", which is a major task of campus culture is becoming prominent. In order to achieve this goal, the university campus culture through its own rich intellectual resources, the "invisible classroom" etc. can realize it.

The sports function of campus culture is to cultivate the physical and mental health of teachers and students in a school. Today, the sports function of campus culture includes the function of psychological adjustment (adjustment of psychological pressure, learning and working pressure) and the function of entertainment. All kinds of ball games, school sports games and other sports activities, dance, singing competitions, and other recreational activities form the sports functions of campus culture.

As the place to form high level talents ("Talent" refers to the people who have extensive knowledge, high ability, good moral character and who can make a real contribution to the modernization of the society), university needs also to develop the aesthetic ability, aesthetic education of students. The aesthetic education function of campus culture in Colleges and universities can be embodied in three aspects: the activity, the spirit and the material. The campus activity culture is a kind of platform of aesthetic education. It is generally integrated into the university culture through its rich and multiple activities. The main content of university campus cultural activities is to carry out cultural art education for college students. This includes theatrical performances, lectures, exhibitions, debates and other activities. Campus spiritual culture through its emotional and spiritual aspect become a kind of passion for the teachers and students. With the spirit of the campus, the members of the school can have a sense of reputation, sense of belonging and sense of responsibility towards their school. Campus material culture contains rich aesthetic factors, including the campus hardware and software facilities. During the construction of campus culture, strengthening the art education is conducive to optimizing the school education environment, campus cultural and artistic

atmosphere, improve students' artistic accomplishment, cultivate students' practice ability and innovation ability. Aesthetic campus culture can guide the students to appreciate the beauty, to learn what is beautiful, to create beauty and to apply/use the beauty.

#### 4.2 The Innovation's Function of University Campus Culture

Exhale the old and inhale the new, this is culture's tendency. One of the basic functions of the university is the scientific research, which shows that in addition to teach, the University's another mission is to carry out research. University while seeking truth, knowledge, and the spirit of innovation encourage its members to innovate, thus innovation has become one of the main functions of the university campus culture. The innovation function of campus culture refers to innovation consciousness, the potential and method of innovation. The innovation function of campus culture is embodied in the cultivation of innovative talents, which is conducive to the cultivation of students' creative thinking, the improvement of College Students' creative ability and their creative personality. Due to their active thinking way and sharp mind, an innovative environment can help students to develop their imagination and creativity. For <sup>[8]</sup>, "campus culture activities are important ways to implement quality education and enhance the students' awareness of innovation and practical ability".

#### 4.3 The Social Service's Function of University Campus Culture

In addition to educating people and conducting scientific research, the other task of higher education institutions is to serve the society. In this new era of knowledge economy, the university is no longer the place primarily for teaching and education, but the place of generating knowledge, skills and technical training. The campus culture with a clear goal of education plays a guiding role in the student's specifications and training. In this sense, the university campus culture has the function of social service. The social service function of university campus culture is helpful to promote the process of the socialization of students, mainly in the following aspects:

- i) University campus culture and social services help to promote the socialization of Students' life goals. As Marx once said, quoted from <sup>[9]</sup> "People creating environment and environment creating people". This shows the reasonable and suitable inter-connection between Human being and the nature. A positive and healthy campus culture can make the students naturally or unconsciously influenced by their environment, it can make students realize and know their life and learning, thus forming a kind of social responsibility.
- ii) University campus culture and social services can promote students' moral norms. The formation of a good campus culture has the role to guide the students. This also enables students to become useful to their society, to the country, to the world.

When Higher Education Institutions consider how to become more sustainable, it is very important that they

consider the cultural aspects of environmental sustainability <sup>[10]</sup>.

#### 5. Conclusion

As part of social culture, a University campus culture plays an essential function in transmitting and spreading knowledge, new cultures, and new ideas to the young people. Because as the former president of China Hu Jintao said: Youth is the future of the country, the hope of the nation. A foreseeable nation, always pays attention to the young people; a foreseeable political party, always look at the youth as an important force to promote historical development and social progress <sup>[11]</sup>. For that, we need to construct a good environment in which youth grow, strengthen ideological education on college students <sup>[12]</sup>. A good campus culture can lead the whole society to a harmonious development, to a healthy society, to prosperity, because it can express the social dominant ideology, norms, values, ideals and beliefs. Higher Education Institution Campus Culture Construction situation can prove its running ability, features, level, and its academic status and competence.

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