

Empirical Study on the Role of Grass-Roots Party Organizations in Epidemic Prevention and Control in the Universities—Take Guangdong Universities as an Example

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Abstract: At present, the epidemic prevention and control has entered the normalization stage. Summarize the experience in the prevention and control of epidemic diseases in the previous stage, and draw important enlightenment from them is important. When dealing with major risks, we should adhere to the party's comprehensive leadership, follow the correct guidance of public opinion and use science and technology to fight the epidemic. So as to further strengthen and improve the self-construction of grass-roots party organizations in colleges and universities, and refute the attempts of western countries to politicize, stigmatize and ideologically trace the virus. Providing experience and reference for the scientific prevention and control of the epidemic means so much to everyone and the final victory.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 broken out in January 2020 is the most serious epidemic in the world in the past 100 years. This year, there has been a serious resurgence in the epidemic on an international scale, and the variant of COVID-19 virus, Delta, which is more contagious with higher viral load, ravages the world and now spreads to more than 140 countries and territories. The current round of the epidemic has also affected China, spreading to more than 10 provinces and cities, including Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Zhongshan, Dongguan and other places in Guangdong Province. The stage victory against the epidemic achieved by our country is now facing a serious challenge again. The lives and health of the people and economic and social development are once again threatened. Colleges and universities with large population density have always been the top priority of the epidemic prevention and control work. The successful experience of epidemic prevention work in colleges and universities in the early stage shows that giving full play to the crucial role of primary-level Party organizations is a solid guarantee for effective prevention and control of epidemic. At the critical moment when the epidemic resurges repeatedly, summing up the role and practice of primary-level Party organizations in colleges and universities in epidemic prevention and control is conducive to providing experience for scientific epidemic prevention and control in the future.

2. The Research Status and Trend of the Role of Primary-Level Party Organizations in the Epidemic Prevention and Control in Colleges and Universities

At present, there are few research results on the role of primary-level Party organizations in epidemic prevention and control in colleges and universities. The existing research results mainly focus on the organizational construction of primary-level Party organizations in colleges and universities in epidemic prevention and control, exploring how to improve political stance, take the initiative, strengthen confidence, stabilize people, and give full play to the crucial role of primary-level Party organizations. Although preliminary results have been achieved, they are not comprehensive and in-depth enough in summarizing the role, in terms of political leadership,

ideological leadership and organizational combat power, played by the primary-level Party organizations of colleges and universities in the anti-epidemic process, and most of them stay at the theoretical level and lack of empirical research. According to the general requirements of comprehensively strengthening Party building and improving Party leadership in the new era, this research summarizes the role played by primary-level Party organizations in colleges and universities during epidemic prevention and control and refines the experience and enlightenment to further expand the research fields, enrich the theoretical content of Party building in colleges and universities, make up for, to a certain extent, the lack of research on the role of primary-level Party organizations and how they play the role in colleges and universities in dealing with major risks, so as to provide some reference for strengthening the construction of primary-level Party organizations in colleges and universities and improve the grass-roots governance.

3. The Arduous Task Faced by Colleges and Universities in Epidemic Prevention and Control

The task of preventing import from outside and preventing proliferation inside colleges and universities is very arduous, which has two characteristics of high risk and high difficulty. The characteristics are manifested in four aspects. First, the number of college people is large. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Education, in 2020, there were 2738 colleges and universities in China, with a total enrollment of 41.83 million students in various forms of higher education and a total of 1.833 million full-time teachers [1], with an average of 15,900 full-time teachers and students per university. Second, the population composition of colleges and universities is complex. It covers not only students, faculty and staff, but also their family members, social workers who buy school housing and live on campus, tenants, property management staff, cooks, security guards, cleaning staff, construction workers of infrastructure projects, etc. They are under the management of many different functional departments, so if lack of unity and coordination, it is very easy to result in loopholes for epidemic prevention and control. Third, the trajectory of intensive crowd activities in colleges and universities is highly overlapping. College staff and students often gather at overlapping times in relatively confined places such as classrooms, laboratories, lecture halls, libraries, dining halls, and dormitory buildings, where the probability of a mass epidemic infection is extremely high. Fourth, the social mobility of university staff and students is high. College staff and students, especially students, come from all over the country, including Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, and many international students come to China. They leave and return to school during winter and summer holidays and festivals, and go out for daily internship and social practice, etc. They will pass through areas with different epidemic conditions, and there is a possibility of getting COVID-19 on their way to and from school. Fifth, colleges and universities are not prepared enough to deal with the psychological crisis. The outbreak may trigger an emergency psychological response or psychological crisis, or even lead to the group panic, but colleges and universities generally lack sufficient counseling professionals and effective programs to deal with the group psychological crisis.

There are 154 colleges and universities in Guangdong Province. Under the unified leadership of Guangdong Provincial Party Committee, Provincial Party Committee of Education and Party Committee of each university, each primary-level Party organization actively responds to the call of General Secretary Xi Jinping, attaches great importance to the ideology, raises the political stance, and effectively takes winning the epidemic prevention and control work as the major political task and the most important work at present. They are brave enough to take responsibility, take the lead in setting an example, charge ahead, give full play to strong political functions and organizational power, and strive to fight on the front line of epidemic prevention and control, which shows the good image of primary-level Party organizations and Communist Party members with practical actions, and build a solid defense line for epidemic prevention and control. In the meantime, although there have been cases of COVID-19 transmission in some colleges and universities, they can be successfully controlled in a short time, which provides us with experience and model of epidemic prevention and control in colleges and universities. Therefore, this research group visited the relevant persons in charge of the primary-level Party organizations of universities in Guangdong, such as South China Normal University, Guangzhou University of Chinese Medicine and Guangdong University of

Foreign Studies. This research group also looked up news reports on epidemic prevention and control in Guangzhou Xinhua University (Dongguan Campus), Guangdong Industry Polytechnic, Xinghai Conservatory of Music and other universities to know the basic practices and experiences of epidemic prevention and control of primary-level Party organizations in colleges and universities in Guangdong province.

4. The Role Played by Primary-level Party Organizations in the Prevention and Control of Epidemic Situation in Colleges and Universities in Guangdong

4.1. Lead and Organize the Campus Epidemic Prevention and Control, and Exert the Role of Political Leadership

After the outbreak of COVID-19, General Secretary Xi Jinping made important instructions: “Party committees and governments at all levels and relevant departments should put the lives and health of the people in the first place, develop a thorough program, organize all forces to carry out prevention and control work, take practical and effective measures to resolutely curb the momentum of the spread of the epidemic” [2]. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) then issued a Notice on Strengthening the Leadership of the Party and Providing Strong Political Assurance for Defeating the Covid-19 Outbreak. explicitly calling for strengthening the leadership of the Party in the prevention and control of the epidemic. This plays an important role in containing the spread of the epidemic and stabilizing the overall situation.

The outbreak is an order, and prevention and control are a responsibility. The primary-level Party organizations of colleges and universities in Guangdong reacted quickly, showed strong political consciousness and political responsibility, and consciously raised their political stance. They are deeply conscious of the need to maintain political integrity, think in big-picture terms, follow the leadership core, and keep in alignment with the central Party leadership. They stay confident in the path, theory, system, and culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics. and uphold the core position of the General Secretary on the Party Central Committee and in the Party as a whole, and uphold the Central Committee’s authority and its centralized, unified leadership. They resolutely implement the important speeches and instructions of General Secretary Xi Jinping on the prevention and control of COVID-19 and unify thoughts to the decision and deployment of the Central Party Committee. They strictly implement the epidemic prevention and control requirements of local governments, get fully mobilized and deployed, guide ideological actions with wartime thinking, and deal with small probability events with bottom-line thinking and high probability thinking, so that all departments abide by their duties. The primary-level Party organizations of colleges and universities in Guangdong set up leading groups for epidemic prevention and control at the first time, formulated epidemic prevention and control plans, clarified the division of labor, strengthened responsibilities, and gave full play to the key role of primary Party organizations and the pioneering and exemplary role of party members and cadres. They focus on coordination, set up a task force for epidemic prevention and control, establish problem lists, task lists and responsibility lists, organize the prevention and control work, and provide clear and definite action guidelines for the primary-level Party branches. They set up Wechat groups for persons in charge of party organizations of all secondary units for epidemic prevention and control, hold regular meetings on epidemic prevention and control, send work notices and tips as soon as possible, adjust prevention and control measures according to the situation, and promote various work of the school in an integrated way to form a strong synergy between the whole school from the upper to lower levels. They resolutely implement the requirement of “suspending classes without stopping learning and teaching”, vigorously develop online resources, and carry out online and offline teaching activities. They promote epidemic prevention by technology, relying on the smart campus network platform, and using big data technology to grasp the whereabouts and health status of teachers and students, so as to ensure that the returning to school and online teaching work are carried out in a safe, smooth and orderly manner. They actively carry out emergency disposal drills, pay attention to the psychological guidance of students during the epidemic, further expand the psychological assistance team, strengthen the

learning of professional psychological knowledge, carefully identify students' psychological problems, intervene in a timely manner and provide the necessary volunteer psychological counseling services.

4.2. Build Consensus to Boost Confidence and Give Play to the Guiding Role of Thinking

The Party's ideological leading power is mainly reflected in the its promotion of theoretical innovation and the adoption of such theories to arm minds, unify thoughts, guide practice, and resist wrong ideas [3]. In the fight against the epidemic, ideological leadership shall be strengthened to ensure that the whole Party is highly unified in thinking, clear-headed in politics and firm in action, and that people of all ethnic groups in China work with the Party in one heart and one mind to win the people's overall battle against the epidemic.

(1) Take the education with the theme of "Stay true to our original aspiration and keep our mission firmly in mind" and the study of Party history as an opportunity to build consensus among teachers, students and Party members that the battle against the epidemic must gain a complete victory. In the thematic learning education of normalization, the aim of teachers, students and Party members clearly learning about the themes of 100-year Party history is for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, is to bear the original mission in mind, firm ideals and beliefs, practice the purpose of the Party, and make unremitting efforts to realize people's yearning for a better life! In the face of such serious epidemic throwing great damage to people's life, health and safety, grass-roots Party organizations at all levels and Party members in colleges and universities should be in firm response to the CPC Central Committee, shouldering responsibility, leading from the front, grasping the nettle, thus to give full play to the role of Party branches as a battle stronghold and the role of Party members as exemplary models. All those mentioned shall be regarded as an important standard to check the results of the thematic education of "Stay true to our original aspiration and keep our mission firmly in mind" and the study of Party history.

(2) Strengthen the construction of publicity positions and do a good job in public opinion guidance and ideological work. Make full use of all kinds of publicity positions and media platforms to vigorously advertise the Party's major decisions and arrangements. Guarantee the conveying of the information to the public, so that people can timely understand and identify with the Party's policies. Make sure the teachers, students and staff attach deeper and greater importance to the current situation of the epidemic and the follow-up prevention and control work, creating a unifying atmosphere of public opinion, providing ideological guarantee for maintaining social stability and winning the battle of epidemic prevention and control. Strengthen the control of online public opinions. Guarantee the timely delivery of official information, the refutation of rumors, the response to hot topics, and especially the exposure and disproof of the recent conspiracy of the US-led western countries for they caused the epidemic politicalization, brought the malicious discredit on China, trying to make China a scapegoat. Great efforts shall be made to create an overall environment of social opinions to consolidate and strengthen the effect and results of epidemic prevention and control. Great emphasis shall be put on the monitoring and early warning of public opinion to guarantee the timely detection of social hot spots and public opinion emergency online, thus to prevent the crisis of public voice caused by the improper handling of small matters fermented and amplified on the internet, which may cause social instability, affecting the general situation of epidemic prevention and control. Resolute fight shall be made in accordance with the law to against rumors, slander and alienation between the Party and the people, as well as endangerment upon social stability and epidemic prevention and control.

(3) Share touching deeds and tell good anti-epidemic stories. For the publicity of the vivid stories of positive energy at the frontline, the way of report shall be welcomed and easily accepted by the public. Dig deeper into the school about the moving stories of teachers and students involved in COVID-19 resistance. Glorification shall be made to the advanced models for people to learn, thus to create reputation and enlarge the influence and charisma of them. Give full play to the role of positive models in inspiring and motivating people. Organize preaching team and tell good Chinese stories of anti-epidemic in accordance with the mechanism of first class of ideology and politics by

secretary and headmaster(dean) as well as Party class taught by members of general Party branch, thus to advocate the spirit of resistance to COVID-19. Perfectly clarify the governing concept of CPC that “life first and people first”, the notable achievement of China's resistance to epidemic and the contribution to the world by comparing with western anti-epidemic situation, through which the superiority of the socialist system is reflected. Make thorough explanation about why the CPC “can”, why Marxism “works”, and why socialism with Chinese characteristics is “excellent”.

4.3. Build a Tight Defense Line for Public Prevention and Governance and Give Play to the Organizational Power of the Masses

(1) Mobilize the masses to actively participate in campus epidemic prevention and control. At the beginning of the outbreak, the primary-level Party organizations of universities in Guangdong issued an initiative to all teachers, students and staff, urging them to actively respond to the call, improve their political consciousness, unify their thoughts, maintain the confidence, with no slack, no relax and no fear for difficulties, actively participating in the people's war against the epidemic. In the form of theory study group of the Party committee (Party), “three meetings and a lesson” of the Party branch, thematic Party (group) activities, micro class of Party (group), class meeting and so on to organize the masses to study a series of important instructional spirits against epidemic proposed by Xi Jinping, general secretary of CPC. Grasp the latest information of outbreak and give rise to the climax of advanced learning. Firm the confidence to fully follow the leading of Party to win the battle against the epidemic. Primary-level Party organizations in colleges and universities have adopted a combination of vertical management and grid management for epidemic prevention and control, covering all areas from functional management departments and second-level units to classes, dormitories, construction sites and logistics service points, so as to avoid “blind areas” and “out-of-control points”.

(2) Primary-level Party organizations and Party members take the lead in leading the public to do a good job in campus epidemic prevention and control. A branch was a fort, and a Party member a flag. Centering on the anti-epidemic theme, primary-level Party organizations in colleges and universities actively carried out “four ones” activities: holding one special micro Party class, holding one organizational meeting, collecting one batch of anti-epidemic story materials, and building one “red firewall”. With the theme of “Let the Party flag fly high on the frontline of the battle against the epidemic” and “Let youth blossom where the Party and the people need it most”, the awareness of putting people's lives and health first can be strengthened, and the prevention and control work can be intensified on a regular basis. Carry out activities of “Identity in the light of an example, as the vanguard of resistance”. Demand Party members to wear Party emblems showing the identity, consciously accept the supervision of masses, and be the first to fight for their best based on their position. They shall take the lead in getting familiar with and abide by the policies and measures of campus epidemic prevention and control, to actively participate in epidemic prevention work, guide the teachers and students to enhance protective consciousness, develop good health habits and lifestyles, and actively cooperate with the school management, thus to form a good atmosphere of full participation in the fight against the epidemic.

(3) Organize the active participation of Party members and masses in volunteer service activities for epidemic prevention and control. At the critical moment of the epidemic, with the calling of the primary-level Party organizations in colleges and universities, many teachers, students and Party members rushed to the frontline of the epidemic as volunteers using their professional knowledge as the advantages. They could be seen busy in hospitals, streets, communities, villages and isolation places. In the campus, Party members and the public not only donated money and materials, but also actively participated in the volunteer work of guarding on the spots where teachers and students return to school, nucleic acid testing, vaccine injection and containment management. With a strong sense of responsibility, they fulfilled the mission with the original mind and ensured the implementation of the campus epidemic prevention and control measures.

5. Experience and Inspiration of the Work of Primary-level Party Organizations in Epidemic Prevention and Control in Colleges and Universities in Guangdong

5.1. Adhering to the Overall Leadership of the Party is the Fundamental Political Guarantee for the Success of Epidemic Prevention and Control in Colleges and Universities

Xi stressed that the most essential feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics is the leadership of Communist Party of China, and the greatest strength of the socialist system with Chinese characteristics is also the leadership of the Communist Party of China [4]. In addressing all kinds of risks, the overall leadership of the Party must be upheld. When people encounter a crisis, or is in needs, Party organizations at the grass-roots level should play strong political function and organizational power, based on their respective advantages and characteristic functions, to fully mobilize the masses, various social forces and social resources, and build the solid line of epidemic prevention and control. During the fight against COVID-19, the primary-level Party organizations in colleges and universities has fully performed the political responsibility, shouldered the fighting burden, and grasped the nettle in the process of resistance to epidemic. A complete chess is formed by efforts made in and out of campus. By effective coordination, these Party organizations fully play a leading role as the core, uniting all the Party members and masses to fight in the forefront. Therefore, Party flag is always flying highly in the whole process of epidemic prevention and control, resumption of school and all parts of career development, showing the strongest capacity of organization and fighting. Practice has proved that primary-level Party organizations are the most reliable backbone and political guarantee for effective epidemic prevention and control in colleges and universities.

5.2. Relying on the Masses and Taking the Mass Line is the Key to Effective Epidemic Prevention and Control in Colleges and Universities

The mass line is the lifeline as well as the fundamental work line of the Party. General Secretary Xi Jinping stressed, as long as we rely closely on the people, there is no difficulty that cannot be overcome, and there is no accomplishment that cannot be achieved[5]. The CPC is rooted in the people, with all strength coming from the people. Only when we have the support of the people can we successfully address the epidemic prevention and control, and win the final victory. The primary-level Party organizations of colleges and universities have implemented the people-centred philosophy and put the protection of safety and health of teachers and students in the first place. In leading the people to win the battle against the epidemic, the primary-level Party organizations of colleges and universities have always adhered to the Party's mass line and shared the same fate with the masses by relying on them, publicizing, mobilizing, organizing and uniting them. Meanwhile, they have also helped in educating the public on health and epidemic prevention, and tried every means to solve practical difficulties and relieve worries of the masses. In response, students and teachers understand and support the epidemic containment policies and measures in collaboration. They have become the main force of joint prevention and control, crowd prevention and treatment, voluntary service, logistic support, campus stability and social security protection, thus building a stringent line of defense against the epidemic in colleges and universities.

5.3. Enhancing Primary-level Governance Capacity of Party Organizations in Colleges and Universities is a Guarantee for the Effectiveness of their Epidemic Prevention and Control

The ferocious epidemic has posed huge challenges for the primary-level governance capacity of colleges and universities. The primary-level Party organizations should have both the ambition to resist the epidemic and the capacity to address the risk. Although their primary-level governance capacity has withstood the severe test of the epidemic and improved in all respects, gone through the process from fumbling to orderly response, and accumulated some experience, there are still deficiencies in coordination, emergency handling, service supply and psychological assistance. Such problems highlight the urgency and necessity to promote the modernization of the primary-level governance system and governance capacity of colleges and universities. For future improvement of the primary-level governance capacity, primary-level party organizations should strengthen their understanding and command of the laws on risk governance, make ideological, organizational, law-

based and material preparations to deal with risks across the board, so as to establish a set of risk response mechanism with strong leadership, quick reaction, open information sharing, clear responsibility, complete, science-based and efficient system. Only good preparation for risk handling enables organized prevention and response. By then, small risks can be prevented from growing into big ones by taking comprehensive measures. Therefore, establishing a strict prevention system in colleges and universities can effectively prevent major public crises like the Covid-19 epidemic.

5.4. Sticking to the Correct Guidance of Public Opinion and Achieving Consensus is the Ideological Basis for the Effectiveness of Epidemic Prevention and Control in Colleges and Universities

General Secretary Xi Jinping has repeatedly put forward clear directions and specific requirements for publicity on epidemic prevention and control, pointing out that it should provide public opinion support for the final victory in the battle against the epidemic, and also function in educating the youth in the long run. In the face of the epidemic, primary-level Party organizations in colleges and universities have given full play to the Party's fine tradition and advantages in carrying out ideological education, worked hard to raise the effectiveness of publicity, education and public opinion guidance on epidemic response, and played a significant role in winning the battle of epidemic prevention and control based on distinguishing right from wrong, strengthening confidence, reinforcing solidarity. It has been proven that in the course of epidemic prevention and control, open and transparent information is a prerequisite for them to join hands in solving public crises and an important link in achieving all the results during the epidemic containment. As the major concerns of teachers and students, it helps gain their trust, achieve consensus, and gain their understanding and support. Focusing on public opinion monitoring, strengthening ideological work, and taking the initiative and a greater say in ideology are necessary means to cope with international, domestic, online and offline public opinions, words and actions that endanger social stability and epidemic prevention, and to maintain campus stability and social security. Effective approaches to motivating people include promoting and reporting role models on media and telling stories of China's fight against the epidemic.

5.5. The Application of Big Data Technology Provides Technical Support for Effective Epidemic Prevention and Control in Colleges and Universities

With the advent of the big data era, the "Internet +" model has been widely adopted in all aspects of social life. It is proved in practice that, great results have been yielded in the application of big data information system by primary-level Party organizations of colleges and universities in campus epidemic response. Firstly, the application of health codes and itinerary codes has effectively helped communities and schools to prevent imported cases and spread within the country, thus strictly curbing the cross-border infection of the epidemic. Secondly, with the support of smart campus platforms, the development and use of mini programs such as "cloud check-in" and "health reporting" can locate the movements of teachers and students in real time. Accurate statistics and information on campus epidemic prevention, with early warning and reminder functions, are also provided by such mini programs in a clear, comprehensive, fast and efficient manner, so that they can help people discover and deal with problems timely, and provide technical support for the study of the epidemic situation on campus and targeted policy-making. Thirdly, by adopting new technologies such as the Internet and big data, teaching, meetings, organizational life, ideological and political education, mobilization for epidemic prevention endeavors, and release of containment measures can be carried out online in order, ensuring the normalcy of teaching, scientific research, management and services on campus during the epidemic. The establishment of big data concept and the use of big data technology have made the risk management of primary-level Party organizations in colleges and universities more intelligent and efficient.

6. Conclusion

The study on the experience of primary-level Party organizations of colleges and universities in epidemic prevention and control is a practical requirement for exercising full and strict governance

over the Party and strengthening primary-level Party organizations. It is also an important step in implementing the important guidance of General Secretary Xi Jinping that Party organizations at all levels, Party members and cadres should play an active role in combating the epidemic, and enhancing the capability of primary-level Party organizations in colleges and universities to address major risks. At present, as China's domestic epidemic situation has leveled off, and China has become the first country in the world that has successfully controlled the spread of Delta virus, Chinese colleges and universities have been taking epidemic containment measures on a regular basis. Drawn from the successful experience of fighting the epidemic in the previous period, it is clear that primary-level Party organizations in universities and colleges can function as the backbone of campus epidemic control in terms of political leadership, ideological leadership and mass mobilization, achieving consensus in boosting confidence, and building stringent lines of defense across society. Therefore they are able to transform the Party's political advantage, organizational advantage and advantage of closely relating to the masses into a strong political advantage in epidemic resistance, and make every effort to guarantee the safety and health of students and faculty members. In this regard, it is important to draw lessons from the above practice that primary-level Party organizations of colleges and universities should uphold the overall Party leadership, take the mass line, advance the effectiveness of primary-level governance, stick to the correct guidance of public opinions, and fight against the epidemic by means of technology, so as to further improve the overall quality of primary-level Party organizations of colleges and universities by fixing weak links. This also contributes to refuting the attempts of western countries to politicize, stigmatize and ideologize the origin of the virus, and providing lessons for future regular epidemic prevention and control, and even for gaining the final victory in the people's war against the epidemic.

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