

Discussions on Value of “Curriculum Ideological and Political Construction” in Educational Practices of Institutions of Higher Learning

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Abstract: Under the background of constructing socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era, there have been new requirements of ideological and political education in institutions of higher learning. The concept of “curriculum ideological and political construction”, put forward against the backdrop, is related to not only the realization of China’s realization of the “Two Centenary Goals”, but also the realization of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Therefore, the importance of “curriculum ideological and political construction” is self-evident. Different from traditional ideological and political courses, “curriculum ideological and political construction” is more systematic, which requires mutual collaboration and integration of different subjects. In this paper, the practical significance of “curriculum ideological and political construction” is expounded.

1. Introduction

Ideological and political education of students has become increasingly important in China in the new era, which calls for more attention paid therefor. Teachers have a subtle influence on students’ ideological development, particularly in the process of knowledge impartment. Therefore, the best place for students’ ideological and political education is the institution of higher learning. The constant development of society in the new era has raised higher requirements of ideological and political education. Therefore, it is necessary to improve the ideological and political educational concepts and reform the educational methods in response to requirements of era development.

Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the People’s Republic of China, emphasized at the “National College Ideological and Political Work Conference”, “College ideological and political work decides what kind of talents is brought up, how to bring up talents and for whom to bring up the talents. With moral composition at the core of talent development, colleges should integrate the ideological and political work throughout the educational process to realize whole-process and all-around talent development and initiate a new development pattern for China’s higher education undertaking.” This suffices to show the importance of ideological and political education in higher education, and necessitates deepening all-around reform of ideological and political curriculum, enrichment of educational resources, broadening of the connotation of education, and realization of the educational concept of all-around talent development.

2. Definition of “Curriculum Ideological and Political Construction”

Guidelines of higher education include whole-process and all-around talent development. According to the guidelines, institutions of higher learning should integrate ideological and political education into the whole process and all links of education. Apart from giving full play to the role of curriculum teaching as the main channel and imparting students with professional knowledge, institutions of higher learning should associate subject knowledge with ideological and political education in a bid to provide scientific guidance for students in the critical formation period of their outlook on the world, life and values. Ideological and political courses are the main carrier of the traditional ideological and political education. Currently, students, no matter which subject they major in, are expected to take the same ideological and political courses. This results in a serious disjoint between ideological and political education and specialized education. At the same time, development of students’ professional ethics, social morality, outlook on the world, life and values,

and personalities is all realized through ideological and political courses. The general development goals make it hard for ideological and political courses to effectively achieve all these goals. According to the requirements of the “National College Ideological and Political Work Conference”, it has become an imperative to change the talent development models, enrich the talent development channels, give full play to the classroom teaching of different specialties and integrate them with ideological and political education. Only in this way can institutions of higher learning bring up talents with all-dimensional development.

As a new concept of ideological and political education, “curriculum ideological and political construction”, with Marxism as the theoretical guideline, integrates ideological and political education with specialized education, aiming at delivering ideological and political education through specialized courses. Teachers should lead by example, and provide correct guidance for students in values and morality in the process of specialized education. In this way, the theoretical connotation of ideological and political education can be externalized into students’ qualities and abilities, thus developing talents with all-around development. Teachers in institutions of higher learning should regard talent development as the most important goal. They should combine teaching with talent development, and integrate ideological and political education into classroom teaching of every subject. By doing so, they can ensure different subjects and ideological and political courses to play a coordinated role so that teachers teaching specialized courses and ideological and political courses can work for the same goal. Under the background, the concept of “curriculum ideological and political construction” has been gradually taking shape and accepted by the public from 2016 to form a new research field and find wide applications in teaching practices.

Though there has not yet been a unified definition of “curriculum ideological and political construction”, scholars have reached a general agreement on the connotation of this concept. The author thinks that “curriculum ideological and political construction” is to integrate ideological and political education into all teaching process and links so that students can receive a subtle influence of ideological and political education in daily teaching activities, under the prerequisite of not setting up new courses. This suggests that ideological and political education is no longer a mission of ideological and political courses but a shared mission of specialized courses as well. The combination between the specialized courses and the ideological and political courses can make the responsibility of ideological and political education shared by more teachers so that the educational goal of all-around development can be fulfilled.

3. Status of “Curriculum Ideological and Political Construction”

(1) Too much theoretical knowledge resulting in loss of students’ interest in learning

The lecturing methods of ideological and political courses lack diversification in most institutions of higher learning. Teachers mainly impart students with the knowledge from textbooks. Consequently, the classroom atmosphere lacks vigor, and students’ interest in learning cannot be effectively stimulated. At the same time, many teaching materials have been outdated, which is out of sync with the social life changing with each passing day. Under the background, if teachers ignore the update of the teaching content, and stick to conventions and books, it is even harder for ideological and political education to keep up with the pace of era development. As a result, the teaching content lacks novelty and attractiveness, and students show no interest in listening to what teachers say. All this has seriously impaired the teaching quality and effects. Ideological and political education plays an important role in shaping students’ outlook on the world, values and life. The traditional classroom teaching methods can no longer satisfy students’ learning needs. In order to better lead students’ development and respond to era changes, it is time to transform the ideological and political educational models, reform the ideological and political classroom, and help students shape positive personalities and cognition in the new era.

(2) Low comprehensive qualities and outdated teaching methods among teachers

Institutions of higher learning set up ideological and political courses mainly for the purpose of not only exposing students to Marxist principles, history of China, socialist theories with Chinese characteristics, and new ideas, but also equipping students with a correct outlook on the world, life

and values, and laying a solid theoretical foundation for their being successors of era development. Currently, however, many schools still pay inadequate attention to ideological and political courses, which is reflected as inadequate funding and faculties. Due to ignorance of these courses at the school level, teachers also tend to put these courses behind other specialized courses, without pursuing the realization of teaching goals or how to make the classroom teaching more interesting. Moreover, teachers cannot effectively deliver new theoretical policies of the party and country to students, combine new theories with current events, or help students combine these theories with their life and learning activities. The classroom teaching atmosphere is dull, and the teaching methods lack innovation. Teachers' loose attitude towards these courses has resulted in students' ignorance of these courses as well. Finally, ideological and political courses fail to play their role to establish students with positive personality and cognition. From ignorance at the school level to casualness of classroom teaching and to students' lack of interest, a vicious circle is formed. Teachers pay no attention to improvement of professional skills, introduction of creative teaching content, transformation of teaching methods, update of teaching content, and combination with national events and students' practical situations. In this way, students' development cannot be achieved through ideological and political courses.

(3) Specialized courses focusing on professional knowledge while ignoring the combination with ideological and political education

Specialized courses, particularly in institutions of higher learning aiming at applied skill education, attach more importance to development of students' professional skills and hands-on abilities, thus ignoring shaping of students' personalities, professional skill training, and professional ethics. This has aggravated the insignificant impression of ideological and political courses in comparison to specialized courses. Consequently, students ignore the development of their ideological cognition, professional ethics and personality.

4. Practical Significance of “Curriculum Ideological and Political Construction”

First of all, “curriculum ideological and political construction” is an inevitable requirement of ideological and political educational reform. Traditional ideological and political courses, including “Situations and Policies”, “Introduction to Mao Zedong's Ideas and Socialist Theories with Chinese Characteristics”, and “Ideological and Moral Cultivation & Fundamentals of Law”, are generally given in class. The strengths of ideological and political courses lie in their professionalism and systematicity, which can impart students with the theoretical system from the professional perspective. However, as every coin has two sides, theories, which are too professional and systematic, might appear too far away from students' daily life, thus making it hard for students to combine the theories with practices in life, work and learning. If the teaching styles can be reformed with the ideological and political content integrated into other courses, particularly specialized courses, it might be more acceptable to students. In this way, ideological and political theories can be better integrated with life and work. Therefore, it is necessary to learn combine theories with practices.

Second, “curriculum ideological and political construction” is an inevitable choice of educational reform in the new era. Institutions of higher learning are major places for vocational education, which aim at developing students' occupational abilities. Previously, “professional ethics” are understood in the narrow sense, which are equal to students' professional abilities. In fact, professional ethics have an extensive range of connotations. This means that “professional ethics” is a comprehensive term and ability, which is not limited to the development of professional abilities. It attaches more importance to the development of students' professional ethics. Therefore, apart from lecturing specialized courses, teachers should integrate professional ethics, morality and other comprehensive abilities into teaching activities. In the new era, ideological and political education plays a vital role in higher education. The teaching concept of “curriculum ideological and political construction” can more efficiently satisfy the reform and development of ideological and political education. The essence of “curriculum ideological and political construction” is to integrate ideological and political education into specialized courses, and let specialized courses carry

forward ideological and political theories so that all courses can stay in sync with the development of ideological and political education, and that all teachers can undertake the responsibility of ideological and political education. In this way, the ideological and political educational concept of “all-around talent development” can be realized, with ideological and political theories applied to practices, and filling different industries with the practical value of ideological and political theories.

5. Intrinsic Values of “Curriculum Ideological and Political Construction”

By analyzing the source of intrinsic values of “curriculum ideological and political construction”, one can easily find that the concept of “curriculum ideological and political construction” is born with the era development. The root cause behind its provision of guidance for ideological and political education of institutions of higher learning is its full consistency with the schooling objective and guideline of institutions of higher learning. What is college? College is a place for moral composition and talent development, and a place for young people to learn knowledge, cultivate abilities, and set wings to their dreams. Chinese institutions of higher learning should first identify their schooling concepts, objectives and guidelines, and make use of every means to finish their mission.

Socialism constitutes China’s fundamental system. Therefore, Chinese institutions of higher learning have their socialist characteristics, and the teachers are teachers with socialist characteristics. Therefore, the history orientation in the new era should be correctly judged to not only satisfy the development needs of socialist with Chinese characteristics, but also respond to the construction needs of socialist modernization and make contributions to development of scientific socialism. In essence, this is a great declaration made by China to the world in the new era, that is, unwaveringly stick to the guidance of Marxist ideas, to the socialist path with Chinese characteristics and to the development of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

As the largest socialist country in the world, China must adhere to Marxism so as to realize the great rejuvenation of its nation. This is the foundation for China’s party and state development, and also the guideline and most striking symbol of Chinese institutions of higher learning. In the construction course of modern socialism, institutions of higher learning should grasp this new historical orientation, thinking about how to undertake the mission of bringing up talents. To the end, the political stance, political direction and school running principles of institutions of higher learning with Chinese characteristics should be firmed up in institutions of higher learning to undertake the mission of bringing up qualified constructors and successors, and do a good job in ideological and political education. According to Marxist theories, humans are the foundation of everything. Institutions of higher learning are major places for talent development. To institutions of higher learning, talent development is to teach students how to be a decent person, particularly equipping students with the ideological and political knowledge to be a decent person. Therefore, all educational activities should be oriented towards students, for students, and aiming at realizing the value of talent development.

Since moral composition is at the core of talent development in institutions of higher learning, “curriculum ideological and political construction” should also revolve around moral composition to realize the goal of talent development via ideological and political education. In this process, institutions of higher learning should stick to a correct political awareness, awareness of the big picture, and awareness of core values to explore the intrinsic value of different specialties, dig the talent development value of different subjects, and give full play to the linkage among different subjects to form coordinated effects and bring up talents with all-around development. Additionally, the talent development direction should be firmed up to realize the talent development objective in knowledge instruction and value cultivation. According to Marxist ideas, moral education is the linchpin to realize all-around development, particularly all-around development among the younger generation morally, intellectually and physically. Therefore, to deliver ideological and political education through moral education is of vital importance, and “curriculum ideological and political construction” undertakes the mission of shaping and developing contemporary college students’

outlook on the world, life and values, and lays a solid theoretical foundation for college students' realization of their life value.

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