

Coupling and Innovation of Policy Instruments for the Development of Ideological and Political Education Teams in Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract: The core support for the high-quality development of ideological and political education in higher education institutions in the new era lies in building high-quality and professional ideological-political education teams. As the institutional carrier and implementation starting point for team building, the unitary and fragmented application of policy instruments restricts the release of the educational effectiveness of ideological-political education teams. To break down barriers to policy implementation and activate endogenous driving forces for team building, from the perspective of systematic governance, this paper defines the core connotation of coupling among policy instruments for the construction of ideological-political education teams in universities, establishes three major coupling principles: political guidance, systematic adaptability and effectiveness-orientation, and constructs multi-dimensional collaborative coupling paths for policy instruments. Through in-depth coupling of rigid regulatory, flexible incentive, resource-supply and digital-empowerment policy instruments, practical difficulties such as imbalanced team structure, lagging training mechanisms and insufficient incentive guarantees can be resolved. It promotes the transformation of policies for ideological-political-education-team building from “scattered implementation” to “systematic empowerment”, and provides institutional-innovation support for the professional, occupational and standardized development of university ideological-political education teams in the new era.

Keywords: University ideological-political education teams; Policy instruments; Instrument coupling; Team building; Educational innovation

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1. Introduction

University ideological-political education teams constitute the core subject for implementing the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education and carrying out ideological-political work in higher education institutions. Their comprehensive quality, professional competence and construction level directly determine the quality of university education and the stability of the ideological-security defense line on campus. In

recent years, the state has successively issued multiple special policies to improve the institutional system for building ideological-political education teams in terms of teacher-student ratio allocation, professional-title evaluation, training, incentives and guarantees, and has built an all-round policy-support framework. Nevertheless, in the practice of policy implementation, various policy instruments suffer from poor connection, insufficient coordination and functional fragmentation. Regulatory, incentive and service-oriented policy instruments operate independently and can hardly form joint governance forces, which causes some policies to become formalistic and weakens educational effectiveness. Against such a background, based on the reform requirements of ideological-political education in the new era, this paper focuses on the coupling logic of policy instruments, clarifies coupling principles and practical paths for team building, and explores collaborative-innovation modes of policy instruments. It aims to solve prominent difficulties in team building, promote institutionalized, scientific and high-quality development of ideological-political-education-team construction, and offer practical references for improving the quality of ideological-political work in universities.

2. Coupling principles of policy instruments for the construction of university ideological-political education teams

2.1. Principle of political guidance: Upholding the fundamental direction of fostering virtue through education

The political nature represents the primary attribute of university ideological-political work, and it is also the foremost core principle for coupling policy instruments for ideological-political-education-team building. University ideological-political education teams undertake the important mission of disseminating mainstream ideology, cultivating new-era talents and consolidating campus ideological-political positions. The design, integration and implementation of all policy instruments must always adhere to the Party's overall leadership and firmly grasp the correct political orientation. In the process of coupling policy instruments, political standards shall run through all stages and links of team building. The political orientation of various policy instruments shall be coordinated to ensure that regulatory, incentive, training and guarantee-oriented policy instruments always serve the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education. On the one hand, policy-coupling logic shall be guided by political requirements. The cultivation of ideological-political teachers' political literacy, improvement of political competence and tempering of political character shall be taken as core indicators for adapting various policy instruments. Relevant policy requirements such as political assessment, theoretical study and performance of ideological-political duties for ideological-political education teams shall be strictly implemented, so as to prevent political deviations in the application of policy instruments^[1]. On the other hand, utilitarian tendencies in policy coupling shall be avoided. The one-sided orientation of valuing professional work over political construction and valuing assessment over education shall be firmly rejected. Through the coordinated exertion of multiple types of policy instruments, a team-cultivation system centering on political construction shall be built, ensuring that ideological-political-education teams always serve as reliable forces for the Party to cultivate talents for the nation. This principle serves as the fundamental premise for coupling all policy instruments and determines the fundamental direction and educational keynote of ideological-political-education-team building.

2.2. Principle of systematic adaptability: Building an all-round collaborative governance system

The construction of university ideological-political education teams is a systematic project covering multiple dimensions including teacher recruitment, training, assessment, incentives and guarantees, and career development. It involves multiple subjects such as education-administrative departments, universities, secondary colleges and functional departments. Corresponding policy instruments are diversified with different functions, and independent application of a single instrument can hardly satisfy all-round team-building demands. The core of the principle of systematic adaptability lies in breaking fragmentation barriers among various policy instruments from the holistic-governance perspective and realizing all-round adaptation and organic connection of instrument functions, implementation scenarios and governance subjects. In terms of functional adaptation of instruments, complementary interaction between rigid regulatory instruments and flexible incentive instruments, short-term training instruments and long-term development instruments, as well as basic-guarantee instruments and quality-improvement-empowerment instruments shall be coordinated. Regulatory-oriented policies shall be relied on to clarify rigid standards for team building, implementing rigid requirements such as the 1:350 teacher-student ratio and exclusive posts staffing. Meanwhile, incentive and guarantee-oriented policies shall be adopted to stimulate endogenous motivation of teams. In terms of implementation-scenario adaptation, differentiated and targeted policy-instrument adaptation shall be carried out according to the post characteristics of different team types such as full-time ideological-political teachers, counselors, and part-time ideological-political workers, avoiding the “one-size-fits-all” policy model. In terms of governance-subject adaptation, the three-tier policy system consisting of national macro-level policies, local supporting policies and university implementation rules shall be coordinated. Vertical connection and horizontal coordination of policy instruments at all levels shall be promoted, so as to build a coupled policy-instrument system with full coverage, clear hierarchies and complementary functions, and improve the overall governance efficiency of team building.

2.3. Principle of effectiveness-orientation: Focusing on practical pain points in team building

The core goal of policy-instrument coupling is to solve practical problems in the construction of university ideological-political education teams and improve educational effectiveness. Effectiveness-orientation acts as the core criterion for testing the value of policy coupling. At present, common practical problems exist in the construction of university ideological-political education teams: imbalanced teacher structure, uneven professional competence, narrow career-development channels, prominent job burnout, and imperfect assessment-evaluation mechanisms. Some policy instruments are merely formally implemented with insufficient pertinence and fail to resolve real-world dilemmas. The principle of effectiveness-orientation requires that policy-instrument coupling shall integrate problem-orientation and goal-orientation. Policy instruments shall be accurately matched, and coupling modes shall be optimized to target pain points, difficulties, and bottlenecks in team building. On the one hand, targeted measures shall be taken for existing stock problems. For prominent problems such as poor operation of the dual-track promotion channel for team career advancement, imperfect professional-title evaluation criteria, and inadequate implementation of grassroots temporary-post training, assessment-, incentive- and training-oriented policy instruments shall be integrated to target and break development bottlenecks ^[2]. On the other hand, targeted empowerment shall be realized for the goal of improving educational quality. Centering on improving ideological-political-education

teams' teaching competence, scientific-research level and educational effectiveness, in-depth coupling of policy instruments including training and research-study, platform construction, scientific-research support and practical training shall be promoted to prevent idling and waste of policy instruments. Meanwhile, a dynamic-evaluation mechanism for policy-coupling effectiveness shall be established. Instrument-combination modes shall be dynamically adjusted according to team-building outcomes, feedback on educational quality and teachers' development demands, so as to guarantee that policy coupling stays realistic and practical, and truly translate institutional advantages into team-building effectiveness and educational performance.

3. Coupling paths of policy instruments for the construction of university ideological-political education teams

3.1. Coupling of regulatory and guarantee-oriented instruments: Consolidating the institutional foundation for team building

Regulatory-oriented and guarantee-oriented policy instruments constitute foundational instruments for constructing university ideological-political education teams. The former defines construction standards and regulates the performance of duties through rigid institutions, while the latter safeguards team rights and interests and stabilizes talent teams via flexible support. The in-depth coupling of the two can build an institutional system featuring “restraints, guarantees and bottom-line requirements”, and fundamentally solve problems including insufficient standardization of team building and serious brain drain. To promote in-depth coupling of the two types of instruments, first of all, rigid constraints of regulatory instruments shall be strengthened. National rigid regulatory policies concerning staffing ratio, post-setting and staffing management for ideological-political education teams shall be strictly implemented. The 1:350 staffing standard for full-time ideological-political-theory teachers shall be enforced. Exclusive staffing quotas for ideological-political posts shall be specified and shall not be diverted for other purposes. Lists of job responsibilities for ideological-political teachers and counselors shall be refined to avoid virtual posts and generalized duties. Meanwhile, a hierarchical regulatory system shall be improved: macro-level construction standards shall be clarified at the national level, detailed supporting implementation rules shall be formulated at the local level, and specific systems for post management, performance norms as well as access-and-exit mechanisms shall be worked out at the university level, so as to form a three-tier linked rigid regulatory system^[3]. Secondly, the guarantee-instrument system shall be optimized in accordance with regulatory standards. Staffing guarantee, salary guarantee, post guarantee and logistics guarantee shall be precisely aligned with regulatory requirements. For post-allocation requirements specified by regulations, special staffing quotas, special funds and exclusive office resources shall be provided correspondingly. Aiming at the heavy workload and complicated affairs of ideological-political-education teams, burden-reduction guarantee policies shall be improved to clarify boundaries of ideological-political work and prevent excessive non-job-related affairs from consuming educational energy. Finally, a linkage-implementation mechanism for regulation and guarantee shall be established. The implementation of guarantee policies shall be incorporated into regulatory-assessment items. Special supervision and accountability shall be carried out for universities with insufficient staffing and poor guarantee implementation. Meanwhile, guarantee policies shall be relied on to stabilize teams and stimulate vitality, forcing regulatory policies to take effect, and forming a benign coupling pattern of “setting standards via rigid regulation and stabilizing teams through comprehensive guarantees”.

3.2. Coupling of training and development-oriented instruments: Activating endogenous driving forces for team growth

Training-oriented policy instruments focus on improving teams' current competence, covering theoretical training, practical research-study and special teaching-research activities. Development-oriented policy instruments target long-term career growth of teams, including professional-title evaluation, platform construction, scientific-research support and academic-degree upgrading. The coupling of the two can realize "short-term quality improvement and long-term empowerment", and resolve core difficulties such as weak professional competence, limited career-development space and insufficient growth motivation of ideological-political-education teams. To promote in-depth coupling of training and development-oriented instruments, a linkage mechanism of "hierarchical training, step-by-step development and all-round empowerment" shall be constructed. First, training contents shall be precisely matched with development demands. Differentiated training programs shall be formulated for ideological-political workers of different ranks, service lengths and posts. Induction pre-service training and basic-business practical training shall be provided for newly-recruited team members to consolidate their performance foundations. Special research-study, scientific-research empowerment and cross-border exchange training shall be offered for young-and-middle-aged backbone team members to enhance their innovative educational and scientific-research capabilities. Renowned-teacher cultivation and leading-talent support shall be implemented for senior team members to build benchmark ideological-political-education teams. Meanwhile, career-development goals shall be integrated into the whole training process. Teaching achievements, scientific-research outputs and educational effects required for professional-title evaluation and post promotion shall be incorporated into training systems, making training serve long-term development^[4]. Second, channels for translating training outcomes into career development shall be opened up. A linkage mechanism shall be established among training credits, research-study outputs, educational performance and professional-title evaluation, merit-based selection as well as post-promotion. Policy requirements such as separate evaluation for ideological-political-series professional titles and senior-post proportions no lower than the university average shall be implemented, so that training performance can be truly converted into development advantages. Third, an integrated training-and-development platform shall be built. Training carriers including "Famous Ideological-Political-Teacher Studio", grassroots temporary-post training, red-base research-study and university-enterprise ideological-political co-construction shall be integrated, supported by development policies such as scientific-research project approval, subject support and achievement promotion. It promotes the transformation of ideological-political-education teams from "single-task-oriented personnel" to "comprehensive education-oriented personnel", and continuously activates the endogenous growth motivation of teams.

3.3. Coupling of incentive and evaluation-oriented instruments: Constructing a scientific educational governance mechanism

Incentive-oriented policy instruments function to provide positive guidance and stimulate vitality, while evaluation-oriented policy instruments realize precise assessment and normative guidance. The two-way coupling of the two can build a governance system of "promoting construction and excellence via evaluation with clear rewards and penalties", and solve problems including generalized assessment, virtualized incentives, insufficient work enthusiasm and prominent job burnout among ideological-political-education teams. To promote in-depth coupling of incentive and evaluation-oriented instruments, the key lies in

reconstructing a scientific and precise assessment-and-incentive system and realizing high unity between evaluation orientation and incentive mechanisms. First, multi-dimensional and three-dimensional evaluation instruments shall be optimized. The traditional single quantitative-assessment mode shall be broken. A comprehensive-evaluation system covering political literacy, teaching effects, scientific-research quality, daily ideological-political education, student feedback and innovative achievements shall be constructed. Formalistic and trace-dependent assessment indicators shall be weakened, while core indicators of educational effectiveness shall be emphasized. An evaluation standard of “Ideological-Political-Influence Index” shall be set up to conduct substantive assessment focusing on students’ political identity, value-shaping and growth outcomes ^[5]. Meanwhile, post differences among full-time ideological-political teachers, counselors and part-time ideological-political workers shall be distinguished, and classified assessment and differentiated evaluation shall be adopted to avoid the “one-size-fits-all” assessment mode. Second, precise hierarchical incentive instruments shall be improved. Assessment results shall be fully linked with material incentives, spiritual incentives and development-oriented incentives. For teams with excellent assessment results, incentive policies such as special bonuses, priority for merit-based honors, professional-title preference and priority for outbound research-study shall be implemented. For teams with satisfactory performance, their regular rights and interests shall be guaranteed and development expectations shall be stabilized. For personnel with unqualified assessment and poor performance, measures including interview-and-rectification, special training, post adjustment and even exit mechanisms shall be enforced. Finally, a fault-tolerance-and-correction incentive mechanism shall be perfected. For non-principled mistakes arising from innovative exploration in ideological-political education, a due-diligence-exemption and fault-tolerance-and-correction system shall be established to prevent generalized accountability, so as to support ideological-political workers in bold educational innovation and create a sound atmosphere of taking responsibility and devoting themselves to education.

3.4. Coupling of traditional and digital-oriented instruments: Building a new paradigm of smart education

Against the background of digital-intelligent education, the integration and coupling of traditional offline educational, training and management policy instruments with new digital policy instruments represents an inevitable trend for the innovative development of university ideological-political-education-team building. Traditional policy instruments feature systematicness, standardization and practicality, whereas digital policy instruments boast advantages of high efficiency, precision and dynamism. The complementary coupling of the two can resolve drawbacks of traditional team-building modes such as low efficiency, insufficient precision and hysteretic dynamics, and satisfy digital-oriented ideological-political education demands for young students in the new era. To promote in-depth coupling of traditional and digital policy instruments, a construction system of “traditional foundation building, digital empowerment and integrated innovation” shall be established. On the one hand, training modes shall integrate old and new approaches. High-quality traditional training forms such as offline special-topic research-study, grassroots practice and famous-teacher mentoring shall be retained. Meanwhile, digital training platforms including online cloud-based teaching-research, digital ideological-political training and virtual-simulation educational practical training shall be built. High-quality online ideological-political-education resources shall be integrated to realize regular training modes of in-depth offline practice plus online empowerment, so as to expand team-training channels and improve training efficiency. On the other hand, management services shall be digitally

upgraded. Relying on big data and artificial-intelligence technologies, a dynamic-management platform for ideological-political-education teams shall be constructed to collect real-time data of team training status, work performance, educational outputs and development demands. It replaces traditional manual statistics and static ledger-management modes, and realizes dynamic monitoring, precise analysis and targeted policy-making for team building ^[6]. In addition, an algorithm-ethics-supervision mechanism shall be set up to standardize procedures for data collection, utilization and circulation, guarantee standardization and security of digital management, promote the transformation of ideological-political-education-team building from traditional experience-driven governance to modern smart-oriented governance, and fully satisfy development demands for smart ideological-political education in the new era.

4. Conclusion

The construction of university ideological-political education teams serves as the core support for fostering virtue through education in universities of the new era. Scientific coupling and innovative application of policy instruments constitute a key path for breaking bottlenecks in team building and improving educational quality. From the perspective of systematic governance, this paper clarifies four core principles for coupling policy instruments for ideological-political-education-team building, and constructs four-dimensional coupling paths: regulation-guarantee, training-development, incentive-evaluation and digital collaboration. It realizes the transformation of various policy instruments from fragmented application to systematic empowerment, and continuously forges high-quality ideological-political-education teams featuring firm political stance, profound dedication, innovative thinking, broad vision, strict self-discipline and noble personality. It consolidates talent foundations for high-quality development of university ideological-political education.

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