

A Study on “Innovative and Entrepreneurial” Part-time Jobs at Colleges and Universities

Xuan Zhang¹ & Hanzi He²

¹ Organization Department of the Party Committee, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou, China

² Organization Department of the Party Committee, Jinan University, Guangzhou, China

Correspondence: Hanzi He, Organization Department of the Party Committee, Jinan University, Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, 510000, China.

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Abstract

With the student aid becoming more and more diversified, China has established an integrated financial aid system of scholarships, educational loans, aids, subsidies and reduction of tuitions. However, there still remain some problems to be resolved regarding the part-time jobs, such as focusing too much on economic aid, mismanagement of part-time positions and slow integration with innovation and entrepreneurship education. In order to achieve the dual goal of financial relief and integral education, we should expand and enrich the part-time positions, form new brands and ensure a sustainable development model. In this way, we can arouse students' enthusiasm for innovation and entrepreneurship to the most extent and better incorporate education in students' study, work and life so as to develop an omnibearing educational system.

Keywords: diversified student aid programs, innovation and entrepreneurship, part-time jobs

In the report delivered by Chinese president Xi Jinping to the 19th Communist Party of China (CPC) National Congress on October 18, 2017, it stresses that we should grow better at ensuring and improving people's well-being, among which building a sound student aid system is one of the most important aspects. Chen Baosheng, Minister of Education also emphasized in the Congress that more investment should be put in poor rural areas and ethnic minority areas. In the last five years since the 18th National Congress, no student dropped out of school because of family financial difficulty. With the number of college students from financially tight families increasing, China has established an integrated financial aid system of scholarships, educational loans, aids, subsidies and reduction of tuitions. As a supplement, part-time jobs have become an effective way to educate students through practice and to cultivate independence. By developing it from “giving fish” to “teaching to fish”, it will greatly promote innovation and entrepreneurship among college students.

1. Diverse Development of Student Aid

1.1 Free-of-Charge Student Aid Through Grants

Free-of-charge student aid principally consists of scholarships, educational aids and the exemption and reduction of tuitions. Scholarships not only encourage students to study harder, but also optimize the allocation of the limited resources to some extent. However, excellent students from low-income families and financially difficult students are not the same. Therefore, scholarships can only help a very small part of students who need it, that is, those with excellent academic records but low family incomes. Likewise, different educational aids are designed to help all full-time students from low-income families, but in reality it can only cover those most in need. As for the exemption and reduction of tuitions, although it is easy to implement, it is likely to lead to inequity among students and reduction of school income.

1.2 Delayed Payment

Delayed payment is different from the aids above. It aims to help students go through the temporary financial difficulty so that they can continue their studies and pay the tuitions later. This way of aid helps to reduce the school burden and is conducive to strengthen students' social responsibility. Nevertheless, it can bring psychological stress on students and the university has to establish an efficient system to collect the tuition.

1.3 Student Aid Through Part-Time Jobs

Paid aid differs from free-of-charge aid. It requires students to devote some amounts of efforts and time. As one of a common and typical ways, part-time jobs provided by the university are popular worldwide. Not only can it strengthen students' service and working awareness, but it also helps to alleviate the financial situation of many students. However, it is urgent to set up and manage the part-time positions in an effective way so that it can meet the needs of most students and create revenues for the university at the same time.

2. Current Situation of Part-Time Jobs

2.1 Focus on Economic Aid Rather Than Educational Goal

In recent years, the Chinese government has attached much importance to part-time jobs at colleges and universities, formulated and promulgated a series of documents concerning the aid system, providing policy support to the sound development of part-time jobs at colleges and universities. However, traditional management on part-time jobs is relatively old-fashioned. In other words, most part-time positions only focus on simple financial aid. Many departments at colleges and universities regard financial help as the main goal of part-time jobs but neglect its educational functions. In this aid system, the main body of management is the university and teachers who make a decision and run the program all the time, while students are only assigned work and do not take initiative, resulting in a lack of sense of belonging and motivation. Some financially difficult students even rely too much on the part-time jobs.

2.2 Low-Level Labor Positions Lack Systematic Planning

At present almost every college and university in China sets up part-time positions. However, most of the positions are set up without systematic planning and center on low-level physical labor. In practice, because of the differences in the nature of each department and position, part-time jobs are managed and paid individually, leading to a lack of preciseness, transparency and standardization and slack management, which poses a negative impact on not only students' work enthusiasm and quality, but also the implementation of quality-oriented education and realization of all-round development at colleges and universities.

2.3 Slow Integration of Part-Time Jobs with Innovation and Entrepreneurship Education

With the ever-changing needs for talents, part-time jobs are given new expectations. They are essentially more than a financial aid to students from low-income families, but contribute to the development of students' hands-on and creative abilities. Those "knowledge-intensive" positions, in particular, require students to analyze all kinds of problems they encounter at work by making use of their wisdom and knowledge. However, many colleges and universities do not combine part-time jobs with innovation and entrepreneurship education and fail to incorporate the cultivation of creativity and hands-on abilities into the part-time job program. Thus, this program needs further improvement.

3. Ways to Innovate Part-Time Jobs at Colleges and Universities

Chinese president Xi Jinping pointed out that it is our mission to meet the people's desire for a happy life. In terms of education, he stressed that we should ensure education opportunities for every Chinese child and strive to let 1.3 billion Chinese people enjoy a better and fairer education. Education is essential to poverty alleviation. In the course to build an overall well-off society, education is the essential solution to prevent poverty passing from generation to generation. In order to better incorporate education into learning, work and life and to form an all-round educational system, colleges and universities in Guangdong have conducted some fruitful exploration on making part-time jobs as an important platform of innovation and entrepreneurship.

3.1 Integrate Resources to Diversity Part-Time Positions

With the part-time positions lacking in systematic planning and appeal and faced with the shortage of part-time jobs, colleges and universities vigorously integrate resources on the one hand and dedicate themselves to setting up positions of innovation and entrepreneurship on the other, providing students with multi-department and multi-role positions so that they can combine theory with hands-on experience. In this way, financial alleviation and talent cultivation can both be fulfilled.

(1) Integrate resources to provide students with as many opportunities as possible to participate in part-time jobs. In recent years, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (GDUFS) have held green-channel recruitment fairs for part-time jobs within the campus on a regular basis. Taking the fair in September 2017 for example, 15 traditional part-time job providers including the Party and government offices and scientific research offices, and 34 innovation and entrepreneurial part-time job providing offices of Yunshan series took part in the fair, offering around 650 positions within the campus. At present, the university has set up over 2000 fixed part-time positions,

building a platform for students, especially those with financial difficulties to obtain hands-on experience and enjoy the right to higher education.

(2) Part-time positions become increasingly diversified. For one thing, colleges and universities continue to set up traditional part-time positions, which are principally comprised of office positions and technology-based positions. The main job of the former is to assist student instructors, administrative staff or research centers with office routines, and the latter is based on students' major and skills and aims to bring their advantages into full play, including teaching assistants, research assistants, computer and Internet maintenance technicians, and news reporters. In Jinan University for example, three kinds of part-time positions are offered: teaching assistants, office assistants and research assistants, which can be fixed or temporary. For another, the part-time positions of innovation and entrepreneurship have also been set up. Under the great support and instructions from the university and teachers, this kind of part-time jobs are based on operating entities where students manage the entity on their own. In this way, students take initiatives, combine professional knowledge with hands-on experience and get paid through creative work.

3.2 Form New Brands to Promote Innovation and Entrepreneurship

The country's hope lies in the young generation. President Xi Jinping encouraged Chinese young people to embrace innovation and entrepreneurship. Innovation has become a great power to push forward social progress, while entrepreneurship plays an important role in promoting economic development and improving people's well-being. By creating operating entities, students are provided with entrepreneurial positions and become more motivated when taking part-time jobs within the campus. In addition, entrepreneurial positions will enrich the program of part-time jobs, making it more diversified and scalable.

In 2003, based on the traditional student aid programs, GDUFS embarked on the exploration of cultivating innovative and entrepreneurial talents and established a series of economic entities to offer part-job times within the campus such as the Yunshan coffee house. The Yunshan Student Work-study program (Figure 1 below) consists of seven departments including the administration, accounting, human resources, audit and supervision, public relations and alumni departments. After over one decade of development, the program currently has 30 economic entities with the establishment of a series of Yunshan student aid bases such as the Yunshan coffee house and Yunshan gym. The number of entities has quadrupled and economic index has increased by 3.5 times. At present, the program covers ten businesses including the coffee house, bookstore, digital port and computer maintenance station with an annual sales turnover reaching 5 million yuan and without any food safety, fire, and financial security incident. Through the Yunshan Student Work-study program, GDUFS has achieved a win-win situation between economic and educational benefits.

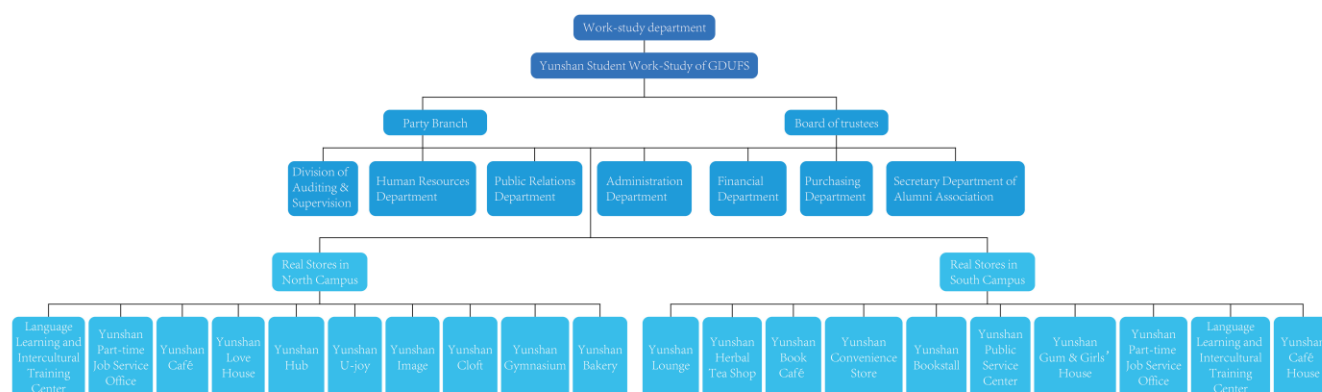


Figure 1. The Yunshan Student Work-study program

By adopting the operating mode of entity, enterprise and base, the program enables students to participate in entrepreneurial practice and receive start-up training in a setting highly similar to real-life contexts. Focusing on entrepreneurship education, GDUFS carries out systematic training for all staff at the entities by adopting collectivize and delicacy management with an aim of laying a solid foundation for student innovation and entrepreneurship. In addition, the university organizes personalized activities such as workshops for the backbone of Party members, the Manager Challenge, the Elite Training Camp and the Eagles Training Camp,

achieving integration between entrepreneurial practice and guiding students' ideas. As students become the main participant of the business, their sense of responsibility and mission is strengthened.

3.3 Ensure Sustainable Development to Promote In-Depth Integral Education

As the student aid platform transforms from “giving a fish” in the past to “teaching to fish” at present, the students' role also changes from passively receiving a task to taking on a responsibility, which greatly boosts their enthusiasm to conduct self-management.

Yunshan Student Work-study program of GDUFS provides students with an entrepreneurship platform, driving the traditional student aid program to further develop into a program in which students participate in entrepreneurial activities. Not only does it improve students' awareness and skills of innovation, but it is also conducive to promote entrepreneurship within the campus. Students' sense of responsibility and mission will in return ensure the development of these positions. In the spirit of self-reliance, innovation and entrepreneurship, GDUFS established the Yunshan Study-work Alumni Association which is committed to strengthening the links between students who once worked and those who are working now in the program. With the efforts of the alumni, the program has become a business incubator and cradle of entrepreneurial talents. The hands-on experience that students obtain through the program has helped them to build confidence to start a business. Students who have once worked in the program pioneer in entrepreneurial attempt, setting a good example to the younger generation and encouraging them to become an innovative and entrepreneurial talent.

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