

On the Influencing Factors of College Students' Participation in the "Second Classroom"

-- A Case Study of Freshmen of Grade 2020 in Four Universities in Bengbu University Town

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Abstract

In this paper, the freshmen born after 2000 in four universities (Anhui University of Finance and Economics, Bengbu Medical College, Bengbu University, Anhui Science and Technology University) in Bengbu University Town, Anhui Province are taken as the research subjects, and a questionnaire from two dimensions of internal development factors and external incentive factors is designed to clarify the practice and general demands of the "second classroom" among the freshmen in the four universities. Meanwhile, based on the results of the investigation and analysis, corresponding suggestions are put forward from four aspects in order to improve the construction level of "the second classroom" in colleges and universities.

Keywords

Freshmen; "Second Classroom"; Student participation; Influencing factors.

1. Introduction

The "second classroom" is different from the classroom learning (the first class), which is a way to acquire knowledge and skills from extracurricular learning, activities or practice, so as to achieve the overall improvement of college students' comprehensive quality (Hu & Li, 2018) [1]. From the pattern of higher education, the "second classroom" has become a significant extension of the first class. The first class can only provide knowledge through the classroom activities, but cannot furnish practice outside the classroom. The "second classroom" can create effective ways to apply knowledge, supplement knowledge, improve the students' ability and develop their ability. Its richness and flexibility make up for the limitation of the field and time of the first classroom to a certain extent, and become an organic part of higher education. From the pilot project in 2016 to the formal implementation of the "second classroom report card" system in 2018 (Chen & Tao, 2019) [2], the "Opinions on Promoting the Deep Implementation of the Medium and Long-term Youth Development Plan (2016-2025)" issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League during the 14th Five-Year Plan period points out that the principle of the work of the Communist Youth League is to adhere to the political direction of the Party's management of youth and to integrate ideological and political guidance into serving the youth (2020) [3]. The work of the Communist Youth League in Colleges and universities aims at ideological guidance while at the same time, the effectiveness of students' ideological guidance is reflected in students' participation and effectiveness in practical activities. The author has found that in the process of participating in the "second classroom" activities, both junior and senior students have been forced to participate in the activities. It is common to arrange students to take turns to participate in activities according to the order of student name list, which violates the original intention of "second classroom" in practicing

teaching. Freshmen are a steady stream of fresh forces in colleges and universities, and each student has its own unique characteristic. Therefore, it is also a process of constantly restarting and upgrading the “second classroom” for the Communist Youth League in colleges and universities. Based on this, a survey is conducted on more than 500 post-00s freshmen from four colleges and universities in Bengbu City.

2. Investigation and Analysis of the Current Situation of College Students' Participation in the “Second Classroom”

2.1. Questionnaire Design and Investigation

According to the group characteristics of the students of Grade 2020 in practical work and the current situation of participating in the “second classroom” activities, the author designed a questionnaire, and distributed it online to the students of Grade 2020 in four universities that participated in the “second classroom” pilot in Bengbu University Town. A total of 502 questionnaires were sent out and 502 were received, among which 498 questionnaires were valid, with an effective rate of 99.20%. There are 16 questions in the questionnaire designed in this paper, including 9 single-choice questions, 4 multiple-choice questions, 2 fill-in-the-blank questions and 1 subjective question. Table 1 shows the contents of the questionnaire in detail.

Table 1. Specific Content of Questionnaire

| Title number | Contents |
|--------------|--|
| Question 1 | Which college/university are you studying in? |
| Question 2 | What is your gender? |
| Question 3 | What is your age? |
| Question 4 | Do you have any hobbies or specialties? |
| Question 5 | Are you a class manager or a member of a student organization? |
| Question 6 | Do you feel confused about college life? |
| Question 7 | Do you know your strengths? |
| Question 8 | How about your personality? |
| Question 9 | Do you know what the “second classroom” is? |
| Question 10 | How often do you participate in extracurricular activities? |
| Question 11 | If there are no incentives for participating in extracurricular activities, would you still participate? |
| Question 12 | Why are you reluctant / unwilling to take part in the activities? |
| Question 13 | What is your motivation for participating in extracurricular activities? |
| Question 14 | What form of activity are you interested in? |
| Question 15 | What kind of activities are you more interested in? |
| Question 16 | So far, what is the most impressive activity you have participated in? |

Judging from the questionnaire data, first of all, 44.02% of the freshmen were vague about their own advantages, and 58.76% of the freshmen were confused about college life, indicating that the freshmen lacked a systematic understanding of themselves, and the richness and flexibility of the “second classroom” cannot promote freshman’s career planning well. Besides, the current contents of the “second classroom” failed to allow them to discover and release their potential in the process of participating in activities. Only 4.38% of the freshmen knew the “second classroom” very well, and only 14.34% of them thought that the frequency of their participation in extracurricular activities can be said as “a lot”. 82.07% of freshmen participate

in extracurricular activities in order to meet the requirements of the corresponding activity credits of graduation, which shows that freshmen are not well aware of the contents, rules and purposes of the “second class”, and lack the initiative in participating in kinds of activities. What’s more, the content of the activity is not attractive that students can only be forced to participate in it. 49.4% of the freshmen think that compared with participating in extracurricular activities, other things are more interesting, 67.73% of the freshmen said that participation in activities depends on whether there are corresponding incentives, which indicates that the content design of the “second classroom” in colleges and universities cannot be closely related to students’ needs. A connotative development model should be formed through a systematic way of design, investigate and feedback. By and large, the participation of the freshmen in the “second classroom” is generally poor, and the credit-based design fails to maximize the enthusiasm of students to participate in activities. In addition, the factors affecting freshman’s participation in the “second classroom” include both internal factors, such as personality, hobbies, advantages, etc., and external factors, such as activity content, incentive measures, etc.

2.2. Reliability and Validity Analysis of the Questionnaire

KMO and Bartlett’s test are used to verify the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. The specific results are shown in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2. KMO and Bartlett’s Test

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------|
| KMO Sampling Suitability Quantity | | 0.824 |
| Bartlett’s Sphericity Test | Chi-square 6233.680 last read | 6233.680 |
| | Degree of freedom | 1128 |
| | Significance | 0.000 |

Table 3. Reliability Statistics

| Cloning Bach Alpha | Cloning Bach Alpha Based on Standardized Terms | Number of items |
|--------------------|--|-----------------|
| 0.668 | 0.774 | 48 |

From the results of Table 2 and Table 3, we can see that the Bartlett sphericity test result is less than 0.05, and the KMO value is greater than 0.7. The result of factor analysis shows that the overall validity of this questionnaire is in good order. The overall reliability of the questionnaire is 0.668. Combined with Hairetal et al.’s suggestion (Hairetal et al, 2006) [4], when the number of measurement questions of a variable is less than 6, the coefficient is greater than 0.6, which also indicates that the data has high reliability. Therefore, the overall reliability and validity test of the questionnaire are passed.

2.3. Significance Test

With the aid of STATA15.1EP, questions “Do you know what the “second classroom” is?”, “Are you a class manager or a member of a student organization?” and “How often do you participate in extracurricular activities?” are used as the core explanatory variables, and some items in the questionnaire are comprehensively selected for significance analysis.

Table 4. The significant Results between “Do you know what the ‘Second Classroom’ is?” and the Selected Items

| | What kind of personality are you? | Are you a class manager or a member of a student organization? | Do you feel confused about college life? |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| Do you know what the “second classroom” is? | 0.1684*** | 0.1490*** | -0.2232*** |
| | Do you know your strengths? | How often do you participate in extracurricular activities? | If there are no incentives for participating in extracurricular activities, would you still participate? |
| Do you know what the “second classroom” is? | 0.3198*** | 0.4316*** | 0.1796*** |

Notes: *** $P < 0.01$, ** $P < 0.05$, * $P < 0.1$, the same below

From the data in Table 4, it can be seen that the interviewees' hobbies or specialties, whether they are student cadres, their understanding of their own advantages, the number of extracurricular activities and the granting of external stimulating activities are all below 0.01 level, showing a significant positive correlation with their understanding of the “second classroom”. In addition, it is noted that there is a significant negative correlation between whether you feel confused about college life and whether you know the “second classroom”. Among them, the frequency of participating in extracurricular activities is 0.4316, the highest correlation with the understanding of the “second class”, indicating that the more the respondents participated in extracurricular activities, the more they knew about the “second classroom”. Hereby, encouraging respondents to participate in extracurricular activities can better promote the practical education effect of the “second classroom”.

Table 5. The significant Results between “Are you a class manager or a member of a student organization?” and the Selected Items

| | Do you have any hobbies or specialties? | Do you feel confused about college life? | Do you know your strengths? |
|--|---|---|--|
| Are you a class manager or a member of a student organization? | 0.2726*** | -0.0861* | 0.3352*** |
| | Do you know what the “second classroom” is? | How often do you participate in extracurricular activities? | If there are no incentives for participating in extracurricular activities, would you still participate? |
| Are you a class manager or a member of a student organization? | 0.1490*** | 0.3357*** | 0.0284 |

As can be seen from Table 5, interviewees' hobbies or specialties, student cadres' identities, their cognition of their own advantages, the number of activities and their understanding of the “second classroom” are positively correlated with the external incentive policies of activities, among which the number of extracurricular activities is most significantly correlated with

whether there are external incentives for extracurricular activities. It shows that the interviewees' internal factors are related to external stimuli, and individuals with great enthusiasm will participate in extracurricular activities even without external incentives.

Table 6. The significant Results between “How often do you participate in extracurricular activities?” and the Selected Items

| | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| | Do you have any hobbies or specialties? | Are you a class manager or a member of a student organization? | Do you feel confused about college life? |
| How often do you participate in extracurricular activities? | 0.3362*** | 0.3357*** | -0.2073*** |
| | Do you know your strengths? | Do you know what the “second classroom” is? | If there are no incentives for participating in extracurricular activities, would you still participate? |
| How often do you participate in extracurricular activities? | 0.4414*** | 0.4316*** | 0.2322*** |

It can be seen from Table 6 that whether the respondents have hobbies or specialties, whether they are student cadres, whether they know their own advantages, whether they know the “second classroom” and whether they have external incentives are significantly positively correlated with the number of extracurricular activities. It shows that a more frequent initiative in activities can be achieved through the following conditions: Firstly, the interviewee is student cadre. Secondly, the interviewee has his own hobbies. Thirdly, the interviewee knows his advantages. Lastly, the interviewee understands the meaning and rules of the “second classroom”.

3. Analysis of Influencing Factors of College Students' Participation in the “Second Classroom”

External cause is the condition for the development of things, but external cause must work through internal cause (Lin et al, 2022) [5]. According to the content of the questionnaire, we discover how the selected factors affect the respondents' enthusiasm to participate in the “second classroom” from two dimensions: the interviewee's internal development factors and external motivation factors.

3.1. Analysis of Internal Development Factors

The data reflecting the internal development factors of the respondents are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Data on Interviewees' Internal Development Factors

| Questions | Options | Proportion (%) |
|---|--------------------------|----------------|
| 4. Do you have any hobbies or specialties? | Yes | 77.09 |
| | No | 22.91 |
| 5. Are you a class manager or a member of a student organization? | Yes | 58.96 |
| | No | 41.04 |
| 6. Do you feel confused about college life? | Yes | 58.76 |
| | No | 41.24 |
| 7. Do you know your strengths? | Very Clear | 5.78 |
| | Clear | 39.24 |
| | Fuzzy | 44.02 |
| | Very Vague | 2.39 |
| | Don't Know | 8.57 |
| 8. How about your personality? | Introverted Type | 5.98 |
| | Lean to Introverted Type | 21.71 |
| | Extroverted Type | 10.96 |
| | Lean to Extroverted Type | 11.35 |
| | All of the above include | 50 |

From the data of Questions 5, 6 and 8, we can see that the comprehensive literacy of the research subjects is relatively high, and their overall personality characteristics are lively and cheerful, but most of the students are still in the confused stage of college life. 77.9% of the respondents have their own hobbies and specialties, which shows that if the contents of the "second classroom" can effectively connect students' hobbies and specialties, they are bound to stimulate students' participation. If you combine Questions 4 and 7, you will find that most students lack self-affirmation, know what they like to do, but do not know what they can do well. If we can give full play to the role model of student cadres and form a group effect by participating in the "second classroom", a clearer self-awareness can be made through the process of practice.

3.2. Analysis of External Motivation Factors

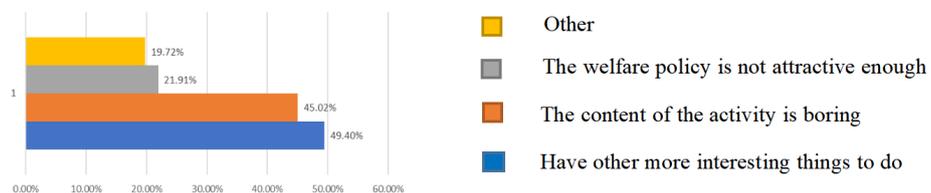
The data reflecting the external incentive factors of the respondents are listed in Table 8.

From the data of the above four questions, it can be seen that the respondents' understanding of the term "second class" is not optimistic, the frequency of students participating in extracurricular activities is not high, and they generally hope to get some rewards by participating in activities. In addition, in the era of new media, a single offline activity can no longer meet the needs of students. Especially due to the impact of the epidemic, the combination of online and offline activities has become more popular. To a certain extent, in the process of continuous revision and improvement of the "second classroom" system, it is necessary to strengthen the reform and implementation.

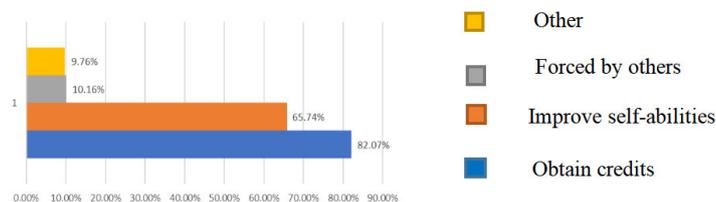
Table 8. Data on Interviewees’ External Motivation Factors

| Questions | Options | Proportion (%) |
|--|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| 9. Do you know what the “second classroom” is? | Know very well | 4.38 |
| | Understand | 17.13 |
| | Have a better understanding | 19.72 |
| | General | 40.84 |
| | I don't know, I haven't heard of it | 17.93 |
| 10. How often do you participate in extracurricular activities? | More | 15.54 |
| | A lot | 14.34 |
| | General | 51.59 |
| | Not much | 15.94 |
| | Never attend | 2.59 |
| If there are no incentives for participating in extracurricular activities, would you still participate? | Yes | 21.31 |
| | No | 10.96 |
| | Not sure | 67.73 |
| 14. What form of activity are you interested in? | Online | 23.71 |
| | Offline | 36.65 |
| | Both above | 70.52 |

12. Why are you reluctant/unwilling to attend the activities?



13. What is your motivation for participating in extracurricular activities?



15. What kind of activities are you more interested in?

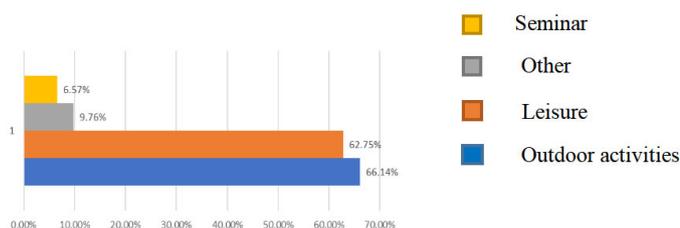


Figure 1. Combination of questions 12, 13 and 15

It can be seen from the above figure that although the credit system plays an obvious role in the “second class”, the top-level design needs to be related to the general demands of students. In addition, respondents generally tend to participate in group activities. At the same time, in subjective question No.16, “So far, what is the most impressive activity you have participated in?”, “group working activities” and “drama performance” appear most frequently, which once again shows that the interviewees prefer teamwork activities.

4. Effective Ways to Improve College Students’ Participation in the “Second Classroom”

4.1. Decrease the Threshold of the “Second Classroom” Participation and Attract more Students to Participate.

In university, exam-oriented education is relatively less implemented, and the evaluation of a student’s learning ability and comprehensive quality is no longer based on scores as in the middle school, but depends on comprehensive evaluation in many aspects. Therefore, when relatively few written evaluations occur, freshmen generally show lack of confidence, especially in fields they have never dabbled in, and often spend too much time and energy thinking about “can I do it” and “should I do it”, and therefore miss the opportunity to improve themselves in doubt and wait-and-see. An important concept in social cognitive theory is self-efficacy, which refers to the subjective judgment of self-ability that affect individual life and activities (Li, 2021) [6]. Therefore, the threshold for setting the “second classroom” activities should not be too high, so that students can taste the success more than once, improve their self-confidence in the process of many attempts, and achieve the effect of self-realization through the “second classroom”. In this process, we can give full play to the role of student cadres in helping and transferring great experience to others so as to achieve the so-called let students lead students. College student cadres are favorable helpers for the Communist Youth League organizations to contact the majority of students, and are the basic advanced elements in the development of the Communist Youth League Organizations in colleges and universities. Peer discourse power is often very convincing, which can be transmitted from dormitory to class, or cross-college communication from the same major to different majors. Peer groups are as cohesive as other groups, and their strength determines the development status of the whole group, and can profoundly influence each group member through subtle forms (He & Zhang, 2012) [7].

4.2. Stimulating Students’ Endogenous Motivation and Designing Activities According to Students’ Hobbies

All the freshmen studied in this paper are post-00s students, who come from all over the country, with more only-child and two-child families, and the economic gap between families is narrow. They are active in thinking, curious and easy to accept new things, independent, caring and justice. The longer students invest in meaningful educational activities, the more efforts and energy they pay, and the greater the gains will be (Astin, 1984) [8]. Meaningful activities are first and foremost welcomed by students. Therefore, we should actively carry out activities that students love and benefit from it, stimulate students’ enthusiasm for participation, truly change “want me to participate” into “I want to participate”, develop students’ interests and hobbies, discover and tap their abilities in all aspects, and maximize the educational function of “the second classroom”.

In addition, increase group activities that present from more to less and from surface to point. Freshmen are more inclined to group activities due to the environmental factors after entering the school. Dormitory and class are the first places for them to carry out interpersonal communication. Benign interaction between groups is an important form of communication (Sun, 2017) [9]. Group companionship helps them overcome their fear and drive their

enthusiasm to participate in activities. Therefore, on the one hand, group activities can stimulate their enthusiasm, on the other hand, they can effectively cultivate their interpersonal communication, communication and cooperation capabilities. It is a win-win process for the construction of "the second classroom" to drive individuals by groups.

4.3. Carrying out Guidance and Career Planning Education

Confusion is a common state of all freshmen (Cai, 2019) [10]. This kind of confusion covers all aspects of student life, studies, social interaction, etc., and this kind of state can be continuous or intermittent or sudden. Therefore, it is far from enough to resolve students' confusion and anxiety through one class meeting or a lecture. It needs a special platform, professional guidance and long-term content design to strengthen it. The "second classroom" should grasp the "critical period" of students' study and life in school by offering confusion and planning education with various contents and forms, and implicitly integrating it into various activities. Let students feel that by participating in the "second classroom", they can find answers to resolve confusion that highlight the guiding function of the "second classroom".

4.4. Strengthening the Platform Construction and Giving Full Play to the Guiding Function of Big Data Platforms

Media is the basic driving force of social development. The emergence of every new media has created a way for human beings to perceive and know the world. The changes in communication have changed human feelings, the relationship between people, and created new types of social behaviors (Masrhall, 2011) [11]. In the new media era, the Communist Youth League workers in colleges and universities should actively integrate into the ever-changing new media and become "experts" in the new media platform, and become excellent developers and operators of the "second classroom". In the activity design, we should make full use of the platforms such as "Bilibili", "Tik Tok" and Weibo, which are widely used by students nowadays. Based on offline platform conduct activities while take the online platform to display results. In the process of building the "second classroom" platform, we should also strengthen the analysis and application of big data, hot topics and most concerned issues that favorite by those freshmen so as to find apt and specific ways to solve problems through which a better construction of the "second classroom" in colleges and universities can achieved.

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