

Retrospection and Prospect: The Characteristics and Enlightenment of Educational Punishment in National Southwestern Associated University

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Abstract: As a monument in the history of higher education, Southwest Associated University has its unique educational disciplinary system. This study investigates the characteristics of SWAU's disciplinary practices through historical analysis and explores their implications for modern educational punishment systems. The research identifies four key features: First, SWAU's decision-making process was transparent and regulated, ensuring fair and rational sanctions. Second, the university demonstrated empathy and discretion in punishment enforcement, reflecting a humanistic approach. Third, its disciplinary system was independent, reinforcing its authority. Lastly, it was highly responsive and capable of self-improvement. These characteristics offer valuable insights for contemporary educational punishment, emphasizing the importance of openness, transparency, a student-centered philosophy, independence, and continuous self-renewal.

Keywords: Southwestern Associated University(SWAU), educational punishment, higher education

Introduction

During the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, the National Southwest Associated University (hereinafter referred to as "Southwest Associated University") united the intellectual elites from Peking University, Tsinghua University, and Nankai University, thereby inscribing a resplendent chapter in the history of Chinese higher education. The university's practices in educational and disciplinary measures demonstrated distinct characteristics and provided invaluable experience for subsequent generations. While some scholars have initiated preliminary inquiries into the educational punishment system of Southwest Associated University, the overall research remains inadequate. Consequently, the objective of this study is to further elucidate the characteristics of its educational punishment mechanism and to explore the insights it offers to contemporary educational punishment practices.

1. The concept of educational punishment

Educational punishment has long been a significant topic within the fields of educational science and educational management. The Dictionary of Education defines educational punishment as "the act of negating or criticizing individual or collective misconduct, aimed at preventing the recurrence of certain behaviors. It serves as an educational method in school moral education, helping students distinguish right from wrong, weaken the motivation for misconduct, and maintain school discipline. This method is antithetical to reward."^[1]

The "Rules on Educational Discipline in Primary and Secondary Schools (Trial)," which officially came into effect on March 1, 2021, further clarified the legal status and scope of educational punishment. It states that educational punishment is an educational behavior implemented by teachers and schools, aimed at correcting students' unruly behavior and serving

as a deterrent.^[2] Based on these definitions, this study conceptualizes educational punishment as an educational method in which teachers, within the school setting, negate students' misconduct or character, inducing an unpleasant emotional experience to reduce the occurrence of such behavior and promote students' overall physical and mental development.

2. Characteristics of educational punishment in Southwest Associated University

2.1 Open decision-making, standardized and rigorous

The educational disciplinary decision-making process at Southwest Associated University is characterized by its openness, transparency, and adherence to strict procedures. All disciplinary decisions are subject to review by the Standing Committee and are meticulously documented. For instance, the 108th meeting established clear quantitative standards and corresponding punitive measures for student misconduct or violations, thereby exemplifying the standardization and rigor of the disciplinary process.^[3]

2.2 Understand the students and handle the situation with discretion

Southwest Associated University fully embodies an understanding of student individual differences and a humanistic approach in its educational punishment practices. While strictly adhering to established rules and regulations, the university also pays close attention to students' attitudes of repentance. For example, during the 135th meeting, students who cheated on exams but later demonstrated remorse were given lighter punishments. Conversely, strict measures were taken against those who showed no signs of repentance. Principal Xiong Qinglai adhered to the philosophy of "education first, punishment as a supplement," focusing on students' remorseful behavior and opting for leniency towards those who sincerely repented.^[4]

2.3 Independent and authoritative discipline

The educational discipline at Southwest Associated University is marked by a high degree of independence and authority. The university continued the tradition of academic autonomy from Peking University, resisting undue external interference and maintaining the independence of its educational and disciplinary practices. For example, during the 101st meeting, the university rejected external intervention regarding the expulsion of a student. Similarly, during the 137th meeting, it insisted on not reinstating the expulsion of students. This independence not only motivated students but also ensured the authority of educational discipline.

2.4 Strong timeliness and self-improvement

The educational discipline at Southwest Associated University is characterized by strong timeliness and a capacity for self-improvement. For example, during the 106th meeting, the university swiftly made expulsion decisions in response to students occupying faculty and staff quarters and subsequently revised housing regulations. Additionally, the university paid attention to self-correction, such as rectifying mistakes caused by management negligence during the 184th meeting. In the face of scarce library resources, the university perfected relevant disciplinary rules regarding library borrowing, thereby demonstrating the flexibility and adaptability of its educational disciplinary system.

3. Contemporary enlightenment of educational punishment in Southwest Associated University

3.1 Ensuring openness and transparency

Openness and transparency are vital for the justice and effectiveness of educational punishment. Professor Guo Dalin emphasized that preventing the abuse of educational punishment largely depends on an open, transparent, scientific, and democratic decision-making process.^[5] The implementation of educational punishment should ensure the openness of the system and the transparency of standards, thereby enhancing the system's credibility and fostering trust among schools, teachers, students, and parents. Modern educational punishment can learn from Southwest Associated University's model of open meeting voting, ensuring rational and fair decision-making through collective discussion and voting.

3.2 Adhering to a "student-centric" philosophy

Educational punishment should aim to "educate people" rather than merely pursuing severe penalties. As an

educational means, the essential purpose of educational punishment is to "correct students' noncompliant behaviors and help them complete the socialization process"^[6]. Principal Xiong Qinglai advocated quantifying punishment based on students' remorse, emphasizing humanistic care and flexibility. Wang Peng noted that the "student-centric" philosophy is fundamental to ensuring the educational nature and achieving the goals of educational punishment. In formulating and implementing disciplinary rules, it is essential to fully consider the student's status as the subject of education and to flexibly apply disciplinary measures in conjunction with students' attitudes of repentance.

3.3 Safeguarding the independence of educational punishment

The independence of educational punishment is crucial for its authority and effectiveness. Schools and teachers should resist undue external interference to ensure fair administration of punishments. Rule-making should be based on educational objectives and student developmental needs, incorporating diverse opinions and open, transparent supervision. Independence enhances the authority of educational punishment and ensures its true educational purpose is realized.

3.4 Continuous self-innovation and improvement

The educational punishment system should be dynamic and responsive, adjusting rules based on implementation challenges and feedback. By actively engaging all stakeholders in evaluation and improvement processes, a co-governance model can be established. The Southwest Associated University exemplified this approach, showcasing the flexibility and adaptability of its disciplinary system through continuous refinement.

4. Conclusion

The practice of educational punishment at Southwest Associated University reflects a deep respect for educational principles and a concern for individual differences among students. Its principles of openness and transparency, humanization, independent authority, and self-improvement provide valuable experience for the establishment and improvement of modern educational disciplinary systems. Contemporary educational punishment should learn from its experience, adhere to openness and transparency, uphold a "student-centric" philosophy, safeguard independence, and continuously innovate to promote the all-around development of students and the fairness and justice of education.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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