

The Centennial Historical Evolution of Party Discipline Learning and Education in the Communist Party of China and the Way Forward

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Abstract: Discipline construction is an important part of Marxist party construction. Since the 18th Party Congress, the Party Central Committee with the fifth-generation leaders of New China as the core has incorporated discipline construction into the overall layout of party construction in the new era, so that discipline construction is carried out throughout, accompanied by the whole process of party construction and all aspects, and adheres to the management of the whole party with strict discipline. As one of the fundamental projects of discipline construction, the future direction of the development of the Communist Party of China's discipline learning and education in the new era has been explored by combing through the historical evolution of the Communist Party of China's discipline learning and education, to ensure that the Communist Party of China has always become a well-organized and disciplined Marxist ruling party. Therefore, the party-wide study and education on party discipline from April to July 2024 is a manifestation of strengthening the party's disciplinary construction and promoting the deepening development of the party's overall strict governance.

Keywords: Party discipline study and education; Discipline building; History of the Communist Party of China

Online publication: August 23, 2024

1. Introduction

Party discipline is the basic rule that the entire party must strictly abide by, and it is also the key to ensuring that the party is united and centralized and that it always has cohesion and combat effectiveness, which is the core guarantee for the Party's cause. Because of this, the Communist Party of China has attached great importance to and continuously strengthened its disciplinary construction since the very beginning of its founding, and has always ensured that the party's discipline is strict and clear. In February 2024, the Communist Party of China Central Committee issued the Regulations on the Study and Education of Party History, which clearly stipulates the political requirements for the study and education of party history in the form of internal regulations; in April, the General Office of the Communist Party of China Central Committee issued the Notice on the Study and Education of Party Discipline in the Whole Party, which requires that the study and education of party discipline be carried out in the whole party from April to July 2024. The party discipline learning education

contains the learning education on the history of party discipline education, in which the current centralized discipline education has been fully launched in the party. This paper analyzes the historical evolution of party discipline learning education to explore the future direction of the development of party discipline learning education in the new era of the Communist Party of China.

2. The centennial historical evolution of party discipline learning and education in the Communist Party of China

The fifth-generation leaders of New China pointed out in June 2023 at a symposium on the development of cultural heritage: “Why is our socialism different? Why can it be vibrant and dynamic? The key lies in the Chinese characteristics”^[1]. Similarly, looking at a hundred years of party history, since the date of the Communist Party of China’s birth, the construction of discipline has been pushed forward in close connection with the political situation, and it has been established because of the party, and it has prospered because of the party. Likewise, the party’s discipline study and education, one of the important components of discipline construction, has always evolved in the practice of socialism with Chinese characteristics and has traveled in the same direction as the party’s construction and cause with Chinese characteristics, and has been committed to safeguarding the party’s unity and vitalizing the party’s life of the party.

In 1921, the First Congress of the Communist Party of China adopted the First Program of the Communist Party of China, which was the first party regulation with the nature of a party constitution in the history of the party, and for the first time made corresponding disciplinary provisions for party membership, keeping secrets and financial supervision, and so on. In July 1922, the Second Congress of the Communist Party of China adopted the Constitution of the Communist Party of China, and the party has had its fundamental law since then. The general statute of the party for party governance is the general rule that the whole party must abide by, and the most basic and most important and comprehensive code of conduct for the whole party. The whole party must abide by the general rules, which are the party’s most basic, most important, most comprehensive code of conduct, and the first “discipline” chapter, the strict discipline written on the party’s flag. The introduction of the party program is the main tool for learning and educating the party discipline, which is the most concentrated manifestation of the unified will of the party, and is “an openly erected flag” to unify the thoughts and actions of the whole party and lead the whole party to move forward, and provides the general navigation for learning and educating the party discipline^[2].

The Sixth Plenary Session of the Sixth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, which “decided the fate of China” in 1938, accelerated the process of tightening Party discipline by criticizing Wang Ming’s right-leaning opportunistic errors and Zhang Guotao’s sectarian errors of splitting up the party and the Red Army, and by criticizing Wang Ming’s refusal to carry out the decisions of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and his repeated acts of undermining the authority of the Central Committee, such as issuing resolutions and opinions of the Central Committee and holding meetings without the consent of the Central Committee. He expressed the views of the Central Committee on resolutions and meetings without the consent of the Central Committee, was independent of and disobeyed the Central Committee, repeatedly undermined the authority of the Central Committee, and committed other serious breaches of discipline. Similarly, Zhang Guotao’s divisive behavior of setting up another “Central Committee” and undermining the unity and solidarity of the party brought great losses to the party and the Chinese Revolution, and therefore the “Four Obediences” were proposed for the first time at the meeting, clarifying the party’s organizational principle of democratic centralism and organizational discipline. The first-generation leaders of New China pointed out in their report to the Sixth Plenary Session of the Sixth Central Committee that “to regularize the internal relations of the party,

it is necessary, in addition to the four most important disciplines mentioned above, to formulate a more detailed internal party statute to unify the actions of the leading organs at all levels”^[3]. This is the first time in the party’s history that the concept of “internal Party regulations” has been explicitly mentioned. As the fifth-generation leaders of New China said, “Party regulations and party discipline are an extension and concretization of the party Constitution, and if you learn them well, you will be able to figure out what you should and should not do, and what you can and cannot do”^[4]. Therefore, the party discipline learning and education has entered a new stage, and it has begun to provide specific guidelines for regulating the actions of party members in the form of “party rules and regulations” in the form of a concrete system.

The 1942 Yan’an Rectification Movement was a period of systematic advancement in the construction of party discipline and a full-fledged period of study and education on party discipline. It is of great practical significance for people today to learn discipline, know discipline, understand discipline, observe discipline, correct their thoughts and actions with party rules and regulations, enhance their sense of discipline, and improve their party character. It promotes the use of strict discipline to regulate the internal struggle of the party. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China has implemented the guideline of “punishing the former to prevent the latter from happening again, treating the sick to save the sick” to oppose subjectivism, sectarianism, and the party’s eight-pronged approach, correctly handle the internal struggle of the party, and achieve the two purposes of clarifying thoughts and uniting comrades, and make the construction of the Communist Party of China more prosperous. As the first-generation leaders of New China pointed out, “The policy of “punish those before to prevent those after, treat those who are sick to save them” was implemented to achieve the two purposes of clarifying ideology and uniting comrades. A prudent attitude towards the treatment of people, neither ambiguous nor perfunctory nor detrimental to comrades, is one of the marks of the prosperity of our party.”^[5]. This is also an affirmation of the role of party discipline in safeguarding the high degree of unity and centralization of the party. The study and education of party discipline went to a climax during the Yan’an Rectification Movement, which unified the party’s thinking, purified its organization, contacted the masses, and coalesced its strength.

The Seventh Congress of the Communist Party of China held in 1945 thus pushed the construction of Party discipline to a new stage. Firstly, in terms of structure, the General Outline was added to elaborate on party discipline, fully affirming the importance and seriousness of strengthening the party’s discipline; in terms of content, the Party Constitution of the Seventh National Congress perfected the principle of democratic centralism, and for the first time, established the policy of “punishing to prevent to prevent to cure to save the sick” to safeguard the party’s unity. In addition, for the first time, the concept of “four obediences” was written into the party Constitution as the party’s organizational discipline, making it the most fundamental political discipline and rule of the Communist Party of China, and providing a guarantee of discipline for the unity of will and action of the whole party.

On June 30, 1949, the first-generation leaders of New China summarized the Party’s 28 years of revolutionary experience since its founding by pointing out that “a disciplined party, armed with the theories of Marxism-Leninism, adopting a self-critical method, and in touch with the masses of the people” is the main weapon in defeating the enemy.

In the new period of reform, opening up, and socialist modernization, the party put forward the idea that “it is only through ideals and discipline that we can be united”, and party leaders have always emphasized the importance of discipline-building and have made efforts to promote the strengthening of discipline-building. The second-generation leaders of New China pointed out that “the issues of leadership system and organizational system are more fundamental, global, stable and long-term in nature”^[6]. The third-generation leaders of New China pointed out, “Party organizations at all levels and every member of the party must act

strictly following the party's constitution and internal regulations, and strictly abide by party discipline" [7]. The fourth-generation leaders of New China stated "It is necessary to insist on using the system to control power and affairs and people, to improve the democratic centralism, and to continuously promote the institutionalization, standardization, and proceduralization of the party's construction" [8].

History fully demonstrates that discipline is the lifeline of the party, and is an important guarantee for the party to keep moving from victory to victory. Therefore, under the new journey, with the consent of the Party Central Committee, from April to July 2024, the party will carry out party discipline study and education for the whole party.

3. The way forward for the development of party discipline learning and education in the Communist Party of China in the new era

Social existence determines social consciousness, political parties are the inevitable product of social and historical development, and party discipline learning and education also develop according to the changes in social existence. The connotation, specific content, and realization elements of party discipline learning and education also change according to the changes of historical conditions, and according to the historical tasks that the party shoulders. Strengthening the construction of discipline is the fundamental policy of the party's comprehensive and strict governance. Party discipline learning and education, as an important part of party discipline, should also be combined with the context of the new era to contribute to its high-quality development. At present, party discipline learning and education are being carried out solidly throughout the party. Under the new journey, the high-quality development of party discipline learning education is promoted combined with the context of the new era to continue to go deep and practical, that is, "deep" in the knowledge, "practical" in the regular, "strict" in the line.

3.1. Party discipline study and education should be "deep" in the systematic and comprehensive study of the regulations

From the promulgation and implementation of a series of internal party laws and regulations, such as the Guidelines on Intra-Party Political Life under New Circumstances, the Regulations on Intra-Party Supervision of the Communist Party of China, the Regulations on the Administration of Discipline of the Communist Party of China, to the third revision of the Communist Party of China Regulations on Discipline and Punishment, the Communist Party of China has always adhered to a tone of "deepness" and has improved disciplinary norms with time to strengthen the party's disciplinary construction. The Communist Party of China has always adhered to the tone of "deep" and improved the disciplinary norms with the times, thus systematically and comprehensively broadening the dimension of learning and education on party discipline.

The fifth-generation leaders of New China emphasized at the third plenary session of the twentieth Central Commission for Discipline Inspection that "taking the study and implementation of the newly revised disciplinary regulations as an opportunity to carry out a centralized disciplinary education in the whole party." Therefore, every revision is a standardization and improvement, and an opportunity for centralized study and education on party discipline. Hence, only by adhering to the problem-oriented to constantly repair the party discipline learning and education keep abreast of the times to tighten the system fence, so that the party discipline learning and education go deep, one step at a time.

3.2. The study and education of party discipline should be carried out in the internal life of the party

The Notice on Party Discipline Study and Education for the Whole Party, issued by the General Office of

the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, emphasizes that the study and education of Party discipline should be integrated into the daily routine and grasped regularly. This requirement has strong practical relevance and practical guidance.

Party discipline learning and education should be emphasized in the party life so people must adhere to the party discipline learning and education in the normalization of learning, work in the ordinary, melting in the daily, grasp in the regular, to promote the party discipline learning and education from the “key minority” to the majority of members of the extension of education from the centralized education to the extension of recurrent education, individual self-study and centralized learning. This ensures that the party organization performs its functions, plays a central role, works in ordinary times throughout the political discipline, organizational discipline, integrity discipline, mass discipline, work discipline, and life discipline, and effectively strengthens the newly revised regulations publicity and education efforts to promote the normalization of the party discipline learning and education, and strive to solve the party rules and regulations of the party discipline do not pay attention to, do not understand, do not master and other issues. The new regulations will be publicized and educated, and the study and education of party discipline will be promoted regularly. To make iron discipline into daily habits and consciously follow, the party discipline learning and education is integrated into the daily lives and grasped regularly so that party members and cadres can be subtly influenced in the further clarification of the daily words and deeds of the measurement of the yardstick, the disciplinary requirements of the internalized in the heart externalized in the line.

On the other hand, the party discipline learning and education should adhere to scientific indoctrination, according to the material. Different party members should innovate and enrich the form of inculcating content to learn the “the Communist Party of China Disciplinary Regulations” in an enjoyable form, chapter by chapter, article by article, to achieve the warning bells ringing in the form of warning education through personalized customization of the party discipline test questions to achieve regular theoretical learning in the form of online thematic education, periodic updating and tracking of the Central Committee’s revision guidance on the “CPC Disciplinary Regulations”, to “the historical evolution of party discipline learning and education in a hundred years of party history” as the theme of education and publicity. Disciplinary Regulations of the Communist Party of China Central Committee on the revision of the orientation of the “100 years of party history in the historical evolution of party discipline learning and education” as the theme of education and publicity, to enhance the cultural identity, political identity and awareness of compliance, from a deep understanding of the “two establishments” to a self-reflection and self-awareness of the “two safeguards.”

3.3. Party discipline learning and education should be “strict” in supervising and enforcing discipline and accountability-oriented role

Value orientation has a direction-led role in improving the implementation of party discipline. It has a practical character, has a significant impact on the subject’s self, inter-subjective relations, and other subjects, and can determine and dominate the subject’s value choice ^[9].

The party discipline learning education is not only a kind of ideological and political education but is also a behavioral norms system, which can further play its “strict” in the supervision and enforcement of discipline-oriented roles. On the one hand, through the party discipline learning education, supervision, and enforcement of discipline to ensure that the implementation of the process of standardization of compliance, is not only to the correct value orientation to the implementation but also to overcome the limitations of instrumentalist thinking. On the other hand, through the party discipline learning and education, supervision and enforcement of discipline and accountability in ensuring normative and standardized at the same time specific analysis of specific problems, in the discretionary space can also plug the loopholes of the system, based on the correct

communist position to always ensure that discipline and accountability of the political, normative, seriousness and impartiality. This also echoes what the fifth-generation leaders of New China emphasized at the third plenary session of the 20th Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, “Strengthening the supervision and inspection of the implementation of key regulations and systems to ensure that they are followed as one and implemented as one.” The vitality of the system lies in the implementation, and the party discipline learning and education to be “strict” in the supervision of discipline and accountability on the guiding role to effectively safeguard the seriousness and revolutionary discipline, to deepen the use of the party supervision and discipline of the “four forms”, to promote accurate characterization measurement of discipline law enforcement, to strictly implement the “three distinctions”, the real strict management and supervision and encourage the organic unity of play, and constantly enhance the creativity, cohesion, combat effectiveness of the party. The real implementation of the fifth generation leaders of New China pointed out, “the party to manage the party, strict control of the party, rely on what management, based on what to rule? It depends on strict discipline”^[10].

It is only under the new journey that people can always adhere to the strict tone, strict measures, strict atmosphere, strict party discipline, and rules so that the overall strict governance of the party will develop in depth.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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