Original Paper

Prevention and Control Strategies of Network Mass Incidents in Colleges and Universities from the Perspective of Cooperative Governance

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Abstract

The frequent occurrence of network mass incidents has posed new requirements and challenges to the governance capabilities of colleges and universities. However, the traditional management model of network mass incidents in colleges and universities has limitations in terms of management boundaries, subject status and participation, prevention and remedy. Introducing the concept of cooperative governance and constructing a cooperative governance model for network mass incidents in colleges and universities can effectively solve the current governance dilemma. This requires the cooperation of all parties to achieve a governance structure of "one core, multiple elements" for network mass incidents in colleges and universities, and improve the effectiveness of governance through cooperation, establish a sound mechanism for the balance of subject rights and responsibilities, information disclosure, expression and response of appeals, dialogue and negotiation, trust and supervision, so as to realize the transformation and upgrading of the handling of online mass incidents in universities from "traditional management" to "cooperative governance".

Keywords

Colleges and Universities, Internet, Mass Incidents, Cooperative Governance

1. Introduction

Since the 1980s, as mankind moved from industrial society to post-industrial society and information age, society became increasingly complex and uncertain, making the shortcomings and defects of traditional governance more apparent, and social governance faced unprecedented challenges. In the transition period of the society, there is an urgent need to go beyond autonomy and implement cooperative governance. (Kangzhi, 2008) Cooperative governance, which "emphasizes equality, diversity, and power sharing, and ultimately achieves 'good governance'" (Hangfeng, 2022), is popular because it fits with the country's advocacy of joint construction, governance, and sharing of social governance concepts, and is even regarded as an ideal path to modernize the grassroots governance system and governance capabilities. (Qi & Ziyang, 2012) Network mass incidents in colleges and universities generally refers to the collective, resistance and radical "rights protection" behavior of university students to achieve common goals and interests by networking through online media, voicing their opinions on the internet and causing a certain degree of public opinion fermentation. It also exists the risk of online and offline serial actions and has the characteristics of emotionalization, suddenness, socialization, etc. With the development of the Internet, network mass incidents in colleges and universities has shown a rapid growth trend, with an increase in antagonism, concealment, and influence, which has brought negative impacts on the physical and mental health of college students, destroyed campus stability, and impacted ideology.Network mass incidents in colleges and universities

mainly involve multiple parties such as universities, teachers and students, governments, social organizations, and social stakeholders, manifesting as conflicts between campus public interests, collective interests, and individual interests. The uneven distribution of power among these parties, as well as the uniqueness of their characteristics, causes, and evolution, pose new requirements and challenges for university governance capabilities. Against this background, introducing the concept of cooperative governance and constructing a cooperative governance model for network mass incidents in colleges and universities can effectively resolve current governance dilemmas and achieve the transformation and upgrading of university handling of network mass incidents from "traditional management" to "cooperative governance".

2. Limitations of Traditional Management Models for Network Mass Incidents in Colleges and Universities

The traditional governance model of colleges and universities facing network mass incidents is under the guidance of higher education administrative departments, emphasizing management as the center and campus stability as the goal. The university's Party committee leads the joint handling of the incident by administrative, propaganda, student work, security, and secondary colleges and other departments.However, this traditional management model has many limitations, such as relatively blurred administrative boundaries, lack of interaction and communication among management departments, unclear student subject status, difficulty in advance prediction and post-event remedies, and limited participation of student groups and social organizations.

2.1 The Relative Fuzziness of Administrative Boundaries

In the governance structure of colleges and universities, administrative departments are very important components and often play a leading role, including educational administrative departments at the government level and internal administrative departments within universities. In practical work, it is difficult for educational administrative departments to accurately grasp the "degree" of participation in the governance of colleges and universities. Often, due to excessive intervention, the autonomy of colleges and universities is restricted, and the governance work is affected. (Jianqiang & Wenbin, 2018) This is also the case in the handling of network mass incidents in colleges and universities. While taking measures to quickly control and quell the incident, educational administrative departments may over-intervene in colleges and universities, under high pressure, they may also adopt unscientific response measures. Within colleges and universities, the inertia of administrative management with excessive control is solidified, and the effort to break the control thinking is insufficient. This has a huge impact on whether other subjects can participate in governance and the degree of participation, which may not only undermine the democratic management of colleges and universities, but also discourage teachers, students, and other participants from actively participating in governance. In the governance of network mass incidents in colleges and universities, how government educational administrative departments and internal administrative departments within colleges and universities grasp the boundaries of governance, improve governance standardization, and enhance governance capabilities are urgent problems to be solved.

2.2 The Management Department Lacks Interactive Communication

The occurrence and development of network mass incidents in colleges and universities are not only influenced by internal factors but also by the countermeasures of management departments. Prompt and scientific actions of the management departments can effectively deal with network mass incidents, otherwise, they may increase the outbreak rate of events or exacerbate the deterioration of events. In reality, the causes, participating groups, and appeals of network mass incidents in colleges and universities are relatively complex, often involving multiple management departments within colleges and universities, such as the propaganda department responsible for public opinion supervision, the student affairs department responsible for student management, the security department responsible for campus security, and the educational technology department responsible for network technology, etc. Each department carries out relevant work according to its responsibilities, but once there is a lack of coordination mechanism, insufficient interaction and communication between departments may lead to problems such as information lag and inconsistent measures, which seriously affect the development and effective handling of events. How to coordinate the various departments to perform their duties and cooperate with each other is a difficult problem for the management of colleges and universities.

2.3 The Student's Subject Status is Not Clear

In the majority of cases, students are the main actors in network mass incidents in colleges and universities, and they are also the ones most affected by these events. This inevitably leads to students

occupying a central position in the management of such events. Although current laws, regulations, and university charters do contain provisions for student participation in governance, these provisions are often unclear or vaguely defined, lacking specific methods for participation. Coupled with the inertia of management thinking, students are often still treated as "managed" or "educated" individuals, lacking opportunities and status for participation in governance. Even when some universities grant students the status of main participants in governance, the actual support provided is often limited, resulting in this participation being trapped in a formalistic dilemma. How to improve the governance structure, provide students with more opportunities for participation, fully leverage the wisdom and strength of student groups in governance, and transform students from passive managers to cooperative managers is the key to managing network mass incidents in colleges and universities.

2.4 It is Difficult to Predict Beforehand and Remedy Afterwards

Compared with other network mass incidents, college students, who grow up with the development of the Internet, are the main group in the network mass incidents in colleges and universities. The faster speed of gathering and taking actions of college students online makes the network mass incidents in colleges and universities have distinct suddenness, which makes it difficult to predict in advance.Social linkage is also one of the characteristics of network mass incidents in colleges and universities. If the incident is not handled and guided in a timely and effective manner, it may cause linkage among multiple universities, or even trigger larger-scale social mass incidents, making it difficult to intervene in the incident in a timely and effective manner. It cannot be ignored that a large number of college students who participate in it because of psychological identification and emotional resonance without direct interest appeals are often the key factors that promote the production and expansion of network mass incidents in colleges and universities. This group polarization effect makes it difficult to control the online mass incidents in universities once they break out in a short time. (Chunlin, Liu, & Hanzhi, 2016)

2.5 Less Participation of Student Groups and Social Organizations

Under the traditional management mode of colleges and universities, few student groups and social organizations truly participate in and supervise the governance work of colleges and universities, and their role is minimal. On the one hand, student groups are guided and managed by relevant departments of the school, and there are certain limitations in carrying out activities or participating in management. The credibility and influence of student groups among students are insufficient, and they can participate in less content of university affairs management, and the phenomenon of formal participation is common. In most cases, social organizations are the target of universities to compete for resources, and the cooperation between social organizations and universities has not been valued. When network group incidents occur in universities, university managers often lack cooperation awareness with student groups and social organizations, which makes the role of these two resources not fully utilized, which is not conducive to universities quickly grasping and disposing of incidents. On the other hand, student groups and social organizations do not fully understand their role in the governance of network mass incidents in colleges and universities, and lack enthusiasm for participating in governance. Due to the above two reasons, it is difficult to see the participation of student groups and social organizations in the governance of network mass incidents in colleges and universities.

3. Realization Path of Cooperative Governance of Network Mass Incidents in Colleges and Universities

Why do network mass incidents occur frequently in colleges and universities in recent years? Why do some measures and projects that have not yet been formally implemented, which are beneficial to the healthy development of schools and students, always encounter strong resistance from students? Why can many university network mass incidents only be calmed down by "stopping when there is trouble"? Is there any defect in the current governance model of university network mass incidents? From the disadvantages of traditional governance models, cooperative governance that demonstrates democracy, fairness, equality, and mutual trust can balance the interests of multiple stakeholders, meet the objective requirements for the governance of network mass incidents in colleges and universities, better resolve the current difficulties in related governance in universities, and is also highly consistent with the social governance philosophy of co-construction, co-governance, and shared benefits.

3.1 Gathering Multiple Parties to Achieve a Governance Structure of "One Core, Multiple Elements" for Network Mass Incidents in Colleges and Universities

In the context of the governance community, the cooperative governance of network mass incidents in colleges and universities should follow the leadership of the Party, the responsibility of the government

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and universities, the participation of teachers and students, and the participation of student organizations and social organizations. These diverse actors are interdependent, negotiate equally, share responsibilities and powers, and ultimately aim to achieve effective governance.

(1) The Party managing the overall situation, fundamentals, and direction in social governance, and occupying a dominant position in the structure of multiple governance subjects. (Qian, C. 2023) Therefore, in the process of governing network mass incidents in colleges and universities, it is necessary to adhere to the Party's leadership role in overseeing the overall situation and coordinating all parties.

(2) Under the cooperative governance model, the government is "only one of the multiple social governance subjects. The previous pattern of government monopoly over social governance will lose its historical rationality, and government control orientation will be replaced by service orientation." (Kangzhi, 2013) Breaking the traditional governance model and placing the government and universities in the context of "only one of the participating subjects" to transform them from all-powerful and controlling governance methods to limited and service-oriented ones, releasing more management resources, is not only a transformation of the governance roles of the government and universities, but also an optimized path for improving governance efficiency.

(3) In network mass incidents in colleges and universities, teachers and students are direct participants and petitioners of interests. Their equal participation in governance is a manifestation of the transition from "governance by others" to "self-governance" and a significant feature of social governance in the new era. It is conducive to making joint judgments and achieving consensus among them in these incidents.

(4) Student groups and social organizations are an indispensable part of university governance，playing an important role in undertaking some administrative functions, filling governance gaps, and integrating resources. Giving full play to the role of student groups and social organizations in network mass incidents in colleges and universities can achieve a win-win situation for governance efficiency and organizational benefits.

Therefore, the network mass incidents in colleges and universities bear the most distinct features of the networked era with multiple authorities and centers. Its governance subject must be a "one core, multiple elements" governance structure, and based on the equality of multiple parties, it reaches a consensus through consultation and coordination, forms scientific decisions, optimizes the policy implementation environment, and improves the governance efficiency from the system and the whole.

3.2 Mutual Assistance and Mutual Benefit, Cooperation to Enhance the Effectiveness of The Governance of Network Mass Incidents in Colleges and Universities

(1) Promoting cooperation through interest coordination. Although the interests and values of various parties in network mass incidents in colleges and universities are not entirely the same, and it is difficult to fully integrate their interests, efforts should be made to make the interests of the parties converge. This requires all parties to achieve common interests through rational interaction, and to eliminate differences and promote convergence. Of course, the government and universities, which hold important resources, should take the initiative to unite all parties, discuss decisions together, and strive to reach a consensus on interests.

(2) Promoting cooperation through resource integration. The government and universities actively provide other subjects with resources in terms of information, institutions, and materials, while other subjects increase their investment in resources such as human resources, emotions, and social capital. After integrating these resources, it can generate positive interaction and resource dependence among all parties, thereby promoting their willingness to participate in cooperation and even generating trust relationships.

(3) Boosting cooperation through mutual trust and mutual benefit. The process of cooperative governance is not only a process of interest negotiation and coordinated interaction, but more importantly, it is about establishing mutual benefit and trust relationships among stakeholders. (IMPERIAL, 2005) Governments and universities can increase the trust of teachers, students and other stakeholders in government and university management departments through timely and comprehensive disclosure of relevant information and extensive promotion, face-to-face communication, visits and condolences, etc. This will enhance the emotions and willingness to cooperate between the two parties, ultimately achieving a win-win governance outcome.

(4) Driving cooperation through effectiveness feedback. When phased or partial effectiveness is achieved through early cooperation, it is conducive to the enhancement of trust relations and often has a feedback effect on the formation of greater cooperation. In the process of cooperative governance of

network mass incidents in colleges and universities, attention should be paid to the summary, promotion, and reflection of the effectiveness, so that the achievements can drive and encourage more parties to participate in governance.

3.3 Realization Mechanism of Cooperative Governance of Network Mass Incidents in Colleges and Universities

As an ideal governance state, cooperative governance also needs a process of continuous development and maturity. From the current reality, there is still a long way to go to achieve true cooperative governance, but "handling various social affairs with the concept and spirit of cooperation is obviously the choice we must make" (Kangzhi, 2014). From the characteristics and development trends of network mass incidents in colleges and universities, in order to form a cooperative governance model in the governance of such events and fully exert the role of cooperative governance, in addition to vigorously cultivating the spirit of cooperation, it is also necessary to improve the corresponding implementation mechanisms and create guarantees.

(1) Establish a mechanism for the allocation of powers and responsibilities among different entities. Based on the premise of equal opportunities and equal rights and obligations, achieve a scientifically reasonable allocation of powers and responsibilities among various entities such as the government, universities, teachers and students, student groups, and social organizations under the leadership of the Party committee. The Party organization should fulfill the responsibilities of leadership, overall planning, and guidance. As a representative of public interests, the government should make good use of various resources to objectively guide universities in their work. Universities should strengthen their own construction, create an atmosphere of cooperation within the campus, and improve their abilities to prevent, respond to, handle, and deal with network mass incidents.   Teachers and students should establish the thinking of exercising rights in a rational and lawful manner, participate in the governance of network mass incidents throughout the process, actively contribute ideas and suggestions, and conduct reasonable supervision. Student groups should play a role as a bridge and link, serving as buffers and regulators to maintain campus stability.Social organizations should leverage their neutral, independent, and resourceful advantages to actively participate in governance and play a positive role in areas such as public opinion guidance and information technology.

(2) Improve the information disclosure mechanism. The openness and transparency of information is an important safeguard mechanism for cooperative governance. Policies, systems, and measures closely related to the learning, life, and development of teachers and students are often decided by universities, and these information sources are held and controlled by the university management. If relevant information cannot be disclosed in a timely manner, it will inevitably lead to mutual suspicion among various parties, making it difficult to engage in equal and rational dialogue and consultation, and increasing the difficulty of resolving conflicts of interest. Therefore, when carrying out information disclosure work, universities should ensure timeliness, authenticity, and comprehensiveness to maximize the sufficiency and specificity of information disclosure.

(3) Perfect the mechanism of appeal expression and response. As can be seen from a large number of cases, the lack of smooth channels for the expression of interest appeals or the failure to obtain timely and satisfactory responses is an important cause of most network mass incidents in colleges and universities. In the Internet era, teachers and students have strong desires and motives to express their interests, and there are more channels for expression that are difficult to control. More individuals and groups participate in it, and the participation methods are simpler. At this time, it is extremely important for college management departments to respond promptly and fully, as well as the way of response. Colleges and universities should educate and guide teachers and students to express their interest appeals rationally, and make good use of legal thinking and means. At the same time, colleges and universities should expand the channels for the expression of teachers' and students' interest appeals, especially by using the Internet to create new channels, and attach importance to obtaining information from student groups and social organizations, and listening to the appeals of teachers and students in a timely manner. In terms of the response mechanism, colleges and universities should establish a scientific response system, formulate response standards and procedures for the subject, content, timing, method, channel, and accountability of the response, to ensure timely, comprehensive, polite, and appropriate responses.

(4) Establish a dialogue and consultation mechanism. Resolving internal conflicts within universities through dialogue and consultation is the correct approach to democratic governance, and it is a specific manifestation of the equality of the statuses of various stakeholders in the governance of network mass incidents in colleges and universities and an inevitable means to adopt. First, we must expand the scope

of dialogue and consultation subjects, including stakeholders and their common issues within the scope and topics of dialogue and consultation. Secondly, we need to innovate dialogue and consultation channels. In addition to retaining the original channels, we should actively use new media, new technologies, and new platforms to expand channels. At the same time, it is also necessary to establish institutional norms around the topics, methods, procedures, etc. of dialogue and consultation.

(5) Form a trust mechanism. "Although trust does not necessarily lead to cooperation, there is definitely no cooperation without trust". (Zhiyou & Cheng, 2016) The cooperative governance of network mass incidents in colleges and universities is a collective action based on the participation of multiple subjects. The cooperation among these subjects requires mutual trust as a foundation. In the past, most of the network mass incidents in colleges and universities were due to a lack of understanding and support for university decisions and actions. Even some measures and projects that had not yet been formally implemented, which were beneficial to the healthy development of the school and students, were strongly resisted by students. This was related to the lack of trust among multiple parties. Cooperative governance based on trust can enable all parties to reduce suspicion, mutual trust and understanding in dialogue and consultation, and accelerate the resolution of conflicts. Universities and teachers and students should actively participate in the construction of the social credit system, not only as practitioners of honesty and trustworthiness, but also as supervisors of credit, to create a strong atmosphere of campus integrity. Universities should establish a good image through mechanisms such as information disclosure, timely response, and dialogue and consultation, so that teachers and students have full trust in the school. In addition, honesty education should be strengthened within the school to guide students to value trustworthiness and keep promises.

(6) Strengthen the supervision mechanism. The orderly promotion of cooperative governance of network mass incidents in colleges and universities requires mutual supervision among various subjects as a guarantee. The cooperative governance of network mass incidents in colleges and universities is a joint action based on equality and mutual benefit, which involves conflicts and games of interests, which may cause deviations from public interests in the decision-making and actions of each subject. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a complete supervision mechanism to provide constraints for the cooperative governance of network mass incidents in colleges and universities. Each subject in such incidents should restrict and supervise each other according to their own actual situation and the resources they hold. Universities should take the initiative to "decentralize" and allow other subjects to participate in decision-making and actions. Teachers, students, and student groups should continuously improve their comprehensive quality and improve their ability to perform duties. Social organizations should use their own resources to strengthen supervision and guidance in areas such as public opinion supervision.

4. Conclusion

Cooperative governance is the embodiment of people's democracy throughout the whole process and social good governance, which is the trend of modern public governance. It adapts to the current reform and development trend of university governance models. Introducing it into the governance of network mass incidents in colleges and universities can not only provide new and scientific theoretical basis for studying the causes of network mass incidents in colleges and universities and resolving governance dilemmas, but also provide a new perspective for universities to improve their governance models, making the governance of online mass incidents in universities more representative of the times, grasp the law, and full of creativity.

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