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From Management to Empowerment: Understanding the "One-Stop" Student Community as a New Paradigm of Chinese Higher-Education Governance

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Abstract: As a distinctively Chinese innovation in higher-education governance, the "one-stop" student community has evolved from a pilot reform into a nationwide model that reorganizes how universities educate, serve, and support students outside the classroom. This article provides a systematic introduction to the connotation, policy evolution, functional architecture, and practical mechanisms of the "one-stop" student community. It traces the model back to the "Fengqiao Experience" of grassroots social governance, clarifies its positioning as a frontier position for Party building, a practice field for "three-wide education", a base for smart services, and a model highland for campus safety, and analyzes its core operating logic of integrated leadership, grid-based management, refined services, and information-based support. In particular, this article elaborates on the foundational role of the dormitory-head - floor-head - building-head three-tier grid self-governance in community governance, and on the supportive contribution of police presence in communities, represented by the "school-police station", to safe campus construction. Drawing on nationwide cases, the article further discusses the current achievements, prominent dilemmas, and optimization paths of community construction, aiming to offer a clear and comprehensive reference for researchers and practitioners engaged in university student work and campus governance.

Keywords: One-stop student community, Fengqiao Experience, Higher-education governance, Three-wide education, Dormitory-head self-governance, School-police station, Student development.

1. Introduction

In the context of large-class cultivation, the credit system, and college-system reform, the traditional class-based model of student management is increasingly unable to meet the needs of contemporary students. The "different courses for the same class" and "different classes for the same course" phenomena have become the norm, and the student community has gradually replaced the classroom as the most frequent and stable place for student interaction and exchange [1]. Against this background, the Ministry of Education launched the pilot construction of a comprehensive management model for "one-stop" student communities in 2019, aiming to shift the forces and resources of education down into students daily life and to transform the student community from a single living space into an integrated educational space that combines ideological guidance, teacher-student communication, cultural activities, and life services [2].

The "one-stop" student community is not a simple improvement of dormitory management, but a profound reform of the governance model of Chinese universities. It is rooted in the fundamental task of fostering virtue and cultivating talent, embodies the concept of "three-wide education" (all-member, whole-process, and all-around education), and draws on the governance wisdom of the "Fengqiao Experience" in grassroots social governance. Understanding its connotation, mechanisms, and development paths is of great theoretical and practical significance for advancing the modernization of higher-education governance in China [3].

2. The Connotation and Functional Architecture of the "One-Stop" Student Community

2.1. Definition and Essential Attributes

The term "one-stop" is translated from the English word "one-stop", which carries the meaning of integration, comprehensiveness, concentration, and all-round coverage [4]. A "one-stop" student community is an educational living community that takes the space and field where students learn, live, and interact as its carrier, aims at serving students growth and development outside the classroom, and uses shared values as its bond. Unlike an ordinary residential community, it highlights its educational attribute: it is not only a place for learning and living, but also a comprehensive platform capable of solving problems, providing services, promoting communication, and facilitating harmonious development.

The essential feature of the "one-stop" student community is the integration of educational functions. It integrates the leadership force, management force, ideological and political force, and service force of the university into one physical and organizational space, so that students can obtain ideological guidance, academic support, psychological counseling, and life services "on the spot" and "around them". This design aims to solve the long-standing problem of fragmented student services, where students had to shuttle among different offices and departments for different affairs.

2.2. Four Core Functions

First, it serves as a frontier position for Party building. Following the principle that "wherever students are and wherever Party members are, the Party work of the university

reaches there", universities establish Party organizations within communities, such as building-level Party branches, floor-level Party groups, and dormitory-level Party member posts, forming an organizational chain that extends to the smallest unit of student life [5]. Second, it functions as a practice field for "three-wide education". Counselors, professional teachers, administrative staff, and psychological consultants station themselves in the community, providing whole-process companionship and all-round guidance to students.

Third, it operates as a base for smart services. By deploying digital infrastructure, universities integrate student affairs into unified online and offline platforms, so that a wide range of matters can be handled efficiently within the community. Fourth, it acts as a model highland for campus safety, establishing grid-based daily management and rapid emergency-response mechanisms to keep campus stable and secure. These four functions together define the "one-stop" community as a multi-dimensional educational ecosystem rather than a mere living facility.

3. Policy Evolution and the "Fengqiao Experience" as Its Theoretical Source

3.1. From Pilot to Nationwide Promotion

The construction of "one-stop" student communities has progressed through a clear trajectory of policy evolution. In October 2019, the Ministry of Education officially launched the pilot work for the comprehensive management model. In the following years, the pilot was gradually expanded, and by 2023 the model had been promoted across the country [6]. The 2023 Work Priorities of the Ideological and Political Work Department of the Ministry of Education further proposed to "comprehensively advance the construction of one-stop student communities" and to "create a new-era university version of the Fengqiao Experience", marking the elevation of this reform from a management initiative to a strategic task of higher-education governance.

By 2022, more than 1,400 universities had established 21,000 Party organizations and nearly 100,000 League organizations within student communities, realizing the basic coverage of Party and League organizations at the grassroots level of student life [7]. Statistics also show that tens of thousands of full-time and part-time counselors, psychological educators, and service staff now work or reside in student communities, forming a continuous and stable force of education around students.

3.2. The Theoretical Connotation of the "Fengqiao Experience"

The "Fengqiao Experience" originated in Fengqiao Town, Zhuji, Zhejiang Province in the 1960s, with the core essence of "mobilizing and relying on the masses, resolving conflicts locally without escalating them to higher authorities". After more than sixty years of development, it has become a model of grassroots social governance in China, and its new-era connotation has been summarized into five "adherences": adherence to Party-building leadership, adherence to the principal position of the people, adherence to the integration of autonomy, rule of law, and rule of virtue, adherence to the joint efforts of prevention and control, and adherence to co-construction and sharing [8].

The "Fengqiao Experience" is highly compatible with the philosophy of the "one-stop" student community: both emphasize resolving problems at the grassroots level, providing services around people, and covering education at all times. The "one-stop" student community is therefore regarded as the in-depth development of the "Fengqiao Experience" in the field of higher education, and an important institutional innovation for universities to strengthen Party building and dispute resolution in the new situation [9].

4. The Operating Logic and Practice Mechanisms

4.1. Integrated Leadership and Grid-Based Management

The operation of the "one-stop" community follows a dual logic of "integrated leadership" and "grid-based management". On the one hand, universities integrate multiple forces, including school and department leaders, Party and administrative staff, professional teachers, counselors, and psychological consultants, into the community through mechanisms such as the "first-line rule", so that educational forces regularly sink into students daily life [10]. On the other hand, communities are divided into grids at the levels of building, floor, and dormitory, with grid leaders and student volunteers serving as "nerves" of governance, enabling the timely discovery and resolution of problems.

4.2. Dormitory-Head Self-Governance: The "Nerve Endings" of Grid Governance

Within the grid-based management system, the dormitory-head - floor-head - building-head "three-tier grid" constitutes the basic skeleton of student self-governance, and is the most direct embodiment of the mass-line spirit of the "Fengqiao Experience" in student communities. The dormitory head, situated at the very end of the governance chain, is entrusted with the "three duties" of information reporter, safety inspector, and mediator: dynamically keeping track of roommates physical and mental conditions and reporting anomalies in time, regularly organizing dormitory cleaning and safety self-inspections, and proactively intervening to resolve interpersonal frictions within the dormitory, so that every dormitory becomes the "smallest unit" of community stability [11]. The floor head serves as the "management link", responsible for floor-level safety patrols, information aggregation, and preliminary dispute mediation; the building head acts as the "coordinating hub", coordinating building affairs and organizing cultural activities, so as to realize "minor issues resolved within the floor, major issues resolved within the building" [12].

This vertical chain of autonomy, in which "the dormitory head grasps information, the floor head grasps coordination, and the building head grasps overall planning", not only significantly reduces the human-resource cost of community management, but more importantly transforms students from "the managed" into "participants in governance", cultivating their organizational coordination and emergency-response abilities through serving fellow students. Empirical experience shows that a sound dormitory-head team can effectively improve the timeliness of problem discovery and the on-the-spot resolution of conflicts, serving as a key lever for opening up the "last mile" of community governance.

4.3. Police Presence in Communities: Safeguarding the Bottom Line of Safety through "School-Police Stations"

The principle of "no conflicts handed over to higher authorities and no safety incidents" emphasized by the "Fengqiao Experience" requires the collaborative support of professional public-security forces in the university context. In recent years, an increasing number of universities have joined with local public-security agencies to build standardized school-police co-governance police offices — "school-police stations" — within student communities, introducing police officers on regular campus duty and establishing a "school - police - community" network of mass prevention and mass governance [13]. The station integrates a service hall, a mediation room, and an education area, handling more than one hundred "cloud-assisted" services such as household registration, vehicle and driving license matters, and criminal-record inquiries so that teachers and students can "avoid unnecessary trips", while also functioning as a "forward post" for risk early warning by keenly detecting campus safety hazards through daily reception and online platforms, so as to achieve early discovery, early intervention, and early resolution.

In terms of conflict resolution, the "school-police station" innovates a mediation model integrating "law, reason, and emotion": police officers clarify legal boundaries, counselors interpret campus rules and disciplines, and student police volunteers patiently persuade as peers, forming a rapid-response mechanism in which "police - security - counselors - dormitory heads" arrive simultaneously and handle public-security incidents such as telecom fraud and campus conflicts "immediately upon report" [14]. In terms of safety education, stationed police officers offer an interactive "public-security second classroom", conducting case discussions and anti-fraud education around key nodes such as orientation-season fraud prevention, employment traps at graduation, and cybersecurity. In addition, many localities connect key-area surveillance to the public-security smart system to build a "3-minute emergency response circle". The presence of police in communities realizes the transformation of campus governance from "passive response" to "proactive service", and is a vivid practice of the professional and law-based expression of the "Fengqiao Experience" in safe-campus construction.

4.4. Refined Services and Information-Based Support

Another distinctive feature of the model is its pursuit of precision and intelligence. Many universities have established "one-stop" service centers that concentrate scattered services into a single hall or platform, covering matters such as academic affairs, financial aid, psychological counseling, and campus-card services [15]. With the support of big data, artificial intelligence, and the Internet of Things, universities build digital portraits of students, identify potential risks in advance, and shift from passive "people looking for services" to proactive "services looking for people". This smart-governance approach significantly improves the efficiency and precision of student services.

4.5. Student Autonomy and Co-Governance

Drawing on the mass-line spirit of the "Fengqiao Experience", the "one-stop" community emphasizes student autonomy and participatory governance. Student self-governing organizations, peer psychological support teams, and volunteer service groups are cultivated within the community, and students are encouraged to participate in the formulation of community rules, the planning of activities, and the mediation of conflicts. This "participatory governance" not only relieves students anxiety but also cultivates their sense of ownership and self-management ability, forming a benign ecosystem of self-regulation and self-repair [16].

5. Achievements, Dilemmas, and Optimization Paths

5.1. Notable Achievements

Through years of practice, the "one-stop" student community has achieved remarkable results. It has become an important front for advancing the high-quality development of universities and a useful exploration that highlights the fundamental attributes and unique advantages of socialist universities with Chinese characteristics [17]. Nationwide, a large number of characteristic cases have emerged: Northeast University stationing counselors in communities for weekly dormitory reading clubs; Xi an Jiaotong University inviting professors into communities to guide academic development and career planning; Huazhong University of Science and Technology building a "one-stop" service center handling hundreds of thousands of matters with a satisfaction rate close to 100%; Guizhou University organizing a peer-support team of over 6,700 floor heads and dormitory heads to participate in building management; and Wuhan Donghu University building a "school-police station" in cooperation with local public security, with five police officers stationed across two campuses to create a 3-minute emergency response circle. These cases demonstrate the strong vitality and adaptability of the model.

5.2. Prominent Dilemmas

However, the construction still faces several dilemmas. The first is the structural dislocation of resource input, with an imbalance between hardware and software: communities tend to prioritize the improvement of living facilities while investing insufficiently in cultural atmosphere and organizational support, which are the most effective ways to relieve students psychological pressure [18]. The second is the professional dislocation of educational content, as generic service models fail to address the specific needs of different student groups, such as medical students facing unique occupational and ethical pressures. The third is the "suspension" of governance mechanisms, where organizational tentacles do not genuinely penetrate into students spiritual world, leaving explicit management disconnected from implicit education. In addition, the dormitory-head team suffers from the phenomenon of "selection without training and appointment without activation", and school-police stations are prone to the tendency of "emphasizing unveiling while neglecting operation", which constrain the practical effectiveness of grassroots self-governance and school-police collaboration.

5.3. Optimization Paths

To address these dilemmas, universities should further optimize the community along several paths. Culturally, they should shift from rigid management to flexible cultural

infiltration, building communities into emotional communities with a sense of belonging. Organizationally, they should deepen the "core-grid" collaboration of Party-building leadership and student autonomy, and improve the selection, training, and incentive mechanisms for dormitory heads so as to activate the governance nerves at the grassroots level. In terms of collaboration, they should ensure the regularized operation of school-police stations, promoting the forward deployment of police services and joint dispute mediation. Technologically, they should strengthen data-driven precise services, matching limited resources to the psychological and developmental fields where students need them most. And at the source, they should establish prevention-oriented crisis-intervention mechanisms to resolve problems before they escalate.

6. Conclusion

The "one-stop" student community represents a distinctly Chinese answer to the question of how universities can educate, serve, and support students in the era of mass higher education. Rooted in the fundamental task of fostering virtue and cultivating talent and enriched by the governance wisdom of the "Fengqiao Experience", it transforms the student community from a disciplinary space into a life harbor, and from a site of management into a field of empowerment. The dormitory-head self-governance grid extends the tentacles of governance to the very end of student life, while the school-police station brings professional public-security forces down to the frontier of campus safety; together they constitute a governance landscape in which "autonomy" and "co-governance" complement each other. As the construction enters the deep-water zone of quality improvement, universities need to keep closely following students actual needs, strengthening cultural infiltration and organizational collaboration, consolidating grassroots self-governance and school-police linkage, and promoting resource sinking and precise empowerment. Only in this way can the "one-stop" student community truly realize its promise of resolving problems at the grassroots, providing services around students, and delivering warmth to the heart, and thus contribute an innovative paradigm of education and governance with Chinese characteristics to the cultivation of a new generation of young people.

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