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Building a Think Tank Brand Postprint through “Three Major Constructions”

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Abstract

Abstract: [Purpose/Significance] As a major force in the new type of think tank system with Chinese characteristics, Party School think tank construction must forge a scientific development path characterized by accurate positioning, distinctive features, and remarkable effectiveness. [Method/Process] Grounded in its actual conditions, the Shanghai Municipal Party School of the CPC has actively implemented the Central Committee’ s “Opinions on Strengthening the Construction of New Type of Think Tanks with Chinese Characteristics,” taking the “Three Major Constructions”—categorized construction, integration of teaching-research-consultation, and brand building—as breakthrough points to continuously advance the new think tank construction to new heights and levels. [Results/Conclusion] In recent years, our institution’ s think tank achievements have not only received numerous instructions from Shanghai’ s main leaders, but have also gained considerable recognition from central leadership, playing an active and unique role in serving decision-making for both Shanghai and the central government.

Full Text

Focusing on “Three Major Constructions”to Build a Think Tank Brand

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] As a major force in the new type of Chinese-characteristic think tank system, party school think tanks need to forge a path of scientific development with accurate positioning, distinctive features, and remarkable results. **[Method/Process]** Based on its actual conditions, the Party School of Shanghai Committee of CPC has actively implemented the Central Committee's *Opinions on Strengthening the Construction of New Types of Think Tanks with Chinese Characteristics*, using “Three Major Constructions”—classification construction, integration of teaching-research-consultation construction, and brand building—as breakthrough points to continuously promote the new-type think tank construction to higher levels. **[Result/Conclusion]** In recent years, our think tank results have not only received numerous instructions from Shanghai's main leaders but also considerable affirmation from central leadership, playing a positive and unique role for local party schools in serving decision-making for both Shanghai and the central government.

Keywords: new type of think tanks; classification construction; integration of teaching-research-consultation construction; brand building

Classification Number: D602

The think tank construction of the Party School of Shanghai Committee of CPC has consistently adhered to the functional positioning entrusted by the Party and government, striving to align with their requirements and expectations while matching the school's nature and functions. It aims to make achievements in serving local development and even central decision-making, endeavoring to become an important think tank with party school characteristics that is well-known in Shanghai and influential nationwide.

1 Classification Construction Based on Scientific Positioning

In forming think tank products, we base ourselves on requirements for foundational, forward-looking, and strategic research. According to our academic accumulation and research characteristics, we conduct classified research to form different types of decision-making consultation outcomes.

1.1 Transformation Research Supported by Academia

This type of research is mostly foundational theoretical research or research supported by academic principles, characterized by comprehensiveness and trend analysis. It mainly derives from the transformation of national or provincial/ministerial-level project research results, mostly focusing on major theoretical and practical issues of concern to central leadership. Over the five years since 2012, we have obtained 53 national social science fund projects (including 2 major projects). Some of these research results, such as “Current

Tendency Issues Worthy of Attention in the ‘Three Stricts and Three Earnests’ Special Education and Countermeasures” and “Survey Shows Party Cadres’ Political Mentality is Generally Good but Some Cognitive Biases and Tendencies Worthy of Attention,” have received instructions from central leaders, even members of the Central Standing Committee. There are also rational thinking achievements formed by theoretically refining and summarizing Shanghai’ s vivid typical experiences, such as “Optimizing Township Regime Construction through Deepening Budget System Reform” and “Countermeasures and Suggestions for Introducing Market-oriented Professional Managers in State-owned Enterprises,” which have received instructions from Shanghai’ s leadership.

1.2 Problem-Oriented Countermeasure Research

These outcomes have distinct applied and forward-looking characteristics, with some being applied and transformed in specific government work. This research has three main features: First, accurately grasping current social hot spots and difficult issues according to relevant document spirit; second, solid investigation and research, including both results from student seminars and joint follow-up research by teaching and research staff; third, scientific countermeasure thinking, with some being tasks directly assigned by leaders to directly serve local party committees and governments. Most of these research results have received affirmative instructions from local leaders. For example, “Problems and Solutions in the Construction of Shanghai Community Resident Committee Cadres,” “Two Suggestions on Talent Policies for Shanghai’ s Construction of a Science and Technology Innovation Center,” “Suggestions on Improving Underground Space Safety Levels,” and “Problems and Countermeasures in the Construction of Shanghai’ s 12345 Citizen Service Hotline Knowledge Base” have all received instructions from Shanghai’ s main municipal leaders. It is particularly worth noting that party school students are important resources for decision-making consultation research. On the one hand, they themselves are important forces in writing decision-making consultation reports and participating in research; on the other hand, their seminar activities and their status as research subjects are also vivid materials and important sources for generating various decision-making consultation results.

1.3 Comprehensive Research Led by Projects

These outcomes have comprehensive and strategic characteristics, mainly including decision-making consultation research projects publicly tendered or commissioned by national and Shanghai municipal departments, important decision-making consultation research tasks assigned by leaders, and school-level integrated teaching-research-consultation projects. This research often requires team collaboration and organizing multidisciplinary personnel participation, even mobilizing experts from different units inside and outside the party school system, featuring project team research. This type of decision-making consultation research can effectively leverage team efforts and plays a good guiding role

in cultivating party school teachers' cooperative research and collaborative 攻关 capabilities. The resulting outcomes are often highly substantial. For example, the “Research on Countermeasures for Deepening Reform of State-owned Enterprises and Reducing State-owned Shares to Supplement Social Security Funds during the 12th Five-Year Plan Period” was a task assigned by the Shanghai Municipal Decision-Making Consultation Committee and received full affirmation from Shanghai' s main municipal leadership at that time. The “Research on Expanding Grassroots Party Building Coverage and Enhancing Work Effectiveness” also received affirmation from Shanghai' s main leadership and was awarded first prize for outstanding research results in the 2011 annual survey project by the National Party Building Research Association.

2 Integration of Teaching, Research, and Consultation Under Systematic Thinking

Establishing and improving the integration mechanism of teaching, research, and consultation to achieve positive interaction among the three is not only a unique advantage of party school think tank construction but also an inevitable choice for planning central work under systematic thinking. As General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out at the National Party School Work Conference, “The Central Party School has many resources for developing think tanks, with relatively complete disciplinary settings, numerous experts and scholars, and especially rich student resources from various regions and departments, which can form advantages of teaching-learning mutual improvement, learning-learning mutual improvement, and multi-win symbiosis” [1]. It should be said that the above “three learnings” advantages (disciplines, scholars, students) of the Central Party School' s think tank construction are also common characteristics and potential for the development of party school think tanks at all levels.

2.1 Scientific Resource Allocation

The key to integrating teaching, research, and consultation lies in the scientific allocation of various elements and resources, including leadership systems, organizational management, human resources, financial resources, and policy resources. Two aspects are most critical: (1) Achieving scientific resource allocation in organizational carriers. First, forming a decision-making consultation research system with joint management by all departments: decision-making consultation management departments perform organizational coordination and service guarantee functions; decision-making consultation research functions are 下沉 to various teaching and research departments and incorporated into their work scope, forming a think tank construction pattern with whole-school participation and an open form of comprehensive deployment and joint management, ensuring the overall effective advancement of teaching-research-consultation integration. Second, establishing a specialized institution for decision-making consultation research—the Shanghai Development Research Institute: selecting and appointing a certain number of full-time decision-making consultation re-

searchers to strengthen key guidance, topic planning, concentrated 攻关, and long-term tracking research to form flagship products. (2) Achieving scientific resource allocation in the leadership system. Establishing a teaching-research-consultation integration leading group at the school level, with the executive vice president in charge as the leader and other leaders in charge of teaching and research business as deputy leaders, to strengthen overall coordination at the school level and apply the school's limited human, material, financial, and policy resources to the cutting edge of decision-making consultation research, solving problems of resource dispersion and insufficient focus in decision-making consultation research.

2.2 High-Level Content Integration

In party schools, the key to integrating teaching, research, and consultation also lies in the realization and effectiveness of integration in all aspects. Specifically, first is teaching integration. Through teaching-research-consultation integration projects, decision-making consultation research results are brought into the classroom to ensure the freshness and flexibility of course content; high-quality project research results and excellent scientific research achievements should also timely enter the classroom and approach students to achieve integration into teaching. In recent years, many new courses have been formed through the establishment and research of teaching-research-consultation integration projects. Practice has proven that these courses are more popular with students and give teachers more confidence. Second is academic integration. Making decision-making consultation results become sources of academic project research and important carriers of academic achievements; guiding teaching and research personnel to be good at incorporating issues from classroom teaching and student seminars into their academic research. The deep theoretical issues discovered in decision-making consultation research and the practical issues from the teaching front line and the practical problems raised by students are precisely the real questions that academic research needs to address and important sources of topic selection for academic research. Third is consultation integration. It is precisely through teaching integration and academic integration that there is a convergence point in decision-making consultation research, continuously expanding the connotation of teaching-research-consultation integration of “teaching raises questions, research solves problems, answers enter the classroom, and results promote development.” Decision-making consultation research results based on academic research and from the teaching front line often better touch social pain points and attract the attention of leaders and relevant decision-making departments.

2.3 High-Quality Outcomes

The ultimate standard for measuring the effectiveness of teaching-research-consultation integration is whether it can produce excellent courses, excellent research, and excellent consultation. First, teaching outcomes 精品化. Driven by

teaching-research-consultation integration, 精品课 construction has also achieved complete success, with the best example being two consecutive awards of 精品课 organized and selected by the Central Party School nationwide. In 2016, three teachers also obtained 精品课 and excellent courses from the National Academy of Governance. Second, academic outcomes 精品化. Taking only national social science fund project establishment as an example, our school currently has 55 national social science fund projects under research, ranking first among provincial party schools (administrative institutes) nationwide for five consecutive years. The number of academic papers reprinted by Renmin University' s newspaper and periodical reprint materials has ranked among the top three national cadre training institutions for many consecutive years (ranking alongside the Central Party School and National Academy of Governance) and first among provincial party schools. Third, consultation outcomes 精品化. This is reflected not only in the quality of decision-making consultation research results but also in the weight of provincial/ministerial-level decision-making consultation research projects, especially in the affirmative instructions received for decision-making consultation research results. Since 2010, our school' s decision-making consultation results have received instructions and adoption from central leaders including Central Standing Committee members and Shanghai' s main leaders.

3 Brand Building Through Pursuit of Excellence

In years of practice, our school has adhered to 同步 think tank construction and management innovation, strengthened classification construction on the basis of scientific positioning, strengthened teaching-research-consultation integration construction under the premise of systematic thinking, continuously liberated productivity, activated creativity, enhanced the core competitiveness of teaching-research-consultation integration, and strengthened think tank brand building with the concept of pursuing excellence, initially demonstrating think tank influence. On January 27, 2016, the "2015 China Think Tank Report" [2] released by the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Think Tank Research Center showed that the Shanghai Party School ranked eighth in systemic influence among national party, government, and military think tanks and tenth in professional influence in the national political construction field. According to the "Chinese Think Tank Influence Report 2016" [3] released by the Sichuan Academy of Social Sciences and the Chengdu Documentation and Information Center of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the Shanghai Party School ranked fifth in influence among local think tanks nationwide, with the top four being several local academies of social sciences: Shanghai, Beijing, Guangdong, and Sichuan, ranking first among provincial party schools and administrative institutes.

3.1 Highlighting Brand Effect Through the “Internal Reference Special Report” Platform

The “Internal Reference Special Report” is our school’s only internal reference directly submitted to the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee, founded over 10 years ago. In recent years, we have continuously standardized the compilation and reporting process of the “Internal Reference Special Report,” focused on diverse manuscript organization forms, achieved quality improvement and breakthrough effects, and formed a batch of results that have attracted high attention and adoption from the municipal party committee and government, becoming a 标志性 brand for decision-making consultation research. Recently, over 50% of our compiled “Internal Reference Special Reports” have received instructions from provincial/ministerial-level leaders. Many research results have become important references for relevant functional departments to formulate, adjust, and improve policies after being instructed by leaders, or important references for relevant systems to adjust work thinking. Additionally, we have compiled 73 decision-making consultation research results from the “Internal Reference Special Report” since 2010 and publicly published the book *Planning Shanghai*.

3.2 Expanding Brand Influence Through Cooperation and Base Construction

Strengthening cooperation and exchange is a basic experience in modern think tank construction. Utilizing Shanghai’s unique advantages in marketization, modernization, and internationalization, we are fully committed to building a new-type think tank that reflects party school characteristics and possesses Shanghai’s local advantages. First, strengthening connections and communication with party and government organs, universities, research institutes, and social think tanks, and deepening dialogue and cooperation with top domestic think tanks. Second, intensifying the construction of four municipal-level bases: party’s governance capacity building, administrative system reform and service-oriented government, party building research, and talent theory research, continuously launching a batch of valuable research results, playing the role of a new-type think tank, and continuously expanding social influence. Third, establishing cooperative research bases. Based on the principles of cooperation, mutual benefit, and win-win results, strengthening collaborative innovation with practical departments, and conducting strategic cooperation with Jiading and Yangpu district party committees and governments respectively to expand new forms of teaching-research-consultation integration realization. Fourth, expanding international exchange and cooperation channels, undertaking more international cooperation and exchange tasks, and shaping the window role of showcasing China’s and Shanghai’s reform and opening up. Currently, our school’s partners have spread across five continents worldwide, establishing cooperative relationships with 36 overseas institutions and organizations including Harvard University and Oxford University. For this reason, our school’s international

cooperation received full affirmation from Comrade Xi Jinping at the 2012 National Party School Principals Conference.

3.3 Shaping Brand Functions by Broadening Transformation Channels for Think Tank Outcomes

We encourage and recommend teaching and research personnel to publish decision-making consultation research results in internal reference publications sponsored by the Central Party School, National Academy of Governance, Xinhua News Agency, national and Shanghai social science planning offices, and the municipal party committee general office, actively broadening the transformation channels for decision-making consultation research results. For this reason, the main municipal government leaders have fully affirmed our school's think tank construction work, specifically pointing out that our "decision-making consultation is well done and very down-to-earth." For some hot issues of concern to leaders, tasks are directly assigned to the Shanghai Party School for research, and instructions have been given to further leverage the Shanghai Party School's more important role in decision-making consultation services for Shanghai's deepening reform and development. Now, whenever important time nodes arrive or important tasks emerge, such as the "Two Studies, One Action" campaign, the 95th anniversary of the Party's founding, the Sixth Plenary Session, the 100th anniversary of the October Revolution, etc., we receive "special attention" from relevant departments and special leaders: the Shanghai Party School is requested to provide relevant research reports to be submitted to central or municipal party committee leaders.

3.4 Demonstrating Brand Image Through Completing Major Research Tasks

In recent years, our school has closely followed the central work of the municipal party committee and government, being able to voice opinions timely on social hot spots, difficulties, and important decisions, striving to make achievements, with influence gradually rising. In the past five years, our school has completed 707 decision-making consultation reports, with 10 receiving provincial/ministerial-level decision-making consultation awards, and undertaken over 50 provincial/ministerial-level decision-making consultation projects, including major tasks assigned by the main municipal party committee leaders. Especially in the 2016 Shanghai Municipal People's Government key decision-making consultation research project bidding, our school won 7 projects, creating a new high for similar public bidding key projects in many years. The acquisition of these decision-making consultation projects further demonstrates that our school's think tank construction has received affirmation from leaders, recognition from peers, and attention from society, with the think tank brand initially formed. Our experience is that in completing important tasks, we can continuously establish, demonstrate, and highlight the brand.

3.5 Boosting Brand Building Through Institutional System Construction

Following the 思路 of institution first, atmosphere creation, and motivation mobilization, we have continuously built the institutional system for decision-making consultation research, gradually establishing an effective decision-making consultation incentive mechanism to boost brand building. Our school has successively issued documents such as the “2011-2015 Decision-making Consultation Research Work Implementation Plan,” “Decision-making Consultation Research Reward Measures,” “Implementation Measures for the Compilation, Review, and Submission Process of the ‘Internal Reference Special Report’ (Trial),” “Implementation Measures for Expanding Student Resources to Strengthen Decision-making Consultation Research (Trial),” and “Implementation Opinions on Promoting the Development of Teaching-research-consultation Integration Courses,” forming an initially effective decision-making consultation research institutional system to ensure that decision-making consultation research produces results and brands, projects and courses, talents and mechanisms. Our experience is that decision-making consultation brand building requires the thrust of institutional construction; institutional construction needs to consistently implement the 思路 of “two characteristics and one transformation,” namely, institutionalization of management, systematization of institutions, and synergy of institutions.

It should be said that the think tank construction of the Shanghai Party School still needs continuous efforts in the future, leveraging strengths, compensating for weaknesses, following the research orientation required by General Secretary Xi Jinping in his speech at the Philosophy and Social Sciences Work Symposium to “focus on what we are doing” and “seriously study and solve major and urgent problems,” seizing new opportunities brought by think tank construction, staying close to the ground, producing more ideas, thoughts, and countermeasures, continuously improving the influence and competitiveness of the new-type think tank, and making new due contributions to serving the overall situation of state governance.

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