Exploring the Construction of University Campus Culture in the Multi-Campus Educational Setting

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Abstract: The establishment of new campuses has expanded the educational space, while bringing about integration and connection issues in campus culture across different campuses, questioning the homogeneity of university campuses. The main issue facing the construction of campus culture in a multi-campus setting is how to address the coordination of cultural integration among multiple campuses to achieve uniform quality across campuses. Inheritance serves as the foundation of campus culture construction in a multi-campus setting, connection acts as the path, and innovation points the direction. Strategies such as cultural edification, value shaping, cultural exchange, and social interaction can be adopted to promote campus culture construction.

Keywords: multi-campus; university campus culture; connection; integration

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of multi-campus operation is common in the development of universities. The establishment of new campuses expands the educational space, enhances the scale of universities, and creates opportunities for universities' outward development. While pursuing external expansion, universities should also focus on internal enhancement. The establishment of new campuses may be due to university mergers or the construction of new campuses. Regardless of the reasons, it brings about numerous connection issues among campuses. One prominent issue affecting the internal enhancement of universities is the integration, connection, and campus culture construction of various campuses, especially in new campuses. New campuses are typically established in environments relatively lacking in cultural heritage. Excellent campus culture is precisely what new campuses lack and urgently need, notably manifested in the scarcity of campus culture and the asymmetry with the campus culture of older campuses. How new campuses inherit the educational spirit of older campuses, carry forward the campus cultural traditions of older campuses, further enhance the taste of campus culture, and build and create a campus culture with distinctive characteristics has become an important issue worth exploring in the current development of higher education. It is also a significant subject for research in the practical process of multi-campus operation in universities.

2. Analysis of the Necessity of Campus Culture Construction

2.1 The Connotation and Extension of Campus Culture

Both the academic and practical realms have conducted numerous in-depth studies and discussions on campus culture. It is generally believed that campus culture can be broadly categorized into two realms. In a broad sense, campus culture encompasses the lifestyle of higher education institutions, primarily involving university students, faculty, and staff living on campus. It represents a distinct cultural type characterized by material wealth, intellectual products, atmosphere, and modes of activities. This includes four aspects: intellectual culture, material culture, normative culture, and spiritual culture. On the other hand, within a narrow context, campus culture refers to the cultural temperament and spiritual atmosphere accumulated by a school in its development process. It reflects the overall spiritual outlook and characteristics of a university, as well as the thought patterns and value orientations of individuals within the campus community.[1]

This paper posits that campus culture can be divided into two major categories: software and hardware. In terms of software, it mainly refers to the spiritual and institutional inheritance of universities. This includes the historical traditions of the campus, commonly accepted cultural concepts, values, and lifestyle ideologies by all faculty, students, and staff, forming the essence, personality, and spiritual outlook of a school. Examples include the school spirit, teaching style, academic atmosphere, school motto, interpersonal relationships, collective opinions, psychological atmosphere, school regulations, and the informal behavioral norms formed by members during interactions. On the other hand, in terms of hardware, it encompasses the physical manifestations of the campus such as architectural design, campus landscapes, beautification, and

greening efforts — essentially the material embodiments of the spirit.

2.2 The Role of Campus Culture Construction in Multi-Campus Operations
2.2.1 Role of Cohesion
In the context of operating multiple campuses, although each campus cannot exist in isolation from the whole, they are relatively independent. The effective functioning of the system as a whole is not simply the sum of the functions of each subsystem. If all campuses within a multi-campus university, as well as the faculty, students, and staff at each campus, have a shared vision and work together towards a common goal, it will inevitably lead to a synergistic effect where "1 + 1 > 2"; otherwise, they will weaken each other. This underscores the need for campus culture, developed through long historical accumulation and deep cultural heritage, to exert its unique cohesive and centripetal force. Through distinct spiritual activities and cultural ambiance, campus culture can align individuals towards common goals and directions in terms of thoughts, values, and behaviors, thus unifying the diverse campuses within the same value system and strengthening the sense of belonging and pride among faculty and students.[2] For newly established or expanded multi-campus universities, the cultural "homogeneity" makes it easier for faculty and students from new and old campuses to bridge psychological distances, facilitating the integration and development of institutional and management cultures. For multi-campus universities resulting from mergers or reorganizations, a unified campus culture fosters organizational identity among faculty and students at each campus, establishes common organizational development goals, and consolidates the thoughts, behaviors, and will of all faculty and students across multiple campuses, playing an essential role that cannot be overlooked.

2.2.2 Role of Balancing Relationships
All things in the world develop through the unity of opposites. Whether it is the merger or expansion of universities, the existing personnel order and organizational structure face re-adjustment, the management patterns and various systems need reconstruction, and the existing distribution patterns and relationships must be rebalanced. Faculty and students also need to readjust their mindsets. From the perspective of management culture, in a multi-campus university setting, it is essential to integrate the values and behaviors among the various campuses, balance various interests, and coordinate different relationships.[2] The construction of campus culture in a multi-campus university aims to enhance or improve beneficial values within the institution, establishing a common cultural foundation and providing faculty and staff with a fundamental guideline for thinking and acting, thereby creating a shared cultural driving force. Only in this way can a stable campus atmosphere be cultivated across material, institutional, and spiritual aspects, laying a solid foundation for the university's deepening reforms and sustained development. Simultaneously, the new organizational structures, management patterns, regulations, and cultural atmospheres resulting from the integration and optimization of campus culture can effectively constrain the psychological and behavioral deviations of faculty, students, and staff from the university's strategic positioning and development goals, thus creating greater space for the university's development.

2.2.3 Role of Radiating Enhancement
A university's campus culture reflects the educational philosophy and spirit of the institution, showcasing its cultural temperament and intellectual content, serving as the core force that supports the continuous development and growth of a university. To achieve the ultimate goal of growth and strength, it is essential to create a humanistic atmosphere, academic atmosphere, environmental atmosphere, and cultural atmosphere conducive to the development of faculty, students, and staff. This involves effectively coordinating and utilizing the advantageous resources of each campus, leveraging each campus's management and cultural characteristics in accordance with local conditions, and synergistically competing, complementing strengths and weaknesses, engaging in exchanges and collisions. The core ideals of the university should be passed down consistently, with excellent campus cultural brands continuously promoted, and the academic ecosystem of shared cultural resources continually improved. This adaptation should include updating perspectives in response to external environmental changes, enriching the form and content of campus culture on its existing foundation, while also aligning with new development goals and orientations. New highlights of campus culture should be nurtured, new campus cultural brands created, and the university's campus cultural spirit should serve as a guiding principle for faculty, students, and staff, driving the school's development with powerful momentum. This enhancement of campus culture's radiating effect, elevation of its spiritual level, and ensuring vitality will help multi-campus universities maintain vitality in intense competition.

3. Analysis of the Dilemmas in Campus Culture Construction in Multi-Campus Settings

During the initial stages of a new campus's establishment, the campus culture foundation is relatively lacking, with more emphasis on transplanting values, educational philosophies, and regulations from older campuses. As the new campus

matures and develops, the one-way transplant effect from the older campuses diminishes, while the interactive effects among multiple campuses gradually strengthen. However, the uniqueness of campus culture does not imply its closure as a system; its development process is inevitably influenced by the cultural atmosphere of the surrounding community. The campus culture of a new campus particularly reflects distinct community characteristics. When immersed in the new campus environment, at times, it may be challenging to perceive its belongingness to the same university as the older campuses, leading to questioning the homogeneity of the university's campus areas.

3.1 Factors Influencing the Homogeneity of Campus Culture Construction in Multi-Campus Universities

3.1.1 Cultural Discontinuity Caused by Physical Distances Between Campuses

Most new campuses are constructed in suburban areas or spacious locations such as newly developed city zones, often quite distant from the older campuses located near city centers. In the planning and construction of new campuses, the focus tends to prioritize teaching facilities and student dormitories, while faculty research spaces and staff accommodations may be considered in later phases or even overlooked. Even if there are accommodations for faculty, it is rare for teachers to reside on campus. Teachers who commute to the new campus for classes are often busy catching the campus shuttle immediately after class, limiting opportunities for interactions with students. This shortens the time teachers and students spend together, primarily within the confines of the classroom. Consequently, it becomes challenging for students to perceive the campus culture of the institution through the charisma and cultural depth of their teachers, leading to noticeable emotional and ideological gaps between teachers and students.[3] Interactions among students from different departments are hindered, making it difficult to facilitate extensive cross-grade and cross-discipline interactions, which in turn impacts the transmission of campus culture and spirit. This limitation also hampers the integration and promotion of mutual understanding between different disciplines and hinders innovation within the campus culture.

3.1.2 Insufficient Cultural Accumulation in New Campuses

Due to their short establishment history, new campuses lack historical buildings and symbols that embody the spirit of campus culture, such as in the form of historic structures or landmarks that carry symbolic significance from bygone eras. They are unable to capture the tangible material culture of the campus that holds historical weight, as seen in older campuses. This absence is perhaps the most significant deficiency in the campus culture of new campuses. The impact of campus culture on students at new campuses gradually develops through comprehensive interactions. However, many crucial interactions are relatively scarce compared to established campuses, which in turn affects the transmission of the profound cultural heritage within campus culture to students in new campuses.

3.1.3 Limited Influence of Community Culture on New Campuses

Although university faculty and students residing within communities possess distinctive characteristics in terms of communication styles, lifestyle habits, and professional pursuits, they are influenced by the cultural ambiance of their surroundings, absorbing the essence and temperament of the community. Their behaviors and ideologies are inevitably subject to varying degrees of change due to the influence of the community, with this transformation stemming from a mix of subjective choices and the subtle impact of the community environment. Given that new campuses are predominantly located in suburban areas, they are less influenced by the cultural atmosphere of larger urban communities. This lack of influence from the broader city community can be a significant deficiency and regret in the formation and development of their campus culture. Additionally, negative cultural elements prevalent in underdeveloped suburban areas surrounding the campus could potentially have adverse effects to a certain extent.[2]

3.2 Issues in Campus Culture Construction in Multi-Campus Settings

3.2.1 Inappropriate Handling of Relationships Among Multiple Campuses

This misalignment manifests in two extremes: firstly, the complete replication of the campus culture of older campuses through a simple and direct transplant; secondly, the total abandonment of the historical accumulation of the school's development, neglecting the inheritance of the excellent spiritual essence of campus culture from the older campuses. In this scenario, there is a one-sided pursuit of efficiency and a utilitarian perspective that overlooks the school's unique characteristics. The approach to understanding and implementing campus culture construction is driven by practical utilitarianism, ignoring the school's distinctive features in a rush for immediate results. In this rush, the original campus values are deviated from, sometimes for the sake of cultivating a superficial "cultural" image. This approach impacts the enthusiasm of university faculty and students towards campus culture construction, resulting in the superficialization, vacuity, and homogenization of campus culture. This leads to the loss of the campus culture's individuality and essence.

3.2.2 Unreasonable Planning of New Campus Construction

University administrators often fail to take a comprehensive view of how campus culture development can drive and promote the personal development of faculty and students as well as the overall development of the institution. This deficiency is particularly evident in the emphasis on physical infrastructure development over the nurturing of spiritual culture. There is a significant investment in the "hardware" aspects while the development of the "software" is lacking. There are relatively few instances where campus culture construction is viewed as a systematic project that requires scientific and comprehensive planning. Administrators often overlook the cultivation and refinement of campus spirit and fail to engage in serious discussions regarding new educational development concepts.[4]

3.2.3 Insufficient Innovation in Institutional Cultural Construction

Most new campuses tend to adopt the systems of older campuses, with many new institutional cultures not yet fully developed or, even if they have been established, they have not gained psychological acceptance. Consequently, these new institutional cultures struggle to become ingrained, leading to a lack of cohesion between old and new systems. This disconnect results in a deficiency or instability in the institutional culture across multiple campuses.[5] Simultaneously, some activities are haphazardly organized, with departments conducting scattered activities based on their individual needs. Some student activities lack specific guidance from teachers, leading to a lack of communication between teachers and students. The cultural activities often have a lower standard, resulting in low enthusiasm and unsatisfactory outcomes from student participation. This situation makes it challenging to foster a positive cultural atmosphere and ethos.

4. Analysis of Paths to Improve Campus Culture Construction in Multi-Campus Settings

4.1 Overall Strategies for Campus Culture Construction in Multi-Campus Settings

The main challenge facing the construction of campus culture across multiple campuses is how to address the issue of integration and coordination of the diverse campus cultures, aiming to achieve a unified quality across multiple campuses. The overall approach includes the following key points:

Inheritance: The foundation of constructing campus culture across multiple campuses lies in inheritance—transplantation. The task of developing campus culture in new campuses involves inheriting and developing the culture of older campuses, including spiritual, institutional, and material aspects. Universities should utilize the construction of new campuses as an opportunity to fully leverage the adaptability of these new spaces, establishing the university's spirit early on. This can be achieved by guiding the inheritance of noble ethics and refined aesthetic values through a positive atmosphere, while also emphasizing the significance of material aspects such as every building and facility within the school.[2] The values transplanted to the new campus should permeate various aspects, ensuring that institutional arrangements, cultural networks, hierarchical systems, academic development, operational mechanisms, and more reflect these core values.

Connection: The pathway for constructing campus culture across multiple campuses is integration. Universities aim to build a new campus rather than an entirely new university, so the focus should be on how to effectively integrate and coordinate the cultures of multiple campuses. The establishment of a new campus is a recognition of the educational resources of the university, hence the expansion in scale and spatial extension should be rational. Consequently, it is essential for the new and old campuses to possess a unified quality, achieving organic cultural integration.

Innovation: The direction for constructing campus culture across multiple campuses is optimization through innovation. Universities are cradles for nurturing talent, and the modern talents they cultivate should possess qualities such as rationality, cultural refinement, professional knowledge and skills, social responsibility, and the ability for self-expression and self-extension. The essence of the existence and development of university campuses as spiritual homes for humanity lies in innovation. Schools should actively explore the university spirit in line with their unique characteristics, advancing with the times.

4.2 Strategies for Campus Culture Construction in Multi-Campus Settings

In the development of campus culture in multiple campuses, it is necessary to inherit the excellent historical cultural traditions of the original school while also innovating to create a cohesive campus culture. The following strategies need to be implemented:

Cultural Influence Strategy: Create a "soft" environment for campus culture to facilitate the transplantation and development of the culture from the old campus. Utilize cultural influence strategies to promote cultural penetration, fostering identification among teachers, students, and staff. Ultimately, consciously internalize the original campus culture to achieve essential unity with the culture of the old campus.

Value Shaping Strategy: Through the school's internal cultural network, facilitate information exchange among faculty and staff, transmitting shared values and ideals to promote the excellent campus culture of the old campus. Achieve resonance of values among faculty and staff to influence the qualitative unity of multiple campuses through resonating effects from cultural exchanges between the new and old campuses.[6]

Cultural Exchange Strategy: Enhance cultural exchange among multiple campuses, allowing cultures to interact on the basis of mutual adaptation and coordination, thereby avoiding the destructive impact of abrupt changes in behavior.

Social Interaction Strategy: Rely on and be guided by society, deeply analyze the prospects of social development, and establish values that can drive the sustainable development of the new campus.[6] Simultaneously, create a campus culture system that is mutually balanced and coordinated with society to achieve sustainable development.

4.3 Specific Measures to Promote Campus Culture Construction in Multi-Campus Settings

Clarify the division of responsibilities among departments in campus culture construction across multiple campuses, while strengthening communication and coordination. To optimize campus culture development in multiple campuses, it is necessary to create a harmonious working atmosphere among management departments, enhance communication and coordination between departments, and ultimately achieve mutual understanding through communication. Advocate for considering others' perspectives, prioritize the overall school's interests, and establish common value goals to promote the school's development.

Strengthen the development of online culture and conduct multi-channel, multi-level cultural exchanges across multiple campuses. The key focus should be on guiding students to develop a habit of caring about school development, reinforcing the role and communication of campus online culture in campus culture construction and in the development of campus culture across multiple campuses.

Emphasize the radiating effect of the old campus on the new campus, balancing material and spiritual culture construction. As a whole, while the campus culture of the new campus should promote its own characteristics, it should not deviate from the overall style of the old campus. Additionally, the construction of the new campus should not simply replicate the style of the old campus. This requires coordinated planning by the school management to explore the historical culture that can be extracted from the old campus and have it radiate both tangibly and intangibly onto the new campus, unifying the cultural heritage and human spirit across multiple campuses.

Strengthen institutional cultural management. Multi-campus universities should boldly innovate and explore efficient management models tailored to their specific circumstances with a forward-thinking attitude. The diverse nature of management models in Chinese multi-campus universities necessitates ensuring smooth management channels, constructing internal organizations sensibly, and optimizing the allocation of human, financial, and educational resources. Furthermore, adopting a people-centric approach, implementing cultural management, fostering tolerance between different cultures, and creating a harmonious coexistence on campus involves exploring a relaxed atmosphere of mutual understanding. This involves shifting from the external constraints of rigid rules and regulations towards a more humanized guidance and influence that is easily understood and accepted by those being managed, ultimately aiming to achieve standardized management practices.

5. Conclusion

In summary, within the framework of multi-campus education, the campus culture of the old campus serves as the foundation for the campus culture of the new campus, with the culture of the new campus inheriting and developing from that of the old campus. Campus culture construction across multiple campuses should progress in a unified direction, carrying forward the essence and excellent traditions of the old campus while staying current and enriching the culture of the new campus at a higher level. Strengthening campus culture construction, addressing innovative connections between multiple campus cultures, achieving an upgrade in campus culture to highlight its unique features, is a long-term and challenging task that cannot be accomplished overnight. It requires top-level design from the school's management, unity and cohesion among faculty and staff, and active participation from students. Only through these efforts can the specificity, effectiveness, and influence of campus culture become increasingly prominent.

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