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Multiple Logics and Practical Requirements of University Student Administration

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Abstract: University student education and administration is carried out under specific historical contexts. It reflects political, historical and cultural requirements of specific periods and constitutes an action process governed by multiple logics. Existing studies mostly discuss the standardization of student administration from within the rule-of-law logic, while relatively neglecting the key roles of political logic and ethical logic. This paper distinguishes the action logics in university student administration into political logic, rule-of-law logic and ethical logic. Political logic addresses the directional question of "what kind of talents to cultivate and for whom to cultivate them". Rule-of-law logic requires administrative power to be exercised in compliance with rules and procedures, whose evolutionary trajectory is clearly reflected in the three revisions of *Regulations on the Administration of Students in Ordinary Institutions of Higher Education*. Ethical logic calls for responses to social moral expectations for schools and teachers within the context of traditional Chinese teacher-student ethics. Accordingly, student-administration practice shall highlight political guidance, consolidate awareness of the rule of law, and strengthen humanistic care. The three logics do not compete on the same plane: political logic sets the orientation and draws red lines; rule-of-law logic establishes rules and safeguards rights; ethical logic infuses human warmth. All three are unified under the fundamental goal of talent cultivation.

Keywords: University student administration; Multiple logics; University governance by rule of law; Teacher-student ethics

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1. Problem statement

Sound student administration is of great significance for maintaining normal school order and guaranteeing campus safety and stability. Universities have dense student populations with active minds. Students are confronted with various confusions and pressures from academic pursuits, employment, psychology, and emotional life. A high proportion of students are only children with strong awareness of their rights, and their parents pay close attention to them. In addition, the prosperity of self-media means that ordinary disputes may evolve into public incidents within a short time. Under the combined effect of the above-mentioned factors, how to construct high-quality student-administration systems and guarantee efficient and harmonious campus operation has become an unavoidable practical issue in university governance.

Regarding the standardization of university student administration, existing studies roughly follow three lines of inquiry. First, the line of student-right protection: researchers examine improvement paths for student-right-protection mechanisms under the background of the newly-revised *Regulations on the Administration of Students in Ordinary Institutions of Higher Education* [1], analyze changes in legal relationships between public universities and students from the "power-oriented" to "right-oriented" perspective [2], and summarize the right-based logic behind the three revisions of *Regulations on the Administration of Students in Ordinary Institutions of Higher Education* as "order evolution" [3]. Second, the line of university governance by rule of law and legalization of disciplinary power: researchers discuss the development of university-student-administration systems under university governance by rule of law [4], as well as contents and promotion paths for legal review of university disciplinary power [5]. Third, the line of procedural justice and judicial remedy: drawing on real-world cases, researchers discuss procedural justice, adjudication logic, and dispute-resolution mechanisms concerning student disciplinary sanctions in universities [6-7].

The above-mentioned studies lay a solid foundation for this paper. Nevertheless, most of them are conducted within the rule-of-law logic and relatively overlook two other facts. First, political logic plays a directional and prerequisite governing role in university student administration in China. Second, traditional teacher-student ethics still exert a profound influence on home-school relations and the boundary of schools' administrative obligations. This paper differentiates action logics in student administration into political logic, rule-of-law logic and ethical logic, defines their respective connotations and bases, and further discusses specific practical requirements raised by the three logics, as well as integration principles when tensions arise among them.

2. Multiple logics of university student administration

Action logic refers to value orientations and rule structures that govern actors' behavioral choices within a specific field. University student administration lies at the intersection of relationships among the state, schools, families and students. Administrators' actions are not governed by a single rule alone. Political logic answers "what kind of talents to cultivate and for whom to cultivate them" and determines administration orientation. Rule-of-law logic answers "how administrative power shall be legitimately exercised" and defines administrative rules and procedures. Ethical logic answers "what kind of educators society expects schools to be" and provides behavioral guidance beyond formal rules. The three logics differ in their sources, contents and orientations and shall be grasped respectively.

2.1. Political logic

The core of political logic lies in the political orientation and state-nature of education. Education is always carried out against specific socio-political backgrounds, and education in every country bears distinct political-value orientations. Relevant Chinese laws contain explicit statements on this point. Both the *Education Law of the People's Republic of China* and the *Higher Education Law of the People's Republic of China* stress that education aims to cultivate well-rounded socialist builders and successors who develop morally, intellectually, physically and aesthetically [8]. Education is not mere knowledge imparting; it represents an institutional arrangement for the state to cultivate talents and serve social development. As part of the educational process, student administration also undertakes the function of value guidance. It shall

serve the fundamental goal of fostering virtue through education and assume the bottom-line responsibility of safeguarding campus ideological and cultural security.

2.2. Rule-of-law logic

The rule of law means governance by good laws. It constitutes the basic approach for modern-state governance and also serves as the fundamental guideline for university-student education and administration. Issued as a ministerial regulation by the former State Education Commission in 1990, *Regulations on the Administration of Students in Ordinary Institutions of Higher Education* systematically and comprehensively regulated various areas of student administration for the first time, and underwent two subsequent revisions in 2005 and 2017 [9]. A comparison of texts from the three editions reveals obvious changes in its normative structure.

Obligatory norms targeting students have been relatively reduced, empowering norms granting rights to students have increased markedly, while obligatory norms targeting universities and educational competent authorities, especially procedural obligatory norms, have grown substantially [10]. Some scholars summarize this transition as the shift of legal relationships between public universities and students from "power-oriented" to "right-oriented" [11]. Others describe the order-based logic behind revisions to *Regulations on the Administration of Students in Ordinary Institutions of Higher Education* as a "march toward right emancipation" [12]. The three revisions of this regulation fully demonstrate the continuous growth of rule-of-law logic in the field of student administration. Rule-of-law logic has evolved from an external constraint on universities into the internal structure of student administration, becoming the basic mode for restraining power exercise.

2.3. Ethical logic

Within the specific relational field of schools (teachers) and students, many practical-administration problems cannot be solved effectively merely by abiding by rule-of-law logic or political logic. In the context of traditional Chinese culture, students have never been completely independent individuals.

In terms of teacher-student relationships, traditional Chinese culture endows them with an ethical dimension that transcends legal contracts. Under such cultural presuppositions, teachers are entrusted with fiduciary-like moral obligations. Society generally expects teachers to bear joint responsibility for students' conduct and development, rather than merely fulfilling in-class teaching functions. In other words, even though most students are legally adults with full capacity for civil conduct, neglecting communication with parents in student education and administration will not help resolve problems smoothly and may instead intensify conflicts. From current administrative practice, many universities require parents to be informed or participate when handling important matters such as student-loan applications, off-campus accommodation and withdrawal applications. This shall not be simply interpreted as schools' self-protection or retrogression of the rule of law. Instead, more attention shall be paid to the underlying teacher-student ethics.

It should be noted that ethical logic serves as a necessary supplement, rather than a substitute, for rule-of-law logic, and this boundary must be kept clear. The overwhelming majority of university students have reached the legal age of majority and are independent subjects of rights and obligations in law. Excessive parental involvement may, on the contrary, undermine the cultivation of students' independent personalities and sense of responsibility and even trigger new disputes. This paper advocates adopting appropriate approaches such as notification, consultation and educational guidance within the framework defined by rule-of-law logic to respond to social expectations rooted in traditional cultural ethics.

3. Practical requirements under the influence of multiple logics

Different action logics pursue different values and accordingly raise distinct practical requirements. Political logic calls for highlighted political guidance; rule-of-law logic demands consolidated awareness of the rule of law and adherence to a right-based orientation; ethical logic requires strengthened humanistic care. These elements interpenetrate one another and jointly constitute the inherent requirements for university student administration.

3.1. Highlight political guidance

To effectively implement political logic in current university-student-administration practice in China, emphasis shall be laid on the following three aspects to give full play to political-guidance functions.

Adhere to the correct talent-cultivation orientation. Student administration shall consciously serve the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education and integrate value guidance into every link of daily administration. Attach importance to the cultivation and administration of student cadres and bring their exemplary and leading roles into play. Strengthen education on university history and circumstances to help students understand the inherent connections between national development and personal growth.

Attach importance to value guidance. Adapted to the characteristics of young students, adopt multiple channels, including classroom teaching, campus cultural activities, and social practice, to help students establish a correct worldview and outlook on life subtly and imperceptibly. In the face of influences from diverse social ideological trends, respond in a timely manner and provide proper guidance to create a sound and positive educational atmosphere.

Adhere to the student-centered approach. Daily student education and administration work, such as grants for needy students, employment guidance and psychological counseling, shall be examined from the perspective of talent cultivation. They shall be regarded as important approaches for serving students' growth and producing education satisfactory to the people, instead of merely trivial transactional work.

3.2. Consolidate awareness of the rule of law

Since the reform and opening-up, China's social-governance approaches have kept evolving. The rule of law has become the country's basic governance mode and naturally serves as the fundamental guideline for educational administration. To effectively implement rule-of-law logic in university student administration, attention shall be paid to the following three aspects.

Clarify attributes of legal relationships. Within the campus context, legal relationships between schools and students vary under different relational scenarios and shall comply with different behavioral logics [13]. In educational-administration links, the relationship between schools and students is that of educator and educatee. Universities exercise administrative authority authorized by laws and regulations in this field. Under the principle of legal reservation, universities' educational autonomy shall also be acknowledged. Dual review of legality and rationality shall be adopted to simultaneously realize legal protection of student rights and respect for university autonomy [14]. In the field of logistics-support relationships, schools and students shall maintain equal contractual relationships: students obtain accommodation, catering and other supporting services by paying consideration. Students shall participate fully in the formulation of relevant rules, which shall specify not only students' obligations but also their entitled rights.

Standardize power exercise. The core essence of the rule of law lies in power restraint, and governing universities by rule of law essentially means governing power by rule of law. Three requirements shall be met

to standardize the exercise of school administrative power.

First, promote awareness of a rights-oriented culture and increase schools' initiative in respecting and safeguarding student rights. Second, improve the student-right-remedy system, smooth and perfect internal-university remedy mechanisms such as appeals and letters-and-visits, promote effective connection between internal and external remedy channels, and strengthen power restraint through multiple approaches [15]. As judicial intervention in university-governance deepens, appropriately expanding the scope of judicial case acceptance is also necessary [16]. Third, enhance procedural awareness in student administration. Procedural awareness has two-fold implications: respect for established rules and procedures in handling affairs; and value-based evaluation of rules themselves, namely that established procedures shall be legitimate. From judicial practice, a considerable proportion of university-student-administration-related lawsuits lost by universities result from failure to follow self-formulated procedural rules strictly.

Improve university-rule systems. From a governance perspective, university regulations are typical "soft law". They are not enforced by state coercive power yet exert actual binding force within campus communities and directly determine the level of rule-of-law-based student administration. Improvement of university rules can proceed as follows. First, build a complete university-rule system to provide grounds for university education and administration and avoid arbitrary personal discretion of administrators. Second, increase student participation in rule-making processes to reflect students' demands within the university and enhance their recognition of university rules. Third, improve the scientific nature of rule contents. Be prudent when drafting obligatory and accountability clauses prone to disputes. Liability setting shall follow the principle of proportionality and avoid improper connection in liability investigation. In addition, strengthen overall coordination to guarantee consistency and unity of internal-university normative systems.

3.3. Strengthen humanistic care

Strengthening humanistic care means that student-administration measures shall conform to requirements of traditional teacher-student ethics. Ethical norms prevail among various social subjects, yet teacher-student ethical relationships differ from those among ordinary subjects. Within the "teacher-student" relational dimension, the public tends to show relatively more tolerance for students while holding higher moral expectations for schools. To conduct student administration well, attention shall be paid to the practice of teacher-student ethics. This means that under certain educational-administration circumstances, schools need to assume administrative obligations within ethical boundaries beyond legal requirements.

First, strengthen educational guidance. Although most students are legally adults, within the context of traditional Chinese culture, students are not completely independent individuals in front of teachers. Teachers still need to perform administrative obligations derived from teacher-student ethics even when no legal necessity exists.

Second, reinforce home-school communication. From current university-administration practice, parents play an important role in handling various student-behavior-related incidents. For student-initiated applications such as withdrawal and off-campus accommodation, parental signatures are generally required. The overwhelming majority of university students have reached the age of majority. From a pure rule-of-law perspective under such scenarios, schools bear no active notification obligations and parents have no qualification for participation. Nevertheless, in the concrete implementation of student education and administration, necessary communication shall be maintained with parents when the disposal of students' important rights and interests is involved, in consideration of China's unique historical and cultural traditions.

Third, combine strict discipline with care. While student administration requires tolerance and guidance rooted in traditional teacher-student ethics, disciplinary sanctions shall still be imposed in strict accordance with rules for serious-circumstance cases in pursuit of both procedural fairness and educational effectiveness. Meanwhile, schools shall maintain continuous attention and care for sanctioned students. Disciplinary sanctions shall be treated as educational means rather than ends. Explore underlying causes behind students' problems and conduct targeted educational guidance.

4. Conclusion

Political logic, rule-of-law logic and ethical logic each hold their own value stances and do not always coordinate with one another in concrete administrative scenarios. Rigid adherence to legal procedures may be perceived as inhumane; accommodating parental demands may cross rule-based red lines; improper implementation of strict political requirements may trigger doubts over legitimacy. How to perceive and handle tensions among the three logics constitutes an unavoidable issue in student-administration practice.

This paper holds that the three logics are not competing on the same plane. Instead, each occupies its proper position and observes its own boundaries. Political logic sets the orientation and draws red lines: it guides the value objectives of student administration with the question of "what kind of talents to cultivate and for whom to cultivate them". Rule-of-law logic safeguards student rights by restraining the exercise of administrative power and sets bottom lines for administrative acts. Ethical logic infuses human warmth: within the framework of politics and the rule of law, it responds to Chinese-social cultural expectations for teacher-student relationships.

The unity of the three logics rests on solid normative foundations. Requirements for political orientation have been institutionalized through the Constitution and laws. Adherence to rule-of-law logic is inherently consistent with adherence to political logic at the normative level. Tensions that may emerge in concrete scenarios shall be resolved by returning to the fundamental goal of talent cultivation. Any arrangement conducive to students' growth without crossing bottom-line requirements represents sound student administration. Taking this as the benchmark to comprehensively grasp political logic, rule-of-law logic and ethical logic, and putting into practice the practical requirements of highlighting political guidance, consolidating awareness of the rule of law and strengthening humanistic care, we can realize more efficient and harmonious university student administration.

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