Exploration of the Ideological Dynamics among University Students and the Establishment of a Normalization Research Mechanism

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Abstract. Understanding students' ideological dynamics is essential for ideological and political education in higher education. Timely and accurately assessment of students' ideological dynamics is a critical focus in ideological and political work in colleges and universities. This study focuses on a university in Beijing to analyze the main characteristics of the current ideological dynamics of students, examines the issues present in current research practices, and proposes strategies for establishing a normalization research mechanism involving three key aspects: constructing a collaborative work pattern, adopting a hierarchical and classified work mode, and formulating standardized work processes. By implementing these strategies, universities can establish effective mechanisms to routinely grasp the ideological dynamics of students, thereby further enhancing the quality and effectiveness of ideological and political education in higher education. This is of significant importance for universities to guide student's thoughts and promote their comprehensive development in the ever-changing social environment.

Keywords: University Students, Ideological Dynamics, Normalization Research Mechanism.

1 Introduction

General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out clearly in the National Conference on Ideological and Political Work in Colleges and Universities that "the ideological and political work in colleges and universities entails the fundamental issue of what kind of people colleges and universities should train, how to train them, and for whom to train them"[1]. "The Medium and Long-Term Youth Development Plan (2016-2025)" issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council points out that "the timeliness and effectiveness of youth ideological education need to be enhanced" [2]. Understanding the ideological dynamics of university students is an important prerequisite for the scientific and effective conduct of ideological and political education in colleges and universities, as well as a necessary means to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of such education. Establishing a scientific and efficient

mechanism for investigation and research to accurately grasp the ideological dynamics of university students is a crucial task for maintaining the stability of higher education institutions.

2 The Main Features of University Students' Ideological Dynamics

Ideological and political education is a practical activity that cannot be separated from people and their environment. It must always revolve around people, while also being influenced and constrained by the environment. The relationship between people and the environment constitutes not only an important element of ideological and political education, but also their interaction is the fundamental guarantee for its existence and development [3]. It can be said that the development of university students' ideological understanding is profoundly influenced by the movement and changes in the external environment. Correspondingly, their ideological dynamics can largely be reflected through attention to and feedback on the external environment. The hot events widely concerned by university students are increasingly becoming an "observation window" to understand the ideological dynamics and behavioral characteristics of young university students [4]. This study focuses on the hot events that students at a university in Beijing are concerned with as the research subject. From January to September 2024, a total of 382 hot events of student concern were dynamically collected weekly through face-to-face chats and monitoring social media platforms, covering a variety of hot events both on and off-campus, as well as domestic and international issues. These hot events can be categorized into the following classes, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Classification Statistics of Hot Events.

Classification	Quantity	Percentage
Politics and International Relations	111	29.06%
Education and Technology	102	26.70%
Society and Economy	79	20.68%
Sports and Culture	44	11.52%
Natural Disasters and Public Safety	24	6.28%
Others	22	5.76%

According to Table 1, it is evident that students show the highest level of concern for Politics and International Relations, Education and Technology, and Society and Economy, which together account for more than 75%. In addition, this study carries out thematic survey of students' ideological dynamics, which content primarily pertains to the ideological risks of university students. Based on the comprehensive analysis of the aforementioned research findings, the current ideological dynamics among university students are found to exhibit the following features.

2.1 Students Continue to Pay Attention to Changes in the External Environment

Jean Piaget posited that in the course of an individual's development from birth to maturity, cognitive structures are continuously reconstructed through interaction with the environment [5]. Currently, students are generally concerned about the development of science and technology and their own research-related fields, the international and regional situation, national security, the national economy and other aspects. The research revealed that among the hot events of student concern, issues concerning China's cooperation and conflicts with other countries in areas such as politics, diplomacy, and economics repeatedly emerged. University students' contemplation and exploration of integrating their personal values into the development of the nation and society have consistently been an integral part of their learning process. A noteworthy transformation is the significant shift in the emerging issues that students are concerned with. As socialism with Chinese characteristics enters a new era, and in conjunction with the developmental achievements of national progress and international comparisons, there is a growing sense of ownership and conscientiousness among the student population.

2.2 Students' Political Identification and Confidence in the Path Have Significantly Strengthened

A youth survey conducted in 2020 demonstrated that the majority of China's youth wholeheartedly support socialism with Chinese characteristics, and are full of confidence about the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation[6].The present research also shows that students' ideological dynamics are generally positive, healthy and upward, with no outstanding ideological problems or bad tendencies, and in terms of political identification with the Party and the country, there is an increase in affirmative expressions, showing more positive evaluations. Regarding the national development situation and the international situation, students generally believe that the current international situation is complicated and severe, but it's both a challenge and an opportunity for China. Students are generally positive about China's development situation, believing that despite external pressures, China's economy is still on a steady upward trend, with broad development space and huge potential, the fundamentals of China's economy have not changed, and that China's huge market size, upgrading consumption structure, and continuous technological and scientific innovations provide a solid foundation for economic development.

2.3 Attention to and Awareness of Online Hot Issues Have Become a New Trend in Students' Ideological Landscape

According to the 54th Statistical Report on the Development of China's Internet, as of June 2024, the number of Internet users in China has reached nearly 1.1 billion, and the Internet penetration rate has reached 78.0% [7]. With the development of information technology, new media such as the Internet and mobile phones have gradually become a very important way for people to acquire knowledge and communicate, which has

had an unprecedented profound impact on the majority of teachers and students [8]. Especially for the younger generation of students who have grown up in the digital era, the internet has emerged as the predominant source for rapidly accessing current events and timely information. Concurrently, it has also become the principal medium through which they articulate their opinions and demands. By analyzing the distribution of hot events that students are concerned with, we can see that the online public opinion events generated and occurred on various new media platforms are easily concerned by university students and cause controversy or resonance. In this context, how to identify the truth of the events and make correct judgments has become a problem that more and more young people are thinking about. Facing the complexity of online public opinion, university students have begun to have insight and analytical ability, and they no longer regard themselves as ordinary netizens, but more calmly and rationally recognize the necessity of the state's management and channeling of the online world. The attitude of university students towards the Internet world is gradually different from their previous knowledge and understanding, which has become a new trend of Internet ideology.

3   Current Issues in the Mechanism for Researching University Students' Ideological Dynamics

3.1   Insufficient Synergy

In the view of Marx and Engels, human development is not determined by consciousness, but by material conditions; not by thought, but by material life; it is determined by the development and manifestation of one's own life experiences, which are in turn determined by social relations [9]. Dynamic changes in the minds of students in colleges and universities are affected by various factors, in the work of college and university education is also subject to the common concern of many departments, but the current college and university ideological dynamics of the research work is mostly "working in silos" state, the lack of a sound synergy mechanism. In practice, each department usually carries out special research based on the needs and rhythm of the department, relying on the department's team and channels, and there are inevitably certain fragmentation and limitations in the form and content of the research, collection and use of the results, and there may be disordered research, duplication of research, coupled with a lack of clarity and clarity in the workflow, resulting in a waste of research resources and energy.

3.2   Inadequate Workforce Construction

Currently, the research work on the ideological dynamics of university students faces greater challenges, and puts forward higher requirements on the ability and level of the research team. However, the traditional research teams mainly composed of university ideological workers such as counselors and full-time youth league cadres, cannot fully meet the requirements of timely, in-depth and accurate understanding of students' ideological dynamics, and not all university ideological workers have the corresponding

professional backgrounds, and the lack of professional knowledge in the ways and means of research and in the processing and analyzing of the results of the research will lead to difficulties in completing high-quality research.

3.3   The Absence of a Normalized Mechanism

The ideological dynamics research conducted by universities is often initiated during specific periods or driven by events, and is mostly temporary and emergency-driven. This approach lacks long-term planning and institutional arrangements, leading to a lack of routine and periodicity in research work. Consequently, the tracking and analysis of students' ideological changes are not sufficiently coherent. Additionally, the absence of a long-term mechanism results in the accumulation and updating of research data being neither timely nor comprehensive, and the analysis and application of existing data are not sufficiently thorough, making it difficult to provide robust data support for students' ideological and political education. Furthermore, research findings often remain at the level of written reports, lacking effective feedback and application mechanisms. This prevents research outcomes from being promptly transformed into references for education and management, thereby affecting the practical effectiveness of the research work.

4   Strategies for Establishing a Normalization Mechanism for University Students' Ideological Dynamics

4.1   Constructing a Collaborative Work Pattern

Systematization is the essential attribute and existing way of high education [10]. As an essential component of the ideological and political work in higher education institutions, the regular research of university students' ideological dynamics is a systematic and complex project, so that there should be a top-down increase in attention, creating a multi-departmental collaborative management and a university-wide coordinated approach to enhance the systematic, scientific, and forward-looking nature of the research work. The application of Synergy Theory to ideological and political education in colleges and universities is of great significance to strengthen the disagreement among the subsystems and integrate educational resources[11].Colleges and universities should establish a leading group for research on students' ideological dynamics, whose members include the school party committee's propaganda department, the student work department, the Youth League Committee and other relevant functional departments, so as to make a comprehensive top-level design and clarify the division of responsibilities. The secondary colleges, under the unified deployment of the leading group, should liaise closely with the relevant functional departments and collaborate with them, in order to build up a synergy of efforts at the school and secondary college levels. As shown in Fig. 1.
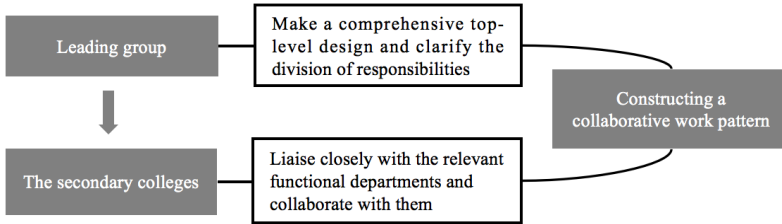
Fig. 1. Constructing a collaborative work pattern.

4.2   Adopting a Hierarchical and Classified Work Mode

In 2017, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council clearly stated in the "Opinions on Strengthening and Improving Ideological and Political Work in Colleges and Universities under New Circumstances" that it is essential to "adhere to the laws of student development, focus on combining general requirements with categorized guidance, and enhance the scientific and refined level of work."[12] Therefore, it is necessary to deeply recognize the diversified and changeable characteristics of young students' ideological cognition, fully recognize the growth and transformation of young students in the process of studying in colleges and universities, conduct research on the ideological dynamics of college and university students using a hierarchical classification strategy, focus on university students of different levels and categories, and combine the ideological characteristics of students with their actual needs for targeted research. First, establish a diversified workforce. The team should include a diverse range of members, such as administrative staff, teachers, and researchers, and leverage the unique advantage of student cadres' closeness to other students, allowing the diversified work groups to cooperate and play their roles effectively. Second, develop a stratified and categorized research plan. Universities should adhere to a stratified and categorized strategy when conducting ideological trend research among university students of different levels and categories. By integrating the ideological characteristics and practical needs of students, colleges and universities should develop research plans that are tailored to different student groups. As shown in Fig. 2.
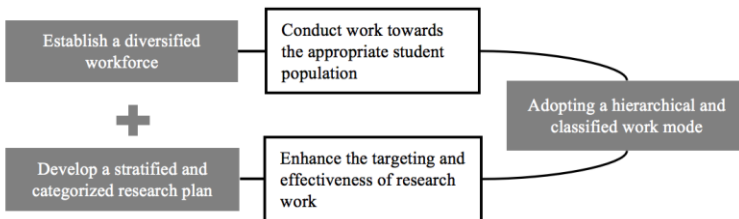

Fig. 2. Adopting a hierarchical and classified work mode.

4.3 Formulating Standardized Work Processes

A standardized workflow is crucial for the efficient conduct of research. First, establish a standardized research process. There should be clear regulations and guidance for every aspect of the research to ensure that the entire research process is standardized. This standardization ensures the authenticity and effectiveness of the research results. The standardized and transparent process also facilitates the collection, storage, and sharing of student ideological information among various departments, forming a continuous and normalized research mechanism. Second, implement dynamic management and feedback mechanisms. Since student ideological trend research is an ongoing process, the research team should regularly collect data and dynamically adjust the research plans and methods. Concurrently, a smooth feedback channel should be provided for students to offer their opinions and suggestions on the research process, which can be used to continuously optimize and improve the research mechanism. As shown in Fig. 3.
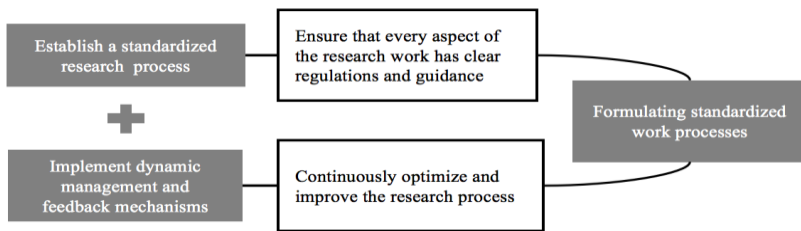

Fig. 3. Formulating standardized work processes.

5   Conclusion

The establishment of the normalization research mechanism proposed in this study is a crucial step in understanding the ideological dynamics of university students, and it is anticipated that the implementation of these strategies will contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of ideological and political education in higher education institutions. However, due to the study's confinement to a single university setting, the findings may not fully represent the actual conditions of other universities. In particular, the lack of empirical analysis in this study does not sufficiently support the verification of the applicability and effectiveness of the proposed strategies across different environments and student populations. To overcome these limitations, future research could consider the following directions: First, expanding the scope of the study to include a variety of university types and diverse student populations can provide a more comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of the proposed strategies. Second, increasing empirical analysis through quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, such as surveys, in-depth interviews, and case studies, can provide a more solid evidence base for the effectiveness of the strategies. Third, comparative studies that examine the differences between universities that have implemented the normalization research mechanism and those that have not can more accurately evaluate the actual effects of the strategies.

In summary, this study provides preliminary ideas and strategies for higher education institutions to establish a normalization research mechanism for student ideological dynamics. Although there are limitations, it lays the foundation for future research and points out directions for improvement. It is hoped that future research will be able to validate and expand the conclusions of this study through broader empirical analysis, thereby providing stronger support for enhancing the effectiveness of ideological and political education in higher education.

Acknowledgments

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