

# A Review of Research on Countermeasures for College Students' Autonomous Management in China over the Past Decade

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**Abstract:** College students' Autonomous Management represents a significant reform from traditional "heteronomous governance" to modern "autonomous governance." Systematically combing through the research achievements on countermeasures for college students' Autonomous Management in China over the past decade holds certain theoretical and practical significance for further accurately grasping the importance of Autonomous Management, deeply understanding its internal laws, vigorously promoting scientific exploration of Autonomous Management, and continuously enhancing the implementation effect of Autonomous Management.

**Keywords:** College students; Autonomous Management; Countermeasures; Review

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## 1. Introduction

Judging from the existing literature, since the late 1990s, some scholars in China have started to pay attention to the issue of college students' Autonomous Management. Yang pointed out that "with the deepening of the reform of the school-running system, management system, enrollment and distribution system in Chinese universities, the student management work in universities is also undergoing profound changes. This change is most prominently manifested in the transformation of students from the objects of management to the subjects of management. They gradually assume the responsibility for self-education and development, thus achieving Autonomous Management."<sup>[1]</sup> Over the past decade, the Autonomous Management of college students in China has received even more attention in the academic and educational circles, with remarkable research achievements, mainly reflected in four "more": First, there are more types of research, involving public schools, private schools, undergraduate institutions, vocational colleges, independent colleges, etc. Second, the research scope is wider, covering aspects from students to teachers, from classrooms to dormitories, from study to life, from student cadres to student associations, and from schools to society. Third, there are more research methods, including both macro-level research and case-by-case studies, and even the principles and methods of

mathematics and statistics are applied. This paper aims to review the research on countermeasures for college students' Autonomous Management in China over the past decade, hoping to provide references for future related research.

What is "college students' Autonomous Management"?

Wang pointed out that "college students' Autonomous Management refers to a series of self-learning and self-education practice processes with college students as the main body. University administrators, college students, and their organizations to achieve the training objectives of higher education, make full use of and integrate resources inside and outside the school, and maximize the subjective initiative of college students."<sup>[2]</sup> Why is it necessary to strengthen the research on college students' Autonomous Management? On the one hand, as Shi said, it is not only an internal need for the growth of college students, an innovative need for the development of universities, but also an objective need for social development. On the other hand, there are still many problems in the Autonomous Management of college students in China so far. Ji and Ye both pointed out that currently, college students generally lack the awareness and ability of Autonomous Management, mainly manifested in unclear learning goals, poor self-care ability in life, inappropriate use of the Internet, urgent need for psychological adjustment, and weak awareness of participating in management. As for the reasons for these problems, Li believed that it is mainly the result of the combined action of various internal and external factors. For example, in terms of educational concepts, schools emphasize blind obedience and lack content related to independent personality; in terms of educational models, they attach importance to cultural knowledge but neglect the cultivation of comprehensive qualities; in terms of management methods, they emphasize the educator-centered approach and ignore the dominant position of students, and students overly rely on schools and families. Overall, the research on countermeasures for college students' Autonomous Management over the past decade mainly includes the following aspects.

## **2. Autonomous Management of learning**

Different from the past, in recent years, research on college students' Autonomous Management in learning has placed more emphasis on exploring countermeasures in the context of the credit system. The credit system, as a new teaching management system, has an important impact on all aspects of university management and also provides new requirements and opportunities for the implementation of college students' Autonomous Management. However, Zhao believed that from the perspective of Autonomous Management, there are many problems in the implementation of the credit system at present: students lack the concept of Autonomous Management. Since the academic year system is implemented in primary and secondary schools in China, students still rely heavily on teachers' management after entering universities; students lack Autonomous Management abilities, including self-awareness, selection, judgment, design, and regulation abilities. These will lead to college students' poor adaptation to university learning, and some even do not know how to choose courses or learn independently. In response to the above problems, Wang pointed out that schools should change the original teaching evaluation criteria. Not only should they give students more space for active selection in a curriculum setting, but also in performance evaluation, they should not focus solely on test scores. Instead, they should comprehensively assess students' application abilities and comprehensive qualities. Deng proposed constructing a new management model for college students featuring "self-discipline, self-care, self-governance, and Autonomous Management," and continuously cultivating their self-discipline awareness of abiding by regulations, self-care ability to handle affairs independently, self-governance ability for teamwork,

and Autonomous Management ability for learning. Lei believed that a self-evaluation mechanism should be established to encourage college students to actively participate in the evaluation process. This is not only helpful to improve the objectivity and credibility of evaluation results but also enables them to correctly understand their advantages and disadvantages through comprehensive and scientific self-evaluation and make timely corrections to their deficiencies. Jia emphasized the need to cultivate students' ability to analyze and solve problems using critical thinking.

### **3. Autonomous Management of life**

Life management includes time management, financial management, health management, dormitory management, and other aspects. Research over the past decade has covered these aspects. For example, Yan explored the cultivation path of college students' Autonomous Management ability from the perspective of daily affairs management. However, the main focus of research is still on the management reform of student communities (apartment buildings).

First, it is necessary to further strengthen resource integration. The management of student communities (apartment buildings) mainly consists of two modules: one is the routine life management based on accommodation and meals, and the other is the educational management to improve students' comprehensive qualities. Therefore, Deng proposed achieving "two integrations": the integration of the construction of the dormitory management team and student self-governance organizations. That is, in addition to full-time dormitory administrators, a college student dormitory management committee composed mainly of student cadres, student Party members, and student backbones should be established, and the two should work together; the integration of specialized management departments and multi-department coordination. A comprehensive "Student Dormitory Management Center" should be established to integrate relevant personnel from the Student Affairs Office, General Affairs Office, and Logistics Office to form a joint force. Second, it is necessary to further enhance functional upgrading. On the one hand, it is necessary to strengthen the leading role of Party building in student communities (apartment buildings). Wu believed that a positive and healthy apartment culture can not only promote the sound development of apartment construction but also contribute to the all-round development of students. Du proposed taking tidiness, order, and a positive attitude as the basic principles of dormitory construction; carrying out dormitory cultural activities in forms popular among college students; and giving play to the role of Autonomous Management and supervision.

### **4. Autonomous Management of class**

Zhang pointed out that the self-managed class collective of college students includes Autonomous Management of their learning, life, and activities. It has theoretical value-contributing to the diversification of class collective management models and theories; practical value-helping to increase the diversified path choices for class collective construction; and individual value-facilitating the formation of college students' worldviews, outlooks on life, and values. So, how to carry out the Autonomous Management of college students' class collectives well? Zhang believed that students in the class should be divided into several groups according to their interests, hobbies, and specialties, and the past student-organization-led model should be changed to an autonomous management model where everyone participates and drives. Li proposed that to do a good job in the construction of class cadres, three mechanisms need to be constructed: one is the guidance, training, evaluation, and feedback

mechanism with the counselor as the core; the second is the mechanism to enhance the Autonomous Management and self-regulation abilities of class cadres; the third is the top-level management mechanism with the school and the secondary college as the core, including formulating selection, assessment, and reward-punishment systems for class cadres.

Of course, the Autonomous Management of college classes is not completely “self-governed” by students but should be carried out under the guidance of relevant functional departments and teachers. Work such as setting up exemplary models, implementing learning goal education; coordinating overall work, implementing collectivism education; publicizing the prospects of majors, implementing life value education, guiding students to formulate overall class goals; and encouraging the development of characteristic activities should be carried out.

## **5. Autonomous Management of student associations**

Wen *et al.* believed that “college student associations are mass organizations formed by college students voluntarily following relevant school regulations, guided by their interests and hobbies, and carrying out various student activities. Participating in association activities can, to a certain extent, exercise students’ practical abilities, enhance their interpersonal communication abilities, and promote their physical and mental health”<sup>[3]</sup>. How to carry out the Autonomous Management of college student associations well? In response to problems such as chaotic management, lack of characteristics, and low quality of college student associations, Lü *et al.* proposed a “three-autonomy” model.

First, the autonomy of association decision-making. Relevant school departments only provide macro-level guidance and do not interfere specifically. Associations have decision-making autonomy regarding their own goals, activities, processes, etc. Second, the autonomy of association operation. This is mainly achieved through the co-construction of associations and the integration of innovative elements to ensure autonomous operation. Third, the autonomy of association culture ensures the formation of a unique cultural heritage and activity brands to promote the healthy development of associations. For example, through the association’s purpose, activity traditions, and slogans, an association can gradually form its own cultural image and showcase its unique charm. Of course, there are also studies on the Autonomous Management countermeasures of certain types of associations. For example, Wen *et al.* focused on exploring the feasible ways of Autonomous Management of sports associations, such as the preparatory work for association activities and the exploration of the development potential of associations.

## **6. Autonomous Management of student cadres**

The student cadres mentioned here include not only the class and league cadres but also, more importantly, the backbones of the student union, the Communist Youth League Committee at the school and secondary-college levels, and their subordinate organizations. Zheng pointed out that in the Autonomous Management of college students, student cadres play roles in organization and management, communication between the upper and lower levels, setting examples, and providing help and guidance. However, there are still common problems, such as weak innovation awareness, passive work, lack of management ability, low efficiency, low self-adjustment level, depression after setbacks, and improper handling of the relationship between study and work, with thoughts easily influenced by the environment. In response to these problems, Xu proposed ideas for strengthening the



Autonomous Management of student cadres.

First, enhance the spirit of innovation, enabling them not only to complete the “prescribed actions” set by the school but also to take “optional actions” according to specific situations. Second, strengthen the long-term mechanism of guidance and training. The Student Affairs Office and the School Youth League Committee should take the lead in providing systematic training for them in organizational leadership, emergency response, and other aspects to continuously improve their job-performing abilities. Third, scientifically design the evaluation and incentive mechanism to ensure that the capable are promoted and the mediocre are replaced. Fourth, clarify the management system, standardize the behavior of student cadres, and make their work follow rules and avoid mistakes. Zhou believed that the “rotation system” for student cadres should be implemented. One form is the “job-rotation system,” that is, each semester or academic year, through a combination of student evaluations, cadres’ self-evaluations, and teacher evaluations, some cadres are directly “relieved of their posts”; at the same time, through self-recommendation, peer recommendations, and teacher selection, new student cadres are “elected” to achieve the replacement of the old by the new and increase vitality. Another form is the “position-transfer system”<sup>[4]</sup>. By encouraging student cadres to apply actively or be recommended by teachers, the original student cadres are transferred to different positions to improve their adaptability and flexibility.

## 7. Comprehensive management of the school

“All activities of college students’ Autonomous Management should be carried out with the support and guidance of functional departments or teachers. Only with correct guidance can the goal of cultivating advanced talents be achieved. Without the support and guidance for college students’ Autonomous Management, this path will inevitably become narrower and narrower and finally lead to a dead end.”<sup>[5]</sup> Then, how should universities ensure the smooth and effective implementation of students’ Autonomous Management through comprehensive measures?

First, plan the path to achieve Autonomous Management. Hu Xiaoxuan (2014) believed that to do a good job in college students’ Autonomous Management, changing concepts is the foundation, improving mechanisms is the essence, establishing evaluations is the guarantee, and cultural influence is the support<sup>[6]</sup>. From the perspective of the distributed leadership theory, Wu Qiao (2021) proposed the following paths: enhance students’ willingness for Autonomous Management and improve the leadership abilities of members; improve the Autonomous Management structure of students and strengthen the construction of organizational culture; form collective and fluid Autonomous Management practices and implement scientific and effective leadership<sup>[7]</sup>.

Second, construct the model to achieve Autonomous Management. Xu Yibiao (2016) pointed out that a “three-in-one” (differentiated, standardized, and humanized) management model should be implemented, and innovation in management technology should be strengthened<sup>[8]</sup>; implement an “autonomous” management model that permeates students, and strengthen the cultivation of students’ “three self-abilities” (Autonomous Management, self-service, and self-restraint). In combination with the new situation of “Three-Dimensional Education” today, Xiao *et al.*<sup>[9]</sup> proposed implementing the “student dean” Autonomous Management model in secondary colleges, fully involving students in college construction and management, and promoting democratic management and efficiency improvement.

Third, improve the Autonomous Management mechanism. Huang pointed out that it is necessary to take the construction of the organizational mechanism as the premise, the construction of the management mechanism as the key, the construction of the assessment mechanism as the focus, and the construction of the

guarantee mechanism as the extension<sup>[10]</sup>. Hu emphasized the need to focus on establishing and improving three mechanisms: The first is the incentive mechanism. Through means such as goal-based incentives, honor-based incentives, and emotional incentives, the subjective initiative of students for Autonomous Management can be stimulated<sup>[11]</sup>. The second is the constraint mechanism. Autonomous Management should be carried out within the scope permitted by legal, institutional, and moral constraints. The third is the supervision mechanism. Through democratic supervision, the cultivation of students' self-awareness and Autonomous Management abilities can be effectively promoted on a regular basis. Ai believed that the training mechanism for teachers and students should be strengthened<sup>[12]</sup>.

Fourth, build the platform for Autonomous Management. Tang pointed out that, first, it is necessary to make full use of the integrated interactive online platform of Yiban, which integrates functions such as education and teaching, student management, life services, and cultural entertainment, to construct an Autonomous Management system for college students<sup>[13]</sup>. Second, social platforms such as QQ and WeChat should be used to construct a student Autonomous Management system to improve the quality and efficiency of Autonomous Management. Yang *et al.* proposed building a college student Autonomous Management platform based on cloud computing and mobile Internet<sup>[14]</sup>. This platform can not only guide students in Autonomous Management but also collect and process the behavioral data of students during the Autonomous Management process for decision-making analysis by school administrators. Guan and Guo both believed that it is necessary to make full use of offline and online platforms to strengthen the publicity of content related to Autonomous Management<sup>[15]</sup>.

## 8. Conclusion

In summary, the research on countermeasures for college students' Autonomous Management in China over the past decade has made great progress in terms of quantity, depth, and breadth. These achievements have not only enriched the higher-education management theory in China but also provided valuable references for specific practices. However, from a higher-requirement perspective, there are still four deficiencies: First, there are more repetitive studies and fewer innovative ones. The topics, contents, and viewpoints of some papers are quite similar. Second, there are more general studies and fewer differential ones. Some papers discuss in general terms and fail to conduct detailed countermeasure research for different regional universities, different types of institutions, and different student groups. Third, there are more practical studies and fewer theoretical discussions. Some papers are similar to work summaries, merely introducing specific practices and lacking in-depth explanations from multiple-disciplinary theories. Fourth, there are more studies on students' Autonomous Management but fewer discussions on how students participate in school management, making the research less comprehensive. Therefore, subsequent related research should pay attention to these issues and strive for breakthroughs.

## Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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