

Original Paper

Party Building-Led High-Quality Development of Local
Education Groups: A Case Study of Z City Education Group
Empowering the Education Undertaking and the Culture and
Sports Industry

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of deepening the reform of state-owned enterprises and advancing the high-quality development of regional economy and society, how local education groups can uphold the Party's leadership, strengthen Party building, and convert their unique advantages into a driving force for boosting the progress of education and the prosperity of the culture and sports industry has become an important issue with both theoretical value and practical significance. Taking Z City Education Group as the research object, this paper conducts an in-depth analysis of its practice of Party building leadership. Firstly, it elaborates on the significance of Party building leadership for the group to empower the education undertaking and the culture and sports industry. Secondly, in light of the group's actual development, it systematically analyzes the current shortcomings in market-oriented transformation, the settlement of legacy issues, talent team construction, digital transformation and internal synergy. Finally, from four dimensions—strengthening political guidance and ideological emancipation, consolidating organizational foundation and talent support, deepening business integration and collaborative development, and building a strong barrier of discipline and safety—this paper proposes an optimized path for education groups to empower the progress of education and the prosperity of the culture and sports industry under the guidance of Party building. The study is intended to provide theoretical references and practical experience for the high-quality transformation and development of local state-owned enterprises, especially those in the education sector, in the new era.

Keywords

Party building leadership, Local education groups, Education undertaking, Culture and sports industry, Reform of state-owned enterprises

1. Introduction

As China's economy enters a new stage of high-quality development, state-owned enterprises are playing an increasingly crucial role in serving national strategies, safeguarding people's wellbeing, and leading industrial development. (Chen, 2024) Education is a major issue concerning the Party and the country, and the culture (Wu, Huang, Ding et al., 2024) and sports industry is an important carrier for meeting people's spiritual and cultural needs and enhancing cultural confidence. As an important bridge connecting the government, the market and schools, local education groups undertake the special mission of optimizing the allocation of educational resources, activating state-owned cultural and sports assets, and expanding the connotation of educational services. However, faced with increasingly fierce market competition, a complex and volatile policy environment, and the inherent demand for their own transformation and development, how to ensure the correct development direction of the group and stimulate its internal driving force and market vitality have become urgent problems to be solved.

Upholding the Party's leadership and strengthening Party building are the "root" and "soul" of state-owned enterprises, and also a unique advantage of China's state-owned enterprises. (Zhu, 2018) For Z City Education Group, its development history and future planning fully reflect the necessity of the deep integration of Party building with production and operation. From the initial ambiguity in business positioning to the clear orientation of developing the "non-core education industry", from overcoming difficulties to stabilize basic operations, to focusing on new productive forces to plan transformation and breakthroughs, every step of development is inseparable from the political core role and fighting fortress role of Party organizations. Through an in-depth analysis of the case of Z City Education Group, this paper aims to explore the specific functioning of Party building leadership in the group's practice of empowering the education undertaking and the culture and sports industry, identify the existing problems, and put forward systematic optimization paths, so as to provide a reference for the reform and development of similar enterprises.

2. The Significance of Party Building Leadership in Empowering the Progress of Education and the Prosperity of the Culture and Sports Industry

2.1 The "Compass" for Ensuring the Correct Political Direction

The core businesses of the education group, including youth research and practice, quality training, the operation and management of large-scale sports venues, and the hosting of cultural and sports events, all have distinct ideological and social public welfare attributes. Party building ensures that the group adheres to the socialist orientation in all aspects of its operations, fully implements the Party's

educational policies, and strictly abides by national policies and regulations in the cultural and educational fields. For example, when developing the research tour curriculum system, Z City Education Group clearly proposed the “Follow the Seven Colors” initiative, integrating patriotism, collectivism and socialist core values into the curriculum. This is a concrete manifestation of the Party organization’s leading role in ideological and political education, which effectively ensures the realization of the educational function of the curriculum.

2.2 The “Backbone” for Uniting Forces for Reform and Development

In the course of development, education groups generally face multiple challenges such as the pressure of market-oriented transformation, historical legacy issues, and bottlenecks in funds and talents. Resolving these tough problems requires strong organizational mobilization and execution capabilities. By strengthening grassroots Party organizations and giving full play to the vanguard and exemplary role of Party members, Party building can unite people’s hearts and boost morale at critical moments. The Group Party Committee’s mobilization initiative of “Uniting Hearts and Minds for Transformation and Breakthroughs”, as well as the practice of signing target responsibility agreements at all levels and setting up clear performance commitments, effectively transforms the organizational advantages of the Party into combat advantages for overcoming difficulties, making Party organizations a strong core that unites and leads cadres and employees to surmount obstacles and promote development.

2.3 The “Adhesive” for Optimizing Resource Allocation and Realizing Collaborative Development

The education sector and the culture and sports industry involve a wide range of fields and require the integration of government, market and social resources. Education groups under the leadership of Party building can better leverage their platform advantages to achieve cross-departmental and cross-sector resource sharing and business synergy. The three core business sectors of Z City Education Group—logistics services, research and practice, and cultural and sports events—have inherent potential for interactive development. The “One Overall Plan” concept proposed by the Party Committee, which requires all sectors to share resources, exchange information and recommend customers to each other in business expansion, precisely leverages the organizational advantages and ideological guidance of Party building to break down the administrative barriers of “minding one’s own business”, promote internal circulation and external linkage, and realize the synergy effect of “1+1>2”.

2.4 The “Melting Pot” for Forging a High-Quality and Professional Talent Team

Talent is the primary resource for the development of any cause. For education groups in the transformation period, there is an urgent need for both professionals who are familiar with market rules and management backbones who are politically reliable and have good moral conduct. Party building work can effectively enhance the overall quality of employees through strengthening ideological tempering, political training, practical exercise and professional training. The group’s advocacy of a working atmosphere of “being pragmatic and responsible, forging ahead and innovating”, as well as its adherence to the employment orientation of “the competent advance, the mediocre step aside, and the

incompetent exit”, fully embodies the important role of Party organizations in talent cultivation, selection and motivation.

3. Problems and Shortcomings in the Practice of Party Building-Led Local Education Group State-Owned Enterprises Empowering Education and Culture and Sports Industries

3.1 The “Temperature Difference” in the Deep Integration of Market-Oriented Thinking and Party Building Still Exists

Although the group has defined the direction of market-oriented transformation, it is highly dependent on policy dividends such as after-school service fees, resulting in an unstable market-oriented operation foundation. Some Party members and cadres lack a sufficient understanding of the urgency of reform and fail to translate the Party organization’s strategic deployment into a strong sense of market crisis and internal driving force for development. The effect of Party building in promoting ideological emancipation and breaking path dependence has not been fully exerted. Some business segments have limited thinking and methods in business model construction, and the mentality of “waiting for policy support, relying on superior arrangements, and demanding financial assistance” still persists.

3.2 The Improvement of Organizational Capacity Fails to Fully Cover the “Pain Points” and “Difficulties” of Development

Faced with tough problems such as historical legacy issues, talent shortages and digital transformation, the fighting fortress role of Party organizations in tackling key and difficult problems is not fully exerted. The slow progress in resolving historical legacy issues consumes a great deal of the group’s energy; there is a lack of systematic planning for talent development in terms of “attracting, cultivating and retaining talents”, and the bottleneck of “being unable to attract and retain professional talents” has not been broken. In the process of digital transformation, the Party building-led remodeling of business models and its integration with actual operations are lagging behind, and there is a risk of formalistic implementation.

3.3 There is a Gap Between Internal Synergy and Execution Efficiency and the Requirements of High-Quality Development

The synergy among various business segments has not been fully realized, the mechanism for resource sharing and customer recommendation is not perfect, and Party organizations have not fully played their coordinating role in breaking down internal barriers and building systematic synergy. The problems of shirking responsibility, low work efficiency and slow decision-making are essentially due to the lack of a strong sense of responsibility and weak execution capacity of some Party members and cadres.

3.4 The Efforts to Extend the Comprehensive and Strict Governance of the Party to the Grassroots Level Need to Be Strengthened

During the business transformation period, the group faces more risks related to production safety and clean conduct in operations, with multiple risks such as research tour safety, campus food safety and

cyber security intertwined. The concept of “safety first, prevention first” has not been fully implemented to the front line of projects through Party building, and a regular prevention and control mechanism has not been formed. In terms of clean operation, in the face of an increasingly strict regulatory environment, regular and targeted warning education still needs to be deepened.

4. Optimized Paths for Party Building-Led Local Education Group State-Owned Enterprises to Empower the Education Undertaking and the Culture and Sports Industry

4.1 Strengthen Political Guidance and Ideological Emancipation to Calibrate the “Compass” of Development

First, deepen theoretical armed work and break the rigid mindset. Continue to arm the mind with the Party’s innovative theories, especially thoroughly study and understand the important discourse on developing new productive forces and promoting high-quality development. The Group Party Committee should take the lead in carrying out the “Great Discussion on Emancipating the Mind”, guiding Party members and cadres to step out of their “comfort zones”, deeply understand the inevitability and urgency of market-oriented transformation, (Fang & Wang, 2023) and completely abandon the mentality of relying on policy dividends. Take the “key points for broadening thinking and vision” proposed by the Party Committee as an important part of ideological Party building, encourage employees to dare to “reset and rebuild” in management models, business strategies and product research and development, and transform ideological inspiration into concrete actions to promote business innovation and clarify the group’s differentiated competitive advantages.

Second, strengthen strategic guidance and identify the key points of development. Party organizations should deeply participate in the formulation and implementation of the enterprise’s strategic planning to ensure that the enterprise’s development direction is consistent with national strategies and regional planning. Take the group’s key production and operation tasks (namely “one base, two products, three industries, four tasks”) as the focus of Party building work, and concentrate efforts to overcome the key bottlenecks restricting development (such as the differentiated positioning of bases and the loss-stopping operation of venues) by setting up Party member vanguard posts and forming Party member assault teams. The Party Committee should regularly study major issues in the implementation of the strategy, timely correct deviations, and ensure that all tasks are “kept in mind, carried on the shoulders, and implemented in action”.

4.2 Consolidate Organizational Foundation and Talent Support to Build the “Backbone” of Development

First, consolidate the fighting fortress and tackle tough problems. Establish Party branches on projects and along industrial chains to make the Party flag fly high at the grassroots level. For key and difficult tasks such as the resolution of historical legacy issues and digital transformation, set up special task forces led by key Party members, with clear responsibilities, rights and interests, and concentrate efforts to “tackle key problems and surmount difficulties”. Establish a “problem list” closing

mechanism, taking the effectiveness of resolving contradictions and problems as an important criterion for testing the combat effectiveness of grassroots Party organizations, to ensure that the “contradiction list” is truly transformed into a “performance list”.

Second, adhere to the Party’s management of talents and activate the driving force for development. The Group Party Committee should establish a strong talent awareness and give a more prominent position to talent work. On the one hand, focus on internal cultivation, implement the “double cultivation” project, which cultivates business backbones into Party members and Party members into business backbones, assign responsibilities and build development platforms for young talents to ignite their entrepreneurial passion. On the other hand, dare to break the institutional and mechanism barriers, and explore introducing urgently needed high-end professional talents through market-oriented recruitment and contractual wage systems. Earnestly fulfill incentive commitments, push for a close link between salary and performance, and firmly establish the employment orientation of “the competent advance, the mediocre step aside, and the incompetent exit”, so that those who create value can gain honor and benefits.

4.3 Deepen Business Integration and Collaborative Development to Build a Development “Community”

First, promote integrated development and realize resource sharing. Establish and improve the business synergy mechanism under the overall planning of the Party Committee to break down sectoral barriers. Hold regular joint meetings for coordinated development led by the Group Party Committee and attended by the person in charge of each subsidiary to exchange information and connect resources. Encourage all business segments to establish the awareness of “One Overall Plan” in external business expansion, and carry out product combination and packaging of research tours, logistics, culture and sports, and insurance to drive mutual customer flow. For example, convert the school channel resources established by the logistics sector into customer sources for the research tour and cultural and sports sectors; transform the student families gathered by the research tour sector into potential participants in cultural and sports events. Let Party building serve as the “adhesive” to promote internal circulation and improve overall operational efficiency.

Second, integrate internal and external resources and expand development space. Give full play to the political advantages of Party organizations and their coordinating role among all parties, proactively connect with higher-level Party committees, governments and relevant departments, and strive for policy support and development opportunities. At the same time, encourage Party members to “go out”, actively connect with high-quality resources at home and abroad, learn advanced experience and expand cooperation channels. Establish close cooperative relations with upstream and downstream enterprises, schools and communities in the industrial chain through co-construction of Party organizations and other forms, build a mutually beneficial and win-win industrial ecosystem, and inject new vitality into the development of the education and culture and sports industries.

4.4 Build a Strong Barrier of Discipline and Safety to Safeguard the “Lifeline” of Development

First, forge a good work style and improve execution efficiency. Continue to deepen the construction of work style, and take the work requirements of “obedience, responsibility, pragmatism, dedication and commitment” proposed by the Party Committee as an important yardstick for evaluating cadres. Strictly implement the list of powers and responsibilities and the list of management and control, optimize the decision-making process, delegate greater autonomy to subsidiaries and front-line teams, and solve the chronic problems of “slow decision-making and poor execution”. Strengthen supervision and performance assessment, seriously hold accountable those who shirk responsibility and have low work efficiency, and ensure that “decide and act, act immediately, and act well” becomes the normal work state.

Second, strictly abide by the bottom line of discipline and prevent and resolve various risks. Tighten and implement the primary responsibility and supervision responsibility for the comprehensive and strict governance of the Party. In light of the operational characteristics of the education group, incorporate production safety (especially research tour safety and food safety) and the prevention and control of clean operation risks into the Party building work responsibility system. Regularly carry out education on Party discipline, laws and regulations and warning education, use typical cases around to educate people around, and guide employees to know awe, hold bottom lines, and abide by the red line. Strengthen supervision over key links of power operation, especially in fund management, project bidding and material procurement, and tighten the institutional cage. At the same time, pay close attention to emerging risk areas such as cyber security and ideological security, and build a comprehensive and multi-level safety protection network through Party building-led technological upgrading and management improvement, to ensure that the group achieves high-quality development on a safe and stable track.

5. Conclusion

The practical exploration of Z City Education Group clearly shows that upholding the Party’s leadership and strengthening Party building are the fundamental guarantees for local state-owned education enterprises to stand firm and forge ahead in a complex and changing environment. (Chen, 2022) Strengthening political guidance can calibrate the value direction of enterprises in serving the education and culture and sports industries; consolidating the organizational foundation can gather strong forces to overcome difficulties; deepening business integration can unlock the potential of collaborative development; and strictly enforcing discipline can build a solid barrier for safe development.

Faced with new opportunities and challenges in the first year of the 15th Five-Year Plan, local education groups must unswervingly uphold and strengthen the Party’s overall leadership, integrate Party building more deeply and solidly into all aspects of corporate governance and production and operation, and continuously promote ideological emancipation, capacity improvement and style

transformation. Only in this way can they truly play the strategic supporting role of the state-owned economy, and write a new chapter of high-quality development worthy of the times in the new journey of empowering the progress of regional education and the prosperity of the culture and sports industry. This is not only the development path of a single enterprise, but also a vivid practice and inevitable choice for the modern state-owned enterprise system with Chinese characteristics in the new era.

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