

On Constructing an “Implantable” College Students Learning Support Center

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Abstract: Learning is the fundamental task for college students, who, besides academic studies, are expected to experience others. It has become common sense for the staff of student affairs to support students with all their college exploration. The “implantable” style of leaning support stresses students as the core, and respects their personality and choices while providing them with all-the-way assistance in their pursuit of excellence. With the aim of “motivating learning interest, broadening professional eyesight, and achieving academic excellence”, China University of Geosciences (Wuhan) is now constructing an “implantable” style supportive leaning center for college students. The 6 functions of the learning center are elaborated, the features introduced and the operational effectiveness discussed. The center is supposed to help develop students’ personal interests, individual research and academic discovery.

Keywords: Student Affairs, Implantable Style, Leaning Support, Support Center

Learning is the priority of college students. At present, the staff engaged in students affairs have gradually come to the consensus that their chief task shall be to focus on “students’ learning”, to help students improve their learning effectiveness, and to service and support “students’ learning.” In recent years, most papers about teaching quality concentrate on “teaching”; issues like “what to teach”, “how to teach” are discussed. However, little attention is paid to more substantive matters such as the exploration of “why to study” or “learning quality” from the learners’ standpoint. [1] By summarizing the experience from other universities, and based on the beneficial practices on constructing the College Students Learning Support Center at China University of Geosciences (CUG) (hereinafter referred to as “Learning Center”) , the authors from CUG are attempting to explore the features, functions and effectiveness of this “implantable” learning support system.

1. Significance of Constructing the Learning Center

According to the *2012 Statistical Bulletin of China’s National Educational Development*, the number of undergraduate students in colleges and universities increased to 23.9 million by 828,100 or 3.59% from that of last year; the average number of students in institutions of higher education and higher vocational education,

the former being 13,999 while the latter being 5,858, amounts to 9,675. With the popularization of higher education and the upsurge of student enrollment, it becomes an increasingly more obvious tendency that students' demand in study is getting more personalized, diversified and dynamic. Under such circumstances, researches on how to apply the idea of learning support to college study and construction of learning support system are of great importance and urgency.

Through investigation, Cheng Xiaoliang suggested that learning problems exist widely among college students with diversity and complex causes. To sum up, they mainly include: lack of learning motivation, lack of enthusiasm and passion, lack of interesting in learning, muddling along; unclear of learning objectives, no clear expectations for destinations after graduation, with confusion; psychological dilemma, lack of confidence and perseverance; poor communication and coordination ability, and poor flexibility in adversity; and failure to resist various temptations in society, etc. [2]

Through research on college students, the writers also found that the following problems generally exist: 1) It is universally difficult for the freshmen to adapt to the change of college life, and hard for them to schedule their learning and to conduct self-learning; 2) They are unclear of learning objectives, uninterested in learning, insufficient in learning motivation, and unable to find a suitable way of learning, which renders them relaxed and inefficient in learning; 3) The contradiction between students' individualized learning and developmental needs with hysteretic college learning support service widely exists, deteriorated for lack of consultation and guidance on their development of interest in learning and learning ability; 4) The practical and utilitarian drive is popular among some students in their learning, and there exists in the students a strong logical cognitive capability but a weak moral and emotional cognitive capability; 5) And students in colleges raise more and higher requirements for the software and hardware facilities, which indicates that nonintellectual factors such as learning interest, habit and accommodating conditions are what mainly influence the learning quality of university students. According to Shen, students are more likely to improve their learning efficiency if they are given timely professional assistance and support. [3] Therefore, institutions of higher education shall continuously reform and innovate the way of learning support and service, so as to satisfy the learning demand of university students.

In addition, the conventional education mode cannot meet the needs of the college students' learning and development in the new era. As two important aspects in teaching activities, "teaching" and "learning" gradually turn to be relative independent and lack co-ordination; [4] and the clear characteristic of "teaching-focus", leads to students' weak learning interest and knowledge-seeking desire; they are lacking in learning initiative and the learning effect is not satisfactory. Teachers and students as relatively independent body in the teaching activities also lack sufficient communication and interaction. Therefore, coordinates the relations between "teaching" and "learning", and meets the demand of students' study in the traditional teaching can make up for the deficiency to a certain extent.

2. Construction Philosophy and Principles of the Learning Center

The idea of “Learning Support” originated in the practical process of distance education and distance learning in the Open University (in England). David Swart at the university systematically discussed learning support services for students for the first time: In order to meet the needs of students’ learning, an interactive model between distance education institutions and students should be established. It made clear that distance education institutions must also have the function of consulting and teaching guidance while providing teaching. Du Huimin pointed out that learning guidance is that teachers use their knowledge and professional advantages to help students learn to study, love study, improve the quality and ability to learn, and form a good study habit and the ability of autonomic learning. [5] With the development of the theory and practice of “Learning Support”, learning support service constantly affects the teaching practice of higher education, and the understanding of its status and role will be further improved.

In CUG where the authors are working as student affairs staff, the administrative agency of college students learning support center was established in 2008, and the entity Learning Center was officially built in 2013. During the center construction, construction thoughts were actively explored and the idea of “Implantable” college students learning support center was put forward, which aimed at building the interaction platform between teachers and students, continuously focusing on and meeting the demands of students’ learning, and providing counseling and guidance for students thus to enhance students’ learning enthusiasm and ability as well as ensuring students learning development and effectiveness. “Implantable” means inserted, which is common in the field of medicine. Later it was introduced to economic management activities, that is, “Implantable Marketing Model.” “Implantable” college students learning support center tries to strategically implant the learning support into students daily study on all sides and in the whole process through recessive ways so as to achieve the transformation from management to governance for the thoughts and actions of students learning and to give full play to the students in autonomic and initiative learning. Besides, it aims to eliminate the separation and barriers between teaching and learning, promote teaching fusion and full communication, and create a harmonious, close and orderly learning environment and atmosphere. Highlighting the dominant position of students in learning is the ideal pursuit of constructing new learning support system. Therefore, the construction of “Implantable” college students learning support center must adhere to the student-oriented concept, highlight the students’ learning needs, respect students’ personality and choice, make efforts to overcome the influence of non-intelligence factors on learning, and motivate students to form the value orientation of “focus on studies, pursue the excellence”. Value orientation decides the behavior pattern, so only by establishing the correct values can there be assiduously learning motivation. To let the students concentrate on the study and take the pursuit of academic excellence as the goal. At the same time, to adhere to the construction principle of “something to do but something not to do”. Student learning is a systematic engineering and the effect

factors are complicated. It cannot fit all in the angle of student affairs management. It should closely embrace the perspective of students learning and grasp the important aspects such as the learning interest cultivation, academic planning guidance, psychological counseling, learning methods guidance and so on to build interactive communication platform for students learning.

3. Functional Analysis and Structural Design of the Learning Center

Based on the aim that providing service and supporting students to learn and surrounding the basic task of the College students' learning support center, we can divide the function of the learning support center into six parts. They are as following: long-term counseling, the promotion and help of study, the expansion of comprehensive quality, innovation and enterprise education, ideological and political education and the collection of information about study. What's more, the learning support center can also arrange the working content and project carrier (see Table 1) connected with the needs of students' learning. In order to make the learning support center providing service support about students' study practically, realizing the aim of efficient operation, so the learning support center build the operating framework including the organization, service team, guarantee conditions and so on

3.1 Functional Analysis of the Learning Center

1) Function of growth counseling

The college life of four years is a vital period of the young to grow up and become excellent. It is necessary to help the students to make a plan of this four years' life and even the future career. They need the elaborate consultation and counseling when facing the inability of adaptation upon entering the college, the confusion in their studies and the frustration before joining the workforce. Every student, who entered the college by the examination-oriented education system, faces the adjustment of their studying methods and strategies. Most of them still follow the learning habits which are only suitable in middle school, so they cannot adapt to the college learning very well. Therefore, the support of learning should be not only the guide of learning methods in a general meaning, but also a comprehensive systemic support of learning which contains the learning conception, goals, content, methods, and psychology. We should tell students "which kind of knowledge is the most valuable" and "how to study effectively" these kinds of basic questions, helping students grasp the appropriate learning conception which suits the requirements in our new times as soon as possible. We also need to help them understand the learning goal, find the learning resource, adjust learning mentality in order to finish the college study smoothly and effectively. This will provide a substantial basis of study and professional career in the whole life of a student.

2) Function of promoting learning

For various reasons, after the school opening, the learning condition of the new students will take on a polarization state. Some students can smoothly go through the adaptation period, enter the normal learning tracks, and travel happily in the ocean of

knowledge, just like a fish in water. While some students can't adapt themselves to the new circumstance for a long time; they are not able to solve difficulties in studying, and even become negative and depressed. They lose goals, and begin to show psychological problems. Schools should provide chance for excellent students to expand their learning horizon, for instance, to carry out the research study, interdisciplinary professional exchanges, and international vision expansion to expand their knowledge and make them learn better. For students with learning difficulties, schools ought to provide learning "rescue", such as learning methods and techniques guidance and curriculum counseling, to help them analyze learning difficulties and key points, to show them the learning path, to provide them psychological counseling, to help them learn to ease the pressure, enhance learning self-confidence and get rid of the trouble of "failing exams" as soon as possible.

3) Function of expanding comprehensive qualities

Learning is a broad concept. In addition to learning academic knowledge, it also includes the need to learn the knowledge conducive to comprehensively improving the overall quality. Learning support services should help students develop a clear perception of themselves in terms of personality, interests, values and abilities, etc, and should guide students to think and explore through promoting the non-intelligence factors that can promote learning success and work success. On the premise of full respect for students' personality and choice, the school should enhance students' education, aesthetic education, emotional intelligence training, leadership power training and interpersonal skills training, etc, through targeted training courses, training programs, extracurricular practice and community activities. Further development of integrated quality should focus on the organic convergence of the first class and second class, and take students' specialty characteristics and career planning into consideration, in order to conduct the expanding projects closely to the training objectives, and make it a natural extension of classroom learning and expertise.

4) Function of innovation and enterprising education

With the deepening reform of higher education, each university is committed to cultivating innovative talents and inspiring college students' consciousness of innovation, with the improvement of innovation becoming the key in the reform of talent cultivation. Innovative talents, who possess both innovative spirit and innovative ability, are usually flexible, open, and curious in personality, and energetic, persistent, concentrative, imaginative and adventurous in characteristic. [6] As interest is the best teacher, once a student picks up his own interest in learning, it helps stimulate the intrinsic motivation in learning, improve greatly the efficiency and effect of learning, and gain the pleasure as well as a sense of achievement in the learning process. Learning to support, which begins with the guidance of students' professional interest, need to stimulate the inner motivation in students' professional study, to carry out innovative activities with professional knowledge, to conduct entrepreneurship practice with innovative achievements, finally to drive the high-quality employment with successful enterprise, and to establish the cultivation channel of new talents from

knowledge to ability, and to thought, which combines interest, profession, innovation, entrepreneurship, and employment as a whole.

5) Function of ideological and political education

Ideological and political education goes hand in hand with students' healthy growth and excellence. On the one hand, ideological and political education helps students to identify their learning objectives, correct their learning attitude, and improve their learning initiative and enthusiasm. Ideological and political education enables students to set up correct outlooks on the world, life, and values, and bring about the transformation in their ideas of examination, interaction between teachers and students, learning resources, and autonomous learning, so as to inspire their potential learning motivation. On the other, this education meets some students' learning demand of ideological and political theory. Thus, it is essential to improve these students' level of ideological and political theory by establishing learning centers for CPC party members, organizing interest groups for college students, and launching the study of Marxism theory, knowledge of the party history, situation and policy, etc, in such approaches like course training, and discussing on hot issues.

6) Function of integrating learning and information

Efforts should be made to construct the center into the collection and distribution of learning and information, and that of exchanging and communication. On the one hand, the center makes it convenient for students' autonomous learning in a direct way by collecting both campus and network learning resources like PPTs of both excellent courses and basic courses, audio and video, texts, and MOOC to establish an electronic learning repository; and provides the students who are preparing for PG entrance exam, various certificates and the civil service exam with item bank, cases, references, websites, etc. Meanwhile, the center also serves as a platform to collect and publish information about courses, examinations, training and coaching. On the other, by promoting the communication between teachers and students, and interactions among students themselves, they are allowed to fully express their learning aspirations which reflect problem hidden in teaching; in turn, teachers are able to timely assist their students as well as their learning conditions.

Table 1: The Function List of College Students' Learning Support Center

Functions	Main Contents and Projects
1) Function of growth counseling	Freshmen Adaptation to College: Guiding weeks of entrance education, Tutoring for freshmen, theme class meeting of freshmen, the course of "The Management of College Life", etc.; Training on Academic and Career Planning: Training lectures, the course of Guiding for College students on Career Planning, Employment Consulting and Guidance, etc.

2) Function of promoting learning	<p>Promoting Excellent Students: Exotic culture forum, cross-disciplinary studying salon, etc. and other small lecture forums, moreover, foreign language exam abroad and some other exchange activities;</p> <p>Helping Students with Learning Difficulties: Developing training on learning Higher Mathematics, College physics, chemistry and wide range of other basic courses in the form of “Workshop for Learning and Training”;</p> <p>Counseling and Training on Learning Methods: To develop training report and experience exchange meeting in the form of “Workshop for Learn Skill” focused on learning methods of mathematics, physics, chemistry and other basic general courses, and guidance on learning interest;</p> <p>Learning Interest Groups: Learning and communication between communities, such as math discussion class for transferring light, earth science club, English club, reading association, mathematical modeling association, etc.</p>
3) Function of expanding qualities	<p>Training Projects: To train general education, aesthetic education, EQ, leadership, communicative ability, military and political quality of the national defense students and “Talent Project”, etc.;</p> <p>Expanding International Vision: Some small lectures on overseas exchanges and visiting plan, exotic culture forum, dialogue with international students, competitive activities for broadening horizon, consulting and training for studying overseas, etc.;</p> <p>Projects on Cross-disciplinary Consulting: Cross-disciplinary learning salon, “To Win in CUG” outstanding college students exchange BBS, etc.</p>
4) Function of innovation and enterprising education	<p>Training on Innovation and Entrepreneurship Knowledge: “College Students KAB Entrepreneurial Foundation” and SYB training courses;</p> <p>Exchange on Innovation and Entrepreneurship Practice: College students’ entrepreneurship club, MINI start-up challenge in campus, and “Talent Project” (Scientists Plan and CEO Plan), etc.;</p> <p>Development on Learning Interest: Zhen Dan Forum – entrepreneurship Inspirational lectures, etc.</p>
5) Function of ideological education	<p>To Learn the Ideological and Political Theory: Principles of Marxism, situation and policy, learning center of the party members;</p> <p>To Discuss Current Political Affairs: Tea meeting between teachers and students, etc.</p>
6) Function of integrating	<p>Learning Resources on Campus: PPT of excellent courses, basic courses and</p>

learning and information	<p>other learning materials;</p> <p>Learning Resources on the Internet: Audio and video, PPT, learning materials in the form of text, MOOC resources, etc.;</p> <p>Information on Teaching and Learning: Courses, examinations, trainings, tutoring and other information; teaching and learning information, etc.</p>
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3.2 Core of the Center System Design

1) Organizational Structure

Led by the Student Affairs Department, the administrative structure---Student Learning Support Center was founded at the school level, comprehensively organizing and coordinating learning support programs, and especially responding for learning support program design and operation. While the Steering Committee, which is composed of responsible officials of Student Affairs Department, Academic Affairs, Graduate School, International Education College, The School League Committee and some representatives of professors and students, consulting guidance to study support service work.

2) Service Team

The team set up the full-time jobs in charge of sites construction and service management. At the same time, teacher and student volunteers are recruited for implementation of specific learning support and services, and student assistants are recruited for assistance of the management and operation of all kinds of programs and activities. In addition, Student Union and Associations Union participate in team to assist the implementation of relevant projects.

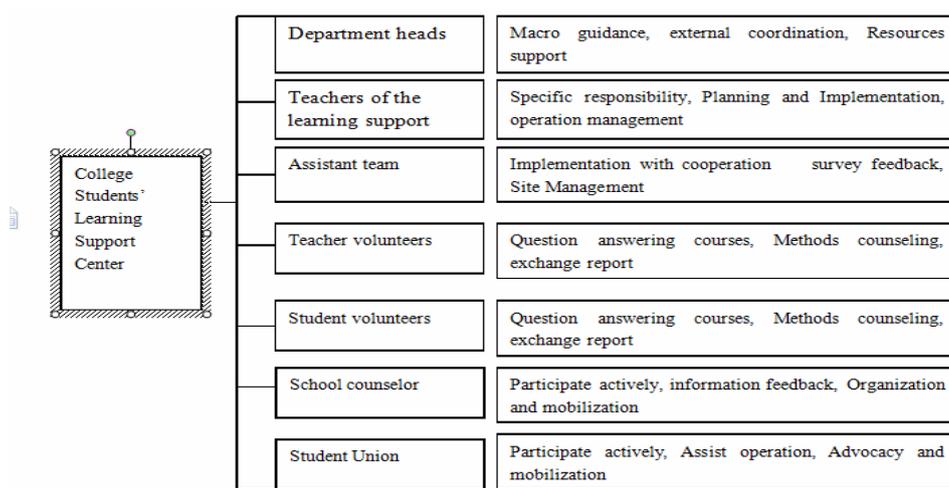


Figure 1: Teams and Specific Duties of the Learning Center

3) Support Projects

Learning support projects will be carried out throughout a student's school life from a freshman to a graduate. At the beginning of a freshman's school life, the project can

help freshmen to adapt college life as soon as possible, and then it will carry out learning interest and learning method guidance, providing course learning support services, education and career organizational learning and activities, which can help students to build learning objectives, optimize learning methods, self-awareness and the successful completion of their studies. When the students become seniors, it can provide employment counseling and job counseling, education and support entrepreneurship, pre-vocational education and so some other measures to help students successfully to have a good career. Moreover, as for some students who have learning difficulties in the process of learning, psychological difficulties, employment difficulties, economic difficulties or other problems, the learning support center and corresponding departments will take appropriate measures, measures to give specific help or guidance.

4) Conditions Guaranteed

Establishing a physical space used for learning support services is the foundation of the necessary conditions. Learning Support Center sets up 10 study rooms, and it is equipped with multimedia equipment. The layout of the study room is different from other classrooms as it has a relaxing and harmonious atmosphere, so learners can feel comfortable and free. Meanwhile, the establishment of smooth interaction network space can provide support for acquisition of learning information, online consulting, interactive exchanges, etc.

4. Major Features and Operational Effects of Implantable College Students' Learning Support Center

1) Major Features

The implantable style center promotes individualized guidance together with self study, cooperated study and imploring study, which are new types of study generated by the novel conception that receives a red-carpet among students. It can avoid the disadvantage produced by traditional classes, expands students' extracurricular knowledge and combine the study and further development together.

The Center focuses on students and is operated for all of them. It respects their interests and choices, trying to help all different parts of their study. By sufficing the demand of students' study, it aims at their pursuit of excellence. By making the best use of teachers, administrators, full-time and part-time counselors, students organizations and students volunteers, the center manages to creates a platform where better communication will be achieved between teachers and students, between students themselves and between students and the society. With the various salons and activities organized by the center, students can get free suggestions and guidance from study to career-plan. All these can contribute to improving their interests in study, activating them to study initiatively, optimizing their study methods and making progress in study and self-development. The Implantable study-support service can assist students to harvest the knowledge and experience that they are interested in an

acceptable way, thus a better study effect can be achieved since students have resonance during the special learning progress.

Besides, it can promote the communication and interaction between students and different subjects, such as their classmates, teachers and the society through various guidance, different reports by companies and diverse practice in and out of the campus. Thanks to these activities organized by the center, the aloneness of self-study out of class can be reduced and their enthusiasm in study and diversified study methods can be stimulated.

2) Operational Effects

Since the operating of the learning center, there have been 200 students accepting the one-to-one course tutor guidance, and more than 570 sessions of activities have been held, with about more than 10,000 students taking part in the activities. By calculating the 580 samples survey of the college students, it shows that the overall using effect of the college students' learning support center is good. Among them, 56% students think that the college students' learning support center supplies a better learning environment than the classrooms for the students, and 81% students in survey have taken part in the activities held by the center, and 70% students mainly take part in the activities held in it which has direct assistance to their study, such as the Learn and Auxiliary Workshop, Talking to the Students Abroad, LEARN SKILL Workshop, English Learning Salon and so on; the most impressive feeling for 54% students who have taken part in the activities held by the center is that they can get timely help and guidance when they have difficulties in their course study, and for 29% students, their most impressive feeling is that they can take part in the Sharon learning and then stimulating the enthusiasm of learning.

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