

Research on Implementation of Undergraduate Tutorial System in Economy and Management Specialty in the Agricultural and Forestry University

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Abstract

Undergraduate Tutorial System in University of Oxford can provide useful enlightenment for undergraduate teaching reform in the agricultural and forestry universities in China. As a new undergraduate training mechanism, we have found serious problems in implementation of Undergraduate Tutorial System, such as the insufficient of tutors, and infirmity of Undergraduate Tutorial System and so on. It is necessary to do some work to perfect Undergraduate Tutorial System. Through the investigation of Undergraduate Tutorial System implementation in College of Economic and Trade of Agricultural University of Hebei, Analysis the problems of the current tutorial system and propose coping measures.

Index Terms: Agricultural and Forestry universities ; Undergraduate ; Training Mechanism ; Tutorial System

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1. Introduction

Undergraduate Tutorial System, also known as Undergraduate Guidance System, is a kind of personnel training system which teacher guide undergraduates on ethics, professional learning, overall quality and personality development in universities. Undergraduate Tutorial System originated in University of Oxford in 14th century [1]. This is a system of individual tuition organized by the colleges, which not only guided the student's academic, but also responsible for the character of undergraduate. It is one of the chief foundations of the greatness of University of Oxford by means of the tutorial system, and other universities around the world gradually follow with University of Oxford [2].

Follow with China's economic development, most of the agricultural and forestry universities in China have being gradually changed into comprehensive universities, and economy and management specialty become an important direction of development [3]. Because economy and management specialty in most of agricultural and

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forestry universities are new specialty, training system for undergraduate students is not perfect, it is very necessary to adopt tutorial system for those universities. In order to understand the implementation of Tutorial System in agricultural and forestry universities, we carried out the empirical research in College of Economic and Trade in Agricultural University of Hebei, research the implementation of Undergraduate Tutorial System.

2. Necessity to implete undergraduate tutorial system in agricultural and forestry universities

Through investigated in 63 agricultural and forestry universities in China, we found that there are college of economics and management in most of the agricultural and forestry universities. But compared with finance and economics universities, the overall quality, professional standards and employment of the graduates major in economy and management in the agricultural universities is relatively poor[3]. Undergraduate Tutorial System will become a feasible training mechanism for students major in economy and management in agricultural and forestry universities.

2.1 Improve Teaching Quality

It is a fairly short period that the economy and management specialty established in agricultural and forestry universities. The former talent fosters mode in agricultural and forestry universities can not well-adjusted with new specialties. So agricultural and forestry universities lack of experience in personnel training for economy and management specialty, which induce some discrepancy on research capacity, the paper writing capacity and professional knowledge between agricultural universities and finance universities. Through implementation Undergraduate Tutorial System in agricultural and forestry universities, the tutors can give individual guidance to undergraduate students, and teach them in accordance with their aptitude. All those will conducive to students interested in learning professional. When the undergraduate students began their university life, they are often confused by some problems, such as what to learn? How to learn? Why to learn? It will be helpful to solve the problem by implementation Undergraduate Tutorial System.

2.2 Improve overall Quality of Undergraduates

The training objectives of undergraduate students major in economy and management in agricultural and forestry universities should focus on training applied talents, which means to foster the gradates who have specialized knowledge, ability, and a high degree of social responsibility. But in China today, most of the undergraduates are the only child. They can't take care of themselves, and have influenced by 'education for exam' for a long time, when they face with the stress from employment, academic or emotional, they do not know how to deal with. In order to cultivate overall developed talents, it is not enough that just teaching them book knowledge. They need the guidance about ideology, ethics and behavior training etc. Main content of Undergraduate Tutorial System is life guidance, learning guidance and psychological guidance. By learning guidance, tutors can understand the students thought, and enhance the sense of social responsibility of students by realistic data analysis or the arrangements for professional paper writing.

2.3 Benefit to Agricultural Development

It is the main task of agricultural and forestry universities to train high quality talents for agriculture, farmer and rural area in China. But now in China, most of the graduates from agricultural and forestry universities do not want to work in rural area, they would rather work in big cities and receive low wages. The phenomenon is bad to the agricultural development, also bad to the graduate employment of agricultural and forestry universities. By implementation Undergraduate Tutorial System in economy and management specialty in agricultural and forestry universities, the tutors can guide undergraduate students major in economy and management to concern

about the problems of agriculture, farmer and rural area in China, and understand the rural economic development. Tutors also can help students make career planning according to the talent need in China's New Construction of the Rural Areas. When the undergraduate students know the prospects of Agriculture-related employment, they will find the correct position in their future and serve for the countryside. The increase of talent supply for China's New Construction of the Rural Areas will benefit to agricultural development.

3. Implementation of undergraduate tutorial system

Agricultural University of Hebei was founded in 1902, which is one of the earliest agricultural and forestry universities in China. In 2002, School of Business and College of Economics and Trade of Agricultural University of Hebei were established. Now there are 3000 undergraduate students and 150 university teachers of economy and management specialty. College of Economics and Trade of Agricultural University of Hebei has implemented Undergraduate Tutorial System since 2008. In order to research on the implementation and effect of Undergraduate Tutorial System in Agricultural University of Hebei, we carried on an empirical study on undergraduate students and tutors by discussion and questionnaire. We sent out questionnaires to 140 undergraduates, and got feedback for 127 undergraduates, coefficient of recovery of the questionnaire is 94%.

3.1 A teaching System of Undergraduate Tutorial System

The overall vision of Undergraduate Tutorial System in College of Economics and Trade of Agricultural University of Hebei is going to allocate tutors for undergraduate students according to the needs of professional development and individual characteristics. Under the Undergraduate Tutorial System, tutors will teach students in accordance with their aptitude, and provide services on their thinking, learning and living. Through the questionnaire survey on undergraduates, we found that tutor's content of guidance focused on learning content and methods, the ratio is 83.46%. The second tutor's content of guidance focused on employment and entrance exams for graduate guidance, the ratio is 40.94%. The third tutor's content of guidance focused on professional research and psychological consultation guidance, the ratio is respectively 24.41% and 20.07%. In addition, the tutors also give guidance on community activities, social practices and other problems of undergraduate students. Guidance method of tutors involves team guidance, individual guidance, guidance through network and telephone and so on. Among all the methods, collective guidance is the most frequent methods for tutors, the ratio is 71.65%, the second is the computer network guidance, including blog, e-mail, web chatting, the ratio is 65.35%. If students encountered problems must be solved quickly, they tended to select the methods such as individual guidance and telephone guidance.

Table 1. Questionnaire about undergraduate tutorial system

No.	Question	Options	Selection ratio%
1	Understanding about Undergraduate Tutorial System	Understanding	24.41
		A better understanding	40.94
		Do not know	34.65
2	Harvest form Undergraduate Tutorial System	Ideological level	22.04
		Learning Level	75.59
		Scientific Research Level	31.5
		Communication level	28.35
		others	9.45
3	Satisfaction for Undergraduate Tutorial System	Satisfactory	55.91
		General Satisfactory	38.89
		Unsatisfactory	5.51
4	Frequency of Guidance	1 Time per Week	17.32
		2 Times per Month	62.2
		Less 2 Times per Term	20.47
5	Method of Guidance	Collective Guidance	71.65
		Individual Guidance	42.52
		Guidance through Network	65.35
		Guidance through Telephone	13.39
6	Content of Guidance	Learning content and Methods	83.46
		Employment Guidance	40.94
		Professional Research	24.41
		Psychological Consultation	20.47
		Others	11.81

3.2 Method for tutors selection

Limited by the shortage of teachers, it is very difficult to allocate tutors for all undergraduate students in College of Economics and Trade of Agricultural University of Hebei. The first batch of undergraduate students were allocated tutors are sophomore and junior major in economics and marketing and freshman major in statistics, which include five classes, and the total number is 138. Not all the teachers in College of Economics and Trade can be tutors for undergraduate student. Selection criteria for tutor is very strict, who must have high standard of teaching, full of teaching experience, and high academic standards. By selection, 33 teachers got the

tutor qualification. They are composed by Ph.D. supervisor, Master Instructor, associate professor, professor, and some outstanding young teachers. Undergraduate students have the freedom to choose their tutor. Information of tutors will be published at the college website, so the students can choose tutors according to the specialty and academic standards by themselves. To ensure the quality of tutor's guidance, all students' selections were summarized and adjusted, at last the results is 4-8 students per tutor.

3.3 Work evaluation for tutors

How to assess the work of tutors in College of Economics and Trade of Agricultural University of Hebei focused on individual development of undergraduate students, which has the same principle with University of Oxford. The targets for implementation Undergraduate Tutorial System involve helping undergraduate students establish development goals, plan professional learning and living arrangements etc. Through the questionnaire survey on students, we found most of students thought they obtained a benefit from Undergraduate Tutorial System. When they answered the question about harvest form Undergraduate Tutorial System, most students thought their learning level raised, the ratio is 75.59%. Some students thought their scientific research level raised, the ratio is 31.5%, in which shown in statistical analysis, software applications and extra-curricular academic work. Through the survey on satisfaction for Undergraduate Tutorial System, we found that not all the undergraduates are satisfied with Undergraduate Tutorial System. Form the questionnaire survey data, only 55.91% undergraduate students are satisfied with Undergraduate Tutorial System.

4. Difficulties on implementation undergraduate tutorial system

4.1 Scarcity of tutors

The major problem on implementation Undergraduate Tutorial System in Agricultural University of Hebei is that the number of tutor is too scarcity to arrange tutors for every undergraduates. Compared with the Stanford University and Princeton University, which teacher-student ratio is respectively 1:3 and 1:6, the teacher-student ratio in China's university is too low. With Agricultural University of Hebei for example, there are 62 full-time teachers in College of Economics and Trade of Agricultural University of Hebei, and more than 150 postgraduate students and doctoral students, In addition, more than 1400 undergraduates. The teacher-student ratio is 1:25. If arrange tutors for every undergraduate students, each tutor will guide about 25 students. Tutors have to faced with arduous tasks, and have not enough time and energy to carry on individual guidance. Limited by the scarcity of tutors, only ten percent of undergraduates have their tutors in College of Economics and Trade of Agricultural University of Hebei, which is unfair to other undergraduate students.

4.2 Uncertain of tutor's guidance method

Because it is not a long time to implement Undergraduate Tutorial System in College of Economics and Trade of Agricultural University of Hebei, neither the role of tutors nor the tutor's method of guidance is definite. There is no provision for the tutor's method of guidance in detail. Tutors can decide all the things follow their own way, include how to guide, when to guide and what to guide. Through the discussion with the tutors, we found that many tutors can not give clearly define for their work. Undergraduate students in Agricultural University of Hebei are educated by their professional teachers, and ask for help to their class counselors or class teachers when they meet problem in life and thought, which is the method of work in previous undergraduates training system. In this condition, tutor is not necessary for undergraduate students. And at the same time, tutors will not only be their professional teachers, but also their class counselors or class teachers. Which is the major role they act? They do not know.

4.3 Undergraduates do not volunteer

Agricultural University of Hebei is a local agricultural university. Compared with the top universities, student's matriculate quality of Agricultural University of Hebei is poor. They are used to learn the knowledge and accomplish assignment passively, not used to study initiatively. So even if arranged tutors, some undergraduate students do not know what is the benefit from Undergraduate Tutorial System. Through the questionnaire survey on undergraduate students, we found that Undergraduate Tutorial System has not been understood by all the students at all. There are only 22.41 percent of students said that they had a full understanding about Undergraduate Tutorial System, while 34.66 percent of undergraduates said they did not understand in the least. Through the discussion with the tutors, we found that most tutors guide their students with great pleasure, but the students are lack of enthusiasm in active learning and they are too shy to ask for help on their own initiative. The relationship between tutor and student is passive.

4.4 Infirmary of undergraduate tutorial system

As a new undergraduate teaching system in Agricultural University of Hebei, Undergraduate Tutorial System is imperfect in some ways, especially reflected in the evaluation and incentive system on tutors work. Limited by the lack of finances, the tutor's work is not included in the class load of a teacher, which means tutor's work is volunteer work without material reward or compensation. Because serving without compensation, the tutor's performance evaluations system is of no consequence. Absence of tutor's performance evaluation system, it is difficult to make quantizing assessment system on tutor's work, which liable to lead to moral hazard when tutors guide their students, which means the kind of tutor's behavior that they get lazy with their work but giving the appearance of being busy. It is difficult for others found there is moral hazard in tutor's work or not. Absence of tutor's incentive system, it is difficult to effectively galvanize the enthusiasm and creativity of tutors [4].

5. Countermeasures and suggestion

5.1 Increase the amount of tutors

Insufficient faculty force is one of important bottleneck to restrict the development of Undergraduate Tutorial System in universities in China. In order to make up for the shortage of tutors, universities in China should bring in talent by all the ways [5]. For the college of economics and management in agricultural and forestry universities, talent in and outside the campus can be added to tutors for undergraduate students. Taking undergraduate students major in different specialties into consideration, agricultural and forestry universities can make full use of their teaching staff and personal relationship with the talent outside the campus. Retired teachers, senior accountants, securities analysts, staff members to the bank or rural credit cooperative enterprise administrators all can serve as tutors for undergraduates major in economics and management. Through bring in the social talent, the bottleneck of shortage of teachers in colleges and universities in China will be broken through.

5.2 Clear the tutor's work duties

Indistinct of tutor's work content is other important bottleneck to restrict the development of Undergraduate Tutorial System. We can classify undergraduate students according to their grade, special field of study, academic performance and so on, and different students should be guided in different ways. Because the sense of

distance between young teachers and undergraduate students is relatively minor, young teachers can serve as tutors for lower grade undergraduate students. Their responsibility includes making rational arrangement of learning content for students, guiding students selecting the lessons and so on. High ranking teachers, such as professors and associate professors, who are good at in specialty knowledge and academic research, can serve as tutors for higher grade undergraduate students. Their responsibility includes giving guidance to students when they are going to take part in the entrance exams for postgraduate schools, bringing up the student's ability of innovation & carve, and helping seniors accomplish their graduation thesis.

5.3 Stimulate students full motive of study

It is an interactive process between tutors and students on implementation Undergraduate Tutorial System. How to stimulate undergraduate students' interests and independent character of learning in special course is very important. Undergraduate Tutorial System should be given wide publicity in campus for every student. Through displaying the excellent graduation thesis and extra-curricular academic works and giving wide publicity to student's information about percentage of passing the CET (College English Text) and Provincial Computer Proficiency Test under the guidance of their tutors, undergraduate students will be aware of the important role of tutors, and turn to their tutors for help in time of trouble actively. On the other hand, there must be mechanism of rewards and punishment on examining students, which means undergraduate students who achieve satisfactory results should be praised and others who disobey their tutors guidance deliberately should be punished.

5.4 Set up management and evaluation mechanism on tutor's work

Systemization will ensure the smooth implementation of Undergraduate Tutorial System. For the sake of sustainable development, the elaboration of complete rules and regulations is needed, which include teacher training, performance evaluation and assessment rule and incentive plans [6]. At first, it is necessary to draw out corresponding teacher-training system, which is responsible for the tutor-training on psychology, pedagogy and educational administration. Second, performance evaluation and assessment rule is necessary to confine the tutor's act. According to the grade and major of undergraduate students, different standard of tutor's performance evaluation should be made. Third, it is very important to bring the tutor's enthusiasm by setting up reasonable incentive plans. Universities should pay appropriate post allowance to tutors for their guidance work according to the number and accomplishment of students they guide. Tutors who have made outstanding achievements in their work will be more easily chosen as excellent teachers and gotten high professional titles.

6. Conclusion

Remarkable results have been achieved on implementation of Undergraduate Tutorial System in College of Economics and Trade of Agricultural University of Hebei, which laid the groundwork for making further improvement on the teaching standards for economy and management specialty in the agricultural and forestry universities. But there are still many problems on implementation of Undergraduate Tutorial System. We should improve and perfect it by bringing in talent, setting up management and evaluation mechanism etc. Therefore, more achievements will be made in personnel training scheme of the undergraduate students major in economy and management in the agricultural and forestry universities.

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