

# Encouraging Reading Habit among Chinese University Students

Jie Li

Zhongyuan University of Technology, Zhengzhou, Henan, 450007, China

**Abstract:** University and college curriculum in China is increasing placing more emphasis on producing and developing graduates with comprehensive qualities in recent years. One of the main factors that affects the development of high quality college graduate is the students' active reading habit. However, recent statistics on Chinese college students have shown that the number of students who read habitually is not ideal nor encouraging. Campaigns launched to promote reading habits in the university have only minimal effects on the students. In this work, some of the problems faced in promoting reading habit among college students in China and the potential solution for solving these problems are discussed. It is hoped that the content in this article would provide some insights for college administrators to encourage reading habits among college students.

**Keywords:** Chinese university; college; China; promote reading; method research

**Publication date:** May, 2019

**Publication online:** 31<sup>st</sup> May, 2019

**Corresponding Author:** Jie Li,  
daoyizhenggu@163.com

## 1 Introduction

Reading is one of the most important aspects in developing critical thinking and knowledge-acquiring. In tertiary education setting, it is one of the main processes in active learning and self-improvement. In response to the rising demand for quality, comprehensive university talent by today's society, colleges and universities have placed higher emphasis in encouraging active self-learning, talent discovery, critical-thinking and other essential trainings in their curriculums. These trainings,

however, are highly dependent on the students' active reading habit and initiative for self-learning. Therefore, campaigns that targeted at promoting and cultivating reading habit among students should form the basis for producing high quality graduates and talents. For the students, constant and active reading should be an imperative part of their tertiary education.

## 2 Improving reading campaigns and its effect on college education

The learning process of a student evolves from teacher-centred method in high school to student-centred method in college <sup>[1]</sup>. During this evolution, the ability to read is becoming increasingly important for the student as a medium for knowledge transfer, information processing and memory consolidation. This could help enhance and complement the student's capacity to understand logic, analyse questions and knowledge discovery. These are some of the important skills that should be inculcated as part of the move to promote life-long learning in college students <sup>[2]</sup>. School education is merely a stage in knowledge transfer, and within this stage, the most important process is to develop the students' initiative to receive and absorb knowledge to form the basis for continual learning <sup>[3]</sup>. This initiative, when applied in college and university setting, could develop into active reading habit for the students. Engaging in reading and critical thinking could help students to sharpen their senses and sensitivity towards information, enable students to decipher useful and accurate information and propel their mentality forward <sup>[4]</sup>. Thus, actively promoting and encouraging reading habit among college students are an important aspect in upgrading and improving students' quality.

## 2.1 The differences between college reading campaigns and social reading campaigns

Currently, the social and cultural structure in China also encourage and promote reading habit. Promoting reading habit is defined as the cultivation and encouragement of the reading as a beneficial habit amongst member of the society. The ideal material for reading should not be confined to only books, but also newspapers, magazines, e-books, and a menagerie of other reading products <sup>[5]</sup>. Although “reading for

everyone” has become a consensus in the development of contemporary culture, there still exists some differences between promoting reading habit in colleges and in the society <sup>[6]</sup>. We should identify the differences between these two cultures and focus on improving and enhancing the characteristics of college reading campaign to further promote reading in colleges.

According to literature, there are five main differences between college reading campaign and society reading campaign. The differences between the two campaigns are tabulated in Table 1.

**Table 1 Differences between college reading campaign and society reading campaign**

	<b>College campaign</b>	<b>Social campaign</b>
<b>Target audience</b>	<b>College students</b>	<b>Every member of society</b>
<b>Campaign organizer</b>	Administrators, lecturers, student leaders and university library staffs	Publishers, public libraries, ministry of education
<b>Campaign objective</b>	Develop higher quality talent	To establish a learning society
<b>Content</b>	Revolve around college materials	Wide array of topics, relatively fewer restriction
<b>Motivation</b>	Supports from various parties to make the campaign a success	Interesting content to encourage reading

Based on the summary tabulated in Table 1, it is clear that there exist major differences between college reading campaigns and society reading campaigns. Universities and colleges typically have clear objectives and directions when launching reading campaigns. Moreover, college administrators often commit more resources in launching these projects, due to their unique responsibility and position as educators. When developing new campaigns and projects, it is prudent to focus on the differences shown in Table 1 to design specific solution to address each of the differences.

## 2.2 Analysis of the current status quo of Chinese university reading campaign

Before researching on the optimization method of college reading campaigns, it is imperative to acquire an in-depth understanding of the current status quo of college reading campaigns. The problems currently faced by Chinese universities are summarized in the section below:

### 2.2.1 Campaign without a clear objective

The main motive in launching college reading campaign is to develop better quality talents. Therefore, reading campaigns and university talent development program should be working in sync <sup>[7]</sup>.

However, most universities and colleges fail to realize the uniqueness of reading campaigns and treat the

campaigns as the common social reading program. The university administrators place high emphasis on the volume of books read and expanding the students’ reading interest without gauging the effect of reading on the students. Putting the emphasis on the quantity while neglecting the issue of quality could gravely affect the effectiveness of the reading campaigns, thus rendering the objective of the whole campaign ambiguous. These ineffective campaigns will have little contribution in developing high quality talents <sup>[8]</sup>. Therefore, the first hurdle that should be overcome to better organize a college reading program is to provide a clear and concise campaign objective.

### 2.2.2 Lack of creativity in campaign design

Given a clear and concise campaign objective, universities should also ensure the continuity of the reading campaign and design a fitting theme for the reading campaign. By assessing the current state of college reading campaigns, it is clear that most campaigns are organized during the enrolment period, semester commencement week, and festive period. Reading campaigns are comparatively less during other period of the academic calendar <sup>[9]</sup>. The lack of continuity makes it difficult to cultivate an environment that encourages reading and for students to keep up their reading habit. The lack of project planning and design can affect the development of college students’ systematic and in-

depth reading habit. Left unmitigated, the problem will continue to affect reading campaigns in colleges.

### 2.2.3 The narrow scope of reading campaigns.

The conventional method of conducting a reading campaign in Chinese college is through classroom engagement or library campaigning. Thus, most of these campaigns are targeted at a narrow scope of target audience, or conducted in a small group setting or environment. This has caused college students to have insufficient knowledge and understand of the importance of reading and thereby affecting their participation rate in reading activities. Moreover, the lack of large scale campaign project also affects the depth, clout, and effects of reading campaign. Due to these reasons, it is difficult to cultivate a reading environment in college. Without a healthy reading environment, students would find it difficult to maintain their zeal for reading. Left unmitigated, bad habits like shallow reading and fragmented reading could become more difficult to correct and affect the academic results of the students<sup>[10]</sup>.

### 2.2.4 Improving the campaign team and campaign mechanism.

Organizing a comprehensive, successful reading campaign requires the support and cooperation from all academic staffs and university staffs, coupled with active participation of the students. The current trend of college reading campaign, however, is spearheaded by college library staffs assisted by only a handful of student members<sup>[11]</sup>. Most college lecturers

and administrative staffs are not supportive of the campaign, while students' participation is made up of mostly members of literary clubs, journal clubs or other literature-based student bodies. Limited students' participation affects the popularity of the campaign and subsequently affecting the confidence and enthusiasm of campaign organizers<sup>[12]</sup>. It will be difficult to create a good reading environment and it can have a lasting impact on students in terms of effectiveness, comprehensiveness and memory consolidation. In addition, the mechanism of reading campaigns in college should also be improved. Most of these campaigns rely heavily on mouth-to-mouth promotion, classroom announcement, or library advertisement as their major publicity method, while neglecting the fabric of the diverse mechanism of such campaigns and ignoring the significance of mobile-reading on the effectiveness of reading campaigns. This has led to the low effectiveness of reading campaigns despite the high volume of reading campaigns launched in recent years. Expanding the campaigning team, enhancing the campaign mechanism, run a comprehensive and systematic campaign based on proper, scientific method are the key to researching the college reading campaign methodology.

## 3 Improving the campaign profile through effective publicity

In view of the problems stated above, one should analyse the scope and the depth of current campaigns in search for an effective solution.

**Table 2 Analysis of factors that affect the effectiveness of college reading campaign**

<b>Readers</b>	Interest in reading affects the scope of reading	Reading target affects the depth of reading
<b>College libraries</b>	Commitment and organizing of campaign affects the scope of reading	Library collection and book types affect the depth of reading
<b>Campus</b>	Quality and frequency of reading campaigns affect the scope of reading	Lead ad guidance in classroom affects the depth of reading
<b>Diversified and creative campaigning</b>	Creativity affects the scope of reading	Diverse design affects the depth of reading

The four aspects tabulated in Table 2 can be further elaborated in the section below.

### 3.1 Reset the mentality and set a clear goal

The improvement of college reading program should begin with the amendment of the mentality of college staffs, academics and students. This should be followed by the development of a clear reading goal. The main aim of college reading program is to produce and develop high quality talents. When engaging in reading

activity, students should recognize the role reading plays in extending and expanding their knowledge on top of classroom learning<sup>[13]</sup>. This could help the students to acquire more knowledge and information effectively. Moreover, having the right mentality and learning attitude while reading could help memory consolidation. For teachers and lecturers, reading provides a route for interaction between students and teachers. Teachers should lead the students by invoking the students' interest in learning and reading

through interesting information and facts, followed by systematic realization of students' reading goal through extra reading (after formal class, for instance), thus cultivating a good reading habit. It is hoped that through the step-by-step implementation of conceptual renewal and clear objective, the students' interest and depth in reading can be expanded.

### **3.2 Guidance and lead from university administrators**

College administrators play an important role in popularizing and promoting reading campaigns. Conventional top-to-bottom approach can be used to publicize the reading projects. First and foremost, teaching staffs and academics should be acquainted with the habit of reading regardless of the role they play in teaching and lesson planning. Academics should set an example of themselves and continue to elevate themselves through reading to enhance their professionalism and keep themselves in line with the latest trend and development in their academic field. Through leading by example, it is hoped that the reading habit of college administrators and academics can be passed down to the students. Besides leading by example, the administrators should also lend their undivided support for college reading campaigns and programs. Another important factor is the construction of comprehensive library infrastructure that could help attract students to use the library as a place to concentrate, read, and revise<sup>[14]</sup>. Library collection should constantly be monitored and be updated with the latest books, and library administrators should also organize other projects to attract students to use the library facilities.

### **3.3 Increase book clubs and create a conducive reading environment**

College administrators may also consider expanding the reading campaign team to include members of book clubs or reading clubs in the campus. Moreover, more clubs and bodies can also be initiated, led by an academic staff with good reading habit, to encourage students to participate in simple reading program on the club-level. In addition, reading can also be included into the main curriculum in college as part of the basic requirement for graduation. Certain simple tasks like summarizing the content of a passage every fortnight could ensure that every student is exposed to at the very least one passage every 14 days, could help create a conducive reading environment in campus.

### **3.4 The application of new technology and expanding the scope of reading**

Reading should progress in tandem with the advancement of information technology. In this day and age, libraries and lectures are no longer the main source of information for students, who now rely mostly on mobile applications to satisfy their demand for knowledge and information. Knowledge and information providers should recognize the current trend and utilize the technology made available to promote knowledge transfer. Most college students today are no strangers to mobile applications, and hence the incorporation and introduction of mobile reading app could be received more readily by students than conventional reading campaigns. An example would be to create a public forum on chatting application such as Wechat for students, where the administrators could recommend or introduce a new book on a weekly basis. The platform may also be used as a publicity tool to promote reading campaigns to attract more participation.

## **4 Conclusion**

The task of drawing more students to read is one of the main aims of higher education today. It requires the collaborative research work of educators, administrators, librarians, and even the students themselves in order to be successful. More diverse campaign ideas should be applied to attract more participation from the students. It is hoped that with the cultivation of reading habit in college students, Chinese universities could continue to produce high quality talents for the future of the country.

## **References**

- [1] Lin-hao Huang, A brief discussion on the teacher's guided student reading problem in college reading campaign [J]. Inner Mongolia Science Technology & Economy, 2018(5):142-144.
- [2] Lin-hao Huang, Problems in College Students' Reading and College Reading Program and Countermeasures [J]. National Library of China, 2017 (1):83-86.
- [3] Cui Fang, College Reading Program Requires the Support of the Entire University [J]. Vocational Education Forum, 2015 (23):93-96.
- [4] Kun-yang Li, Xue-ying Li, The Significance of College Reading Program on Cultural Innovation [J]. Technology Information, 2017 15(36): 233-235.
- [5] Hai-yan Li, Research on Reading Program in Public Libraries in China [J], Library Journal, 2016, 35(2):103-

110.

- [6] Mu Xuan, Research on the Application of WeChat Public Platform for College Reading Program in the New Media Era [J], Inner Mongolia Science Technology & Economy, 2018(5): 56-57.
- [7] Wang Yu, Wang Lei, Yong-qiang Hu et al., Progress in Library Reading Program: Practise and Theory—A Summary of the Reading Campaign Seminar of University Libraries in Northeast China [J], Journal of Academic Libraries, 2016, 34(4):17-22.
- [8] Su-fang Wang, A Summary on the Research on Children's Reading Campaign I the International Library Community [J], Document, Information & Knowledge, 2014, 3:53-66.
- [9] Gao Yun, A Research Summary on College Library Reading Campaign in China [J], Library Work & Study, 2017, 11:108-113.
- [10] Wang Yu, Wang Lei, Wu Jin, A Summary on the Second Summit of National College Reading Campaign [J]. Journal of Academic Libraries, 2017, 35(6):18-23.
- [11] Xin-xin Wang, Research Summary on College Library Reading Campaign under the New Media Environment [J], Public Communication of Science & Technology, 2018 (10).
- [12] Hui-xin Liu, Du Xin, Xingli Li, Research Summary on Library Reading Campaign in China [J], Library and Information Newsletter, 2016, 1:36-42.
- [13] Li-rong Xue, A Summary of Research on Reading Campaign by College Libraries in China (2006-2016) [J], National Library of China, 2018,1.
- [14] Wei Ke, A Compilation of Work Case on Shanghai University Library Reading Program (2012-2016): Summary and Revelation [J], Journal of Shanghai University of Electric Power, 2017 (1).