

Research on the Integration of Organizational Culture Construction and Ideological-Political Education in Universities under the Background of Multi-Campus Operations in Dual Cities

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Abstract: University organizational culture plays a vital role in fostering a sense of belonging among students and faculty, as well as in cultivating correct values, outlooks on life, and worldviews. In China, many universities adopt dual-city, multi-campus operations and have also experienced campus mergers. However, the establishment of new campuses often faces challenges in inheriting organizational culture and integrating ideological-political education. Against this backdrop, this study explores the construction of campus organizational culture and its integration with ideological-political education in the context of dual-city, multi-campus universities. Furthermore, it proposes practical strategies to address existing difficulties, such as creating distinctive campus cultures, emphasizing the cultivation of spiritual civilization, and enhancing the sense of identity among students, faculty, and staff.

Keywords: Multi-Campus Operations; Campus Organizational Culture; Ideological-Political Education.

1. Introduction

Since the 1990s, Chinese universities have undergone multiple reforms, with nationwide efforts to promote the establishment of comprehensive universities and to advance the development of the multi-campus model. Meanwhile, a wave of university mergers emerged across China. The rise of “mega-universities” has also become a global trend in higher education. In Europe and the United States, large-scale, cross-regional universities had already been established, making multi-campus operations an important model in global higher education. At present, it is common in China for a single university to operate multiple campuses, with some even extending across different cities.

The multi-city, multi-campus model has brought significant infrastructural benefits to universities, yet it has also led to dispersed resources, increased management difficulties, and higher operational costs [1]. Moreover, the decentralization of authority across multiple campuses, often resulting in a “multi-centered” structure, distinguishes it significantly from single-campus operations [2]. At this stage, the development of multi-campus universities in China generally falls into two categories: merger- and reorganization-based expansion, and self-expansion-based growth [3]. While this model provides new opportunities for institutional development, it also presents new challenges for the formation and evolution of campus culture. University organizational culture has a profound impact on relationships between faculty and students [4]. It not only serves as the foundation for strengthening interpersonal relations within the university but also plays an important role in shaping the outcomes of ideological-political education.

2. The Practical Context of Integrating Organizational Culture and Ideological-Political Education under the Dual-City, Multi-Campus Model

2.1. The Cohesiveness of Campus Organizational Culture

Organizational culture refers to the system of values, beliefs, and norms that are gradually accumulated and shaped through the interactions of members during the long-term development of an institution. In the context of multi-campus universities, while each sub-campus is not entirely independent from the whole, it still retains a certain degree of autonomy. The effectiveness of organizational culture in this environment is not a simple summation of individual campuses. Rather, it depends on its ability to foster faculty–student relationships, cultivate campus identity, and ensure the implementation of ideological-political education, thereby promoting alignment in shared values and developmental direction.

When effectively integrated, campus culture and ideological-political education can generate a “1 + 1 > 2” effect. Conversely, fragmentation weakens cohesion. In this regard, organizational culture serves as a unifying and centripetal force. Through its unique spiritual and cultural atmosphere, it enables members across campuses to converge toward shared goals in values, beliefs, and behavior, thus strengthening their sense of belonging and honor. For newly built or expanded campuses, cultural homogeneity helps bridge psychological gaps between members of different campuses, thereby facilitating institutional and managerial integration. In merger- and reorganization-based universities, a unified organizational culture plays a crucial role in

cultivating organizational identification, establishing shared developmental goals, and consolidating the collective thoughts, behaviors, and will of faculty and students across all campuses.

2.2. The Importance of Campus Organizational Culture

Organizational culture is a defining feature that distinguishes one university from another, and its role in institutional governance is becoming increasingly prominent. It encompasses spiritual culture, institutional culture, behavioral culture, and material culture. Together, these components serve functions of cultivation, guidance, regulation, cohesion, dissemination, motivation, and innovation. Compared with single-campus institutions, universities with multi-campus structures operate on larger scales, with broader spatial distributions, thereby extending the scope and influence of organizational culture. Its radiating effect has become increasingly significant [5].

At the same time, cultural construction plays a vital role in strengthening disciplinary foundations [6]. In the digital era, modes and characteristics of communication within universities have undergone profound transformations. Cultural construction now supports not only the overall campus atmosphere and disciplinary development but also contributes to an interwoven, multi-layered structure of “spiritual culture—behavioral culture—institutional culture—environmental culture.” Among these, spiritual culture serves as the core, emphasizing value guidance and moral education. Behavioral culture manifests in daily teaching, research, and communication, directly reflecting spiritual culture. Institutional culture ensures effective organizational functioning through rules and incentive mechanisms. Finally, environmental culture shapes member behavior through its tangible settings and broader atmosphere.

2.3. Integration of Campus Organizational Culture and Ideological-Political Education

Within the dual-city, multi-campus structure, ideological-political education requires not only institutional guarantees and curricular implementation but also deeper internalization through the medium of organizational culture. Ideological-political education involves multiple stakeholders—including society, universities, and government—yet its core focus lies in educating students and teachers. Throughout the development of higher education, ideological-political education and campus organizational culture have long been inseparable.

This process demands careful consideration of diverse stakeholder interests as well as the costs of human, material, and financial investment. A key outcome is the cultivation of emotional identification, which establishes strong goal-oriented connections among campus members. Emotional identification provides a secure and positive sense of belonging: for example, teachers seek recognition from students and society, while students pursue acknowledgment from teachers and parents. This reciprocal recognition fosters new forms of teacher–student relationships in the new era and highlights the importance of pursuing connotative development. In particular, under the multi-campus model, ideological-political education must serve as a “bridge,” dissolving psychological barriers between campuses through

shared cultural identity and common values. This not only reinforces collective organizational identification but also injects sustained value-driven momentum into the overall development of the university.

3. Major Obstacles in the Construction of Organizational Culture under the Dual-City, Multi-Campus Model

3.1. Weakening of Campus Spirit Transmission

In the multi-campus model, universities often overemphasize the improvement of physical infrastructure and the redistribution of resources, while neglecting the continuation and cultivation of spiritual culture [7–9]. For universities, cultural inheritance, integration, optimization, and innovation constitute the ultimate expression of substantive institutional integration and serve as its most solid foundation [10–12]. Without such continuity of spirit, psychological distance between campuses is likely to emerge, diminishing faculty and student identification and sense of belonging, thereby weakening the overall cohesion of the institution.

To address this, universities must embed ideological-political education deeply into cultural construction by leveraging approaches such as curriculum-based ideological instruction, thematic education, cultural activities, and role-model guidance. These efforts should transform the core socialist values into a shared framework of cognition and value orientation across campuses. At the same time, attention must be paid to the digital context: as students’ lifestyles have been reshaped by accelerated rhythms and extensive online immersion, the complexity of external influences has been amplified in multi-campus settings. This makes the inheritance, sharing, and innovation of campus culture across different locations even more challenging.

3.2. Implicit Interference from Small-Group Mentalities

Small-group mentality essentially represents a form of collective consciousness, often emerging from the instinct for self-protection or competition over interests [13]. Characterized by loosely organized psychological traits, it is present to varying degrees in all organizations and, within universities, constitutes part of subcultures such as departmental culture, disciplinary culture, class culture, and dormitory culture. While moderate group consciousness can, in some cases, facilitate rapid problem-solving, it may also create complications when entangled with kinship, friendship, geographic ties, or hierarchical relationships. Such entanglements weave a complex network of interests.

Although small-group mentalities often remain hidden, they tend to surface in areas such as institutional design, resource allocation, and benefit distribution, undermining or distorting the execution of policies. This not only harms the collective interests of students but also detracts from the broader developmental direction of the university. In the construction of campus organizational culture, the influence of these small groups cannot be ignored. Identifying their underlying interest relations is essential, since these groups are ultimately bound by shared benefits—once those are broken, the group dissolves.

During campus cultural construction, particularly in processes involving student evaluation, awards, and

recognition, mechanisms for fair and transparent distribution and oversight must be strengthened. This ensures equity, aligns organizational culture with value education, and guarantees the effective implementation of institutional policies.

3.3. Tensions between Management Mechanisms and the Integration of Ideological-Political Education

The state has been promoting the high-quality development of ideological-political education in the new era. However, in multi-campus universities, the wide spatial distribution and complex administrative hierarchies often lead to a multi-centered operation of power. As a result, different campuses may exhibit inconsistencies or even conflicts in institutional implementation and resource utilization, thereby constraining the integration of organizational culture.

Relying solely on institutional constraints often fails to address the ideological foundations of faculty and students, which may lead to “external compliance but internal resistance.” To resolve this tension, ideological-political education must be embedded into management culture, using shared values to mitigate institutional conflict. Specifically, this involves prioritizing value orientation and stakeholder participation during institutional design, while in the implementation process strengthening responsibility and a sense of the bigger picture through ideological-political education. In this way, the “rigidity of systems” and the “flexibility of culture” can complement each other, ultimately achieving organizational unity and stability.

4. Recommendations

4.1. Embedding Core Values and Strengthening the Leadership of Spiritual Culture

The construction of campus culture in universities should be guided by the core socialist value system, ensuring that value orientation is embedded throughout the entire process of cultural formation. Core socialist values should be integrated into the daily teaching and training systems of all campuses, supported by systematic learning plans.

In practice, universities can organize regular thematic lectures and seminars to enhance ideological-political education. They can also arrange exchange activities where faculty and students share insights and reflections, encouraging intellectual dialogue and deeper recognition of core values. Teachers, for their part, should innovate in moral education methods and enrich content, enhancing its appeal and impact, thereby improving the effectiveness of holistic education and guiding young students to establish correct worldviews, outlooks on life, and values.

During implementation, it is essential to acknowledge and appropriately respond to the interests of individuals or small groups, using proper guidance and educational approaches to foster a healthier spiritual culture. This ensures deeper development of campus culture, with environmental, institutional, and behavioral dimensions evolving in parallel with spiritual culture. By reinforcing the central role of spiritual culture, cultural activities can be directed toward deeper reflection, particularly in multi-campus universities. Within this context, ideological-political education should actively integrate into campus culture, subtly transforming

core socialist values into students’ intrinsic beliefs, thereby achieving resonance between spiritual culture and ideological-political education.

4.2. Building Distinctive Campus Cultures to Strengthen Faculty–Student Identification

In dual-city, multi-campus universities, each campus retains its unique cultural characteristics while belonging to the same institutional whole. The construction of campus culture is not a process of cultural homogenization but one of innovation and integration. New campuses should draw upon the experiences of established ones, while also cultivating their own distinctive features to enhance members’ sense of belonging and identification.

Universities can regularly organize inter-campus cultural exchange activities—such as exhibitions, academic lectures, and artistic performances—to foster mutual understanding and learning among faculty and students. At the same time, ideological-political education should be leveraged to align the spiritual culture of each campus with the core socialist values. In this way, distinctive cultural features serve not only as symbolic markers of individual campuses but also as important carriers of shared value identity. Ultimately, this allows for integration within difference and cohesion within diversity, generating collective synergy across all campuses.

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