

A Reflection on the Development of Ideological and Political Situation of College Students in the Past Ten Years

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Abstract

During the past ten years, the ideological and political situation of college students has shown a significant progress, especially in the aspects of political thought and political standpoint, outlook on life and world, evaluation of school and teacher. The important influencing factors are the system reform, especially the reforms of higher education and ideological and political theory course. Therefore, we must accurately grasp the changes of the ideological and political situation of college students, promote the ideological construction of colleges and universities with pioneering and innovative spirit, and strive to create a healthy and upward educational environment.

Key words: College students; Ideological and political situation; Change and development

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INTRODUCTION

Young people “are responsible for the age they live in”. “Young people are the most sensitive barometers of the

times.” (Xi, 2014) The development of the ideological and political situation of college students over the past decade is an important ruler of the times and its objective situation reflects the spirit of the times. It is of great significance to study the changes of the ideological and political situation of college students in the past ten years, to summarize the experiences and lessons of the ideological and political education of college students, and to enhance the effectiveness of ideological construction in colleges and universities.

1. THE SPECIFIC PERFORMANCE OF COLLEGE STUDENTS’ IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL SITUATION

Political thought and political standpoint, outlook on life and values, evaluation of school and teacher are the important indicators of the development of ideological and political situation of college students.

1.1 Changes in Political Thought and Political Standpoint

The survey conducted by the Chinese Ministry of Education for ten consecutive years shows that the mainstream of students’ thinking is positive and healthy. They highly recognize the socialist developmental road with Chinese characteristics, the common ideals and relevant basic political system.

The college students become more rational and more objective on the analysis of problems. Enjoying the results of the Reform and Opening-Up, the contemporary “post-80’s” and “post-90’s” college students are highly consistent in ideology with the Central Committee of Communist Party of China (CPC), fully affirm the work of the Party and the Government, are more supportive to the lines and policies and remain a high level of satisfaction. They pay attention to domestic and foreign

political and economic hot issues, especially the issues of national honor, interests and major events related to people's livelihood, showing an international perspective on national development and national interests and a high political quality. They have a more rational judgment and stronger analytical ability, and are highly concerned about the prosperity and stability of the country and national rejuvenation. They have a positive and optimistic evaluation of the leadership of CPC, and applaud the "hardworking, accessible, pragmatic and clean" image of the CPC leading group represented by General Secretary Xi Jinping. The survey shows that college students have deepened recognition in theory, politics and emotion on socialism with Chinese characteristics and Chinese dreams. The college students are confident of the Chinese dream of realizing the great rejuvenation of the nation, showing a high recognition on the theory, developmental road, system and culture. Over the past decade, the college students have maintained a sober political thinking and have had a clear understanding of the 2008 Southern Rain and Snow, Sichuan Wenchuan Earthquake and other serious natural disasters, Lhasa "3.14" Serious Smashing Robbery Crime and other major events, showing a satisfaction to the strong leadership of the Party and Government in response to these serious natural disasters and major criminal events. The college students grown up in the Reform and Opening-Up have withstood the severe tests in a series of major and unexpected events.

The college students are more conscious in political behavior and are able to actively participate in social practices. The contemporary college students widely agree with the vanguard nature of CPC. According to the statistics, 78.0% of the college students actively ask to join the Party, the majority of who are correctly motivated (Shen & Duan, 2015). The students have lofty ideals and strong desires to learn and grow, taking "participate in social practice" as the most effective way to improve their own quality and ability. After the devastating Sichuan Wenchuan Earthquake, the students consciously and actively carried out a variety of forms of activities such as volunteer service, blood and money donations to support the relief in disaster areas, showing a fresh spirit and strong society responsibility. They have a high degree of patriotism and can turn the patriotism into practical action of hard study. We are pleased to see that the young overseas students came forward to protect the Olympic torch when it's snatched by outlaws in the torch overseas delivery; the young people gathered in Tiananmen Square shouting "China Come on", "Wenchuan Hold on" after the Wenchuan Earthquake, etc.

1.2 Changes in the Outlooks on Life and Values

A survey conducted by the Chinese Ministry of Education on the ideological and political situation of college students over the past decade shows that since the promulgation of the No. 16 Document of the Ministry

of Education and No.64 Document of the State Council, college students have maintained a general healthy ideological and moral condition. "The vast majority of students have a high recognition and affirmation on the socialist core values". "The mainstream values are positive and upward." "The ideological and moral quality of college students has been further improved and continues to show "gratifying changes".

The contemporary college students pay more attention to their own development, tend to be rational and pragmatic on the choice of personal goals and desire to grow and succeed eagerly. Although they continue to strengthen recognition on the mainstream values, such as the spirit of Lei Feng, "more than 92% of college students believe that in today's society 'Lei Feng spirit' is not out of date and is still worthy of being promoted and practiced" (Ibid.). They don't hold a uniform but diverse values. Whether it can improve their quality and promote their development becomes the dominant factor to choose the values. They have high initiative and enthusiasm to learn, and hope to contribute in the future for the community and country. They are determined to become talented, pay more attention to the cultivation of social responsibility and comprehensive ability. According to the survey of the Chinese Ministry of Education in 2015, more than 50% of the college students hoped to strengthen the training in "learning and research ability", "practical ability", "psychological adjustment ability", "innovation and entrepreneurial ability" "organizational leadership", "teamwork ability" and "interpersonal ability". The students also have an urgent need for the strengthened training in ideological and moral quality, comprehensive ability, international vision and humanistic accomplishment.¹ The college students generally believe that in addition to a mastery of knowledge, they also need to pay attention to personal cultivation and shape character. The majority of college students feel repulsion for uncivilized behaviors in campus, and more than 90% of students value being an upright man more than just learning well.

1.3 Changes in the Evaluation of School and Teacher

Over the past decade, most students have actively evaluated the education of their colleges. According to the survey in 2016, more than 80% of the students were satisfied with the construction of teachers' morality, counselors' work, campus safety, stability and ideological and political theory courses.² The expectations of contemporary college students to teacher have gradually increased, which changed from the focus on teachers' teaching level, moral quality

¹ <http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/s5987/201505/188174.html>

² http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/gzdt_gzdt/s5987/201605/t20160531_247095.html

and charisma to their academic level, academic ethics, charisma, professionalism, educational awareness as well as respect and care for students. According to the survey of the Chinese Ministry of Education, the students had more than 80% of praise to teachers' academic ethics, professionalism, academic level, teaching level, educational consciousness and charisma. Among them, the students were most concerned about the teacher's "academic ethics", "professionalism", "teaching and academic level." The most of students gave a high evaluation to school work and became more recognized with the counselors and ideological and political education. Counselor and class teacher have the most communication with college students, who play an important role in solving students' ideological and practical problems and play a guiding role in the healthy growth of students. During the past ten years, college students have highly recognized and trusted class teachers and counselors by paying attention to their work. The survey shows that the most of students believed that counselors played a role in their growth, and more than half of the students held that the role was "important" or "great".

2. THE ANALYSIS ON THE CHANGES OF IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL SITUATION OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

Social existence is the objective source of social consciousness, and social consciousness is the subjective reflection of social material life and its conditions. Social existence determines social consciousness, and social consciousness reacts upon social existence. The development of the ideological and political situation of college students in recent ten years is the result of the changes of the real world in which they live.

2.1 The Influences of Institutional Change on the Ideological and Political Situation of College Students

Reform is a quantitative change in the process of social development and an important driving force to promote social system for the development. The current reform of China is to pursue the interests of all parties concerned and meet the people's growing material and cultural needs. College students stand at the forefront of the times, and every change in their thinking is inseparable from the ongoing reforms at the times.

The reform of political system plays a direct leading role in the development of college students' ideological and political situation. We can find that the mainstream of the ideological and political situation of college students in the past ten years shows a positive, healthy and upward development trend, which is inseparable from the Central Government's high attention to college

students' ideological and political construction. With the careful analysis of the situation, the Central Government has issued No.16 Document in time and held a national meeting to improve the ideological and political education of college students. In order to make a thorough arrangement and overall mobilization for the ideological and political education of the new era, the relevant departments have issued *The Opinions on Further Strengthening and Improving College Propaganda and Ideological Work under the New Situations* and *The Implementation Opinions on Strengthening and Improving College Ideological and Political Work under the New Situations*. The Party and the Government correctly appraise the new situations, demonstrate a strong leadership in a series of major events, exhibit China's comprehensive national strength and expand the international influence. Therefore, the college students have given a high degree of recognition to the Party and Government's leadership in the control of the complex and changeable situations, to the Party's advanced nature of "building up the Party for the public and assuming administration for the people" and to the image of a responsible power of China. This series of achievements and gratifying trend of ideological and political situation of college students are inseparable from the Party and Government-led political system reform, anti-corruption, comprehensively deepened reform, comprehensively strict rule of the Party and comprehensive law-based governance.

The reform of economic system has a fundamental impact on the ideological and political situation of college students. "Everything that people strive for is related to their interests." (*The Complete Works of Marx and Engels [Vol.1]*, 1995, p.187). In the economic system reform, the reallocation and adjustment of benefits will directly affect the ideologies of college students. In the survey, we see that a small number of people do not distinguish the relationship between money and life. When the country called on college students to work in western regions, many students remained on the sidelines. Their thoughts are the external manifestation of what they are interested in. Of course, "once the idea is out of interest, it will make a fool of itself" (*The Collection of Marx and Engels [Vol.1]*, 2009, p.286). With a series of supporting measures introduced by the Government and under the severe employment pressure, college students also continued to adjust their attitudes and had a better understanding of themselves. The proportion of approval to "money is the determinant of happiness" decreased significantly. By adjusting themselves to adapt to the process of economic reform, the students had more peaceful attitudes, more reasonable judgment and more pragmatic choices of their own goals.

The influence of multi-cultural collision on the development of ideological and political situation of college students

The impact of culture on people is profound and far-reaching, which affects people's way of thinking and behavior and shapes their characters. In the new era of globalization and Internet, tradition civilization and modern civilization coexist, oriental culture and Western culture clash. In this era, college students experience the collision of mainstream culture and non-mainstream culture, agitation of grass-roots culture and elite culture. These cultures interact and integrate, forming a coexistence of multiculturalism. In the "micro-era" of the support of network information technology, college students begin to adapt to the conflicts of multiculturalism and be able to absorb nutrients in the conflicts. They criticize egoism, pragmatism of the Western culture, highly recognize that the value of life is at the dedication, and maintain a positive, healthy and upward outlooks on life and values.

2.2 The Influences of Higher Education Reform on the Ideological and Political Situation of College Students

The reform of higher education is carried out and deepened with the Reform and Opening-Up. Since then, in order to meet the needs of economic system reform, higher education has been reformed in school-running system, enrollment and examination system, investment system, charging system, student self-employment system, educational evaluation system, degree system, graduate education and school management system, etc. The government strictly control teachers' academic morality and academic level, formulates a series of policies and regulations to reform college teacher admittance system and evaluation system. The Chinese Ministry of Education has also promulgated *The Opinions of the Chinese Ministry of Education on Establishing and Improving the Long-term Mechanism of Teachers' Moral Construction in Colleges and Universities* (Teacher [2014] No.10), drawing the red lines for the teachers' moral construction. The reforms in these fields have brought about direct impacts and changes to college students. In the past ten years, the reforms in ideological and political education, school teaching management and school infrastructure construction have brought far-reaching influences to the ideological and political situation of college students.

In the higher educational reform over the past few years, we have always put the construction of a high-quality counselor team as the top priority in further strengthening and improving the ideological and political education of college students in the new period. Measures have been taken in ideology, institution, policy and personnel training to make new breakthroughs in the team building of college counselors. Under the guidance of relevant policies of the Central Government, a large number of college counselors advanced study and training bases have been set up, and a number of college counselor team building research centers have been established.

The counselor team has come to a professional road of development. The smooth implementation of the work of counselors and class teachers has played an important role in the growth of college students. According to the survey over the past ten years, the majority of college students fully affirmed the work of counselors and class teachers, more than 90% of the college students held that the counselor have played a role in their growth, and more than half of the students held that the role was important or great. During the process of growth of college students, the leadership of counselors and class teacher was also obvious.

2.3 The Influence of the Reform of Ideological and Political Theory Course to the Ideological and Political Situation of College Students

Promoting the reform of ideological and political theory courses and enhancing their effectiveness is an important part of the construction and development of the socialist higher education with Chinese characteristics, and is also an important way to improve the ideological and political quality of college students. Since the Reform and Opening-Up, China's ideological and political theory course has experienced several significant adjustments with the simultaneous reforms and development of higher education, that is, the adjustment from 1985 to 1987 (referred to as the "85 Program"), adjustment in 1998 (referred to as the "98 Program") and adjustment in 2005 (referred to as the "05 Program"). The effective implementation of the "05 Program" calls for the construction and development of the first-level discipline of Marxist theory. In December 2005, the Academic Degree Committee of the State Council and the Chinese Ministry of Education decided to establish the first-level discipline of Marxist theory and related second-level disciplines, providing theoretical support for ideological and political theory course based on the first level discipline. As the "main channel" and "main position" in the ideological and political education in universities and colleges, ideological and political theory course has been closely integrated with the new situations and new changes home and abroad, the new process of the socialist modernization construction and the new practices of educational reform. Of constantly strengthening Marxist theory education, especially the socialist theory education with Chinese characteristics, we have made gratifying achievements of the healthy, positive and upward outlooks on the world, life and values of college students. We have also got closely to the ideology, life and study of college students with different growth paths, treat them as the reserves of all kinds of specialized talents for the socialist modernization construction, solve their ideological problems while solving their practical problems. We have also explored the method of integrating the socialist core values into the whole process of higher education, and have achieved initial results. This is an efficient

way to improve the ideological and political quality of college students. In recent years, considering the new development of socialist spiritual culture and the new changes of college students' thoughts, we have tried to explore some new ways, new means and new mechanisms of ideological and political education, such as network teaching, practice teaching, MOOC, WeChat, microblog and other platforms, etc., which effectively enhanced the affinity, attractiveness and appeal of ideological and political theory course.

3. THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF COLLEGE STUDENTS' IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL SITUATIONS TO THE IDEOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTION IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Colleges and universities are the frontline of a variety of vibrant ideologies. The mainstream and non-mainstream ideologies encounter and collide here, do their best to compete for young college students. Therefore, the ideological construction in colleges and universities under the new situations is facing a more difficult task, and needs to focus on the fundamental problem of "cultivate what people, how to cultivate people" to strengthen the ideological construction.

3.1 Accurately Grasp the Development of Ideological and Political Situation of College Students

Young college students are in the process of forming the outlooks on the world, life and values. At this stage, they are vigorous, have strong acceptance of new things and strong ability to adapt to environment. They seek change and innovation, strive to learn, do not stick to stereotypes and do not stand still. Young college students are the hope of the country and the future of the nation. "The responsibility of the times is given to the youth, and the glory of the times belongs to the youth". Therefore, the ideological and political situation of young college students is the core issue to grasp in strengthening the ideological construction in colleges and universities.

The "post-80's" and "post-90's" college students are the witnesses and practitioners of the socialist modernization, who shoulder the historical mission of realizing the Chinese dream of great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. With the continuous progress of China's Reform and Opening-Up and the all-round deepened reform, during the past decade, the composition of the "post-80's" and "post-90's" college students has undergone some changes. In the past, there were demobilized soldiers, former employees, married people and other special groups in college campus, who took up

a large proportion of college students. Nowadays, these groups account for a smaller proportion, and the bigger difference lies in family background. The different ways of growth make college students difference in the aspects of learning, lifestyle, channel for information and even ideology. In the face of these differences, there are some vulnerable spots or even negligence in the past ideological and political work, leading to the divorce between the solvation of ideological and practical problems and the reality. To ensure that college students grow and develop healthily, we must firstly grasp their ideologies, know what they care about and what they are interested in. We should discern their political positions and values, find out their growth roads, go deep into their study and lives and understand their life planning from the hot social issue they enthuse about. Only with a more in-depth and more careful understanding of their ideological development, we can implement the ideological work closer to their lives and emotions, closer to the reality, and constantly enhance the pertinence, effectiveness, affinity and appeal of the ideological work in colleges and universities.

3.2 Promote the Ideological Construction in Colleges and Universities With Pioneering and Innovative Spirit

Ideological construction in colleges and universities should closely focus on the fundamental task of strengthening moral education and cultivating people, insist on moral education first in education, adhere to educate people with reasoning and knowledge, integrate the socialist core values into the personnel training, scientific research, social service, cultural heritage and innovation in universities and colleges, and fully mobilize to realize the historical mission of cultivating qualified builders and reliable successors for the great socialist cause with Chinese characteristics.

With the rapid development of globalization and the Internet, the conflict between Western thoughts, values and our mainstream ideology has intensified. College students have some curiosity about social thoughts, and are more likely to accept them under certain circumstances, but they have an ideal tendency to accept the social thoughts. When ideal and reality conflict, they will suspect all that they have accepted and recognized. Social thought has far-reaching influences on college students, which can reflect the characteristics of their ideas and reflect the theories and practices of their concern. In fact, many college students have no firm understanding of Western ideas and values and still have strong mouldability. This puts forward a new request to the ideological builders in colleges and universities, requiring them not to avoid the social ideological trend but to solve the ideological confusion of college students on the basis of studying the problems raised by multiple social thoughts. Ideological and political teachers should take this responsibility to lead social thought trend with the scientific mainstream

ideologies, educate students to master the Marxist stands, views and methods, consciously practice the socialist core values, and consciously use the latest achievements of Marxism in China to arm brains. In the process of further strengthening and improving the ideological and political theory courses in colleges and universities, we must vigorously strengthen the construction of the first level of Marxist theory disciplines. For the whole society, the Marxist theory discipline should play a greater role in assuming the responsibility of localizing, modernizing and popularizing Marxism in China, and play a leading role in accomplishing the fundamental task of strengthening moral education, cultivating people, establishing and practicing the socialist core values.

In recent years, the Internet has become the primary channel for college students to communicate and access information. The rise and development of network media have brought new opportunities and challenges to the ideological construction in colleges and universities. However, whether the ideological workers seize this opportunity needs to be carefully examined. Seeing from the actual situation, we haven't done enough to occupy the position of network. The achievement of network ideological and political education is not obvious and is still disconnected to the reality of network life of students. In the online communities, forums and public platforms where many college students gather, ideological workers are not much involved, or even absent or quiescent, let alone giving guidance to the ideological confusion of college students. If we do not go to occupy the position of network, other social trends will go for it, and once the wrong and extreme ideologies control the network, the consequences will be disastrous. This gives us a new way to explore network ideological and political education and the new task to take the initiative to occupy the position of network ideological and political education.

Only by continuously pioneering and innovating work ideas, work ways and institutional mechanisms, we can further improve the quality of ideological and political education in the new situations, and cultivate qualified and reliable successors of all-round development of morality, intelligence, physique and aesthetics for the socialist cause with Chinese characteristics.

3.3 Efforts to Create a Healthy and Progressive Environment and Atmosphere

Practice is a way of human existence. In order to meet their own needs, the "realistic people" continue to develop themselves and confirm their social existence in the process of transforming the nature, human society and

themselves. This social existence of people is inseparable from the environment which they live in. People carry out social practices in the environment, which not only transforms the environment, but also shaped themselves. Seeing from the development of the ideological and political situation of college students, social environment, especially the campus environment, has a deep impact on their ideologies. A stable, orderly, harmonious and progressive learning and living environment are conducive to the growth of college students. In the overall stable background of universities and colleges, a good and harmonious environment can cultivate and inspire students. We should make rational use of various media, propaganda and method of social practice to establish models, strive to develop students' understanding with the mainstream values, and guide them to take volunteer service and contribution to society as the fine character of tireless pursuit. In addition to publicity and guidance, the creation of a healthy and progressive educational environment needs to resist negative confusion and incitement. Ideological builders need to clearly criticize bad social atmosphere, define their positions, and take the leads in professionalism, academic ethics, educational consciousness and other aspects.

The creation of a good atmosphere of "people-centered education and moral education first" is the strong guarantee for the ideological work in college. The good educational atmosphere in college cannot be separated from the participation of the whole society. The society's vigorous propaganda of the mainstream values and delivery of positive energy helps to enhance the joint force of ideological and political education. This is a joint force of full participation, comprehensively promotion and full range of guarantee. With this force, we will see the great improvement of ideological and political education of college students.

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