

Research on Optimization Strategies of Private College Students' Participation in Student Community Governance from the Perspective of Synergy Theory

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Abstract

With the deepening of higher education reform, the construction of "one-stop" student communities in private colleges has become an important path to improve educational efficiency and management level. However, compared with public colleges, private colleges face more significant collaborative dilemmas in the process of students' participation in community governance. Based on the perspective of synergy theory, this paper deeply analyzes the evolution process and current situation of "one-stop" student community construction in private colleges, and focuses on revealing the existing collaborative problems: information silos between departments lead to fragmented decision-making, uneven resource allocation restricts service balance, traditional management inertia weakens students' participation efficiency, and lack of institutional guarantees affects the sustainability of participation. The root cause lies in the tension between the unique "board-led president responsibility system" in the governance structure of private colleges and the bureaucratic management model, as well as insufficient understanding of students' subject status. To this end, this paper proposes systematic optimization strategies: first, construct a "multi-subject collaborative governance" mechanism, clarify the rights, responsibilities and interests among the board of directors, administrative departments, student work teams and students, and improve the student congress system; second, build a "digital intelligent collaborative sharing platform", use information technology to break data barriers, and establish a mechanism for accurate identification of needs and dynamic allocation of resources; third, implement a "capacity-incentive" dual-drive plan, improve students' literacy and ability to participate in governance through systematic training, and build an incentive mechanism that combines material and spiritual incentives; fourth, create an "inclusive collaborative cultural ecology", strengthen community identity under the leadership of the Party building, and cultivate an open, trusting and cooperative governance atmosphere. This study aims to provide theoretical reference and practical guidance for private colleges to break through governance bottlenecks, stimulate students' main vitality, and realize the modernization of community governance[1].

Keywords: Synergy Theory, Private Colleges, One-stop Student Community, Student Participation, Governance Optimization

1. Introduction

The university student community is a core field for college students' study, life and social interaction, and its governance model is directly related to the quality of talent training and the harmony of campus ecology[2]. Since Chinese universities began to explore the "one-stop" student community model in 2004, this model has gradually evolved from providing basic accommodation services to a comprehensive platform integrating education, management, service and education functions. In 2019, the Ministry of Education launched a pilot project for the construction of a "one-stop" student community integrated management model, highlighting the four elements of "Party building leadership, team stationed, student participation, and condition guarantee". By 2022, the Ministry of Education further clarified its connotation and four basic requirements of "information support, service-oriented management, educational environment, and intelligent platform", marking that the construction of "one-stop" student communities has entered a new stage of comprehensive promotion and quality improvement[3].

However, compared with public colleges, private colleges have encountered more complex collaborative dilemmas in students' participation in governance in the process of promoting the construction of "one-stop" student communities due to differences in their school-running system, resource allocation, governance structure and student source characteristics[4]. Private colleges generally implement the board-led president responsibility system, with relatively short decision-making chains, but administrative tendencies and cost-effectiveness considerations sometimes squeeze the institutional space for student participation. At the same time, students' background of paying for their education makes them have higher expectations for service quality, but their subject status and participation rights are often ignored, leading to a mismatch between "demand and supply"[5].

Synergy Theory, founded by German physicist Hermann Haken, emphasizes that subsystems within a system can produce an overall effect of " $1+1>2$ " through non-linear interactions. This theory provides a powerful framework for analyzing the interactive relationships between multiple subjects (administrative departments, student work teams, student organizations, individual students, etc.) in private college student communities[6]. Student participation in governance is no longer simply "soliciting opinions", but through effective collaborative mechanisms, transforming students from managed objects into subjects of co-construction, co-governance and sharing, thereby achieving optimal resource allocation, accurate service supply and multiplied governance efficiency.

Therefore, based on synergy theory and focusing on private colleges as a specific type, this study systematically examines the practical dilemmas, causes and optimization paths of students' participation in governance in the construction of "one-stop" student communities, aiming to provide academic support and practical solutions for solving collaborative problems, stimulating governance vitality, and building a modern student community governance system.

2. Connotation of Synergy Theory and Its Applicability in Private College Student Community Governance

2.1 Core Connotation of Synergy Theory

Synergy theory is an emerging discipline that studies the common characteristics of different things and their synergy mechanisms. Its core essence is that when elements within an open system form good collaboration and cooperation, they can achieve evolution from disorder to order, and produce a synergistic effect where the overall function of the system is greater than the sum of the functions of its parts. This theory emphasizes the dominant role of order parameters (key parameters that determine the evolution process of the system) and the formation process of self-organization (the spontaneous formation of ordered structures within the system). In management practice, synergy means promoting different subjects to coordinate their actions for common goals through the establishment of effective rules, platforms and mechanisms, ultimately achieving resource sharing, complementary advantages and efficiency improvement.

2.2 Applicability in Private College Student Community Governance

The governance system of private college student communities can be regarded as a complex open system. It contains multiple subsystems: administrative management system (logistics, academic affairs, finance, etc.), student work system (counselors, class teachers), student autonomous system (student union, associations, floor leaders), and external support system (enterprises, families, communities). These subsystems may originally operate independently and even have conflicting goals (such as administration pursuing efficiency and students pursuing individuality), thus causing "collaborative dilemmas".

3. Current Situation and Collaborative Dilemma Analysis of Private College Students' Participation in Community Governance

Despite continuous promotion at the policy level, private colleges still face multiple collaborative dilemmas in practice of students' participation in "one-stop" community governance, mainly reflected in the following four aspects:

3.1 Structural Collaborative Dilemma: Institutional Barriers and Ambiguous Rights and Responsibilities

The centralized decision-making in the governance structure of private colleges often places student participation in governance in a position of "post-event consultation" rather than "in-process co-construction". The student congress system often becomes a formality, lacking a normalized mechanism to transform student proposals into actual policies. Various departments (such as logistics, student affairs, security) have clear responsibility boundaries but lack collaborative interfaces. When students encounter cross-departmental issues (such as dormitory network repair involving operators, logistics and network centers), they have no one to complain to or fall into the dilemma of "departmental buck-passing". This reflects the lack of a strong collaborative order parameter at the system structure level to integrate all parties.

3.2 Technical Collaborative Dilemma: Information Islands and Data Isolation

Although private colleges generally attach importance to information construction, business systems of various departments (such as academic management, dormitory management, payment systems) are often purchased independently with inconsistent standards, forming solid "data chimneys". Students' behavior data, demand data and service data cannot be shared. For example, academic early warning information fails to link with psychological counseling systems, and application for community activity venues still requires offline stamping and running around. This not only causes low management efficiency, but also makes it difficult to achieve data-based precision services and student demand insight, and the system cannot achieve efficient collaboration through information exchange.

3.3 Subjective Collaborative Dilemma: Weak Participation and Inadequate Ability

On one hand, there is a phenomenon of "uneven enthusiasm for participation" among students. Most students are busy with their studies and employment and are indifferent to public affairs; a few student leaders are overburdened and fall into "transactionalism". On the other hand, schools lack a systematic capacity training system, and students are deficient in rules of procedure, project management, communication and coordination, making it difficult for them to put forward constructive opinions or conduct effective supervision even if they participate, resulting in significantly reduced participation quality. This reflects that the "self-organization" ability of the subsystem (student subject) has not been fully activated.

3.4 Cultural Collaborative Dilemma: Lack of Trust and Weak Sense of Community

Cultural construction in private colleges often focuses on "enrollment and employment" and "campus stability", with insufficient cultivation of a community culture of "sharing, co-governance and co-construction". Management departments "distrust" students, fearing they will "cause trouble"; students "distrust" management departments, considering them "formalistic". This lack of trust leads to a fragile collaborative foundation. At the same time, students come from diverse backgrounds with high mobility, and their sense of belonging and identity to the school is generally weaker than that in public colleges, which further exacerbates the "free-rider" psychology and insufficient internal motivation to participate in community governance.

4. Optimization Strategies for Private College Students' Participation in Community Governance: From the Perspective of Synergy Theory

In response to the above dilemmas, guided by synergy theory, this paper constructs the following "four-in-one" optimization strategy system:

4.1 Improve Collaborative Governance System Design and Build a "One-core, Multi-element" Co-governance Structure

Strengthen Party building leadership and top-level design of the board of directors: Give full play to the political core role of the Party organization in private colleges, and elevate "student participation in governance" to the level of school development strategy. Establish a "Student Community Governance Committee" under the board of directors, composed of school leaders, department heads and student representatives, as the highest coordinating and decision-making body, responsible for formulating the "Charter for Student Participation in Community Governance" and clarifying the scope of participation, rights and responsibilities.

Improve institutionalized participation channels: Strengthen the student congress system and establish a closed-loop management process of "student proposals-department response-result announcement". At the community level, implement a grid-based autonomous system of "building leaders-floor leaders-dormitory leaders" and establish a "Student Affairs Joint Meeting" to allow student representatives to conduct face-to-face consultations with heads of logistics, security, academic affairs and other departments on a regular basis.

Establish a list of rights and responsibilities and process reengineering: Sort out and publicize the list of rights and responsibilities of various departments in community affairs, and simplify cross-departmental business processes. Implement the "first-question responsibility system" to eliminate prevarication.

4.2 Build a Digital Intelligent Collaborative Platform to Break Information Barriers

Construct an integrated "smart community" platform: Integrate data from academic affairs, logistics, student work, finance and other systems to create a unified APP or mini-program portal. Realize "one-click application for services, one-click information query, one-click complaint feedback", with all processes operating transparently online.

Use big data to achieve precise governance: By analyzing data such as student campus card consumption, access control and network usage, accurately identify groups of students in need, predict peak demand for community

services, and realize intelligent push and dynamic allocation of resources (such as automatically sending safety reminders to students returning late, and pushing academic assistance information to students with learning difficulties).

Establish a digital evaluation and feedback mechanism: After each service is completed, the system automatically invites students to evaluate, and the data is collected and analyzed in real time, which is used as a basis for department assessment and service improvement, forming a digital closed loop of "demand-supply-feedback-optimization".

4.3 Implement "Empowerment-Incentive" Dual Drive to Activate Students' Subject Potential

Build a systematic training system: Offer courses and workshops such as "Student Leadership Training Camp" and "Community Governance Practice", with training content including project management, financial management, communication skills, policy analysis, etc., to comprehensively improve students' participation ability.

Design scientific incentive mechanisms: Incorporate students' performance in participating in governance into the comprehensive quality evaluation system, linking it with awards, evaluations and recommendation for Party membership. Establish honors such as "Community Governance Star" and "Golden Idea Award", and explore incentive models that combine material and spiritual incentives such as "time bank" and "volunteer service points".

Give play to the peer leading role of student leaders: Support and guide student autonomous organizations to carry out activities in accordance with laws and regulations, encourage them to undertake some community service projects (such as study room management, cultural and sports activity planning), exercise their abilities in practice, and form a demonstration effect.

4.4 Cultivate Collaborative Culture and Create a Community Spirit

Strengthen value guidance and community identity: Through activities such as the first lesson of the new semester, community cultural festivals, and dormitory decoration competitions, publicize the concept of "my community, my responsibility" and enhance students' sense of belonging and ownership to the community.

Promote an open and transparent communication culture: Regularly hold "Principal's Luncheon" and "Department Open Day" to establish a regular communication mechanism between management and students. Use public accounts and bulletin boards to timely disclose the decision-making process and results of major community issues to win students' trust.

Create an inclusive and trusting governance atmosphere: Encourage trial and error and innovation, and give patient guidance rather than simple rejection to immature suggestions put forward by students. Recognize active participants, disseminate successful cases, and make collaborative governance a new campus trend.

5. Conclusion and Outlook

In the context of educational modernization and improved governance capacity, promoting students' in-depth participation in "one-stop" student community governance is not only an external need for private colleges to respond to policy requirements and improve service quality, but also an internal pursuit to stimulate endogenous motivation and build a characteristic education model. Synergy theory provides us with a scientific perspective and methodology to solve the current collaborative dilemmas faced by private colleges.

The optimization strategy system proposed in this paper aims to make systematic efforts from four dimensions: system, technology, subject and culture, promoting a profound transformation of private college student community governance from "single management" to "multi-subject collaboration", from "passive response" to "active participation", and from "experience-driven" to "data-driven". However, the effective implementation of these strategies still requires sponsors and managers of private colleges to practically change their concepts, truly regard students as equal governance partners, and continuously invest resources. Future research can further explore: how private colleges of different sizes and development stages choose differentiated implementation paths? How to build a scientific evaluation index system for students' participation in governance effectiveness? And while digital technology empowers students, how to avoid data ethical risks? Exploration of these issues will jointly promote the deepening and maturation of private college student community governance practice.

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