

Construction of Evaluation Index System for Ideological-Political Work in Universities in the New Era

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Abstract: The evaluation of ideological-political work in universities serves as a navigator for implementing the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education, and also represents the transformation of evaluation paradigms required for the high-quality development of higher education. Essentially, the evaluation of university ideological-political work assesses the implementation of fostering virtue through education, namely evaluating the top-level design, implementation process and actual effectiveness of the working system for fostering virtue through education. Evaluation is adopted to help universities improve the quality of ideological-political work and earnestly implement the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education.

Keywords: Ideological-political work; Fostering virtue through education; Three-wide education; Index system; Evaluation

Online publication: October 27, 2026

1. Introduction

The ideological-political work in universities concerns the fundamental issue of “who to cultivate, how to cultivate people, and for whom to cultivate people”. Centering on fostering virtue through education, universities should integrate ideological-political work into the whole process of education and teaching and implement the concept of Three-Wide Education. Fostering virtue through education is the fundamental value guidance for ideological-political work, and ideological-political work is essentially the work of fostering virtue through education ^[1]. The new round of educational teaching audit and evaluation has transformed fostering virtue through education from a “soft target” into a “hard indicator”. Constructing an evaluation index system for ideological-political work suited to university conditions can help universities better fulfill the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education.

2. Evaluation of top-level design: Whether the institutional mechanism for fostering virtue through education is reasonable

Education takes cultivating people as its core and fostering virtue as its foundation. This represents our Party's new understanding of the essence of education in the new historical era. Fostering virtue through education is the fundamental stipulation for coordinating all talent-training work in universities. To vigorously advance the project of fostering virtue through education in universities for the new era, it is necessary to firmly grasp the scientific connotation and practical requirements of education's political attribute, people-oriented attribute and strategic attribute ^[1].

2.1. Evaluation of the institutional mechanism for upholding the Party's comprehensive leadership over universities

The Party's leading position embodies the political attribute of the project of fostering virtue through education in universities in the new era. Socialist universities cannot function without Party leadership. Strengthening the Party's comprehensive leadership over universities constitutes the fundamental guarantee for running socialist universities with Chinese characteristics. Nevertheless, the capacity and level of internal university governance are critical to university development ^[2]. Therefore, the Party's comprehensive leadership over universities means adhering to and improving the president-under-Party-committee-leadership system in university internal governance, strengthening Party leadership in secondary colleges, and reinforcing primary-level Party-building work.

The president-under-Party-committee-leadership system means that the university Party committee exercises comprehensive leadership over university affairs, assumes the principal responsibility for Party governance and university administration, strictly enforces and safeguards political discipline and rules, implements the responsibility system for Party-building work, and effectively plays its role as the leadership core. As the legal representative of the university, under the leadership of the university Party committee, the president implements the Party's educational policies, organizes the execution of Party committee resolutions, exercises all functions and powers stipulated in the Higher Education Law, and takes overall charge of teaching, scientific research and administrative management. The president-under-Party-committee-leadership system forms an indivisible organic whole, embodying democratic centralism — the fundamental organizational principle and leadership system of the Party and the country. Accordingly, evaluation of this system mainly observes whether the university leadership grasps the general direction, manages the overall situation, makes decisions, implements reasonable division of labor, establishes coordinated operational mechanisms, effectively applies democratic centralism, adheres to the correct orientation for personnel appointment, and effectively promotes the implementation of major matters.

Party leadership in secondary colleges is reflected in the comprehensive leadership exercised by the college Party committee over all college affairs. It assumes principal responsibilities for Party governance and college administration, and fulfills duties of grasping direction, managing the overall situation, making decisions, promoting development and ensuring implementation. Under the leadership of the Party committee, the dean and the administrative leadership group are responsible for teaching, scientific research, and administrative management in accordance with laws and regulations. Evaluation of Party leadership in secondary colleges focuses on observing whether job responsibilities of the Party committee and the dean are clearly defined, whether mechanisms for deliberation and decision-making, college administrative meetings, Party-administration communication, and scientific, democratic and law-based decision-making are sound,

and whether the leading group demonstrates a responsible and enterprising work style.

Primary-level Party organizations constitute the foundation of the Party's combat effectiveness and all its work. University primary-level Party organizations must implement the Party's lines, principles and policies, unite and mobilize teachers and students, carry out ideological-political work, and also undertake tasks including professional talent training, cultural inheritance, scientific research and social service. Major observation points for evaluating university primary-level Party-building work cover institutional mechanisms for organizational-system construction, including Party-member recruitment, Party-member training, Party-membership management, Party-fee collection, and incentives, care and assistance for Party members.

2.2. Institutional evaluation of adhering to the socialist orientation for running universities

The socialist orientation for running universities embodies the people-oriented and strategic attributes of the project of fostering virtue through education in the new era. It determines the path of university operation and the question of what kind of people to cultivate. Talent cultivation is an inherent basic function of universities and their primary significance to society^[3]. The mission of a university is to serve the society that nurtures it^[4]. In the new era, the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics requires qualified successors. Universities should cultivate socialist builders and successors. On this issue, we must hold firm stances and take clear attitudes. Therefore, universities must resolutely adhere to the guidance of Marxism, and uphold education that serves the people, serves national governance, serves the consolidation and development of the socialist system, and serves reform-and-opening-up and socialist modernization. Evaluation of the university-running orientation mainly observes ideological-political work such as the construction of Marxist theoretical disciplines, the School of Marxism and Marxist publicity; social-satisfaction evaluation and feedback; output-oriented multi-integrated talent-training evaluations conducted by universities, employing units, government and third-party institutions; as well as industry-education integration and think-tank development.

3. Evaluation of implementation process: Whether fostering virtue through education runs through the whole talent-training process

The implementation process of fostering virtue through education refers to integrating ideological-political work into the whole process of education and teaching, advancing the "Three-Wide Education", building an integrated education system, and creating an all-round three-dimensional educational space. Evaluation of the implementation process should neither be generalized into evaluation of various specific tasks, nor narrowly confined to assessment of university talent-training processes or capabilities for Party-building and ideological-political work.

3.1. Evaluation of ideological-theoretical value-guidance work

Marxism constitutes a scientific world outlook and methodology. Solid progress in Marxist theoretical education can lay a sound ideological foundation for students' lifelong growth. For young students, correctly responding to the turbulence of a pluralistic world bears great significance for determining the basic political orientation of the younger generation and the future of the country. Therefore, it is necessary to educate and guide students to strengthen their faith in Marxism, conviction in socialism with Chinese characteristics, and confidence in the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Ideological-political theory courses serve as the main channel for disseminating Marxist theories, and the primary path for systematically spreading ideals and

convictions, core socialist values, fine traditional Chinese culture, revolutionary culture and advanced socialist culture with Chinese characteristics. Evaluation of the construction of university ideological-political theory courses mainly observes whether classroom teaching organically integrates the Party's innovative theories, pays attention to social hot-spot issues, and focuses on concerns raised by students^[5].

On the basis of giving full play to the value-guiding role of ideological-political theory courses, social-practice activities must be persistently carried out. Ideological-political education originates from the objective needs of human survival and development^[6] and bears strong practical features. Marxist-theoretical education should carry out diverse social-practice activities imbued with ideals and convictions, patriotism, civic morality, humanistic quality and scientific spirit in light of local and temporal conditions. It should integrate moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic and labor education into such activities, helping young students understand society and national conditions, perceive the truth power of Marxism, and consciously internalize the national spirit of patriotism and the times spirit of reform and innovation. Evaluation of social-practice activities mainly observes whether they are coordinated and integrated with ideological-political theory courses, and whether local red resources are effectively utilized.

3.2. Evaluation of “ideological-political elements embedded in specialized courses” teaching work

Classroom teaching is the main front for educational work. All courses should undertake educational responsibilities, align objectives and actions with ideological-political theory courses, and unite to form joint educational forces. Accordingly, it is necessary to adjust and optimize course-teaching content, open up the integrated educational chain linking ideological-political theory courses and courses embedded with ideological-political elements, and build an educational pattern featuring full-cycle theoretical armament, whole-process educational guidance and all-round practical cultivation^[7]. This realizes mutual promotion between knowledge imparting and moral cultivation, and organic integration of ability training and value guidance. On the one hand, strict checks should be imposed on textbook selection, ensuring textbooks that combine knowledge delivery and correct value orientation are available for teaching-learning activities. On the other hand, educational elements embedded within courses should be deeply explored. Every course represents outcomes of human practical cognition and inherently contains value propositions concerning human relationships with nature, other individuals and society. Therefore, embedding ideological-political elements in specialized courses emphasizes the acquisition of relevant value-judgment and value-choice capabilities in the course of knowledge learning^[8]. Accordingly, evaluation for courses with embedded ideological-political elements verifies teaching materials such as selected textbooks, course syllabi and teaching plans at the formal level. At the content level, comprehensive judgment on the implementation of course-based education is made via multiple approaches including student feedback, supervisor inspections, class observations by university-college leaders, peer reviews and expert lesson evaluation.

3.3. Evaluation of campus-culture construction work

Campus culture is the reflection of organizational culture within the specific setting of a university. Continuously refined in the course of university operation, it gradually forms values and codes of conduct recognized by teachers and students^[9]. Campus culture demonstrates the unique spiritual outlook and cultural taste of the campus and exerts positive effects on student development^[10]. The formation of students' moral concepts, quality improvement and personality-shaping rely more on the all-round immersion of the campus

environment^[11]. Therefore, as invisible education exerting subtle influence, campus culture achieves the effect of “growing fragrant after staying long in a room full of orchids” through immersion, influence and edification. There are four dimensions for campus-culture evaluation^[12]:

First, material campus culture, including university buildings, garden landscapes, quotations from famous figures and alumni rolls. It observes whether these elements highlight the university’s educational characteristics.

Second, spiritual campus culture, including university-running philosophy, positioning, school motto and educational-teaching concepts. It observes whether these are recognized by teachers and students and become their shared spiritual pursuit.

Third, institutional campus culture, including campus rules and regulations, class regulations and organizational forms. It observes whether they are oriented toward education and achieve the goal of fostering good student behavioral habits through external constraints and internal motivation.

Fourth, behavioral campus culture, including teachers’ and students’ psychological states, ways of conducting affairs, personalities, speech and deportment, and moral literacy. It observes whether campus interpersonal relationships and exemplary role-models enhance the spiritual outlook and professional literacy of teachers and students.

3.4. Evaluation of education through administration and service

Education through administration and service constitutes a key link for fulfilling the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education. In practice, it continuously integrates with education and teaching, courses embedded with ideological-political elements, ideological-political theory courses and ideological-political work. It clarifies various misconceptions from the perspective of life-oriented and scenario-based experience and continuously reinforces the correct political orientation^[13]. The “student-centered” principle serves as the starting point and destination for university administration and service work. While maintaining normal educational-teaching and living order, university administrative work should combine the settlement of practical affairs with the resolution of ideological issues. When guaranteeing study and life for teachers and students, service work should combine standardized procedures with humane care, and earnestly implement the dedication to serving teachers and students wholeheartedly in every detail. Evaluation of education through administration and service mainly observes whether various student-related management systems (academic administration, student-status management, employment administration, dormitory management, etc.) reflect demands for student growth and success and are implemented standardly and effectively; whether systems including student-life services, financial-aid programs, mental-health education, employment guidance and comprehensive public-security governance contribute to student growth and success.

3.5. Evaluation of the development of teaching staff and specialized ideological-political work teams

Teachers are the foundation of education and the source of educational vitality. They shoulder the era mission of disseminating knowledge, ideas and truth and shaping souls, lives and new generations. University teachers in the new era should cultivate educator sentiments, develop solid professional competence, adhere to the principle that educators should receive education first, and take teachers’ ethics and conduct as the primary criterion for evaluating teaching-team quality^[14]. They should always uphold the maxim “learned to be a teacher, behaved to be a role-model”, achieve moral integrity in personal conduct, scholarship and teaching,

and undertake responsibility for guiding student growth. Taking teachers' ethics and conduct as the primary evaluation criterion for teaching-staff quality, evaluation focuses on observing teaching-education outcomes, examining whether teaching meets student-growth demands and whether teachers care for students' studies and development after class. A "one-vote veto" system applies to violations of teachers' ethics and conduct.

Apart from classroom teachers, ideological-political work teams and Party-building work teams are organizers and implementers of ideological-political work. In accordance with *Standards for Student Party-Building Work in General Institutions of Higher Education*, full-time ideological-political and Party-building staff in universities shall account for no less than 1 % of the total number of teachers and students. Each college shall assign at least 1-2 full-time Party-organization officers, and the teacher-student ratio for full-time counselors shall be no lower than 1:200. According to *Provisions on the Development of Full-time Ideological-Political Theory Course Teachers in Institutions of Higher Education in the New Era*, the teacher-student ratio for full-time ideological-political theory course teachers shall be no lower than 1:350. In addition, special funds for developing ideological-political and Party-building work teams shall be allocated at no less than 20 CNY per student per year based on total enrolled-student numbers. On the basis of quantitative indicators, evaluation observes training, development guarantees and work performance of ideological-political and Party-building work teams.

4. Evaluation of work effectiveness: Whether fostering virtue through education has achieved practical outcomes

The ultimate goal of university ideological-political work is to fulfill the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education. Its effectiveness is comprehensively reflected through the "cognition-emotion-volition-behavior" of talents cultivated by universities. This represents the core and most direct manifestation of outcomes from fostering virtue through education.

In terms of cognition: students shall possess correct value identity, namely establishing a scientific world outlook, outlook on life and values, identifying with fine traditional Chinese culture, revolutionary culture and advanced socialist culture, and distinguishing right from wrong.

In terms of emotion: students shall possess noble character cultivation, namely loving the country, the Party and the people, having a sense of collective honor, empathy and gratitude, maintaining self-confident, rational, peaceful and positive mental health, and holding emotional inclinations of dedication, integrity, friendliness, hard-working spirit and commitment.

In terms of volition: students shall possess sound spiritual qualities, namely self-discipline and self-reflection, strong frustration-resistance capability, and lofty ideals.

In terms of behavior: students shall act proactively and work diligently, namely respecting teachers and treating peers amicably, observing discipline and etiquette, taking good care of public property, uniting others, voluntarily participating in volunteer services, social practice and public-welfare activities, being diligent and thoughtful, seeking truth and pragmatism, loving their jobs and abiding by laws and disciplines.

To evaluate these core outcomes, evaluation information can be collected by reviewing student-growth files, conducting on-site interviews and questionnaire assessments. Meanwhile, third-party social evaluation and feedback from employing units shall be incorporated.

In addition, a neat, orderly, safe and stable campus filled with a humanistic atmosphere together with a positive mental outlook among teachers and students represents the combined effect of all

elements of university ideological-political work. It constitutes the most concrete and vivid expression of ideological-political-work effectiveness and outcomes that cannot be falsified. This can be observed via site visits investigating campus landscapes, civility norms, teaching-living order, work style, teacher demeanor and study ethos.

5. Conclusion

Education's essence is "cultivating people rather than manufacturing utensils" ^[15], and no unified "standard" can be applied. Therefore, evaluation for fostering-virtue-through-education work must be grounded in the university's developmental positioning and foundation, unique regional culture, and its orientation toward serving local communities. It focuses on observing distinctive working ideas and practices for implementing the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education. Admittedly, ideological-political-work evaluation centered on fostering virtue through education results from the paradigm shift in evaluation amid the high-quality-development stage of contemporary higher education. Evaluation of non-quantifiable or hard-to-quantify factors encounters certain difficulties in realizing process evaluation, value-added evaluation and comprehensive evaluation. Nevertheless, this evaluation paradigm breaks away from simplistic quantitative assessment and better conforms to the developmental demands of real human beings.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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