

New Trend of Higher Education Development in Mainland China

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Abstract—This paper summarizes the latest development of higher education in mainland China in recent years, analyzes the causes of its emergence, holds that the strategic goal of “realizing the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” is the deep-rooted reason, and analyzes it from three aspects of politics, quality, and technologies. Therefore, it is concluded that “refined ideological and political education, first-class undergraduate education and intelligent teaching means” will become the new trend of higher education in China.

Keywords—China; higher education; strengthen moral education and cultivate people; undergraduate education; information technology

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the reform and opening up, the higher education in mainland China (“China” is substituted for “mainland China”) has made remarkable achievements. In particular, the Chinese government launched “211 project”, “985 project” and “2011 collaborative innovation plan” successively by implementing the strategy of rejuvenating the country through science and education and sustainable development in the 1990s, and began to deploy the construction of the first-class universities and the first-class disciplines in higher education (referred to as the “double first-class” construction) in 2016. Based on a series of measures, the higher education of China has achieved quantitative and qualitative leaps, and gradually built the world's largest higher education system. [1]

In the new era of building socialism with Chinese characteristics, the development of higher education is also showing some new changes. For the good job in the research on contemporary higher education of China, it is necessary to pay attention to these changes and analyze the reasons thereof to infer its future trend and development trend.

II. NEW TREND

A. Moral Education Is Highly Valued

Xi Jinping, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of China, stressed during his visit to Peking University on May 2, 2018: “university is a place to strengthen moral education, cultivate people, cultivate talents, as well as the place for young people to learn knowledge, increase their abilities and fly their dreams.”[2] The conversation of China's top leader in Peking University, one of the most famous universities in China, on the point of “strengthening moral education and

cultivating people” was highly regarded, which is in a consanguineous relationship with the expression that “strengthening moral education and cultivating people” is the fundamental task of education on the report in the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012 and the content of “fully implementing the party's educational policy and carrying out the fundamental task of strengthening moral education and cultivating people” stressed in the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2017. At the same time, it also can be seen as a requirement for higher education field put forward more clearly.

At the national conference on ideological and political work in colleges and universities held at the end of 2016, Xi Jinping stressed that ideological and political work in colleges and universities is fundamentally about being a human being, the central link is to strengthen moral education and cultivate people, and the core is to improve the ability of talents cultivating. [3] Therefore, ideological and political work can be regarded as an important factor in the practice of “strengthening moral education and cultivating people”. Since then, the administrative department for education and universities of China has generally strengthened the work aimed at achieving the relevant work of “strengthening moral education and cultivating people” better.

Since the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China focuses on achieving all-out, thorough, and all-round education and cultivation of student, and starts the comprehensive reform pilot of “all-out, thorough, and all-round education and cultivation”, guides the construction of network ideological and political education centers of 32 provincial universities, cultivates and constructs 20 innovation and development centers of ideological and political work and 40 training and academic centers of ideological and political work team, and vigorously promotes theoretical innovation and practical exploration. In addition, the colleges and universities around the country actively explore the education elements of professional course teachers, ideological and political theory teachers, counselors and management cadres and other positions, put the education function throughout the work, run the education work through the every stage of students from enrollment to graduation, covering all classes in the whole school and integrating into all aspects of students' study and life, promote the organic integration of professional education and ideological and political education and the organic infiltration of ideological and political education into

all disciplines, so that the ideological and political courses and all kinds of courses will move in the same direction.[4]

In October 2018, the Ministry of Education issued its latest guidance on undergraduate education, laying particular emphasis on adhering to the correct direction of running schools, maintaining integrity and talent, improving the quality of ideological and political work, and strengthening the ideological and political courses and majors. [5] It can be said that moral education plays a more and more important role in the current Chinese college education and teaching. “Strengthening moral education and cultivating people” has been gradually implemented by the earlier propaganda slogan and gradually integrated into the whole process of higher education by taking the relevant elements and links of talent cultivation as the carrier.

B. Undergraduate Education Has Been Strengthened

In recent years, undergraduate education, as an important stage of higher education, and talent cultivation (the main function of higher education) have been increasingly emphasized by the administrative department for education of China, to highlight the importance of undergraduate education.

In 2016, when China started to build the first-class universities and disciplines, Lin Huiqing, the then deputy minister of education, expressed in the “BBS of the first-class university undergraduate teaching construction” jointly organized by China Association of Higher Education and Xiamen University that “the first-class undergraduate education is an important foundation and basic feature of the first-class university, and construction of the first-class undergraduate is the basis of constructing the first-class university.”[6] This reflects that the administrative department for education hopes to strengthen undergraduate education in the “double first-class” construction, affirm and support the mission of undergraduate education clearly.

In 2018, the “national conference on undergraduate education of colleges and universities in the new era” was held. Chen Baosheng, the Secretary of the Leading Party Members' Group and Minister of the Ministry of Education, attended and addressed the conference. This is the first time that the Ministry of Education of China has held a conference devoted to the study and deployment of undergraduate education since the reform and opening up 40 years ago. The conference stressed the need to adhere to the “people-oriented”, promote the “four regressions”, accelerate the construction of high-level undergraduate education, and improve the ability to train personnel. Wu Yan, the Director of the Department of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education, pointed out in the evaluation: “this is a grand event of higher education, sounding the call to build high-level undergraduate education, making a general mobilization to improve the ability of personnel training, and starting a new journey of high-level personnel training system construction.” [7]

At this conference, Chen Baosheng, the Minister of the Ministry of Education, put forward “three no” and “three must”, namely: the universities that do not grasp undergraduate education are unqualified universities, the president who does not pay attention to the undergraduate education is unqualified

president, and the professor who does not participate in the undergraduate teaching is unqualified professor; must put undergraduate education at the core of the talent cultivation system, must put undergraduate education at the foundation of education and teaching, and must put undergraduate education at the forefront of education development in the new era.

Until the beginning of the autumn in 2018, the Ministry of Education issued a Notice on the Implementation of the Spirit of the National Conference on Undergraduate Education in Higher Education in the New Age, put forward to rectify education and teaching order fully and implement the severization of undergraduate education teaching process management, and made specific requests on classroom teaching management, learning process management, improvement of quality of graduation thesis (design) and strengthening of entity responsibility of teachers' teaching. In September, the Ministry of Education put forward the Opinions on Accelerating the Construction of a High Level Undergraduate Education and Improving the Ability of Talent Cultivation (commonly known as “40 guidelines for higher education”), which proposed guidance from ten aspects, wherein the “Double Million Plan” for the first-class majors was launched in early 2019.

C. Active Use of Technological Means

The vigorous advocacy and active application of information technology in higher education is another significant change in the field of higher education in China. In the “40 guidelines for higher education” mentioned above, 3 guidelines specifically stated the opinions on “promoting the deep integration of modern information technology and education and teaching”, including: reshaping education teaching form, speeding up the formation of higher education cloud service system, creating wisdom classroom, wisdom laboratory and wisdom campus adapting to students' autonomous learning, autonomous management and autonomous service requirements to promote the application of Internet, big data, artificial intelligence, virtual reality and other modern technologies in teaching and management, explore the implementation of network, digital, intelligent, individualized education, promote the formation of new form of “Internet + higher education”, vigorously promote the construction of MOOC and virtual simulation experiments, and share high-quality educational resources.

The construction of online open courses is a typical case of the deep integration of information technology and higher education in recent years. In 2013, the construction of an online open course in China began to take off under the strong promotion of the Ministry of Education. In 2015, the Ministry of Education issued the Opinions on Strengthening the Application of Online Open Curriculum Construction in Colleges and Universities by analyzing and referring the successful experience at home and abroad on the basis of the implementation of national fine-designed course construction and sharing and the supporting to the MOOC of leading pilot for classes of high-level universities in the early stage, so as to strive to promote the construction of massive online open courses of China to the development path of “subject in colleges or universities, government support and social

participation". Over the past six years, 12,500 courses have been launched, more than 200 million students and social learners have participated in the courses, and 65 million students have received credits. [8] Since 2018, the Ministry of Education has started to recognize national quality open online courses. So far, two batches of 1,291 courses have been recognized. In addition, the sharing and application modes of intramural and intercollegiate courses have been constantly innovated, and some course platforms of meeting the teaching needs of different types and levels of universities have emerged, such as "shared course alliance of east-west university", "UOOC alliance of local universities", "MOOC alliance for computer education of Chinese university", "icourse", and "XuetangX", and small customized online courses were provided. [9]

III. CAUSE ANALYSIS

The 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China proposed the slogan of "unremitting struggle to realize the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation". The revival of Chinese nation is the greatest goal of contemporary China, and it can be seen as the root of influencing the recent development trend of China's higher education, and divided into three aspects, i.e. politics, quality and technologies.

A. Politics

During the visit to Peking University in 2018, Xi Jinping stressed that "Our education should train socialist builders and successors who are well developed morally, intellectually, physically and aesthetically," and "It is the party's educational policy to train socialist builders and successors, and it is the common mission of all kinds of schools in China. Universities play an important role in the growth and development of young people. The universities and colleges should grasp the foundation of training socialist builders and successors to do a good job and build world-class universities with Chinese characteristics."

For some time, the education contents of Marxist theory of some China's colleges and universities is blurred, the ideological content is fuzzy, the social mainstream values is covered, related education ignored the penetration of western cultural values and ideological content, some students played down the ideal faith of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and some educators deviated from the fundamental goal of training qualified builders and reliable successors of socialism.[10]

Xi Jinping pointed out that the colleges and universities should stick to the correct political direction. "At all times and in all over the world, every country has cultivated its people according to its own political requirements, and the world's top universities have grown up by serving their own countries. The socialist education of China is to train socialist builders and successors." "As long as making effective efforts to train socialist builders and successors, our universities will have a place and a voice in the world." He stressed: "talent cultivation must be a unified process of educating people and educating talents, and educating people is the basis. In addition, no man

can live without virtue, and the foundation of educating people is moral education." "We should regard the achievement of cultivating people with moral integrity as the fundamental standard to test all the work of the school." "We should take the education of people as the core, and take moral education as the foundation." [11] It can be seen that political qualification is the bottom line requirement for the existing higher education of China, and this is the main reason why moral education with moral education as the core is highly valued in the existing higher education of China.

B. Quality

Higher education is an important symbol of a country's development level and potential. Chinese officials believe that the need for higher education, scientific knowledge and talents is more urgent than ever before to build China into a great modern socialist country and realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. [12] In 2012, the Ministry of Education has issued *Some Suggestions on Improving the Quality of Higher Education* which is commonly known as the "30 guidelines for higher education". Compared with this document, the "40 guidelines for higher education" issued in 2018 highlighted the new idea of "speeding up the construction of high level of undergraduate education", and clearly put forward: the construction of education power is the foundation of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. "To run China's universities well and build a world-class university, talent cultivation is the foundation, and undergraduate education is the root." "To build China into a strong country of higher education, it's necessary to speed up the development of high-level undergraduate education, train a large number of high-quality professionals with ideals, abilities and responsibilities, and provide strong talent and intellectual support for completing the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects, realizing socialist modernization basically, and building China into a great country of socialist modernization."

Combined with the current development situation of China, it's reasonable to grasp the concept of constructing high-level undergraduate education more profoundly. According to the Government Work Report adopted by the National People's Congress in March 2019, world economic growth is slowing down, protectionism and unilateralism are intensifying, prices of international commodity are fluctuating sharply, factors of instability and uncertainty are increasing obviously, external imported risks are increasing, downward pressure on the domestic economy is increasing, consumption growth is slowing down, effective investment growth is sluggish, capacity for independent innovation is not strong, and weakness of key and core technologies is prominent. [13] The "ZTE event" in 2018, the "Huawei event" in 2019 and the economic and trade friction between China and the United States since 2018 have demonstrated the increasing complexity of China in the international environment, and revealed that the second half of China's economic development focuses on high-quality development and independent innovation of core technologies. [14]

Therefore, colleges and universities must take the initiative to adapt to the new needs of national strategic development, and firmly grasp the core of comprehensive improvement of

the ability to cultivate talents. The undergraduates group is the largest group of training professional personnel, undergraduate stage is the key stage in the formation of students' world outlook, outlook on life and values, and undergraduate education is the most important foundation to improve the quality of higher education, so it is particularly important to put undergraduate education at the core of talent cultivation, the foundation of education and teaching, and the forefront of education development in the new era.

C. Technologies

In recent years, the tide of scientific and technological revolution and industrial transformation sweeping the world is rushing forward, and the superposition of network and intelligence has become its main characteristics. As the cradle of talents, the center of science and technology and the highland of humanities, colleges and universities, shouldering the mission of leading the country's innovation and development, must be proactive in thinking and seeking change.

Wu Yan, the Director of the Department of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education, believes that education changes life and Internet changes education. The point of continuing to promote the in-depth integration of modern information technology and education and teaching is the "first move" to seize the opportunities of the new round of world scientific and technological revolution and industrial transformation, and the "accelerator" to realize the development of higher education from "following" and "running" to "leading". The Chinese government hopes to use modern information technology to boost the quality of higher education and achieve "track overtaking". [15]

It can be judged that the Chinese government hopes to form its own characteristics and create Chinese experience by embracing the "information technology + higher education" represented by MOOC actively, subsequently realize innovative development of higher education and catching up, and play a leading role.

IV. FUTURE TREND

Under the guidance of the goal of "realizing the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation", the development of China's higher education will tend to three states, i.e. put more emphasis on ideological and political education, more emphasis on undergraduate education, and more emphasis on advocacy of technological integration.

A. Refined Ideological and Political Education

On March 18, 2019, Xi Jinping pointed out at a symposium for teachers of ideological and political theory courses in schools pointed out that the education of socialism with Chinese characteristics is to confidently conduct ideological and political courses well and cultivate people with the thought of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era. In response to the speech, the leaders and ideological and political teachers of all colleges and universities have expressed their thoughts on deep cultivation of ideological and political courses; specifically, Wang Xinsheng, dean of the

School of Marxism of Nankai University, said that he wanted to study "how can the School of Marxism in our university make connection with the middle school, and even how to connect with the primary school". Wu Jiahua, secretary of the party committee, of the School of Marxism of Anhui University and member of the teaching guidance committee of ideological and political theory course in universities in Anhui province, thinks ideological and political course should be taught in accordance with the characteristics of different ages and students' aptitude. "Primary schools, middle schools and universities must design ideological and political courses in an integrated way." Wang Xueli, a professor of the School of Marxism of Xinjiang Agricultural Vocational Technical College, said that: "The truth is not as good as the story, and the horizon is not as good as the side, you have to 'let Marx speak Chinese' and tell good stories about vocational colleges to stimulate students' interest in learning." Tian Yanguang, secretary of the party committee of Jiangxi Normal University, believes that "the small classroom of ideological and political courses should be combined with the big classroom of society, so that students are willing to learn and learn well." In addition, the school carries out "student life experience day" for school leaders, in which the school leaders will enter students' classrooms, dormitories and canteens to exchange ideas with students face to face. [16]

It can be predicted that the ideological and political education in Chinese colleges and universities in the future will be a more targeted and accurate moral education oriented by education effect and characterized by refinement.

B. The First-class Undergraduate Education

At the national conference of higher education directors held in early 2019, Wu Yan, the Director of the Department of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education, pointed out that building the first-class undergraduate courses, strengthen the first-class majors, launch the first-class courses, create the first-class teachers, implement the first-class quality assurance, and cultivate the first-class talents with the help of six "first-class" programs, so as to start the comprehensive revitalization of undergraduate education. [17]

The Ministry of Education will make every effort to create an "international upgraded version" of entrepreneurship and innovation education - China's "Internet +" innovation and entrepreneurship competition of college student is to be renamed as China's international "Internet +" innovation and entrepreneurship education competition of college student, which will include four sections, i.e. higher education, vocational education, international and budding. The Ministry of Education will also take base construction as an innovative means to "incubate" the top-notch cultivation of basic disciplines — implement the top-notch student cultivation plan 2.0 of basic disciplines, and build a the first-class top-notch cultivation base of basic disciplines for the day after tomorrow, with a long-term layout, so as to become an incubator of top-notch talents in the new era.

In 2019, billions of funds will be invested in China's undergraduate education and teaching, focusing on the construction of high-level undergraduate education in central

universities and the implementation of the “six outstanding and one top-notch” plan 2.0. The undergraduate education characterized by “first-class” is becoming an important aspect of the development of China's higher education.

C. Intelligent Teaching Means

With the popularization and application of information technology in China's higher education, the educational and teaching methods of Chinese universities are undergoing profound changes, and the integration of technology and Chinese higher education will develop towards the direction of more subdivision and smarter means in the future.

In 2018, the concept of virtual simulation “golden class” was proposed firstly. Why build a “golden course” of virtual simulation? Wu Yan said that: the deep integration of information technology, intelligent technology and experimental teaching has solved the long-standing problems in the experiment, practice and training of colleges and universities, and solved the problems of “unable”, “not good”, and “not able”. In a virtual simulation, focus on “intelligence + education” after “Internet + education”. [18] In May 2019, the teaching innovation and development forum held in Shenzhen, a keynote report titled "Education Informatization Under 5G Era" discusses the feasibility of VR application teaching means, this marks the prelude to China's higher education and the integration of information technology will certainly rising along with the development of the technical conditions, more intelligent, and classroom, laboratory of wisdom, and wisdom will undoubtedly become the important carrier of campus.

V. CONCLUSION

In view of the new trend of China's higher education in moral education, undergraduate education and technical means, this paper analyzes its main motivation, namely “realizing the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation”, and its specific causes in three aspects, i.e. politics, quality and technologies, and thus speculates three development trends of China's higher education: refined ideological and political education, the first-class undergraduate education gradually, intelligent teaching methods constantly. The three trends from macroscopic to microcosmic, from thoughts to technology, from the overall to local, mutually echo to constitute a multidimensional development picture of the contemporary higher education of China based on the general goal of achieving the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation”.

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