

## Status, Issues, and Solutions of the Construction of Grassroots Party Branches in Colleges and Universities in the New Era

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**Supported by** the Innovation and Development Center of Ideology and Political Work in Colleges and Universities of the Ministry of Education in 2020: Research on the Path of Improving the Quality of Education of Grassroots Party Branches in Colleges and Universities in the New Era (Project No. 20XJSC20); Project of Research Center for Party Political Development of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology in 2021: Research on the Path of Deep Integration of Planning Party Construction and Work in Colleges and Universities in the New Era (Project No. Foundation GXZY2134); Project of Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities: Research on the Accuracy and Effectiveness of Strengthening the Construction of Grassroots Party Branches in Colleges and Universities in the New Era (Project No. DJY202015).

Received 1 January 2022; accepted 20 February 2022  
Published online 26 April 2022

### Abstract

Grassroots Party branches are the foundation for ensuring the implementation of Party's path, principles, policies, and decision-making arrangements. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the construction of the Party branches in colleges and universities has acquired some success but also faced some issues. In view of this, this article mainly focuses on the current status of the construction of the grassroots Party branches in colleges and universities in the new era, analyzes the issues of the construction, and finally provides suggestions and solutions to improve the preciseness and effectiveness of the construction.

**Key words:** Construction of grassroots party branches in colleges and universities; Current status; Issues; Solutions

Zhang, Y. F. (2022). Status, Issues, and Solutions of the Construction of Grassroots Party Branches in Colleges and Universities in the New Era. *Canadian Social Science*, 18(2), 40-45. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/css/article/view/12507> DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/12507>

As the cornerstone of Party construction, a solid foundation must be laid for the grassroots Party branches in colleges and universities in order for it to play a fighting role and a leading role strongly and firmly. The report of the 19<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) has clearly proposed to build grassroots Party branches, including the ones in colleges and universities, into 'a strong fighting fortress to spread the Party's ideology, implement the Party's decision, lead local governance, unite and mobilize the masses, and promote reform and development' (Xi, 2017). This requirement points out the fundamental direction and serves as an action guide for strengthening the construction of grassroots Party branches in colleges and universities.

### 1. ANALYSIS ON THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF GRASSROOTS PARTY BRANCHES IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES IN THE NEW ERA

With the birth of President Xi's ideology of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era, the construction of grassroots Party branches in colleges and universities has entered a new era. It further proposes to 'comprehensively promote the Party's political, ideological, organizational, workstyle, and discipline development, and to implement institutional development and further promote the anti-corruption work' (Xi, 2017).

Because of this, colleges and universities have actively carry out the construction of grassroots Party branches that meet the new requirements of the new era. Taking Northwestern Technical University as an example, the school adheres to the guidance of President Xi's ideology of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era, and deeply implements the spirit of the

19<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC. It gains a better understanding of the decisive significance of the ‘two establishments’. It enhances the ‘four consciousness’, strengthens the ‘four self-confidence’, and achieves the ‘two defending’. Considering the current situation of the University, following *The Guidelines for Key Tasks of ‘Mass Entrepreneurship and Innovation’ of Party Construction in Colleges and Universities in the New Era* and *The Implementation Plan for Taking the Party Construction in Northwestern Technical University as a Demonstration of Party Construction in Colleges and Universities*, and taking the ‘six excellency’ such as excellent direction and overall management as the standard, the university has accomplished the fundamental goal of building morality and cultivating people, carried forward the great spirit of Party construction, and given full play to the political key role of grassroots Party branches in order to do a good job in standardization and demonstration. It focuses on promoting ideological development and team and brand construction, and comprehensively promote the systematic construction of the school as ‘the demonstration of the Party construction in colleges and universities’ through the ‘six projects’ such as ideological education and ensured institutions. In conclusion, the construction of grassroots Party branches in colleges and universities in the era has some distinctive characteristics as follows:

### **1.1 Emphasizing Ideological and Political Development**

Colleges and universities should give full play to the political key role of the grassroots Party branches, combine with education of ‘never forget our original intention and remember our mission’ and the Party history, constantly strengthen the ideological and political development, earnestly fulfill the mission of ‘educating masses for the Party and cultivating talents for the nation’, and constantly improve the initiative, timeliness, and effectiveness of service for economic and social development. Northwestern Polytechnical University upholds the Party’s innovative theory to seize, strengthen, and expand the ideological battle field and to strengthen the development and management of various positions. It firmly grasp the leadership of ideological development, effectively integrates ideological education into school reform, development, and stability, teaching and scientific research, and daily management. The university improves the ideological education system, makes overall plans and promotions of it, and establishes a comprehensive accountability mechanism and a periodical report-and-examine system. It constantly improves the ideological and political development system of teachers and students and strengthens the dynamic analysis and discussion of their ideology and its education, guidance, and management. It also strengthens the development of the ethics and morality of teachers and strictly implements the ‘one-vote veto’. In recent years, survey has showed

that approximately 94% of college students believe that ‘happiness is achieved through hard work’, approximately 92% of them think that ‘national and collective interests should come first when they are in conflict with personal interests’ (Guo, 2019).

### **1.2 Paying Close Attention to the Construction of the Grassroots Party Branches in Colleges and Universities**

Since the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC, colleges and universities have actively promoted improving the quality of grassroots Party branches construction, continuously improves the cohesiveness and effectiveness of the grassroots Party branches, and consolidates the foundation of school management. Since Northwestern Polytechnic University was selected as the 2<sup>nd</sup> set of demonstration colleges and universities for national Party development, the university has paid close attention to the implementation of key tasks of grassroots Party development. Leaders of the university has actively participated in studies and discussions of elite leading groups, small-scale meetings, activities of the Party branches and strengthened investigation and guidance of the grassroots Party branches development. They have revised and improved the rules of procedures of the Party committee meetings and joint meeting of the Party and the government in the university, printed and distributed *The Compilation of Party Development System* and *The Work Manual for Recruiting Party Members*, and strived to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of Party development. The university holds regular meetings of the grassroots Party committee secretaries to discuss and guide the grassroots Party development, drafts the *Management of Grassroots Full-Time Organizing Staff of Northwestern Polytechnical University*, holds regular meetings with organizing staff, and strives to strengthen the construction of grassroots Party affair team. The university will strengthen the responsibility system for the grassroots Party branches development, evaluate and assess the Party development by the Secretary of the grassroots Party Committee (general Party branches) and the Secretary of the Party branch yearly, and encourage leading cadres to take on their roles. It will also supervises and examines the grassroots Party branches development and the ‘three meetings and one lesson’ in order to promote the standardization of the grassroots Party branches.

### **1.3 Standardization and Improvement of the Grassroots Party Branches Development in Colleges and Universities**

Since the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC, the Party committee in colleges and universities has paid close attention to strengthening and improving the grassroots Party branches development and made great efforts to build a standardized and comprehensive grassroots Party branches development system in schools. In May

2018, the Ministry of Education issued *The Opinions on Implementation of 'Benchmarking and Leading' the Construction of the Party Branches in Colleges and Universities* and *The Opinions on Implementation of the 'Double Leadership' Cultivation Project for the Secretary of the Party Branches among University Teachers* in order to improve the quality of the grassroots Party branches development in colleges and universities. The Central Committee of the CPC issued the revised *Regulations on the Grassroots Party Branches Development in Colleges and Universities of the CPC* ('Regulations' hereinafter) on April 16, 2021, emphasizing the need to comprehensively enhance the vitality of the grassroots Party branches in colleges and universities. In recent years, most colleges and universities have continuously improved the rules and regulations, and clarified the principles and procedures of the grassroots Party branches in accordance with the Party constitution and the 'Regulations'. They have constantly standardized daily activities of the grassroots Party branches, improved the Party branches development, and taken advantages of the Party development system higher to increase efficiency of the internal governance of colleges and universities. Many schools take the model of 'internet + Party development' to build a multi-level, wide-range, and multi-channel learning and education system for the Party members. They continuously strengthen educational management, improve the organizing, executing, and defending abilities of the grassroots Party branches through institutional advantages, and provide political assurance for the connotative and high-quality development of schools with high-quality Party development (Zhao, 2021).

#### **1.4 Enforcing the Disciplines and Rules During the Grassroots Party Branches Development**

*The Opinions on Strengthening and Improving Ideological and Political Work in Colleges and Universities under the New Situation* has emphasized that disciplines and rules should be treated as hard constraints throughout the whole process of the Party branches development...and external rules should be recognized as internal values. Recently, the grassroots Party branches development in colleges and universities has demonstrated that the discipline, rules, and constraints can be enforced during the developing process. Schools have constantly strengthened the political function of the Party branches, firmly established the 'four consciousness', strengthen the 'four self-confidence', resolutely achieve the 'two defending', and improve their understanding of politics. The grassroots Party branches in colleges and universities need to fulfill their duties, take responsibilities, and take the initiative to be 'responsible' for the Party development. As the person-in-charge, the Secretary of the Party branches should consciously strive to 'be responsible, take responsibility, and do their due diligence' of the branches. Activities of grassroots Party branches in colleges and universities are combined

with the central business work to provide services and guarantee for promoting the central work. We should pay attention to the implementation of the system in practice, follow the disciplines and supervise the implementation of discipline and accountability, and act in strict conformity with the rules and regulations. We should emphasize education of the Red Revolution traditions in daily education and management of teachers and students to help them form the correct ideology, cultivate their noble sentiments, and constantly strengthen a fine style of work and establish their awareness of rules (Wang, 2017).

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## **2. ISSUES IN THE GRASSROOTS PARTY BRANCHES DEVELOPMENT IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES IN THE NEW ERA**

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Under the guidance of President Xi's ideology of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era, there are some issues in the grassroots Party branches development in colleges and universities despite its great progress.

### **2.1 Limited Forms of Ideological and Political Education**

We have found, through studies and investigations, the ideological and political education is too shallow in some colleges and universities in the new era. Some grassroots Party branches in schools have only one way to carry out the ideological and political education, despite the new requirements, guidelines, and suggestions proposed in the new era. They still take traditional preaching form with repetitive indoctrination. They are conservative in the ways and methods of Party developing activities and adopt the traditional forms of 'you read and I listen', which lacks of attractiveness and results in a shallow understanding of the material for the students and teachers. The content of this education is boring and sparse. It lacks of pertinence and is poorly organized. This leads to a low participation of students and teachers. With already heavy tasks of learning and scientific research, it is difficult for students and teachers to concentrate on studying the Party's theoretical knowledge systematically.

### **2.2 Lack of Integration Between Organizational Construction and Central Work**

In July 2019, the General Secretary Xi Jinping has stressed during the conference of the central and state Party development, "We should handle the relationship between Party development and professions, and plan, deploy, implement, and examine the Party development and professional work together". The Party development and professional work are interrelated and should be unified. Better Party development can provide strong political assurances for professional work. Currently,

integration between grassroots Party branches development and professional work in some colleges and universities is rather weak, and the phenomenon of ‘two layers of skin’ still exists. For example, some schools and departments still value teaching and research more than the Party development, and value academic scientific research more than ideological and political education. The problem of ‘too much talking and too little action’ still exists in the Party development. The cooperation between the grassroots Party branches development and school administration is insufficient, which has affected the effectiveness of the grassroots Party branches development.

### **2.3 Low Quality and Lack of Ability of the Grassroots Party Members**

A high-quality professional team of the grassroots Party branches is needed to promote the development of colleges and universities. The imitativeness, consciousness, and service of the Party members directly affect the effectiveness of the grassroots Party branches development. Some Party members and cadres pay little attention to study of the Party’s theory, ignore education of Party’s spirit, and have relatively low comprehensive quality, which delays the grassroots Party branches development. Some Party staff lack understanding of the importance of the Party development in the government, confuse the Party development with organized learning, lack of initiative, responsibility, enthusiasm, and passion for the Party development, and don’t want to deal with the Party activities or studies. Some grassroots Party branches ‘only focus on the quantity and forget about the quality of the Party development, and lack of comprehensive understanding of the ideology. Issues such as “empty talk comes first, and practice comes second or even ignored” and the idea of “value development over the Party construction” still exist in the Party development’ (Wang, 2017). In addition, the connection between the grassroots Party branches development and the masses is still weak or nonexistent in some colleges and universities. The awareness of the Party branches of actively connecting and serving students and teachers needs to be further strengthened.

### **2.4 Weak Supervision and Management of the Party Conduct and Governmental Corruption**

The grassroots Party branches in colleges and universities are the basis for schools to promote all kinds of work. We need to take advantages of its role as a fighting fortress, and it is of great significance in actively promoting the development of the Party style and an honest clean government. Unfortunately, some grassroots Party branches in colleges and universities lack understanding of the construction of an honest and clean government. This lack of understanding or misunderstanding of the final goal has led to deviation in their developing directions. For example, some colleges and universities only organize teachers and the Party members but not students to visit the anti-corruption education base. The publicity and

coverage of such education in schools are not enough. The role of the grassroots Party branches as a fighting fortress has not been fully played in some colleges and universities. For example, the implementation of ‘selecting the best leader to strengthen its leadership of the grassroots Party branches’ in some colleges and universities is still lacking. The ‘three meetings and one lesson’ system has not been followed in the long term, resulting in unsystematic and incomprehensive learning. Some branches have replaced the Party’s theory learning with discussion of professional discussion, making the lessons a mere formality. Due to the imperfect management system in some colleges and universities, the grassroots Party branches have affected the development of the Party style and an honest and clean government.

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## **3. PRACTICE AND INNOVATION OF THE GRASSROOTS PARTY BRANCHES DEVELOPMENT IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES IN THE NEW ERA**

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The grassroots Party branches in colleges and universities are the important organizational foundation of the Party’s governance, the basic project of comprehensively and strictly governing the Party, the ‘last kilometer’ between the Party and the people, and the direct promote of teaching, administration, logistics and other work (Yang, Di, and Tian, 2021). Strengthening the preciseness and effectiveness of the grassroots Party branches development in colleges and universities is prominent and of great significance for the nation in the new era with new requirements.

### **3.1 Uphold the Party’s Political Development as the Top Priority and Lead High-Quality Development With High-Quality Grassroots Party Branches Development**

“The Party’s political development is the fundamental development of the Party. Viewing the Party’s political development with the utmost importance has been the proposition of the CPC as a Marxist Party and the Party’s fine tradition since its establishment” (Geng, *et al*, 2021). The grassroots Party branches development should uphold the Party’s political development as its top priority. Firstly, we should consciously strengthen the “four ideologies”, adhere to the “four self-confidence”, and achieve the “two defending”. We need to unswervingly implement the decisions and deployment by the Central Committee of the CPC with practice and hard work, take the lead in exercising the political character of absolute loyalty to the Party, and implement the decisions and deployment by the Central Committee of the CPC. Secondly, we need to strengthen our ideals, beliefs, and political identity, seriously study and understand the rich connotation of President Xi’s idea of socialism with Chinese

characteristics in the new era, increase our understanding of Marxism, and always follow the correct political direction. Thirdly, we must stand firmly by the people, always put students and teachers at the top of our minds, serve them wholeheartedly, and enhance their senses of acquisition, happiness, and security. Lastly, we must pay attention to the political requirements of personnel selection and employment and implement the emphasis on politics in specific professions. We must be a striver, a real doer, and lead and promote professional development with the Party development (Commentator of Xinhua News Agency, 2019).

### **3.2 Focus on the Construction of “Organizational System” and Promote Deep Integration Between the Developments of the Grassroots Party Branches and Professional Work**

A well-organized grassroots Party branch system will lead to a firmly consolidated ruling foundation for the Party and give full play to its role as a fighting fortress and to the Party members’ role as vanguards and pioneers. Focusing on the construction of “organizational system”, we must promote deep integration between the developments of the grassroots Party branches and professional work. Firstly, we need to strengthen our political awareness, act well as the ‘last kilometer’ of implementing the decisions and deployment of the Central Committee of the CPC, and plan and promote the grassroots Party branches development while considering the overall situation of colleges and universities. We should not “value profession over politics” or break away from professional work completely so as to ensure that the grassroots Party branches development always follow the correct political direction. Secondly, we need to give full play to the exemplary, leading, and fighting fortress role of the grassroots Party branches in colleges and universities. We must play a leading role in implementing the decisions and deployment of the Central Committee of the CPC, establish a comprehensive grassroots governance system with “unified leadership of the Party branches, active coordination among various organizations, and extensive participation of teachers and students”, and improve the organizational strength and cohesion of the grassroots Party branches. Lastly, we should continuously promote the innovation of Party development, expand the coverage of the Party branches, select exemplary examples of integrated development between the Party branches and professional work, and adhere to the dual-assessments of the grassroots Party branches development and professional work (Commentator of Xinhua News Agency, 2019).

### **3.3 Adhere to the Party’s Organizational Path in the New Era and Cultivate a Loyal, Honest, and Responsible Team of High-Equality Cadres**

New and higher requirements for the Party’s organizational construction and cadres have been proposed

in the new era. The key is to strengthen the preciseness and effectiveness of the grassroots Party branches development in colleges and universities, implement the Party’s organizational path in the new era, and cultivate a loyal, honest, and responsible team of high-quality cadres. Firstly, we need to guide young cadres to strengthen their understanding of the Party’s ideology, help them accumulate experiences, and improve their skills. We should increase their training, focus on cultivating knowledgeable leading cadres with professional background, implement the cadres’ cultivation through all stages of their growth, and insist on a comprehensive training to make them grow and grow continuously within the Party so that they become the main forces with great responsibilities. Secondly, we must improve the assessment and investigation process of the cadres and select and employ personnel accurately and scientifically. The grassroots Party branches in colleges and universities need to strengthen its comprehensive assessment of cadres’ political education, professional ethics, ability and capability, performance, integrity and self-discipline by listening to reports, examining the papers, and having private conversations to make more accurate, scientific, and effective assessment. Lastly, we should educate and guide cadres to enhance their understanding of the Party’s spirit and establish a comprehensive supervision and management system of the cadres in order to achieve a strict and effective management of them (Geng, et al, 2021).

### **3.4 Unremittingly Enforce the Implementation of the System and Effectively Improve the Quality and Level of the Grassroots Party Branches Development**

The comprehensive implementation is the key for a system to work. The grassroots Party branches in colleges and universities should unremittingly strengthen the implementation of the system. Firstly, our primary political task is to study, publicize, and implement the *Regulations on the Grassroots Party Branches Development in Colleges and Universities of the CPC*. We should seriously study and publicize it, focus on its implementation, and constantly improve its standardization and scientization level. We need to provide assurances for implementing the fundamental task of establishing virtues and educating the young and for promoting the high-quality development of education. Secondly, we should plan the top-level design of the system well, which is the key factor of determining the effectiveness of the system implementation, give full play to the overall functional and effectiveness of the system, and constantly improve and develop during the problem solving process. Lastly, we must enhance the refinement of the system implementation, such as strictly implementing the organizational life and institution, and the deliberation and decision-making system of the

Party and government leading groups of colleges and departments, strictly carrying out the Party's discipline and regulations, comprehending the mechanism of discipline supervision and assessment, and strengthening supervision, discipline enforcement, and accountability.

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