

# Practice and Thinking of Peer Assistance Class Mentorship System in Promoting Students' Comprehensive Development



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**Abstract:** In the current vocational education environment, the comprehensive development of students has become an important goal of education reform, which, in addition to the cultivation of professional skills, also emphasizes the cultivation of students' ways of thinking, creative abilities and sense of social responsibility. Educational reforms in vocational colleges and universities have focused on building an open and diversified learning environment, encouraging students to develop their personal hobbies and social interaction skills while learning professional skills, as well as increasing investment in humanities, arts and science education to cultivate critical thinking and the ability to solve complex problems, so as to enable students to adapt to the fast-changing labor market while taking into account both their personal development and the needs of society. As a result, the peer-help classroom guidance system has emerged, which forms an effective educational and growth support system that enhances students' social skills and shapes leadership and teamwork through the driving and tutoring of junior students by their senior counterparts. This paper analyzes the factors affecting the overall development of students in vocational colleges and universities, and then deduces the advantages of the peer-help class guide system, revealing the positive impact of the facts of the system on the overall development of students.

**Keywords:** peer support; class mentorship system; comprehensive development; practical measures

## Introduction

The peer assistance class mentorship system is a student-oriented educational model that aims to achieve educational goals through mutual help and support among students of the same age. This system originated from the "Lancaster-Bell system" in England in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, also known as the "mutual teaching system". In vocational universities, this system is applied in the form of senior students with excellent performance being appointed as class advisors after strict selection and training, whose main duties are to provide ideological and political education, daily management, and life guidance to the students in the class under their management. Class advisors are closer to the students they counsel in terms of age, psychology, and interests. When helping to solve the students' ideological, learning, and life problems, class advisors communicate and guide them

effectively, improve the students' ability of self-management and self-education, make the educational process more in line with the student's actual needs, and cultivate the students' sense of responsibility and leadership ability.

## 1. Factors Affecting the Overall Development of Students in Vocational Universities

### 1.1. Political factors

The political factors affecting the comprehensive development of students in vocational universities are multi-dimensional. The government's education policy directly determines the curriculum, resource allocation, and development direction of vocational universities, and affects the vocational skills training and knowledge structure of students. The stability of the political environment also plays a decisive role in the comprehensive development of vocational college students. Economic growth and social order brought

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about by political stability contribute to increased educational resources and more equitable educational opportunities; conversely, political turmoil may lead to reduced investment in education, limited quality of education and development opportunities for students, and the penetration of political ideology in education may affect the curriculum content and teaching methodology, which in turn affects the students' way of thinking and values (Zhou et al., 2017). At the national level, the degree of importance attached to education by political decision-makers and their policy choices not only reflects the country's strategic layout of talent cultivation but also the prediction of and response to future social needs. Therefore, political factors affect the knowledge acquisition, skill cultivation, and personal development of students in vocational colleges and universities through educational policies and social environment, and ultimately act on students' career and social adaptability.

### 1.2. Economic factors

With the continuous development of economic globalization and a socialist market economy, China's higher education system and its positioning in the global education market have experienced significant changes. Economic globalization has intensified competition in the talent market, especially in terms of high skills and innovation ability. With China's shift from elite education to mass education, a large number of graduates have entered the labor market, raising the overall level of education and intensifying the competitive pressure in the job market, e.g., the mismatch between the increase in the number of graduates and the economic demand has led to the problem of structural unemployment, which in turn affects graduates' career development and psychological health (Ding, 2017). In addition, the urgent demand for high-end technical talents and innovation ability in the market economy has prompted higher education institutions to adjust their educational strategies and strengthen their ties with industry to better cultivate high-quality talents that meet market demand. However, the impact of economic factors on the overall development of students is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it pushes educational resources towards more practical, technology-oriented fields and promotes the practical application of student's skills and knowledge; on the

other hand, excessive market orientation may weaken the emphasis on basic subject education and the humanities and social sciences, limiting the possibilities for students' comprehensive development.

### 1.3. Exam-oriented education

In the field of vocational education, education to the test usually leads to an over-concentration of educational resources on the improvement of test scores rather than on the overall development of student's abilities and qualities. Test-oriented education emphasizes standardized test results as the main criterion for evaluating students' academic achievements and abilities, neglecting the cultivation of innovative thinking, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities. The excessive test-oriented teaching mode compresses the space for students to explore knowledge and limits the opportunities for learning in actual operation and practice, but for vocational students, the core of vocational education lies in the practice and application of skills. In addition, test-oriented education may also lead to homogenization of educational content by teaching knowledge points that can be easily assessed and neglecting education in areas such as arts, sports, and social sciences, and thus students may lack the ability to deal with complex, diverse, and uncertain situations (Yao, 2016). The theory of "human capital" in economics emphasizes the return on investment in education, while the short-term orientation of test-based education ignores the long-term accumulation of human capital, such as the cultivation of innovation and leadership.

### 1.4. Family factors

Family factors have a decisive influence on the overall development of students in vocational colleges and universities. With the rapid growth of China's economy, the economic situation of families has improved, providing vocational college and university students with better educational resources and learning environments. However, this economic advantage does not come without a price, accompanied by high family expectations and pressure on their children's education. Changes in family structure due to the increase in the number of only children have made vocational college students the focus of family attention and subject to great expectations from their families, which sometimes translates into pressure on learning and life, and

excessive expectations and pressure may also lead to an increase in the psychological burden of students, affecting their emotional stability and personality development (Wang & Gu, 2011). With the intensification of social competition, many families have adopted an overprotective and spoiled educational approach, which affects students' independence and autonomy, limits their ability to cope with challenges and adversity, and makes students appear too vulnerable in the face of occupational environments and social adaptation. The family is the first station for transmitting social culture, moral norms, and behavioral habits, and parents' values, lifestyles, and attitudes towards problems invariably shape their children's worldview and outlook on life. The diversity and richness of family culture can promote the all-round development of students, while a single or overly closed family culture may limit students' ways of thinking and behavioral patterns, affecting their innovative ability and social adaptability.

### **1.5. Modern technology factor**

Modern students, infused with information technology, enjoy unprecedented convenience in knowledge acquisition and social interaction. The Internet opens up channels for information acquisition, enriches students' learning resources and horizons, and promotes the diversification of knowledge and the internationalization of thinking. Smartphones, as portable access devices to the Internet, enhance the speed of information circulation and the frequency of students' interactions. However, while the free and open nature of the Internet provides a broad view of information, it also makes students easily exposed to diverse cultures and ideologies that conflict with mainstream values, which may confuse their value judgments and sense of cultural belonging, and the false and harmful information that abounds on the Internet may mislead students' factual judgment and the formation of their moral values. The phenomenon of Internet dependence in modern society consumes a great deal of students' time, reduces their learning efficiency, and leads to the degradation of social skills and the alienation of interpersonal relationships. Prolonged Internet immersion and smartphone use have been proven to affect the mental health of adolescents, leading to distraction, decreased self-restraint, and even symptoms of depression and anxiety, affecting

students' academic performance, and impeding the formation of a healthy personality and the improvement of social adaptability (Zhang, 2011).

## **2. The Advantages of Peer Assistance Class Mentorship System**

### **2.1. Assistance and supplementation of the class teacher system**

As an effective supplement and assistance to the class teacher system in vocational colleges and universities, the peer support class advisor system optimizes the traditional teacher-student relationship and promotes natural interaction and trust building between students based on similar age, psychology, and values by reducing the authority gap between teachers and students (Zhang, 2011). The working relationship between class guide students and classroom teachers is complementary. While class teachers in vocational institutions are responsible for macro and holistic matters in management, class advisors focus on targeted and individualized student care. For example, in terms of academic support, career planning, and psychological counseling, class advisors can provide more detailed guidance and assistance according to the specific situation of each student, and the "point to face" mode of work not only improves the relevance and effectiveness of education but also reduces the work pressure of class teachers so that they can make use of their limited time and resources to carry out education and management work. With the implementation of the class mentorship system, vocational universities can respond to the diversified needs of students in a flexible and timely manner, thus improving the quality of education and student satisfaction. The existence of class advisors strengthens students' self-management ability, promotes mutual assistance and growth among students, and creates favorable conditions for cultivating competitive and adaptable talents.

### **2.2. Favorable for class management**

The peer support class mentorship system brings significant advantages for class management in vocational colleges and universities. Class guides have frequent interactions with students in their daily lives, such as eating together and participating in discussions, etc. This informal form of interaction enhances the sense of trust between students, enabling class guides to find and solve

problems encountered by students in their studies and lives promptly (Gao, 2010), and because of their exemplary role and positive values, they can convey positive learning attitude and lifestyle for students, and inspire students' enthusiasm for learning and self-management ability through the power of role models. In the education system of vocational colleges and universities, the application of a peer support class mentorship system realizes refined class management, makes the distribution of educational resources more reasonable, educational management more efficient, builds a more harmonious and positive learning environment, promotes the comprehensive development of student's abilities, and provides powerful support for vocational colleges and universities to cultivate high-quality talents.

### **3. The Way to Establish the Peer Assistance Class Mentorship System in Class Management of Vocational Universities**

#### **3.1. Selection and training of class tutors**

The establishment of a peer-assisted class mentorship system in vocational universities includes three key links, namely, selection, training, and management. The selection process requires that students in the upper grades should be selected for their good overall qualities, with emphasis on moral qualities, academic performance, and organizational and managerial abilities, to ensure that class tutors can play an exemplary role among their peers. The selection process needs to be open and transparent to ensure that all qualified students have the opportunity to participate and to select students who are truly capable and willing to take responsibility as class advisors (Wang, 2008). Training is the key to the success of the class mentorship system. Special lectures can be held to enhance the problem-solving ability and conflict mediation skills of class advisors, so that they can effectively manage and guide their classmates, and the content of the training covers the fields of students' ideological and political education, career planning, and mental health to ensure that the class advisors can provide professional guidance and support when they face students' problems, and the hierarchical training ensures that both novice and experienced class advisors can receive appropriate guidance and continue to provide guidance. The hierarchical

training ensures that both novice and experienced class advisors can receive appropriate guidance and continuously improve their professional and practical skills. Regular meetings and continuous performance appraisals promote the self-supervision and self-improvement of class advisors, and the mechanism of recognizing and rewarding outstanding class advisors not only motivates class advisors but also enhances the attractiveness of the whole system. Classroom supervisors who do not perform well should receive enhanced training or be subject to the necessary disciplinary measures to ensure the effectiveness and seriousness of the system.

#### **3.2. Content of the work of classroom supervisors**

Class advisors are the communication bridge between class teachers and students and a key force in the implementation of personalized ideological and political education. Class advisors come into contact with the daily lives of students and understand the personalities, interests, and difficulties of their classmates, and this collection of information enables class advisors to provide class teachers with customized suggestions on educational strategies. Informal methods such as individual interviews and group discussions allow class advisors to have in-depth exchanges with students, capturing their immediate needs and problems, and also enhancing their understanding of school policies and social hotspots. When dealing with students' problems, class advisors need to adopt differentiated strategies, for example, setting specific goals for students who lack motivation, providing moderate challenges and opportunities for reflection for those who think highly of themselves, and providing more structural support and guidance for those who are less organized, to promote the all-round development of students' personalities. In this process, class advisors play multiple roles as educators, advisors, and supporters, and their work is not only limited to transferring knowledge, but more importantly, guiding students to form sound personalities and correct values, and truly realizing the educational goal of "student-centered" (Li & Wang, 2008). In terms of career planning guidance, class advisors can guide junior students with their own learning and life experience, and implement stage-by-stage education and guidance activities according to the

needs of different school years. For first-year students, class advisors mainly help them adapt to university life, enhance their understanding of self-worth and ability, and form a correct outlook on life and career. When students enter the second year and need to clarify their career direction, class advisors work with counselors to use career assessment tools, organize career planning lectures and consulting activities, deepen students' understanding of various career paths, and adjust and refine students' career goals through social practice and professional lectures. At this stage, the focus is on giving students a clear understanding of the current job market and acquiring the necessary job search skills, such as resume writing and interview strategies. By the third year, when students are about to enter the job market, class advisors play a more supportive and guiding role, encouraging students to actively participate in career recruitment activities, providing real-time employment information, coping with challenges they may encounter in interviews, and providing necessary emotional support, to enable students to scientifically plan their careers, cultivate professionalism and a sense of social responsibility, enhance their competitiveness in employment, and realize their personal values and career development goals. On the other hand, class advisors also need to pay attention to the mental health status of students within the class, directly and naturally contact and understand the psychological state of students in the lower grades, and establish a relationship of trust, so that students can find a reliable confiding object in the face of psychological pressures or obstacles, and observe and capture possible signals of mental health, such as withdrawn behaviors, emotional fluctuations, or negative speech, and take timely and appropriate support measures (Zou, 2007). Class advisors should actively participate in the training of mental health education, master the necessary psychological support skills, understand how to carry out initial emotional relief and crisis intervention, and promptly guide students to seek professional psychological counseling services when serious problems are detected. Class advisors also need to work with class teachers to create a supportive learning environment, and promote healthy living habits, reasonable study plans, and positive stress management methods. They should encourage

students to think critically about information, teach students how to maintain psychological resilience when encountering difficulties, and help students maintain a resilient and positive mindset when facing learning and life challenges, to promote their all-round development and long-term success. In the course of daily accompaniment, class advisors should pay attention to new students, poor students, foreign students, and students with special family situations, who encounter more challenges in the process of adapting to the life of vocational colleges and universities, and face learning pressure, interpersonal relationship problems, economic burden, and psychological adaptation problems. Class advisors should carry out daily communication and exchanges with the above groups, guide students to carry out self-discovery and self-management, and help students set practical and feasible life and learning goals. They should guide students to self-discovery and self-management, help them set practical and feasible goals for their life and study, cultivate their self-discipline, encourage them to actively participate in social activities on campus, establish a healthy interpersonal network, and enhance their social adaptability. The class advisors not only provide help as seniors, but also exist as friends, which makes the support work more humanized and effective, and enables students to better adapt to the school environment, and ultimately form a sound personality and values.

### **Conclusion**

The peer assistance class mentorship system has been demonstrated in several vocational universities for its important value in promoting the overall development of students, and the implementation of this system enhances students' learning and life skills, social responsibility, and self-management ability. To maximize its benefits, vocational institutions need to continuously monitor and evaluate the quality and impact of the support activities and ensure that all students can benefit from them, and the continuous optimization and innovation of the peer support system will be the key to the successful implementation of whole-person education in vocational education.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare that they have no conflicts

of interest to this work.

### Acknowledgment

This research was funded by:

Peer Assistance in Class Management--Class Mentorship System, 2021fd-15.

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**How to Cite:** Ma, Y., & Chen, W. (2024). Practice and thinking of peer assistance class mentorship system in promoting students' comprehensive development. *Journal of Global Humanities and Social Sciences*, 05(05), 192-197.  
<https://doi.org/10.61360/BoniGHSS242016380505>