

A Study on Improving the University Press Spokesperson System and Creating Public Opinion Environment in China with a Documentary Analysis Approach

Jie Qiu¹, Yu-Chih Lin²

¹ Krirk University, 3 Ram Inthra Rd., Anusawari, Bang Khen, Bangkok 10220 Thailand

E-mail:24703488@qq.com

² Krirk University. 3 Ram Inthra Rd., Anusawari, Bang Khen, Bangkok 10220 Thailand

E-mail: yuchihlin1013@gmail.com

Article History: Received: 11 January 2021; Revised: 12 February 2021; Accepted: 27 March 2021; Published online: 10 May 2021

Abstract: The purpose of establishing the university spokesperson system is to further deepen the openness of university management¹. It is an important system guaranteed for responding to the society's concern about universities and actively disclosing the management of universities. In the situation, teachers, students and the public understand the development and progress of university. The study examines the problems of the spokesperson system in Chinese universities, explores the importance of establishing and improving the university's spokesperson system, and suggests on how to improve the university's spokesperson system. A documentary research method is adopted to collect and analyze data. It is indicated that the university's management is on the track within the legal framework. Furthermore, the promotion of university's culture, image and reputation is enhanced. It is suggested that the university spokesperson system is supposed to be implemented under the framework of modern university system for the development of university.

Keywords: press spokesperson system, public information, public opinion environment.

INTRODUCTION

The establishment of the university spokesperson system is to further deepen the openness of university management¹. The significance of the system is advocated by Chinese government's advocacy of establishing a 'Sunshine University'², and system will become normative³. China's spokesperson system has been established for more than 40 years. From the beginning till now, governments at all levels have been generally implemented and relatively standardized the system⁴. Regarding the construction of the spokesperson system, China has established a system with a scientific and reasonable structure and a relatively complete system⁵. It plays an increasingly important role in promoting the openness of political party management affairs, administrative management affairs and other affairs in various fields. Especially, after major social emergencies occurred, the level of information release has been gradually improved⁶. The news media and the public's recognition and expectation of the role of news spokesperson have basically been shaped. Establishing and improving the university press spokesperson system fulfills not only the trend in the modern age, but also the need of society. It responds to social concerns, discloses the management of university, and lets teachers and students understand the university's reform, development and long-term goals⁷.

At present, there are still many problems of the spokesperson system at Chinese universities. The development and progress of different universities are diverse. Some universities have slow progress in building

up a spokesperson system. In the process of constructing the news spokesperson system, the procedures, methods, and techniques of news releasing are not standardized. Especially in an emergency situation, lack of system and professional practitioners, causes the University in a passive situation. As a news spokesperson of university, good political and media literacy, emotional intelligence and psychological quality are necessary. Whenever encountering with the news media, a good relationship between the University and the others is necessary in daily routine. At present, the professional positioning of news spokespersons is vague and the professional development is slow⁸. Professionals are relatively scarce. Insufficient professional skills of news spokespersons, and the role of spokespersons have not yet taken seriously⁹. As a result, to be silent, not to release university information, and not to dare to publish more sensitive information are the approaches adopted. Even the official media platforms of universities, such as WeChat public platform, Toutiao platform, Microblog, and Tik Tok, are handed over to students for management. Students are basically able to deal with daily work effectively; however, in emergency situations, students' psychological and professional abilities may be concerned. The lack of professional spokespersons also leads to the imperfection of the university spokesperson system. Therefore, it is particularly important to select and train university spokespersons and comprehensively improve the comprehensive quality of spokespersons¹⁰. The research questions of this paper are to, focus on discussing the main problems of the spokesperson system in Chinese universities by analyzing the relevant literature, to examine the importance of establishing and improving the university's spokesperson system, and suggest how to improve the university's spokesperson system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

By consulting and analyzing documents, the study understands and collects data about the background, history and characteristics of the spokesperson system in Chinese universities. According to the document, the news spokesperson system can be traced back to the United States and connected with the news media and the public access to the media. With the improvement of information disclosure system at American universities, the spokesperson system has been established and improved⁴. In recent years, the Ministry of Education of China has taken many measures for university information disclosure. The requirement of universities to set press spokespersons system is advocated for teachers, students and the public's right to know⁵.

The relevant rules and regulations of the Chinese government have effectively promoted and constructed the university spokesperson system. In 2008, China announced the 'Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Disclosure of Government Information'. In September 2010, the Ministry of Education announced the 'Measures for Information Disclosure in Higher Education Institutions'.

The Chinese press spokesperson system was formally established on April 23, 1983. The Chinese Journalists Association introduced the press spokesmen of various ministries and commissions of the State Council and people's organizations to domestic and foreign reporters for the first time, and officially announced that China has officially established the press spokesman system¹¹. In 2006, the Ministry of Education of China clearly stated that all universities across the country must establish a spokesperson and a spokesperson system⁶.

The research 'Establishing University Press Spokesperson System and Deepening the Openness of University Affairs'¹ indicates how to build a university press spokesman system from a macro perspective, and

explores the problems existing in universities. The study ‘On the Function Positioning and Construction of University Press Spokesperson System’³ shows that the operating mode of the university news spokesperson system are carried out, and some explorations have been made on the operating mode of the university news spokesperson system from the aspects of organization and staffs. The research ‘Study on the Construction of the University Press Spokesperson System under the View of “Sunshine Universities”’² examines that from the perspective of how to build a ‘sunshine university’, it suggests the construction of the university news spokesperson system. The studies mentioned above were analyzed and studied to provide data for the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Face the Society and Public Opinion

The establishment of a spokesperson system in universities enables universities to establish the relationship with society. This will help the communication between universities and society and the manifestation of the innovation of university management systems¹². The construction of university spokesperson system requires universities to change their way of thinking and adapt information age^{13 14 15}. In the digital era, when the Internet is developed, people obtain more information via the Internet, and the influence of increasing new media and self-media.

FULLY RELEASE INFORMATION

To implement the university press spokesperson system, it is necessary to clarify the functions of university news release. That includes the governance of university news release and the significance of managing the university¹⁶. One of the important reasons for establishing a spokesperson system is for good image. The influence of internet communication is increasing. It is crucial to develop their own professional strength, and universities are suggested to build their image. In addition, the students will eventually enter society to work. Their qualities also represent the quality and image of the university. Parents, enterprises and the public who care about the development of students also understand the strength and image of the university. Therefore, the university spokesperson system is an important bridge connecting the university and the society.

IMPROVE MANAGEMENT TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF UNIVERSITY

Accidents or emergencies happened, and sometimes happened at universities. When emergencies are occurred in universities, most students are curious. However, most students may not have sufficient media literacy. The incidents uploaded to the Internet may be exaggerated or lack of professional ethics. When it happened, the university press spokesperson system can clarify the truth to the public, stop rumors spreading, and also form public opinion. Whenever emergency happened, due to well-established spokesperson system, the relationship between the university and the media are built.

Democratic management to protect teachers and students

Under the current university news release system, sometimes facts may not be revealed. University press spokespersons release information that is beneficial to the university, and choose to conceal some that is not good for the university⁴. The situation presented by some university news releases is that the form of information release is more important than the content. The phenomenon is that more attention is paid to the form of the report, and the essence of the content is ignored; more attention is paid to the results of the incident, and the process is lacked; more attention is paid to the principle, and the specific content is less. The public mainly receives information

passively, and it is difficult for them to obtain information in detail. As a result, there are more positive reports but less negative ones on universities¹⁸. The more open a university handles important information, the more university students and teachers will trust university and support university decision-making.

PROFESSIONAL SYSTEM AND STAFF

The spokesperson system cannot be completed by one person, but requires the operation of the entire team to ensure the operation of the system. It requires university news spokespersons to transform from the current job-oriented behavior to professional behavior¹⁹. In terms of professional requirements, university press spokespersons must not only have political and theoretical literacy, be familiar with the country's policies, understand university affairs, have good spoken and written skills, but also be familiar with the characteristics of news dissemination, familiar with media communication, especially the characteristics of new media communication. However, the university news spokesperson system is very complicated. In the news spokesperson team, everyone perform their own duties and focus on their own work. Only when their own work is done can they ensure the entire team's success, so as to ensure the smooth implementation of the spokesperson system.

INFORMATION RELEASE TO PUBLIC

On campus, press spokespersons have the consciousness and ability to form public opinion and create a good public opinion environment. As a news spokesperson, when facing important decisions made by the university, information has to be released in a timely and accurate manner. Meanwhile, the spokesperson is supposed to have the awareness of the truth, to speak with facts, and the content must be concise and clear²⁰. In addition, if there are rumors spreading on campus, it is necessary to have a complete and clear understanding of the actual situation, the cause and effect, and the attitude of the university at the first beginning. It is required to respond to public enquiries and suggestions in a timely manner, to satisfy the public's right to know, to eliminate public doubts, and to ensure campus safety.

INFORMATION RELEASE IN DIVERSE APPROACHES

Universities should take the initiative to change the previous news release method and release official information internally and externally through multiple channels. Internal release information, not only with conferences, posters, campus radio and other forms, it should also take the initiative to use new media, such as WeChat public platform, Toutiao platform, Microblog, and Tik Tok, Bilibili and other forms of communication. As external release, we can further use short video method that is currently popular among young people to release information in a timely and vivid manner.

AGENDA SETTING FOR PUBLIC OPINION

Press release methods including the use of press conference, briefing, group interview, online interview, answering reporters' question, providing press release to the news media, issuing statement and signed article to the news media, via university newspapers, WeChat public platform, Toutiao platform, Microblog, and campus networks. Inform the media and the public in time of public affairs and major university affairs, issues of social concern, and events that teachers and students are concerned. It can also respond to and clarify the relevant reports of the university by the news media to establish a better public image of the university.

CONCLUSIONS

In terms of the construction of the university spokesperson system: First of all, it is necessary to establish and improve related procedures and systems. A sound system is the fundamental guarantee for the implementation of the construction of the university spokesperson system. Secondly, attention is paid to establish and improve the system for selecting and training news spokespersons. Professional talents are important for implementing the news spokesperson system.

In terms of job responsibilities and development requirements of university spokespersons, the essential parts are: First, the spokesperson is supposed to be familiar with the laws of education and news dissemination, and to have a comprehensive grasp of relevant policy and school decision-making information. Second, it is suggested to have the awareness of public opinion, the initiative attention to public opinion, to actively explore public opinion, and to provide scientific, reasonable, reliable and feasible references for university decision-making. Third, it is important to have innovative mind, be good at using diverse media in digital era, and innovate news release forms. Fourth, while establishing the authority of the spokesperson, it is required to be good at dealing with the media, society, teachers and students, and to cultivate their own affinity. Fifth, it is crucial to pay attention to personal image and good eloquence training.

In summary, the university spokesperson system is a concrete manifestation of the university management under the legal framework. It is an important bridge and link between universities and education authorities, society, teachers and students. In digital era, continuously improving system, innovating work methods, responding to social concerns, and adapting to the time transformation, are essential issues that the university spokesperson system is concerned to deal with.

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