An Analysis of the Path of Ethnic Unity and Progress Education under Academy-Based Education: Taking Ningxia University as an Example

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Abstract: Academy-based education is an active exploration and effective attempt to reform higher education and talent cultivation systems in the new era. This article aims to deeply analyze the characteristics and advantages of academy-based education. Combining the theoretical connotation and practical needs of ethnic unity and progress education and taking Ningxia University as an example, it explores the construction and implementation path of ethnic unity and progress education under academy-based education. It promotes communication and integration between students of different ethnic groups, enhances ethnic identity and national consciousness, and promotes the high-quality development of ethnic unity and progress cause.

Keywords: Academy-based education; Ethnic unity and progress education; Implementation path

1. Introduction

Academies were the cultural carrier of ancient Chinese education and the spiritual home for scholars to settle down and pursue truth. As an ancient and vibrant form of education organization, the academy system has been widely practiced in universities in recent years. According to incomplete statistics, since 2005, more than 100 Chinese universities have implemented the reform of the academy system, establishing about 400 academies [1]. As one of the earliest universities to implement the reform of the academy system, Tsinghua University encourages students to extensively explore knowledge in different areas through interdisciplinary accommodation and course training and cultivates innovative talents with general and specialized education through academy-based education. Zhongyuan Institute of Science and Technology has achieved interdisciplinary integration and development through a school-academy education model. Based on actual educational practices, Fudan University and Xi'an Jiaotong University have also built multiple independent academies with unique cultural atmospheres, further achieving the integration of general and specialized education, and realizing the unity of academic and social development of students.

China is a multi-ethnic country, and ethnic unity is an important cornerstone of national development. The

General Secretary has emphasized on multiple occasions that "ethnic unity and progress education should be deepened and strengthened" after the 18th National Congress of the CPC. On September 27, 2019, at the National Ethnic Unity and Progress Commendation Conference, the General Secretary underlined that we should take forging a strong sense of community among the Chinese nation as the main line, fully implement the Party's ethnic theory and policies, adhere to common unity and struggle, and promote common prosperity and development. We should take the cause of ethnic unity and progress as a fundamental cause, promote all ethnic groups to embrace each other tightly, and promote the Chinese nation to move towards a more inclusive and cohesive community with a better future, jointly building a better home and creating a better future [2]. The report of the 20th National Congress of the CPC pointed out that with the main line of strengthening the sense of community of the Chinese nation, we will firmly follow the correct path of solving ethnic problems with Chinese characteristics, adhere to and improve the system of regional ethnic autonomy, strengthen and improve the Party's ethnic work, and comprehensively promote the cause of ethnic unity and progress [3].

As an important base for cultivating talents for the Party and the country, universities should do a good job in ethnic unity and progress education, which is the key to implementing the fundamental task of moral education and cultivating patriotism among young students. With the gradual promotion of academy-based education in Chinese universities, it has become a new educational management model, and the academy community has also become an important platform for carrying out ethnic unity and progress education. Therefore, exploring ethnic unity and progress education in universities under the academy-based system has important practical significance.

2. Advantages and characteristics of academy-based education

The academy-based education places students at the center and talent cultivation as the primary responsibility, emphasizing intimate interaction and personalized education between teachers and students. It has certain advantages and characteristics in ideological and political education, general education, interdisciplinary integration, and daily management.

Firstly, the academy-based education promotes the cultivation of diverse talents. The academy system, as a form of educational and teaching organization and student management, breaks the traditional organizational structure of universities based on majors and departments, establishes learning and living communities with the academy as a unit, and forms a matrix structure with vertical (school) and horizontal (academy) interweaving. It not only focuses on students' professional knowledge learning but also emphasizes their general education, ideological and moral improvement, practical skill training, and innovation and entrepreneurship ability cultivation, promoting their diversified cultivation and multidimensional growth. The coordinated development of specialized and general education complements each other, further ensuring the full realization of the core functional goals of education, which is conducive to improving the quality of talent cultivation.

Secondly, academy-based education promotes intimate interaction between teachers and students. It advocates a new type of teacher-student and student-student relationship, emphasizing personalized characteristics and heuristic teaching. Under the academy-based education, through mixed accommodation, general education, and mentor guidance, the educational functions of student dormitories are expanded, making it a "one-stop" comprehensive interactive growth community for students across grades and majors. In the student community, the academy provides comprehensive, multifunctional, and convenient public software and hardware facilities, creating a warm and comfortable "home culture" [4], which further promotes the effective efforts of management, education, and service, and strengthens close connections between teachers and students through ideological guidance, psychological counseling, and academic guidance. By regularly introducing professional forces such as psychological counseling and career planning, it meets students' personalized needs and promotes their personalized development, creating a

teacher-student relationship characterized by independence, equality, and mutual reinforcement.

Thirdly, academy-based education promotes the improvement of students' comprehensive quality. Under the academy-based education, students are encouraged to participate in self-education, self-management, self-service, self-development, and self-supervision through multiple channels. Under teachers' guidance, they can participate in community construction, building management, and peer education assistance through club activities, volunteer service, work-study programs, and practical activities, which helps to improve students' comprehensive quality in organization, communication, coordination, and management.

3. Overview of the academy system of Ningxia University

On March 18, 2022, Boya Academy was officially established as a pilot construction unit for the academy system at Ningxia University, marking the official implementation and promotion. In March 2023, it successively established seven academies, including Shangde, Shouzheng, Qinxue, Qiushi, Lixing, Dingxin, and Runze. These academies are based on the accommodation areas of students from different majors according to the principle of horizontal integration. In each college, six functional departments are established based on the principle of flat management and different business responsibilities, including the Comprehensive Office, Party Building, Ideological and Political Center, Youth League Committee, Student Affairs Management Service Center, Career Guidance Service Center, and Mental Health Center.

Ningxia University adopts an "academy-school" collaborative education model, with students as the center and dormitories as carriers. By constructing an academy-school (general education-specialized education) collaborative education system, students from different majors, grades, classes, and cultural backgrounds can learn and live together, achieving the integration of different disciplines and majors on the basis of relatively concentrated majors. Under the "academy-school" collaborative education model, academies and schools each play their respective roles and shoulder the dual mission of educational management and guidance. Schools focus on deep cultivation and meticulous work in the professional field. Guided by academic growth and professional progress, they are committed to cultivating students' professional knowledge, academic skills, and research and innovation abilities. While academies focus on cultivating students' comprehensive literacy. Relying on diverse learning experiences outside the classroom, rich and colorful campus cultural activities, and extensive participation in social practice, they build a "second classroom" for students to develop comprehensively, effectively enhancing their comprehensive literacy. This collaborative education model not only ensures the depth and professionalism of specialized education but also greatly expands the fields and boundaries of general education, creating a comprehensive and personalized education ecosystem for students.

4. Construction path of ethnic unity and progress education under the academy-based education

4.1. Research on ethnic unity and progress education

In order to understand the basic situation of ethnic unity and progress education under academy-based education, the research team conducted a random questionnaire sampling survey and case interviews. The survey subjects covered students of different grades, majors, genders, and ethnicities. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed and 286 valid questionnaires were collected, with a response rate of 95.33%. The results are discussed as follows.

4.1.1. A strong sense of ethnic unity in students

Research data shows that the vast majority of students hold a positive attitude towards ethnic unity and progress

education, and believe that it is of great significance for personal growth and social development. More than 90% of students stated that they understand and agree with the concept of ethnic unity and progress education, believing that different ethnic groups should respect each other and live in harmony. Meanwhile, students generally believe that ethnic unity is the foundation of social stability and harmonious development, and is the responsibility and obligation that every citizen should fulfill.

In practical actions, over 80% of students have shown a willingness to participate in various ethnic unity and progress education activities organized by schools and academies, such as social practice and volunteer service. 78% of students believe that through these activities, they can deepen their understanding and cognition of different ethnic cultures.

4.1.2. The leading role of class leaders in ethnic unity and progress education

The research results show that student leaders, with student Party members and class leaders as the core, play a relatively important role in ethnic unity and progress education, mainly reflected in the learning and promotion of theoretical knowledge and the active practice of the concept of ethnic unity. A structured transmission system has been formed, starting from the school level and flowing through the academy, Party branches, Youth League branches, and classes, down to Party members, Youth League members, class leaders, and ultimately reaching ordinary students as the primary focus. Through organizing and participating in various learning and practical activities of ethnic unity and progress education on themed Party/Youth League days, communication and integration between teachers and students of different ethnic groups are promoted and the awareness of the Chinese national community is strengthened.

4.2. Problems in ethnic unity and progress education under the academy-based education

According to the statistical analysis of research results, there are still "three inadequacies" and "three deficiencies" in ethnic unity and progress education under the current academy-based education.

4.2.1. Lack of diversity in teaching forms

77% of students believe that under academy-based education, the forms of ethnic unity and progress education lack diversity. At present, academies mainly adopt an education model of academy-student, lacking interactivity and relying on traditional knowledge input, lectures, and themed Party days. The education methods are relatively outdated, lacking exploration and innovation, and cannot fully stimulate students' learning interest and participation, resulting in poor teaching effects.

4.2.2. Lack of comprehensive teaching content

69% of students believe that the content of ethnic unity and progress education is mostly superficial, focusing on ethnic unity knowledge and theory, without delving into the deep-seated reasons such as historical, cultural, and social factors. This kind of educational content lacks comprehensiveness, which makes it difficult for students to truly understand the importance of ethnic unity, nor can it stimulate their sense of national pride and belonging. At the same time, the content is not updated with current politics, whose interpretation is shallow as well, resulting in weak appeal in education. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen education on the historical, cultural, and social factors of ethnic unity, so that students can have a deeper understanding of the connotation and significance of ethnic unity.

4.2.3. Unspecific practical system

Under academy-based education, the practice of ethnic unity and progress education has not formed a systematic,

normalized, and long-term system. The themed activities of ethnic unity and progress education are mainly held during National Unity Month and have not been normalized throughout all stages and links of learning. 65% of students believe that the social practice is not sufficiently carried out, and the effective transformation of theory is not achieved. With a single social practice carrier, students cannot effectively apply the knowledge they have learned to practice.

4.2.4. Lack of a highly professional faculty

In ethnic unity and progress education, the professional competence and teaching ability of faculty have a decisive impact on the effectiveness of education. Under academy-based education, the development of ethnic unity and progress education mainly relies on full-time counselors. However, the complex and tedious daily work, limited energy, lack of professional background and educational experience, and incomplete knowledge system have caused the faculty to face challenges in deepening the content and diversifying educational methods, and thus unable to meet the diverse needs of students from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The professionalism of faculty still needs to be further improved.

4.2.5. Lack of an effective evaluation mechanism

Educational evaluation is an important means of testing educational effectiveness and promoting educational improvement. Currently, there is a lack of an effective educational evaluation mechanism for ethnic unity and progress education, which makes it difficult to detect and solve problems in a timely manner as well as accurately evaluate the educational effect.

4.2.6. Lack of a sustainable education security system

Ethnic unity and progress education is a long-term and sustained task that requires stable funding and sufficient resource support. At present, the university's investment in ethnic unity and progress education is insufficient, and the academies lack special funding support for ethnic unity and progress education. With a shortage of educational resources, educational activities are not sufficiently supported.

4.3. Practical path of ethnic unity and progress education under the academy-based education
4.3.1. Integrating educational subjects and resources

Cultivating a faculty with the concept and ability of ethnic unity and progress education is the key to implementing ethnic unity and progress education under academy-based education. Counselors and ideological and political teachers, as the primary force of the ideological and political education system in universities, serve as the crucial "two wings" supporting the overall ideological and political framework [5]. Academies should clarify their responsibilities and tasks and strengthen professional training for counselors to enhance their national literacy and educational ability and play a leading and demonstrative role through words and actions. At the same time, linkage with relevant professional teachers and external experts in the School of Marxism and the School of Ethnic History should be strengthened to establish a collaborative education mechanism and jointly participate in ethnic unity and progress education. Through integrated education in and out of class and on and off campus, the systematization and professionalism of educational content will be realized. Meanwhile, various educational resources inside and outside the school, such as forging a solid foundation for the practice of the Chinese national community consciousness, museums, and cultural centers, should be integrated to provide students with rich ethnic cultural experiences and learning opportunities. In addition, a scientific and systematic education evaluation mechanism should be established to collect students' feedback and opinions through regular assessments and questionnaire surveys, in order to promptly adjust education content and methods.

4.3.2. Smoothing the process and creating a brand

From enrollment to graduation, ethnic unity and progress education should be carried out throughout the entire university education, extending to the "one-stop" student comprehensive community, ensuring the systematization, coherence, and depth of education. Based on the characteristics of students in different grades and majors and offering courses on ethnic unity and progress at different levels, we will organically integrate elements of cultivating the awareness of the Chinese national community into daily management, internship practice, and innovation and entrepreneurship, to create brand cultural activities and enhance students' sense of identity and belonging to ethnic culture. In Qinxue Academy, there is an "I Have a Home in Ningxia" Pomegranate Seed Studio, which has established a platform for communication and integration among teachers and students of all ethnic groups through the "three cares" of ideological care, learning care, and life care, as well as the "one-on-one" contact mechanism between Party member teachers and ethnic minority students. The lunch meeting between teachers and students has also been held to promote the subtle and pervasive approach of ideological and political education, effectively promoting a new pattern of Chinese national community consciousness among teachers and students of all ethnic groups through co-learning, sharing, and working together. The "Little Pomegranate" publicity team of Shouzheng Academy adheres to the motto of "Guarding Integrity, Casting Soul, and Educating People" and uses small stories and examples to explain major principles and questions. The team features a wide coverage and interactive campus-themed publicity around the "Xi Jinping Socialist Ideology with Chinese Characteristics in the New Era," "Spirit of the 20th National Congress of the CPC," "Important Speeches and Instructions of General Secretary Xi Jinping on Ningxia," strengthening the sense of community of the Chinese nation and the excellent traditional culture of China, teaching the "great lesson of family and country" through the voice of young students, and incorporating the concept of "five identifications" and "four collaborations."

4.3.3. Integrating educational platforms

First, we need to fully leverage the advantages of the "one-stop" student comprehensive community by organizing themed activities centered around student dormitories. These could include dormitory culture festivals, ethnic culture festivals, and ethnic unity knowledge competitions and symposiums. The goal is to ensure the continuity of education across time, space, and methods, facilitating the transformation from rational understanding to emotional identification with the consciousness of the Chinese national community. Simultaneously, through the "one-stop" student community grid management, we can offer guidance and support to students in areas such as learning, research, daily life, practical activities, and volunteer services. This approach allows students to deeply internalize the concept of the Chinese national community in a subtle and nurturing way. Second, it is essential to integrate modern information technology by effectively utilizing online educational resources and learning platforms, such as the National Ethnic Affairs Commission's cultural publicity platform "Dao Zhonghua." This allows for the exploration of innovative educational approaches in the digital space, further enhancing the integration of online and offline learning. By doing so, students are provided with a more convenient and efficient self-directed learning experience, fostering a positive atmosphere in online interactive learning environments that cultivate a sense of community within the Chinese nation. Additionally, leveraging the Academy's WeChat official account and official website can help tell the nation's history and promote national culture, enabling students to gain a deeper understanding of the importance of national unity and strengthen their patriotic sentiments and national pride. Third, students should be encouraged to actively participate in social practice and volunteer service, so they can deeply understand the culture and lifestyle of different ethnic groups to enhance their awareness of ethnic unity.

4.3.4. Enriching teaching forms

First, it is essential to conduct ethnic unity and progress education activities that are closely aligned with reality,

everyday life, and the needs of teachers and students. These activities should have rich content and diverse formats. Introducing more varied educational methods, such as themed exhibitions, role-playing, on-site inspections, and scriptwriting, will enhance students' interest and engagement in learning. Second, the promotion of ethnic unity and progress education should be seamlessly integrated into the academy's cultural construction. Special funds will be allocated to support a variety of activities, including Party and Youth League meetings, dormitory culture festivals, and ethnic knowledge competitions and symposiums, all centered around the theme of ethnic unity and progress education, as well as other campus cultural events. By focusing on "each academy developing its own unique brand," academies will create immersive environmental education and distinctive themed activities, enabling students to enhance their cultural identity through mutual learning and exchange [6]. Third, students should be organized to participate in various social practices, such as cultural, sanitary, and technological outreach programs in rural areas during summer vacations, ethnic exchange visits, social research, returning to their hometowns, learning from Lei Feng, and on-site inspections. These activities will enable students to actively engage in the cause of ethnic unity and progress, gain a deeper understanding of the actual conditions and development needs of different ethnic regions, enhance their practical skills and sense of social responsibility, and encourage them to align their knowledge with action in achieving ethnic unity.

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