Study on New Requirements Raised by the 19th National Congress for Ideological and Political Work in Colleges and Universities

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Abstract: In 2016, Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed the setting of high moral values and the cultivation of persons as the central link as well as the integration of ideological and political work into the whole teaching process at the National Conference on Ideological and Political Work in Colleges and Universities. In 2017, Chinese President Xi Jinping emphasized in the Report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) that the socialism with Chinese characteristics is entering a new era and that the socialist road, theory, system and culture with Chinese characteristics are constantly developing and contributing Chinese wisdom to the solving of human issues. Since colleges and universities are important places where social builders and successors are cultivated, the advancement of reforms of ideological and political work in colleges and universities is a basic requirement for the consolidation of ideological engineering and the realization of national rejuvenation. We need to have an in-depth study and understanding of President Xi’s spirit of Report of the 19th National Congress of CPC, grasp the ideological and political education laws and principles in colleges and universities, and show respect for the growth trails of college and university students, thereby enhancing the quality of ideological and political work in colleges and universities with dialectical thinking and creative ideas, and opening up a new prospect for the cultivation of talents through higher education in China.

1. Introduction

On October 18, 2017, the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China was successfully convened, and President Xi delivered a report in which he gave clear instructions on the positioning and development of China in the new era. He expounded that the realization of great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is the greatest dream of China in modern times, and that we shall persist in the great struggle, fulfill five self-consciousnesses, and steadily develop the socialism with Chinese characteristics. The spirit of the 19th National Congress offered lots of enlightenment on the reforms of current socialism with Chinese characteristics, and that we shall persist in the great struggle, fulfill five self-consciousnesses, and steadily develop the socialism with Chinese characteristics. The spirit of the 19th National Congress offered lots of enlightenment on the reforms of current ideological and political work in colleges and universities under this spirit, and reinforce the ideological and political work from the perspectives of ideological cognition and practice initiatives so that ideological and political education will be down-to-earth in its form and style and marvelous in its role and significance.

2. New Development Trends of Ideological and Political Work in Colleges and Universities from Strategic View

Strategic vision means the horizon and outlook built based on the full understanding of the internal development rules of things through overall planning. The Report of the 19th National Congress put emphasis on that “not only must we finish building a moderately prosperous society in all respects and achieve the first centenary goal; we must also build on the achievement to embark on a new journey toward the second centenary goal of fully building a modern socialist country”. To grasp the basic policy for current socialism with Chinese characteristics, we shall spread and implement the system of socialist core values to all people. The realization of great rejuvenation of Chinese nation relies on the efforts of generations of ambitious youths. In face of all kinds of social
thoughts and external temptations, college students will easily lose themselves and become listless and inert. Colleges and universities shall spread the creative theories and firm beliefs of the Party through ideological and political teaching so as to guide college students to develop right views on world, life and value, impart correct moral cognition, establish moral emotions and will, and promote moral conduct.

2.1 Occupy a key status in the education and teaching work in colleges and universities

As the Book of Odes recorded, “although ancient ritual enlightenment was imparted in a subtle way, it had great power and could be used to stop those evil trends”. The power of education is exhibited subtly. By combining ideological and political work with regular teaching in colleges and universities, a good ideological and moral practice environment can be created in the campuses of colleges and universities to motivate the students to develop corresponding code of ethics. Seeing from the development process of ideological and political work in colleges and universities, it is gradually getting rid of the embarrassing subordinate status and playing a key role in the higher education system. Since the Reform and Opening Up, the Party’s focus has shifted to economic construction, and ideological and political construction was neglected and greatly weakened, resulting in a series of negative events in the field of ideology, which seriously endangered social security and national image. Meanwhile, the reforms of higher education led to the displacement of focuses of colleges and universities: enrollment expansion increases the complexity of sources of college students, and there are huge differences in their education levels, thoughts, behaviors and habits, which imperceptibly increase the difficulty of management of sources of college students. History has proven that if we ignore ideological and political work in colleges and universities, it is impossible to cultivate outstanding talents for the new era, and ideological and political education shall play its due role in the higher education. Opinions on Further Enhancement of Ideological and Political Education for College Students by Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and State Council proposed that the enhancement of college students’ ideological and political education is a critical and urgent strategic task, and that higher education shall be based on moral education and ideological and political education shall be put in the first place. Opinions on Enhancing Ideological and Political Work in Colleges and Universities under New Situation emphasized that colleges and universities shoulder the responsibilities of talent cultivation, scientific innovation, cultural heritance, social services and international exchange and cooperation, and that ideological and political work in colleges and universities is a key political task and strategic project that relates to how to operate a university. Along with the Party’s increasing attention to ideological and political work and the enhancement of the role of ideological and political work in the higher education, it has become an important link for colleges and universities to implement social belief with Chinese characteristics, follow socialist school-running system and operate prestigious colleges and universities in China.

The Report of the 19th National Congress made a systematic layout to give priority to the development of education career. Education is an means of implementing education functions, improving ethnic quality, and cultivating outstanding talents to meet social development needs. Under the new situation, higher education work will be confronted numerous challenges, and the growing college students also increase the difficulties of education and management. Under the socialist market economy environment, various consciousnesses and cultural forms surge one after another. College students are faced with more spiritual temptation and are easily indulged in hedonism, money worship and individualism due to lack of judgment and self control, which not only cause damage to personal physical and mental health, but also arouse undesirable effect in local environment and even spread negative thoughts that conflict with socialist core value systems. We must clearly understand that in the context of globalization, ideological field will become a prey for hegemony and power politics. Higher education shall hold fast to the battlefield of ideological and political education, pay attention to students’ changes of thought, build up their abilities of distinguishing right from wrong and self-discipline, and set up ideals and faiths of striving all the lifetime for the Chinese dream. The Report of the 19th National Congress proposed clear
instructions on constantly improving the ideological and political work in colleges and universities and advancing the construction of Double First-class University Plan, and expressed that ideological and political work in colleges and universities occupies an important status in the national development strategies and becomes a central link that penetrates through the entire process of moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetics and labor education from a subordinate status. Ideological and political work in colleges and universities is detailed in the Report of the 19th National Congress, which further emphasizes the key role of this work in the higher education, and enhances the ideological and political work in colleges and universities to a core status with clear ideas and means from a weak position that does adapt to new situation and new requirements.

2.2 To be implemented by all faculties in the education and teaching work in colleges and universities

President Xi Jinping pointed out that “to do the ideological and political work in colleges and universities well, we shall change with the events, the times and the trends”. The so-called changes with events show that ideological and political work in colleges and universities shall break away from restricted teaching thinking and single teaching method, and offer targeted and feasible education from the perspective of practical idea issues faced by current college students. The so-called changes with the times mean that ideological and political work in colleges and universities shall be based on the ideas of advancing with the times and getting rid of the stale and bringing forth the fresh. After implementing classic thoughts including Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought and Deng Xiaoping Theory, we shall fully understand President Xi’s spirit of the speech delivered at the 19th National Congress about the education career, combine personal moral and ideological education with the strategic goal of achieving great rejuvenation of Chinese nation, and constantly strengthen the integration of ideological and political work in colleges and universities and socialist modernization. The so-called changes with trends indicate that ideological and political work in colleges and universities shall be oriented to the times and life, set up effective ideological and political courses and lectures in accordance with college students’ ideological characteristics, and constantly innovate the ideas and means of ideological and political education so that the students would really understand, agree with and practice ideological and political work. This argument expounds the new trends of ideological and political work in the domestic colleges and universities in the current stage: respecting the dominant position of students, paying attention to the innovation and practicability of education and teaching, and expand the scope and influence of ideological and political work in colleges and universities by implementing it among all personnel instead of assigning dedicated persons to take charge of it.

Paying attention to ideological and political work is a good tradition of the Communist Party of China. Mao Zedong once emphasized that “all departments shall be responsible for ideological and political work, including the Communist Party of China, the Communist Youth League, governmental authorities and school faculties”, which built up the status that ideological and political work requires not only the participation of the society, but also the participation of schools and governments. Ideological and political work in colleges and universities can help to enlighten college students, enhance their political alertness and judgment and prevent the penetration of thoughts of hostile forces. Through planned and targeted ideological education, college students’ ideas, attitudes and behaviors can be adjusted and improved so as to cultivate the youths with ideals, ethics, cultures and discipline required by the construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics. After the Reform and Opening Up, domestic colleges and universities adopted the professional development mode of ideological and political work, and confine the contents of ideological and political work within a limited range. The faculties who implement the tasks of ideological and political education shall set up independent research teams. Although this development mode is beneficial to the enhancement of the efficiency of ideological and political work, it also gradually gets away from general education and teaching work in colleges and universities. The faculties participating in the ideological and political teaching are mostly middle and senior party members, and ordinary teachers, support staff and other faculties do not have the permissions and
consciousness of participating in the ideological and political education, thus leading to the consequences that ideological education contents derail from the practical applications, the students do not enjoy learning and the teachers do not enjoy teaching. After going through several sessions of national colleges and universities ideological and political work, the deviated working idea was corrected and adjusted. The proposals given in the Report of the 19th National Congress for strengthening and improving ideological and political work in colleges and universities inherited the focuses of the speeches at the National Colleges and Universities Ideological and Political Work Conference held in December 2016, and required that the work centers on, care for and serve for the students. We shall offer sufficient guidance for the students from the ideological and moral levels, and guide them to have a correct understanding of domestic and international development situations. The Communist Party of China has explored a path with Chinese characteristics and Chinese wisdom to construct the socialism with Chinese characteristics so that we can grasp the inevitable development trends of the human society from the perspectives of historic mechanism and intrinsic nature, and look at the relations between China and other countries from a dialectical, objective and evolving vision. Ideological and political work in colleges and universities shall strictly follow the spirit of the 19th National Congress, help college students to recognize their own responsibilities and values, guide them to enhance their sense of mission and develop a great ambition and practical attitude.

We shall pay attention to and respect students’ dominant role in the ideological and political learning, carry out ideological and political work by practical means that adapt to the life of college students, and expand the vision of ideological and political work in colleges and universities. Ideological and political education is not only the job of party personnel but also the responsibility of teachers of specialized courses and all faculties. Ideological and political work shall penetrate in all respects of higher education so that all faculties will realize that moral education is also one of their jobs and will impart knowledge, guide the students to conduct themselves, and encourage them to become comprehensive talents with intelligence and virtue. While creating professional ideological and political teams in colleges and universities, we shall vigorously spread the ideological and political work, carry out ideological and political education in all fields of college work by centering on the core tasks of strengthening moral education and cultivating people, reinforce the integration between ideological and political work and scientific research, physical fitness training, talent cultivation and international cultural exchanges, and promote all faculties’ attention to and participation in the ideological and political work. Professional teaching and ideological and political education supplement each other. The emphasis on the penetration of ideological and political work into general teaching management work maximally displays the educational values of ideological and political courses and party and youth league organizations. The Report of the 19th National Congress upgrade the firm grasp of leadership of ideological work to the strategic height, and proposed that only people have faith and the country is powerful that our nation is full of hopes. We shall vigorously carry out ideal and belief education, carry forward the spirit of the times and the nation, and enhance people’s consciousness and ability of resisting decadent culture. Colleges and universities are key sites of ideal and belief education, as well as an important part of carrying forward the new trends of the times and promoting the construction process of civic virtues. The 19th National Congress integrated ideological and political work in colleges and universities into the macro targets of higher education reforms, adjusted and updated the internal recycling of ideological and political work to enhance the overall quality of higher education so that the environments, conditions and targets of ideological and political work in colleges and universities will change fundamentally from staying in the political field to adapting to the reform trends of higher education. The transition of ideological and political work in colleges and universities from the ideological and political education to the macro-ecological environment of higher education proves the development idea from the local to the whole, and shows that the Party is dedicated to building the macro targets of philosophy and social sciences with Chinese characteristics and new types of Chinese think tanks in colleges and universities during the new period of socialist modernization.
3. New Requirements Raised by the Spirit of the 19th National Congress for Ideological and Political Work in Colleges and Universities

3.1 Pay attention to the characteristics of college students and motivate their self-consciousness

Following the law of growth of college and university students is the correct interpretation of “changing with the events” of the ideological and political work in colleges and universities. “Lighting up the lantern of ideals to illuminate the path ahead for students”: Students are the principal part of studying as well as the starting point and stance of all educational works. The ideological and political works must be carried out on the basis of having fully understood the receivers of education. Young college students are the receivers of the ideological and political work in colleges and universities, which discusses and explores the general patterns of how college students grow and succeed so that a lantern can be lit up to illuminate the path ahead for them. The growth of college students is under the comprehensive influence of multiple contradictions. From the perspective of the principal part, the primary missions for college students in their academic years are learning and comprehending basic theoretical knowledge, shaping their occupational skills and planning with textbooks and in classrooms, and developing the spirit to pioneer and innovate. Setbacks are inevitable as one grows up, and college students are simultaneously faced with the complex pressure from their families, colleges and society. How to resolve conflicts and look for the balance between life ideals and personal interests has been the main factor that imposes influence of their growth. From the perspective of the objective environment, the society is advancing forward nonstop and the specific requirements of talents are constantly changing, so how to deal with the conflict between subjective development aspiration and social expectation is imposing major influence on their growth. We may say that each and every college student is eager to grow and succeed, and they are motivated to develop themselves. Nevertheless, interference from the outside world strengthens or weakens the motivation, and determines the result of individual development at the end. “The growth of college students has always been in an open system where the subjects are interacting with the objects. The growth is not only under the restrictions and influence of the object, but also their own qualities”. It can be thusly seen that the inherent ideological and moral understandings of college students play a nonnegligible role as they grow up. Only by helping them to clearly realize the development patterns of their own ideas and behaviors and develop the abilities of self-control and self-regulation can they give play to their subjective initiative, and not fall short of their prime of youth with great dreams born in mind and being down-to-earth. The ideological and political work in colleges and universities serves as an effective approach to guide college students to deepen their self-understanding. The ideological features and development demands of college students shall be firmly grasped, and the attention shall be drawn onto the combination of theories and practices, as well as general requirements and specific guidance. The work shall be more science-oriented and refined since it is essentially a work on people, and emotions are necessary in interpersonal communications and exchanges. Therefore, emotional consistency and harmony are the most important factors when it comes to any work on people, and only be treating others sincerely can one be treated sincerely back. We shall carry the emotions of knowing and understanding when carrying out the ideological and political work, focus on the imbalance, order, stages, and individual differences as students grow, and grasp the uniqueness shown by college students of different individuality and personality in different growth stages, so that the ideological and political education can become a mirror for college students to reflect on and improve themselves.

Modern college students have been experiencing the prosperous of the socialist market economy since their childhood, and most of them are the center of and highly protected by their families being the only child. The unique environment growing up affected their ideological and moral ideas and values. Their ideological activities are becoming increasingly independent, selective, alternative and differentiated, which are helpful for them to establish the sense of self-improvement, innovation, eager-to-succeed, and entrepreneurship, but they come with negative influence that shouldn’t be
overlooked. Some college students are lost in political faith, ambiguous in ideals and belief, twisted in terms of values, weak sense of honesty, lack of social responsibility, weakened spirit of hard working, poor sense of team work, and terrible psychological quality etc. to different extends. Even though college students, at this period of time, are basically intellectually matured, their ideological and moral concepts are still changing, and their emotions and values can easily fluctuate due to external interference. As a result, the ideological and political work shall become more targeted so that it can be carried out closer to how students think and walks into their heart. The information of students are necessary before the work begins, whether it is the conclusion of work experiences or foreseeing the future of the ideological and political work in colleges and universities, the more we know about the students, the more practical and applicable the work plan we devise will be. Let’s reflect on the previous works to see how we understood the students, and how much of the work we carried out was accepted and absorbed by them. The quality of the ideological and political work in colleges and universities can never be improved if two public opinion fields just fight their own battles only. The personality, characteristics, demands of college students must be fully understood, and also their hobbies in life and discourse systems, so that all-round, scientific, effective, high quality and high level services can be provided for them to grow, succeed and mature. Students are the educated, in the eyes of some. But in fact, they possess some of the advantages and strengths which we don’t have. Showing respect to every single student should be the basic attitude of ours. Serving students shall begin with trivial issues. Particularly, specific issues they face in life and learning should be properly addressed since they are often the blasting fuse that leads to major negative events and campus crisis. So, none shall treat them lightly.

3.2 Pay attention to the development trends of the times and explore intrinsic values

Ideology determines the direction and development path of culture. A socialist ideology with strong cohesive force and infectivity shall be constructed, and college students shall be further theoretically educated by highlighting the theme of the times in the ideological and political work in colleges and universities, exploit inner values from the important speeches from the Party and the government regarding higher education, and capture the reasonable opportunity to carry out the ideological and political work. China has been insisting the general keynote since the 18th National Congress of the CPC, which is seeking improvement in stability, and has made a number of glorious achievements in the Opening Up Policy and socialist modernization construction. Significant achievements are made economically by increasing the GDP from 54 trillion yuan to 80 trillion yuan, ranking the world’s second, and contributing more than 30% to the world’s economic growth. The system construction, which calls for the organic unity of the Party’s leadership, the people’s rule and law-based governance has been comprehensively strengthened, the Party’s leadership system and mechanism are continuously perfecting, the socialist democracy is continuously developing, the intra-Party democracy is becoming more far-ranging, and the socialist deliberative democracy is being comprehensively carried out. The Party’s theoretical innovation is comprehensively promoted and the guiding role of Marxism in ideology is becoming more prominent. The ideas of socialism with Chinese characteristics and Chinese Dream win great popular support. The socialist core values and excellent traditional Chinese cultural merits spread extensively. Activities to create spiritual civilization for the people are substantially carried out. The all-round and high quality development in economy, politics, laws, culture and people’s livelihood is making the Chinese Dream of Chinese people, which is the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, an earnestly anticipated wish shared by all ethnic groups in China. Young college students serve as the backbone as we set out to realize the general layout of “Five-in-One” and accomplish the great national rejuvenation, and they are indeed the “strongest voice” that leads the society to march forward. General Secretary Xi Jinping has been repeatedly emphasizing the fact that students are the main driving force to realize our Chinese Dream. College students now studying in campus are around 20 years old and most of them are less than 30 when a moderately well-off society is built in an all-round way in 2020. Most of them are less than 60 when China realizes fundamental modernization in mid-21st century. We may say that college students nowadays will be thoroughly
involved in the construction of the moderately well-off society and socialist modernization, and they will witness the promising future brought by the socialism with Chinese characteristics. It is the new requirement for current ideological and political work in colleges and universities to encourage young college students to dream big and work hard with the majestic mission of national rejuvenation by guiding them to focus on society and country with appropriately timed ideological and political work.

The trend of the times shall be conformed at all times. The ideological and political work in colleges and universities shall insist on being the innovative leader, ensuring that it is always consistent with the national development strategies. The principles, ideas, strategies and contents of ideological and political education shall temporize. Chinese society has witnessed several times of setbacks and tribulations since the founding of the People’s Republic, and harvested lots of gains and achievements. The complex history of social changes shall be incorporated into the content of the ideological and political work in colleges and universities for college students to better understand the hardworking history of our Party. Most college students are born in 1990s and post-1995, so teaching guidance shall be made in accordance with their group features and individual demands, leading them to actively understand and perceive the Party’s achievements made in ideology. The development status and characteristics of countries of the world shall be grasped, revealing the development patterns of human society, and elaborating the Party’s faith of firmly leading all peoples of China to march on the development path of the socialism with Chinese characteristics in a way that students find the easiest to perceive and accept, ensuring that the ideological and political work in colleges and universities is always inherently motivated to catch up with the times. Why, how and whom to rain remain the three key questions that must be answered as we carry out the ideological and political work in colleges and universities nowadays. “Why” and “whom” are closely related to the development tendencies of the times. One should firmly grasp the core values of the times in order to work hard for the Chinese Dream to answer these two questions reasonably and scientifically, and the classroom teaching reform, of which the objective is “immersing ideological and political teaching in regular courses”, shall be greatly promoted, the professional textbooks shall be revised, and all elements related to ideological and political education contained in all professional courses as well as the ideological and political functional parts contained shall be combed through, so that they can be incorporated in all links of classroom teaching, realizing the organic unity of ideological and political education and knowledge education. The campus network culture construction and management shall be enhanced, promoting high-level integration of the traditional advantages of ideological and political work and IT with an expanded network platform. We shall encourage students to learn more national news with the network so that a correct sense of mission can be formed, which combines their personal future with the great national mission.

3.3 Adapt to the evolution trends and innovate the work means

IT development resulted in the rapid growth of internet users. A survey which targeted at the college students in 2,240 regular higher educational institutions of 29 provinces of China showed that almost all college students use the internet on a daily basis and more than 90% of them use it for over 2 hours; more than 12.2% of them use it over 8 hours. The result tells us their great dependence on internet. The increasingly varied internet functions not only bring convenience to the leisure life and entertainment of college students, but they also help them to expand their channels of knowledge and information. A website of ideological and political education, an internet culture research and evaluation center and a certification system that assesses the internet culture achievements in colleges and universities shall be created, which may open up a series of internet-based ideological and political teaching events, and create the new era of online moral education. Undeniably, internet has become the frontier of ideological infiltration and public opinions conflict, and the guidance and teaching of students can be greatly improved if the ideological and political work in colleges and universities is able to take the initiative online, realizing the online / offline ideological and political education. Therefore, all colleges and
universities shall actively focus on internet, and the Party and administrative leaders shall take the lead while a team consisting of the representatives of the campus CPC propaganda department, office of academic studies, teaching team of ideological and political course, team of college counselors, backbones of student clubs and outstanding students shall be created, coordinating the works across different departments and teaching groups. What the students prefer shall be understood so that a variety of educational activities can be launched with new media to change to stereotypes of online ideological and political education among students, which is “spoon-feeding”, and it is merely the online videos of traditional ideological and political courses. Key points that are helpful to moral education shall be discovered from internet where the good and bad are intermingled, and social hot spots can be correctly made useful to emphasize the orientation of questions, spreading positivity among college students.

We shall focus on exploiting diverse approaches of the ideological and political work in colleges and universities, and activate the teaching modes with multiple methods. As the socialism with Chinese characteristics enters the new era, the development of globalization, informatization and modernization also brings profound changes to the world in which the students live. Teachers are required to advance with the times and innovate according to the trends in terms of ideological and political teaching. On the basis of profound understanding of the spirit of the 19th National Congress of the CPC, teachers may make their lessons “fun” with improved down-to-earth tutoring. In consideration of the hot spot issues students care about, their emotions and thinking can be fully mobilized to give play to their initiative. With modern new media technology, the interaction with the students can be strengthened, so that a modern ideological and political classroom atmosphere, led by teachers with active student participation, interaction and smooth communication, can be created, and the effectiveness of the spirit of the 19th National Congress of the CPC can be enhanced. More multi-dimensional interaction shall be carried out in ideological and political teaching, and the textbook compiling shall closely center the good vision elaborated in the report delivered by General Secretary Xi Jinping in the 19th National Congress. Starting from the general teaching goal, each chapter is focused and the spirit of the 19th National Congress of the CPC can be converted into teaching contents and incorporated in the teaching system, while various teaching activities centering “Chinese Dream”, “human community”, “youths of four qualities” and the keywords of the reports delivered in the 19th National Congress, which are closely related to colleges and universities and their students. Such as “My Chinese Dream” speech contest, “My View of the 19th National Congress of the CPC” symposium, and “the Five Years as We Strove Ahead” photography exhibition etc. WeChat public accounts dedicated to the ideological and political work in colleges and universities shall be created, and teachers shall be encouraged to interact with students extracurricularly via new media. Not only effective approaches are offered to students to make their leisure time useful, but also alleviate their antipathy against the ideological and political studies, so that they can be changed from passive receivers to active explorers, and their cultural confidence and patriotism can be enhanced too.

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