

Research on the Path of College Students' Participation in Micro-Services for Grassroots Social Governance

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Abstract: Against the backdrop of the accelerated advancement of the modernization of China's national governance system and governance capacity, the innovation of grassroots social governance has become a key link in building a social governance pattern of joint construction, joint governance, and shared benefits. As an important group with rich knowledge reserves, professional capabilities, and enthusiasm for service, college students' effective participation in grassroots governance can not only inject fresh vitality into community development but also serve as a crucial approach to achieving the goal of practical education. Promoting the integration of college students' volunteer services with grassroots social governance is conducive to advancing the modernization of grassroots social governance and realizing the aspiration for good governance in grassroots social governance. This paper focuses on "micro-services" as a new form of participation, and systematically explores the innovative paths for college students to engage in grassroots governance through theoretical analysis and practical investigation.

1. Introduction

In the process of modernizing China's contemporary social governance system, grassroots social governance, as the cornerstone of national governance, has become increasingly prominent in its importance. With the acceleration of urbanization and the profound transformation of social structure, grassroots communities are facing new challenges such as diversified service demands and complex governance tasks. Relying solely on government administrative forces is no longer sufficient to meet the people's new expectations for a better life [1]. Against this backdrop of the times, exploring effective paths for multiple subjects to participate in grassroots governance has become an inevitable requirement for advancing the modernization of the national governance system and governance capacity. As one of the most dynamic and creative forces in society, college students have unique advantages in participating in grassroots social governance. Contemporary college students generally possess high intellectual literacy and professional backgrounds, are full of enthusiasm for serving society, and are in a critical period of forming their worldview and outlook on life. Guiding college students to go deep into the grassroots, understand society, not only injects fresh blood and professional strength into grassroots governance, but also serves as an

important way to implement the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education and cultivate new-era talents who are capable of shouldering the responsibility of national rejuvenation. This paper aims to systematically construct the implementation path for college students to participate in grassroots governance through the "micro-service" model by means of theoretical analysis and practical investigation [2]. The research will focus on exploring issues such as how to establish a multi collaborative mechanism among universities, communities and governments, how to build a full-process capacity improvement system, and how to improve incentive and guarantee measures, in order to provide theoretical reference and policy suggestions for relevant practices.

2. Analysis of the Necessity of College Students' Participation in Grassroots "Micro-Services"

With the improvement of the quality and ability of the younger generation, the participation of college student volunteers in grassroots social governance has shown a "blowout" development trend, providing new ideas for the innovation of grassroots social governance mechanisms, and its energy and value are immeasurable. Therefore, against the backdrop of the rapid development of internet technology, how to better integrate college students' volunteer services with grassroots social governance is of great significance for advancing the modernization of the social governance system and governance capacity.

2.1 Empowering Value for Grassroots Social Governance

For grassroots social governance, the integration of college students' "micro-services" can effectively make up for the shortcomings of the existing governance system. Against the background of shifting governance focus downward and allocating resources to the grassroots, grassroots communities generally face challenges such as heavy tasks, insufficient manpower, and outdated methods [3]. As a large-scale and well-organized volunteer force, college students' "micro-services" can directly serve as an effective supplement to grassroots work forces. They can take on a large number of transactional and auxiliary tasks, such as digital entry of population information, organization of community cultural activities, distribution of policy promotion materials, and environmental beautification. These tasks, though seemingly trivial, are crucial: they can greatly reduce the administrative burden on community workers, allowing them to free themselves from tedious affairs and devote more energy to more complex and core community governance issues, thereby improving the operational efficiency of grassroots organizations as a whole.

Compared with traditional volunteer services, the core advantage of college students' "micro-services" lies in their professionalism and knowledge intensity. Universities are highlands of knowledge innovation, and college students are carriers of professional knowledge. Their participation enables the direct transfer of cutting-edge knowledge in fields such as law, psychology, education, medicine, art and design, and computer science to communities, addressing the "professional shortage" in grassroots governance. This "knowledge going to the grassroots" upgrades grassroots services from the simple "providing warmth" of the past to targeted "precision empowerment" that solves practical problems, significantly improving the professionalism of public services and residents' satisfaction.

In addition, college students can also bring vitality and innovation to communities. The entry of college students, a vibrant and energetic young group, into communities can inherently trigger fresh "chemical reactions". The "micro-projects" they organize, such as parent-child activities, festival celebrations, interest clubs, and sports competitions, can effectively attract residents of different age groups to step out of their homes, communicate with each other, and build platforms for residents' interaction. In this process, neighborhood relations are enhanced, residents' sense of community

identity and belonging are strengthened, and the community's "social capital" is accumulated. Meanwhile, college students have active thinking, strong awareness of innovation, and high acceptance of new technologies and concepts. Their presence exerts a "catfish effect" on grassroots work methods, which can drive and encourage community workers to update their concepts, learn new skills, and jointly explore new governance models that are smarter, more humanized, and closer to residents' needs [4].

2.2 The Educational Function for College Students' Own Growth

For college students' own growth, participating in grassroots "micro-services" is a profound social and practical course, and an indispensable key link for them to achieve all-round development and smooth socialization. College students in the "ivory tower" mostly gain their understanding of China from books and the Internet, which is often abstract and one-sided. "Micro-services" provide them with an excellent window to go deep into the grassroots, observe society, and understand national conditions. By personally participating in community affairs, they can truly perceive the complexity and diversity of Chinese society, understand the joys, sorrows, and real needs of ordinary people, and witness the implementation and effects of national macro-policies at the grassroots level. This "grounded" practice helps them get rid of unrealistic illusions, deeply understand the great changes taking place in China and the challenges it faces, thereby connecting their personal ideals more closely with national development and establishing a more solid sense of social responsibility and family-country feelings.

More importantly, "micro-services" constitute a complete process of applying theoretical knowledge to practice, as well as testing, reflecting on, and elevating knowledge in practice. Students may find that theoretical models in books need to be flexibly adapted to complex real-world situations; a seemingly simple community project requires coordinating multiple parties, communicating, and making compromises to advance. In this process, their comprehensive abilities—such as analyzing and solving problems, communication and coordination, teamwork, and emergency response—are fully exercised. These "real skills" honed in practice are crucial core competencies for any future career. At the same time, participating in "micro-services" is also an important driving force for college students' socialization process. They need to learn how to interact with residents and community officials of different ages, occupations, and backgrounds, understand the rules of social operation and the subtleties of human relationships, and face setbacks, resolve conflicts, and manage expectations. This process can effectively improve their social adaptability and emotional intelligence, helping them better complete identity transformation and psychological adjustment, and achieve a smooth transition from "campus person" to "social person" [5].

In addition, "micro-services" also provide college students with valuable opportunities for career exploration. By trying services in different fields in the community, they can discover their true interests and potential. One student may firm up their ambition to engage in social work while helping disadvantaged families; another may develop a strong interest in urban management after participating in community planning and research. This practice-based exploration helps students break through the limitations of their majors, broaden the boundaries of career imagination, plan their future development paths earlier and more clearly, and even inspire innovation and entrepreneurship ideas based on the real needs of the community.

3. Main Dilemmas of College Students' Participation in Grassroots Governance

Although college students' participation in grassroots governance is of great significance and their willingness is increasingly high, they still face multiple structural, institutional, and practical

dilemmas in the actual participation process. These intertwined dilemmas form a barrier that hinders the continuous improvement of the depth, breadth, and effectiveness of their participation. Specifically, they are mainly reflected in the following dimensions.

3.1 "Fragmentation" and "Short-Termism" of Participation Mechanisms

A systematic, stable, and regular institutional system for college students' participation in grassroots governance has not yet been established, and their participation behaviors show distinct characteristics of "fragmentation" and "project-based" engagement.

Firstly, there is a lack of institutionalized arrangements for participation channels. Currently, most college students' participation relies on temporary activities organized by university league committees, student affairs departments, or individual colleges, such as the summer "Three Goes to the Countryside" social practice, concentrated volunteer services on Lei Feng Memorial Day, or temporary pairing projects with a certain community. These activities often have a strong "campaign-style" nature and lack a stable, long-term interface embedded in the daily governance structure of communities. Communities rarely set up permanent positions or procedures specifically for connecting with college student resources, and universities have not fully integrated community participation into the compulsory components of talent training. This leads to college students' participation remaining superficial and failing to match the continuous and long-term needs of community work. Just as a community develops a rapport with a group of students, the activity ends, the participants are replaced, and everything has to start over—thereby increasing governance costs invisibly.

Secondly, the short duration of participation makes it difficult to address in-depth issues. Social practice during winter and summer vacations usually lasts only one or two weeks, while regular volunteer services are mostly conducted on weekends, with each session lasting just a few hours. Within such a short time frame, college students can only engage in superficial and easily visible activities, such as environmental cleaning, policy promotion, and consolation performances. However, the core issues of grassroots governance—such as neighborhood conflict mediation, community deliberation and consultation, long-term support for special groups, and community culture cultivation—require substantial time investment in field surveys, trust-building, in-depth understanding of problem contexts, and continuous follow-up. The short-lived "dragonfly skimming the water" style of participation prevents students from truly "sinking in" to grasp the complexity of community conditions and public opinions. Naturally, the effectiveness of their services remains superficial, failing to resolve deep-seated contradictions in grassroots governance.

A direct consequence of such "fragmented" participation is that college students' experiences and perceptions remain superficial, while the benefits gained by communities are also limited to the surface. It cannot establish an organic connection for continuous interaction and mutual growth between college students and communities, greatly restricting the effectiveness and significance of participation.

3.2 "Mismatch" and "Inefficiency" in Supply-Demand Matching

There is generally a huge "gap" between the services college students can provide and the real needs of grassroots communities, leading to supply-demand mismatch and resource waste.

On one hand, there is information asymmetry between supply and demand. When organizing activities, universities often start from the supply-side mindset of "what we have" and "what we can do", giving priority to students' majors, interests, and safety rather than first asking "what the community needs". This easily leads to the design of "wishful thinking" projects. For example, students from the School of Computer Science may be keen to develop a complex-function APP for

the community, while the community's real need may only be someone who can teach the elderly to skillfully use WeChat for registration and payment; students from the School of Economics may want to conduct large-scale regional economic research, while the community neighborhood committee may be troubled by how to manage the charging of electric bicycles in the residential area. Due to the lack of an in-depth and accurate pre-demand research mechanism, the services provided by universities are completely inconsistent with the "pain points" and "itch points" of the community.

On the other hand, there is a gap between students' capabilities and community needs. Although college students have the advantages of rich theoretical knowledge, active thinking, and high enthusiasm, they generally lack social experience, practical skills, and an understanding of grassroots work methods. Communities need "doers" who can get started immediately and solve specific problems, while most students are "potential talents" who still need guidance and training. For example, a community hoping to carry out aging-friendly transformation needs professionals who understand engineering design, can draw blueprints, and make budgets, but junior students majoring in relevant fields may not yet have such capabilities. This capability gap makes communities hesitant to accept college students. Sometimes, they need to invest a lot of manpower in management and guidance, which instead increases the burden on grassroots staff, making them regard college students' participation as "adding chaos" rather than "adding luster".

The mismatch between supply and demand not only dampens students' enthusiasm but also consumes the community's expectations and patience. In the end, it leads to the "inefficiency" of participation, or even makes it a mere formality.

3.3 "Weakness" and "Simplification" of Guarantee and Incentive Mechanisms

Sustainable participation relies on solid logistical guarantees and effective incentive mechanisms. However, the current support system is particularly weak in both aspects. In terms of guarantees, safety and funding are the two major "shortcomings". Safety risks are the primary concern for universities and communities. The personal safety of students when participating in off-campus activities, traffic safety, and even the conflict risks that may arise when mediating disputes, all make organizers walk on eggshells. Once problems occur, the attribution of responsibility is vague, which easily leads to disputes. Therefore, many universities tend to choose the least risky and most "safe" forms of activities, which objectively limits the depth and diversity of participation. Funding guarantees are also insufficient. There is a lack of stable and adequate sources for expenses such as transportation, meals, materials, and insurance for students' participation in activities. Some projects require students to pay out of their own pockets, which undoubtedly dampens the enthusiasm of students with average economic conditions; while relying on temporary applications for funding support greatly undermines the sustainability of the activities.

In terms of incentives, the methods are overly "simplified" and lack effective conversion. Currently, the main incentive method is spiritual incentive, such as issuing volunteer service certificates and selecting "advanced individuals". This is effective in stimulating enthusiasm initially, but in the long run, its marginal effect will diminish. More importantly, college students' efforts have not been effectively linked to their substantive development interests. Although some universities have tried to connect social practice with academic credits, awards and evaluations, postgraduate recommendation, etc., the standards are often vague and the implementation is flexible, failing to form a rigid, transparent, and recognized evaluation system. Students invest a lot of time and opportunity costs, but it is difficult to convert these valuable practical experiences into persuasive "capital" for job hunting or further study, making it hard to sustain their internal motivation. For communities, there is also a lack of effective incentives for guidance teachers. Their

extra time and energy are not properly recognized and compensated, leading to a low willingness to provide guidance.

4. Implementation Paths for College Students' Participation in Grassroots "Micro-Services"

The effective implementation of college students' participation in grassroots "micro-services" requires the establishment of a systematic plan featuring multi collaboration, smooth operation, and strong guarantees. This plan should break through the limitations of the temporariness and fragmentation of traditional volunteer services, and build a complete closed loop from demand matching to effectiveness evaluation. This ensures that college students' participation can be truly integrated into the grassroots governance system, achieving sustainable and high-quality development. The construction of a systematic path needs to be advanced comprehensively from four dimensions—subject collaboration, project operation, capacity improvement, and incentive guarantees—to form an organically unified whole.

4.1 Establish a Long-Term Tripartite Linkage Mechanism among Universities, Communities, and Governments

The linkage of universities, communities, and governments can promote the orderly participation of college students' volunteer services in grassroots social governance. As the talent supplier, universities should establish a dedicated social practice guidance center, responsible for connecting with communities, building project pools, mobilizing and training students, and providing safety guarantees. This center needs to be staffed with full-time teachers, who are tasked with maintaining regular contact with communities, timely understanding changes in demands, integrating micro-service projects into the practical teaching system, and recognizing corresponding academic credits. As the demand side, communities should appoint college student micro-service liaison officers, who are responsible for collecting, screening, and releasing residents' demands, providing necessary venues, materials, and support for college students, while assisting in the daily management and service guidance of students. Government departments need to play a coordinating role by introducing supportive policies, providing funding guarantees, building regional volunteer service information platforms, and commending and rewarding outstanding projects and individuals.

Through the establishment of a regular consultation mechanism, the three parties can jointly study and solve problems encountered in the implementation process, ensuring that micro-service projects are accurately matched with community demands and aligned with regional development goals. This tripartite linkage mechanism can break the previous situation of separate operations and form a governance community featuring complementary advantages and resource sharing.

4.2 Establishing a Complete Closed Loop from Demand Collection to Effectiveness Evaluation

First, it is necessary to establish a precise demand collection mechanism. Through multiple channels such as community grid workers' visits, online questionnaires, and residents' councils, we will extensively collect the small wishes and service needs of community residents, especially special groups such as the elderly, children, and people with disabilities, and form a dynamically updated "community micro-demand list". Next is the project design stage. The collected demands need to be converted into standardized and modularized micro-service projects, with clear definitions of service content, required skills, time requirements, expected goals, etc. for each project. A project list will be formed for students to choose from. In the project implementation stage, digital tools should be fully utilized to develop dedicated mini-programs or APPs, enabling

the entire process of project release, application, recording, and management to be conducted online. Students can flexibly select service projects like "grabbing orders" based on their professional strengths and schedule, and the system will automatically match and generate service combinations. Finally, a scientific evaluation and feedback mechanism must be established. A multi-dimensional evaluation method combining service recipient assessment, community evaluation, and student self-assessment will be adopted, focusing on examining the actual service effect and residents' satisfaction. The evaluation results will be fed back to the project optimization and student incentive links, forming a positive cycle of continuous improvement.

The capacity improvement system is a key support for ensuring service quality, requiring the construction of a student empowerment mechanism covering the entire service process. Before the start of services, systematic pre-service training should be organized, including two parts: general ability training and professional skills training. General training mainly covers basic content such as service etiquette, communication skills, safety knowledge, and emergency handling; professional training, based on the needs of service projects, will invite relevant experts to conduct special skills training in areas such as elderly care, children's psychology, conflict mediation, and smart device operation. The training can combine online courses with offline workshops to ensure students master the necessary service skills. During the service process, a dual-mentor system should be implemented, assigning one university instructor and one community practice mentor to each service team. The university mentor is responsible for theoretical guidance and process control, while the community mentor takes charge of practical guidance and relationship coordination, jointly providing full-process guidance and support for students. Meanwhile, a regular communication mechanism should be established to organize students to share service experiences, discuss problems encountered, and learn from each other for improvement. After the service ends, students should be guided to conduct structured reflection. Through writing practical reports and holding achievement sharing sessions, students are helped to transform practical experience into internal capacity improvement, achieving the growth goal of integrating knowledge and practice.

4.3 Establishing Diversified Incentive Methods and Comprehensive Guarantee Systems

In terms of incentives, it is necessary to build a three-in-one incentive system integrating material incentives, spiritual incentives, and development incentives. Material incentives include basic guarantees such as transportation subsidies, meal allowances, and the purchase of accident insurance. Spiritual incentives cover honorary rewards like issuing service certificates, selecting outstanding volunteers, and publicizing exemplary deeds. Development incentives involve linking micro-service performance with developmental opportunities such as academic credit recognition, scholarship evaluation, and employment referrals, allowing students to truly feel the value of participating in services.

In terms of guarantees, a multi shared guarantee mechanism needs to be established. Universities should assume the main responsibility, integrate micro-services into the school's practical education system, and provide necessary funding and institutional guarantees. Communities should offer activity venues, facilities, equipment, and service guidance to create a favorable service environment. Governments should provide financial support through service procurement and project subsidies, and incorporate college students' participation in grassroots governance into local talent work plans. At the same time, special attention should be paid to establishing a risk management mechanism, formulating emergency plans, and purchasing adequate insurance for students to ensure the safe and orderly conduct of service activities.

At the individual level, a "three-self" cultivation mechanism for college students under the leadership of university should be constructed, that is, by strengthening the three dimensions of

self-education, self-management, and self-growth, guiding college students to actively participate in grassroots social governance through volunteer service activities. At the university level, attempts can be made to establish an enterprise-oriented operation mechanism for volunteer services through school-enterprise cooperation. Insufficient funds are a major factor hindering the development of college students' volunteer services. Through industry-education integration, universities can fully leverage their strong advantages in education and scientific research, and actively explore ways to transform these resources into effective support for college student volunteers to serve society. For example, through school-enterprise cooperation and platform construction, long-term service projects for college students to participate in grassroots social governance can be provided. At the government level, it is necessary to accelerate the improvement of the guarantee mechanism for college students' volunteer services. By establishing and improving the incentive system for college students' volunteer services, increasing financial support, and accelerating the construction of training mechanisms, the high-quality development of college students' volunteer service undertakings can be promoted, enabling them to better exert their effectiveness and role in grassroots social governance.

5. Conclusion

On the new journey towards the second centenary goal, grassroots social governance not only holds significant development momentum but also has profound practical significance. It serves as a crucial support and key link in advancing Chinese-style modernization. College student volunteers, as an important force in social volunteer services, are significant participants and practitioners in grassroots social governance. In the new era and new development stage, it is essential to fully recognize the value implications of effectively integrating college student volunteer services into grassroots social governance. By focusing on grassroots needs, building consensus among young people, implementing service projects, establishing service platforms, gathering multi efforts, and forming a long-term mechanism, college student volunteer services can be effectively embedded in the practical actions aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of grassroots social governance from the aspects of emotion, action, resources, and field.

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