An Innovative Study About the Effect and the Long-Term Mechanism of Advisors on Graduate Students’ Ideological and Political Education

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Abstract. Advisors should play an exemplary, guiding and regulatory role in graduate students’ ideological and political education. However, such effect is limited by the imperfection of the current mechanism, the incompetence of some advisors and the lack of understanding about advisors’ influence. To strengthen the role of advisors in graduate students’ ideological and political education, we have to focus on the change of advisors’ concepts, construct advisors’ moral responsibility system and set up strict norms and evaluation system, meanwhile we need to ensure that schools provide sufficient protection.

Introduction

With the expansion of graduate school admission, the diversification of values, the lowering age of graduate students and the complexity of ideological and psychologic problems, to guarantee the quality of graduate education, one needs to strengthen the ideological and political education. Several Opinions on Further Strengthening and Improving Graduate Students’ Ideological and Political Education, issued by the Ministry of Education, clearly states that “Graduate education is the highest level of higher education training and is an important channel of innovative talents training in China’s socialist modernization. Graduate students’ ideological and political education is a significant part of graduate education.”

Moral commands talents. Graduate students’ ideological and political education is the guarantee for the quality of graduate education and leads graduate education towards the right direction. Graduate students’ ideological and political education, is the requirement of education concepts of “cultivating students first, moral education first”, “knowledge education” and “moral education”, as well as the prerequisite for the realization of comprehensive development. The “advisor system” grants advisors special status and role in graduate students’ ideological and political education, which objectively provides beneficial conditions for advisors’ participation.

Status Quo and Problems

Advisor system is a mode currently widely adopted by China’s universities. It refers to the education management mechanism where advisors provide individual guidance and take full responsibility for graduates’ study, ideology, life, and all other aspects. It defines advisors’ obligation to educate, as well as specifics advisors’ responsibilities and rights during the education process. Every coin has two sides, and in fact, most advisors ignore or avoid graduate students’ ideological and political education. The existing cognitive bias towards graduate education concepts and the indifference towards graduate students’ ideological and political education lead to the detachment of “talents education” and “moral education”, as well as the imperfection of education effect.

The Lack of Correct Education Concept

Most advisors only recognize the mentoring on students’ research and set up much higher academic requirement than ideological requirement. They hold the view that ideological education should be undertaken by a specialized professional and the fundamental of an advisor is the research work. The advisors believe that graduate students are mature enough to have their own philosophy of life
and to possess the ability of self-control and self-education. The advisors fail to see the necessity of ideological and political education.

The Lack of Sufficient Sense of Responsibility

Detached from the moral education for graduate students and influenced by the traditional concept of talents education, some advisors only focus on graduate students’ academic study, research study and paper publication. They fail to realize that for graduate students, the ideological changes, the psychological growth and the development of philosophy of life can impact on students’ future career options and choices, and can lay the foundations of adaptability. As a result, these advisors do not have the sense of responsibility to initiatively concern and assist.

The Lack of Standardized Management System

Although China’s universities always insist that advisors should strengthen the ideological and political education, there is no clear definition or standardized norms for their work on graduate students’ ideological and political education at the aspects of the scope, content, responsibility, effect and evaluation. Therefore, what often happens is that advisors who are willing to help do not know how, while advisors who want to shirk will not be punished. Moreover, some universities do not form an effective linkage between advisors and the professional specialists at the graduate students’ ideological and political education.

The Lack of Effective Evaluation and Supervision System

Most universities use research as core index for advisors’ qualification determination and career path promotion, and ignore the evaluation of advisors’ political theory, moral level and ideological level. This leads to the deficiency of advisors’ moral education and their avoidance of ideological and political education. Consequently, it fails to form a specific management method for the evaluation of advisors’ moral education and a monitoring mechanism.

Mechanism and Strategies

Change Advisors’ Education Concept and Establish the Mechanism to Encourage Advisors to Focus on Comprehensive Development

The plan for China’s long-term education reform and development (2010-2020) specifically points out that we should promote the organic integration of moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic education, improve the overall quality of students, and prepare students to become comprehensively developed constructors and successors of socialism. For graduate education, advisors need to start from the perspective of comprehensive development of graduate students, alter the concept of “academic first, moral next” and insist the principle of “cultivating students first, moral education first”, as well as the combination of “talents education” and “moral education”.

The Principles of “Cultivating Students First” and “Moral Education First”. The universities need to insist on the principles of “cultivating students first” and “moral education first”. The fundamental task is to educate people and ideological and political education should be put in the first priority. While strengthen academic guidance for graduate students, advisors need to adhere to the principle of moral education first. This requires advisors to emphasize on the graduate students’ ideological and political education and to take complete advantage of students’ trust about academic tutoring to consciously lead the ideological and political direction. The advisors should reinforce graduate students’ education on Marxian theory and socialism moral, strict evaluate students’ thoughts and prepare students to become the qualified constructors and successors of socialism.

Combine “Knowledge Education” with “Moral Education”. Academic guidance is the basic of the advisors’ education for graduate students. Advisors should actively participate in graduate students’ research tutoring and promote students’ intellectual level. Advisors should strengthen the construction of advisors’ moral standard and improve professional level. By influencing students
with noble morality, personal charisma, and rich knowledge, advisors have become the mentors and leaders for students’ healthy growth. Not only should advisors take a lead on academic, but also they should combine the academic mentoring with graduate students’ ideological and political education, as well as combine the talents education with the moral education. The one who has high moral standard will set up an example for people to follow. The strict academic attitude and self-disciplined academic morality of advisors themselves will unconsciously affect the graduate students in their professional training and intensify the effectiveness of the organic combination of talents education and moral education.

**Put Graduate Students Foremost and Strengthen the Interactive Mechanism between Advisors’ Responsibility of Ideological and Political Education and Students’ Self-Education**

We should adhere to the combination of education and self-education. Not only should the educational and guiding role of professors and party organizations be fully played, but also fully employ the enthusiasm and the participation of students. The universities should establish the responsibility mechanism for advisors’ ideological and political education, while respect graduate students’ individual personality, and integrate graduate education with graduate students self-education to create a student-oriented education.

**The Advisor Is the First Responsible Person for Graduate Students’ Ideological and Political Education.** The graduate education in China’s universities basically adopt the “advisor system” or the “advisor responsibility system”. Such method enlarges advisors’ autonomy in the training and management of graduate students, meanwhile leaves more burden on advisors’ shoulders. Advisors take the primary responsibility of graduate students’ ideological and political education. They not only have the duty of students’ academic, but of the education and evaluation for students’ ideology and morality as well. Of course, while carrying out the ideological and political education, advisors should not be condescending and have to put real emotions to let graduate students accept from heart and improve the effect of the ideological and political education.

**Combine Advisors’ Ideological and Political Education for Graduate Students and Graduate Students’ Self-Education.** Cultivating students is the basic requirement for education work. Graduate education should be student-oriented and advisor-led, and encourage students’ active participation. In practice, advisors should implement graduate students’ ideological and political education in a people-oriented way, combine it with students’ self-education and emphasize on students’ subjectivity and personality. Self-education is not only a measure to evaluate the effectiveness of education, but also the final destination of the carrying out of the ideological and political education. Advisors should create benign education environment. To enhance the awareness of self-education, advisors have to actively lead graduate students to educate themselves and to stimulate students’ intrinsic motivation. By this way, can the students gradually alter their subjective philosophy of life and promote the ideological and political level. In self-education, a useful way is to deeply dig and actively propagate the advanced models emerged among graduate students, creating a strong atmosphere of public opinions and stimulating more graduate students to actively increase their ideological and political level.

**Strictly Control and Improve the Evaluation System of Advisors’ Ideological and Political Education**

The educators must be educated first. Only after systematically learning and comprehensively understanding the requirements of social development, can one then fully play its primary role. Advisors’ ideological and political level directly influences the all-round development of graduate students and guarantee the graduate students’ ideological and political education. As well-educated workers, advisors play a significant role in graduate students’ ideological and political education. To guarantee graduate students’ ideological and political level, one need to strictly choose, train and evaluate that of advisors.
Include Ideological and Political Education into the Selection and the Training of Advisors. The universities should use cultivating students as the prerequisite for the employment of graduate advisors and adopt a veto system. In the process of selecting advisors, the universities should not only take strict standards such as the academic level and research outcomes into consideration, but also need to carefully control advisors’ moral level and ideological and political quality, that is, whether an advisor has strict academic morality or not and whether the advisor are capable to adhere to the socialistic direction of graduate students’ education or not. From the perspective of training material, the training towards advisors should not only include professional training, but strengthen the training about the ideological and political education theory as well. For advisors who deviate from the right political direction, fail to pay attention to the reinforcement of their own moral level and possess low ideological and political level, the universities should exclude them from graduate education, no matter how high their academic ability is.

Use Ideological and Political Education as the Standard to Evaluate and Promote Advisors. The universities should make the reward and punishment system of advisors’ instructing work and evaluate regularly. The evaluation of advisors should go beyond the tutoring effects and the academic outcomes and include graduate students’ ideological and political education. In the evaluation of the latter, the universities should establish an evaluation mechanism where strict assessment should be carry out regularly, advisors should regularly report and students should participate. Things to be evaluated should include advisors’ academic morality, level of political theory, and the effect of graduate students’ ideological and political education. Through the evaluation the advisors will implement graduate students’ ideological and political education under certain pressure. Simultaneously, the evaluation outcomes should be related to advisors’ admission quotas and awards. For advisors who exceed in graduate students’ ideological and political education, the universities need to invest a lot of efforts to propagate and spiritually encourage advisors to develop superior professional ethics and to improve the effect of graduate students’ ideological and political education.

Conclusion

Opinions on Further Strengthening and Improving Graduate Students’ Ideological and Political Education, issued by the Ministry of Education, clearly states that “Graduate education is the highest level of higher education training and is an important channel of innovative talents training in China’s socialist modernization. Graduate students’ ideological and political education is a significant part of graduate education.” Advisors possess a special status and play a forceful role in graduate students’ moral education. Therefore, we need to clearly define advisors’ responsibilities and encourage advisors’ active participation in the whole process of graduate students’ ideological and political education. Nevertheless, contemporarily the effect of advisors’ participation is not so obvious. To solve this problem, advisors can start from being more compassionate and exploring the construction of scientific cultivating mechanism for moral education. By finding a feasible path to strengthen and reform the current graduate students’ ideological and political education, one could improve the advisor system for graduate students’ well-round development, the interactive mechanism between the one where advisors are responsible for ideological and political education and the one where graduate students self educate themselves, and the evaluation mechanism for advisors’ ideological and political education. Consequently, the long-term mechanism for advisors’ role in graduate students’ ideological and political education will be successfully established and the overall quality of graduate students will be enhanced.

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