

The Embedding of Party Building in the Construction of "One-Stop" Student Communities in Universities: Action Logic and Coupling Mechanism

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Abstract: During the process of embedding Party building into the construction of "one-stop" student communities in universities, various actors are influenced by the administrative logic of universities, the logic of community autonomy, and the logic of individual action. This leads to deviations between the ideal design and the actual state, tensions between centralized and decentralized resources, and differences between passive involvement and value recognition. Grassroots Party organizations within student communities can effectively enhance their leadership by embedding themselves spatially, structurally, and cognitively. By innovating collaborative governance mechanisms, expanding element aggregation mechanisms, and forming value cohesion mechanisms, a two-way coupling between Party leadership and community autonomy can be realized, thereby empowering and enhancing the construction of "one-stop" student communities.

Keywords: One-stop Student Community; Party Building; Multiple Actors; Coupling Mechanism.

1. Introduction

With the deepening of reforms in China's higher education system, the traditional class management model has gradually lost its effectiveness, while the educational function of student communities continues to develop. In 2020, the Ministry of Education, along with eight other departments, issued the "Opinions on Accelerating the Construction of the Ideological and Political Work System in Universities," which explicitly called for the promotion of "one-stop" student community construction. This initiative was regarded as a crucial reform to thoroughly implement General Secretary Xi Jinping's important discourse on education and to enhance the systematization and refinement of university Party building and ideological and political work in the new era. In 2021, the Ministry of Education selected two batches of universities to pilot the exploration of "one-stop" student community construction, further clarifying the objectives of student Party building and proposing the creation of a university version of the "Fengqiao Experience." By 2022, over 21,000 Party organizations and nearly 100,000 Communist Youth League organizations had been established in more than 1,400 universities' "one-stop" student communities nationwide, achieving basic coverage of Party and League organizations [1].

However, for university student communities to become the frontline of student Party building and create a new platform for collaborative education, effective coordination and integration of multiple departments and stakeholders are required, leveraging both administrative power and student participation to consolidate fragmented resources. In this process, how student Party building can effectively embed itself within student communities amid the complex landscape of diverse actors has become a pressing research issue.

2. Literature Review and Research Design

Existing studies have increasingly recognized the role of Party organizations in grassroots governance, suggesting that Party organizations empower diverse governance actors through role provision, power delegation, institutional construction, and resource linkage [2]. In terms of research focus, the academic community has primarily studied the embedding of Party building in residential community governance and grid management, while less attention has been paid to Party building mechanisms in university student communities. Therefore, incorporating student community Party building into the framework of embedding theory, exploring the interaction between Party organizations and university "one-stop" student communities, and summarizing practical experiences of multi-faceted Party embedding in student community management fills a gap in the existing research on student community Party building, broadens the scope of theoretical application, and extends the depth of theoretical inquiry.

The contemporary value of building student communities in universities has been widely recognized, with scholars paying attention to the educational role of dormitories in student development and their significance [3]. It is believed that embedding Party building into "one-stop" student community construction can effectively expand the coverage of ideological and political work in universities, innovate the education and management models of student Party members, and enrich the working platforms of the "three-wide education" (all-round education) initiative in the new era, thereby better serving the fundamental task of "cultivating virtue and character." [4] However, current research does not deeply explain the internal action logic of actors, and the policy recommendations are often insufficiently targeted. This paper attempts to focus on the actors involved in university Party building and student community governance, analyzing their internal action logic and exploring the

coupling mechanism between Party leadership and community autonomy. By overcoming the action resistance of diverse actors, this study aims to offer some insights into promoting the embedding of Party building in student community construction.

To grasp the current state of Party building in university "one-stop" student communities, this research distributed questionnaires to students and relevant staff at ten universities in Shanghai. Additionally, field visits were conducted at five universities, and in-depth interviews were held with 20 key individuals. Through questionnaires and interviews, the study aims to understand the process, methods, challenges, and influencing factors of Party building embedding in the construction of "one-stop" student communities. The analysis will then focus on the action logic and coupling mechanism involved in this process.

3. Action Logic of Party Building Embedded in "One-Stop" Student Community Construction

Research has shown that in the unique setting of "one-stop" student communities in universities, the main actors influencing the process include: staff from Party and government departments, management personnel from logistics and security departments, ideological and political educators, student Party members, and non-Party students. During the embedding of Party building, these actors often face internal tensions and conflicts in their actions, influenced by factors such as administrative responsibilities, cognitive inertia, resource constraints, and environmental changes. As a result, the outcomes of their actions may sometimes deviate from the intended goals.

3.1. University Administrative Logic: The Gap between Ideal and Reality

In practice, the construction of "one-stop" student communities in universities remains heavily influenced by national administrative power, emphasizing the shared value of "upholding Party leadership." A key requirement is that the spatial and governance design of the communities extends Party leadership to the most granular level of the student population, embedding Party work deeply into the frontline of student education, and turning the community into a new space for cultivating the talents of the new era. However, constrained by the bureaucratic structure of universities, collaboration between departments at different levels of the university hierarchy remains challenging, and student community governance struggles to break away from the traditional "university-school-class-individual" governance structure.

In practice, student communities represent the "last mile" in the governance structure, and they exhibit fragmentation in terms of governance subjects, management levels, and institutional design [5]. Under the profound influence of the university's administrative logic, the leading role of Party organizations in student community governance has not been fully realized, resulting in a significant gap between the intended and actual outcomes of collaborative education efforts.

While most universities have established Party networks within student communities, achieving near-complete coverage of Party and Youth League organizations, there remains a disconnect between Party building efforts and the

actual needs of students. On the one hand, the construction of student communities involves multiple management entities, often leading to overlapping responsibilities and unclear accountability, making it difficult to form an effective synergy that supports the operation of the student community. On the other hand, the direction of actions in student community construction is often more focused on fulfilling tasks assigned by higher-level departments, rather than accurately addressing the key, difficult, and pain points in student development.

Within the existing mechanisms, departments are often driven by their own interests in terms of rights and responsibilities, which leads to inefficient interdepartmental collaboration. This situation frequently results in issues such as multiple parties addressing the same problem without anyone offering a solution or excessive concern for students, which in turn places unnecessary pressure and burden on them.

3.2. Community Autonomy Logic: The Tension between Centralization and Decentralization

One of the key goals of constructing the "one-stop" student community management model in universities is to direct educational resources towards the student community, making management services more integrated and efficient. However, at this stage, the integration of Party leadership with student community autonomy remains low, and the mechanisms for student participation under Party leadership still need improvement. There has been limited engagement with the actual issues facing the community. Therefore, in the process of deepening Party building, there is a need to balance the tension between centralizing and decentralizing resources, reshape the roles of key players in the student community, and create a collaborative governance structure.

From the perspective of Party organization development, student Party branches are typically established within colleges. Strengthening Party organization construction within student communities requires innovation in Party building mechanisms and pathways. In terms of student participation, a complete organizational mechanism needs to be designed. Traditionally, student participation has mainly occurred at the college or university level, with existing organizations such as the Communist Youth League, student unions, and clubs adequately meeting students' developmental and interest needs. Given this context, "one-stop" student communities must address several challenges: identifying new needs, creating new value, attracting new talent, and providing fresh meaning to the concept of student involvement.

When it comes to staffing the communities, the challenge lies in bringing more faculty members into the "one-stop" student communities without increasing the existing staff count. On one hand, faculty, student affairs staff, and administrative personnel are often overwhelmed with their own work, and finding ways to motivate them to actively participate in community construction is crucial. On the other hand, once they are involved, policy design must ensure that faculty can allocate sufficient time daily to community tasks. Ensuring that these staff members experience personal growth, fulfillment, and success in their roles will be key to overcoming these challenges.

3.3. Individual Action Logic: The Gap between Engagement and Identity

The concept of "community" originates from the German classical sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies, who viewed it as a collective relationship characterized by shared lifestyles, common beliefs, and emotional bonds [6]. From a sociological perspective, relationships between individuals can be understood as relationships between spaces, where space is not only a physical entity but also a cultural, political, and psychological phenomenon. In this sense, the "one-stop" student community in universities functions not only as a special administrative unit but also as a community of student learning and life, encompassing physical living spaces as well as social interaction and emotional spaces.

In practice, however, the construction of "one-stop" student communities is primarily driven by educational administrative departments, with insufficient vitality and affinity in community Party organizations. Students generally exhibit low levels of autonomy, participation, and a sense of belonging, preventing the spontaneous formation of a cohesive learning and living community. Although the physical proximity of residents has been achieved, this has not translated into significant social or psychological engagement. Individual differences in cognitive psychology and action logic in social interactions limit the depth of Party building embedded within the community. As a result, students' sense of identity with the community varies and is often unsynchronized.

Contemporary university students are typically ideologically active and hold diverse values. To achieve effective Party leadership in student communities, it is crucial to address the "formalization" of grassroots Party building and enhance the attractiveness of Party activities to students. It is essential to demonstrate a unity of instrumental rationality and value rationality to make Party building resonate more deeply with the students.

4. Coupling Mechanism of Party Building Embedded in "One-Stop" Student Community Construction

The research found that grassroots Party organizations in university student communities can effectively strengthen their leadership through spatial, structural, and cognitive embedding, thereby creating a new model of Party-led student community governance. By integrating governance elements such as space, structure, and cognition, Party organizations achieve a two-way coupling between Party building and community autonomy, which empowers and enhances the efficiency of "one-stop" student community construction.

4.1. Spatial Embedding: Innovating Collaborative Governance Mechanisms

Spatial embedding refers to the organic integration of multiple governance actors within a specific spatial setting, where Party organizations lead various actors to participate substantively in grassroots governance, ensuring effective management of public affairs [7]. In terms of mechanism design, embedding Party building not only requires ensuring the physical space of the community but also creating a social space for shared governance and collaboration among diverse actors.

First, regarding the construction of physical space, it is

necessary to expand the service platforms for Party building, making room for various activities within the community. This could include setting up Party activity rooms, cultural facilities, and other multifunctional spaces, breaking away from the community's previous role as merely a residential area.

Second, in terms of building a social space, it is essential to move beyond the bureaucratic "university-school-class-individual" pathway by strengthening the strategic planning of university Party committees and enhancing the top-level design of the system. System integration provides sustainable support for student community governance by defining the rules of communication and action among diverse governance actors, reducing opportunism and behavioral uncertainty.

The "one-stop" student community governance model, as a beneficial exploration of university governance, fundamentally requires an efficient and collaborative management mechanism to succeed. Therefore, university Party committees should incorporate the construction of "one-stop" student communities into the university's overall development plan. Through Party-government joint meetings and management service coordination meetings, the leadership and coordination of "one-stop" student community construction can be effectively managed, ensuring that all governance actors within the student community work together to create a holistic educational force.

4.2. Structural Embedding: Expanding the Element Aggregation Mechanism

Structure refers to the framework chain formed by the linkage between Party organizations and the community. Structural embedding involves integrating organizations, teams, and resources into the governance system to promote the rational allocation of resources. First, grassroots Party organizations can extend their structure from the top down, playing a leading and consolidating role among various actors. Some universities have innovatively set up functional Party branches within student communities, inviting a wide range of educational forces to participate. This approach allows the Party to focus on issues such as ideological guidance, academic atmosphere building, and community governance within students' daily learning and living environments, ensuring that Party work meets governance needs accurately. Other universities have established grid-based management systems, extending Party coverage down to dormitory units, enabling them to keep up with the thoughts and concerns of students more efficiently.

Furthermore, Party organizations can promote horizontal linkage among educators through project-driven or performance-driven mechanisms, thus stimulating the self-governing vitality of the community. By leveraging the unique characteristics of different educational teams, Party organizations can create clear evaluation and incentive systems to motivate teachers to extend their educational efforts into student communities. Teachers should recognize that even the same educational work can feel different when carried out in new physical spaces, which can contribute to building more equal and open teacher-student relationships. Additionally, Party organizations should actively seek to expand internal and external resources through Party-building platforms, utilizing information technology to integrate management and service resources. This enables community governance to upgrade toward scientific early-warning systems, precise ideological guidance, and intelligent services,

transitioning resource allocation from a singular approach to a shared one.

4.3. Cognitive Embedding: Forming a Value Cohesion Mechanism

Cognition leads action. Cognitive embedding refers to how Party organizations, through their control over resources, infuse mainstream Party ideology into organizational practices, fostering members' value recognition of Party ideals [8]. According to the Ministry of Education's vision, "one-stop" student communities aim to create spaces centered on student growth, bringing students and teachers closer together and making the community an important educational site outside the classroom. To truly realize the student community's function as a learning-living community, it is crucial to activate the agency of student Party members, thus encouraging a shift from students being "bystanders" to "active participants."

On the one hand, universities should deepen their understanding of student needs to find the optimal intersection between Party-building work and community governance, enhancing the appeal of Party activities and increasing the participation of Party members and the broader student body. On the other hand, a strategy of leveraging the participation of some faculty and students to influence others is necessary. The exemplary role of student Party members should be highlighted within the community, promoting a stronger sense of identity, responsibility, and mission among them.

It's important to note that achieving the coupling of Party-building and community autonomy requires both rigid governance, characterized by institutionalization and standardization, and flexible governance, which encourages inclusivity and innovation. Cultural construction is a key manifestation of flexible governance. Efforts should be made to lead community cultural development through Party-building, using cultural activities to unite people and subtly increase students' sense of identity and belonging to the community, thereby improving the effectiveness of education.

5. Conclusion

The embedding of Party-building into "one-stop" student community construction in universities is intended to fulfill the fundamental task of cultivating virtue and talent. The key lies in reinforcing Party leadership based on understanding the action logic of diverse actors and establishing a governance mechanism that couples Party leadership with

community autonomy. In practice, the transformation of university student communities from management to governance remains a significant challenge. Reform thinking must be strengthened to reduce departmentalization, fragmentation, and formalism, while still leaving room for grassroots exploration and development.

According to the experience from university pilot programs, mechanisms such as collaborative governance, element aggregation, and value cohesion under Party leadership are crucial for the construction of "one-stop" student communities. However, further research is needed to delve deeper into issues such as how to fully tap into the strength of educational teams and how to build an endogenous mechanism for community cultural development.

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