

Research on the Education of Long March Spirit for Contemporary College Students

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Abstract: This year marks the 78th anniversary of the victory of the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army's Long March. The Long March spirit is a symbol of the Red Army's indomitable will, a monument to the Communist Party of China members' fearlessness in the face of hardships and dangers, and the sublimation of the Chinese nation's spirit of advancing despite difficulties and striving for strength. In today's context of continuously deepening reform and opening-up, promoting the Long March spirit and conducting education on revolutionary idealism, positive optimism, hard work, and unity and cooperation among contemporary college students help enhance their ideological and political awareness. It is of significant importance for cultivating qualified builders and successors for socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Keywords: Contemporary College Students, Long March Spirit, Ideological and Political Education.

1. Introduction

The Long March spirit, born from an extraordinary historical feat, embodies profound ideological connotations and enduring value. Educating contemporary college students about this spirit is crucial for their holistic development and aligns with the strategic needs of national talent cultivation. This paper explores the essence of the Long March spirit, the necessity of its education for modern students, and practical approaches to effectively impart it.

2. The Connotation and Essence of the Long March Spirit

2.1. Revolutionary Idealism as the Core

The firm belief in revolutionary idealism serves as a significant spiritual motivation that inspires people to strive forward, as well as a spiritual pillar that helps them overcome difficulties and endure hardships. Over the two years of the Long March, as Chairman Mao described, "Dozens of enemy planes conducted daily reconnaissance and bombing raids, while hundreds of thousands of enemy troops pursued, intercepted, and blocked their path. They encountered countless hardships and dangers along the way." Yet none of this could halt the Red Army's advance. "The Long March concluded with our victory and the enemy's defeat." [1] The reason the Red Army, despite enduring immense hardships, was able to accomplish this incredible feat in human history under extremely adverse conditions was largely due to the deeply ingrained spirit of revolutionary idealism within their hearts—an absolute loyalty to the revolutionary cause. Throughout the arduous journey of the Long March, the Red Army consistently maintained an unwavering revolutionary belief. This conviction represents the essence of the Long March spirit and served as the driving force that enabled them to triumph over adversity [2].

2.2. The Spirit of Arduous Struggle is Fundamental

Arduous struggle is neither an empty slogan nor an abstract

phrase; it possesses a scientific connotation and specific substance, continuously evolving and innovating with the times. It is not only a state of mind but also a spiritual force, as well as a fine traditional virtue of the Chinese nation. It served as a crucial "magic weapon" for the Communist Party of China during the revolutionary period and has been a fine conduct advocated and upheld by the Party for over ninety years since its founding.

The Long March stands as a monumental epic of tenacity and endurance for the Red Army. Over the two years of the Long March, the Red Army endured immense hardships and fought courageously—breaching fortified passes, crossing treacherous rivers, climbing snow-capped mountains, and traversing vast grasslands, all while facing death without fear. They marched through one desolate mountain range after another, crossed raging torrents, truded through boundless marshlands deemed uninhabitable, and scaled icy, snow-covered peaks on the roof of the world. They suffered from hunger and cold, inadequately clothed and fed, enduring countless privations. Tens of thousands of Red Army soldiers made the ultimate sacrifice, shedding their blood and laying down their young and precious lives for the revolutionary cause.

As Deng Xiaoping once emphasized, "Arduous struggle is our tradition. Education in hard work and plain living must be emphasized consistently, and this should continue for sixty to seventy years." [3] Educating contemporary university students about the hard struggle spirit of the Red Army during the Long March holds significant practical importance for cultivating qualities such as diligence, thrift, simplicity, resilience, and perseverance. Learning the spirit of hard struggle requires long-term commitment and persistence—it is not a temporary need or a short-term strategy. It cannot be approached with occasional efforts or sporadic emphasis; instead, it must be normalized as a regular and enduring practice.

2.3. The Spirit of Positive Optimism as a Driving Force

The revolutionary optimism of the Red Army was never a blind or simplistic positivity. Instead, it was a scientific and

revolutionary optimism, grounded in a profound understanding of the laws of social development and a clear vision for the future. They believed firmly that the new would inevitably replace the old, that just forces would ultimately triumph over evil, and that the power of the people was inexhaustible. It was this conviction that allowed the revolutionary army, after the grueling two-year Long March, to preserve its vital spark, which later ignited the nationwide victory and liberation.

Furthermore, the culture of the Long March was itself a remarkable culture of optimism. This optimism was not fleeting or blind; it was an inner fortitude sustained by an unshakeable belief in the communist cause. No matter how dire the circumstances or how harsh the environment, the indomitable optimism of the Red Army soldiers consistently provided tremendous positive energy, fueling their march toward ultimate victory.

In the novel *Red Crag*, there is a couplet:

Upper Scroll: "看洞中依然旧景" (Beholding the cave, the scene remains unchanged)

Lower Scroll: "望窗外已是新春" (Gazing beyond the window, spring has already arrived)

Horizontal Inscription: "苦尽甜来" (Hardship ends, sweetness comes)

This couplet vividly illustrates the revolutionary optimism of the Red Army during the Long March. Here, the "old scene" alludes to the rule of the Kuomintang reactionaries, while "new spring" symbolizes the imminent victory of the revolution in China—the gradual realization of liberation and the approaching spring of the communist cause. This couplet also reflects the Red Army soldiers' unwavering confidence in the Long March and the revolutionary cause, as well as the revolutionaries' optimistic outlook and steadfast belief in the impending triumph of the revolution!

2.4. The Spirit of Unity and Collaboration as the Guarantee

During the Long March, the Red Army soldiers demonstrated mutual solidarity and care, fully embodying the revolutionary collectivist spirit represented by unity and collaboration. The soldiers who participated in the Long March came from all over the country, united by the common hope for national liberation and independence. Why was the Red Army able to achieve so many moving and heroic feats and overcome countless difficulties and dangers during the Long March? The answer lies in the spirit of collective unity and collaboration that the soldiers consistently upheld throughout the journey. As the saying goes, "Many hands make light work."

The same principle applies to our actual studies and work today. Unity and collaboration are vital guarantees for success, a method for solving problems, and a fine moral character that reflects the collective wisdom of people. When hearts beat as one and efforts are directed toward a common goal, when individuals offer each other help and support in work and life, and when everyone leverages their own strengths and expertise to assist others, mutual understanding is achieved. There is no shirking of responsibility, only a shared commitment to overcoming challenges together. Only in this way can we transcend the limitations of individual strength and knowledge, pool the power of the collective, and achieve a synergistic effect where $1+1>2$.

In light of the current new context, collectivist education, epitomized by the spirit of unity and collaboration, should be

a focal point in the ideological and political education of contemporary university students. We should use the spirit of unity and collaboration demonstrated by the Red Army soldiers during the Long March to educate and guide today's students in establishing socialist values centered on collectivism. They need to understand the dialectical relationship between the individual and the collective, and integrate the needs of the country and the people with their personal growth. When conflicts arise between national, collective, and individual interests, they must possess a macro perspective and holistic thinking, allowing personal interests to submit to and serve the needs of the nation and the collective.

3. The Necessity of Long March Spirit Education for Contemporary University Students

3.1. Shortcomings of Contemporary University Students

Firstly, there is a weak sense of collective consciousness. Most young people today, represented by university students, are only children. They possess a strong sense of self, and privileged family environments often mean they become the center of family attention from birth. Upon entering campus and society, this overly strong self-awareness can lead to a lack of collective and team consciousness. Furthermore, the prevalent large-class teaching system in universities further limits the time classmates spend together. Simultaneously, when dealing with relationships with other students, they often adhere to the mindset of "Hear no evil, see no evil," which further hinders the cultivation and development of a collective spirit. Consequently, the awareness and capacity for unity and mutual assistance among students need strengthening.

Secondly, they tend to be self-centered and have a relatively low tolerance for adversity. As most contemporary students are only children who grew up during the era of reform and opening-up in relatively comfortable family conditions, they are generally energetic, individualistic, knowledgeable, and possess special skills. However, many have strong personalities and need to improve their ability to get along with others. They often lack understanding of how to share and collaborate, showing deficiency in unity and cooperation. Their ability to cope with setbacks is relatively poor, leading to an increased incidence of psychological issues among this student demographic. Therefore, the spirit of hard work and positive optimism in contemporary university students requires further education and cultivation.

Thirdly, they experience study-related anxiety. We live in an era of information explosion. Students today are curious about everything and want to learn everything. Society and the internet are filled with mixed messages, and with limited life experience, students often struggle to prioritize, attempting to tackle everything at once, which results in learning anxiety. Many parents impose excessively strict or high demands on their children's studies, creating immense internal pressure for students. They worry that declining academic performance will lead to parental blame or punishment, thereby intensifying their anxiety. Currently, intense academic competition among university students increases study pressure, with some students anxious about their ability to compete effectively against peers.

Fourthly, they are overly reliant on the internet. With rising economic standards, computers and the internet have entered nearly every household, making internet access highly convenient. Some young people, facing dissatisfaction or frustration in real life, retreat into the online world to find a sense of belonging and achievement. The virtual world can fulfill various fantasies for this generation of students, leading to a particularly severe issue of internet addiction. University students spend relatively little time online for actual learning and more for leisure, with males predominantly engaged in gaming and females in watching series. Some have developed the habit of turning on their computers immediately upon waking, feeling unsettled without internet access. Many students routinely rely on the internet to find answers for assignments directly, without engaging in deep thinking about the problems, which diminishes their capacity for independent thought.

3.2. The Main Epochal Values of the Long March Spirit

First, the Centripetal Value of Cohesion

Scientific theory is truth, born from the collision of people's hearts and souls. The centripetal value of cohesion is an important component of the epochal value of the Long March Spirit, reflecting its role in social cohesion. Its foundation lies in the extensiveness of its existence and the scientific nature of its formation. Experience from the Long March shows that communist beliefs and patriotic spirit were indispensable spiritual nourishment for our victory. This centripetal value is scientific, practical, and in line with the basic laws of Marxism. Its formation was a process enriched by Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, as well as a process where people's psychological affinity and sense of belonging were continuously strengthened and satisfied. The wide-ranging and enduring nature of this value manifests in its constant penetration and development among the broad masses of workers and peasants. The essence of the Long March was the victory of the revolutionary spirit inspired by the ideals of national independence and liberation in the hearts of the majority of soldiers. During the Long March, the Red Army faced an extremely disparity in strength with the enemy, backward weapons, a lack of medical care and medicines, harsh natural environments, and a shortage of supplies. They relied on their firm belief in the victory of the revolution and their unwavering pursuit of revolutionary ideals. With the development of history, this Long March Spirit, anchored in revolutionary ideals and beliefs, is an accumulation of the fine traditional culture of the Chinese nation, a noble virtue formed since the birth of the Communist Party of China and the Red Army soldiers, and a value that unites people for progress and forges ahead courageously.

Second, the Inspirational Value of Motivation

"The Long March was a manifesto, a propaganda team, and a seeding machine" — this vividly summarizes the great significance of the Long March. Slogans such as "Inherit the traditions of the Red Army and learn the Long March Spirit" and "When facing hardships, think of the 25,000-li Long March!" are known to every household in China and have become powerful inspirational slogans nationwide. The inspirational value of motivation of the Long March Spirit refers to its role in inspiring, encouraging, and moving people in their daily lives, study, and work, and is a key part of its epochal value. This value is mainly reflected in four aspects: first, it endows people with boundless strength to strive for

progress; second, it stimulates people's enthusiasm for work and labor to contribute to building a socialist society; third, it encourages and influences people, fostering an upward and optimistic mental state; fourth, it inspires and touches people, instilling a revolutionary optimistic spirit to overcome difficulties. Thanks to this inspirational value, the Long March Spirit can ignite people's strength, beliefs, passion, and vitality.

Third, the Normative and Guiding Value

What motivated all Red Army soldiers to work hard and fight bravely under such harsh conditions, presenting an unyielding and moving picture? It is because our Red Army soldiers shared consistent codes of conduct, moral norms, and value standards. These three aspects permeated every aspect of their lives and battles, becoming a powerful force guiding and regulating their behaviors and thoughts. The normative and guiding value of the Long March Spirit refers to its role in guiding people's value orientation, personality formation, and belief establishment. A distinctive feature of this value is the unity of spiritual value creation and realization. Spiritual value creation refers to the development of spiritual content that promotes the all-round development of human civilization and social progress. Spiritual value realization refers to the embodiment of such content in improving personality and elevating people's spiritual realm. Through norms and guidance, the Long March Spirit cultivates people's unyielding spirit in hardships, a pragmatic work attitude, perfects their personality, elevates their spiritual realm, helps them set clear goals, become people with spiritual value, and renew and create new spiritual values. In short, the normative and guiding value of the Long March Spirit is a value that unites people toward "consistent goals."

Fourth, the Educational and Shaping Value

To educate and cultivate contemporary college students with the Long March Spirit and promote their all-round development and growth, we must first fully and correctly understand its educational and shaping value. This value refers to the role of the Long March Spirit in educating and shaping people's ideological cultivation, moral character, and value tendencies. Its fundamental role is to educate and shape people, guiding their cognition, emotions, will, and behaviors toward goodness. It also shapes people's value foundations, emotional sustenance, and behavioral patterns, fostering a profound spiritual character with a broad mind connected to people's happiness, national strength, and social responsibility. The Long March Spirit essentially helps people achieve self-improvement, promotes the internal growth of their overall spirit, and encourages harmonious relations between people, between people and society, and between people and nature. In short, the educational and shaping value of the Long March Spirit is a value that makes people "pure and excellent."

4. How to Leverage the Educational Role of the Long March Spirit for Contemporary University Students

For contemporary university students, learning the Long March Spirit primarily involves studying the revolutionary history of the Red Army's Long March, grasping its essence, and translating it into concrete actions.

4.1. Seizing the Opportunity of Deepening Educational Reform, Guiding Long March Spirit Education with the Concept of Fostering Virtue and Talent

The CPC Central Committee and the State Council have proposed deepening educational reform, comprehensively advancing quality-oriented education, and building a vibrant socialist education system with Chinese characteristics, thereby laying a solid foundation of talent and knowledge for implementing the strategy of rejuvenating the country through science and education. The report to the 18th National Congress of the CPC first put forward the scientific thesis that "Fostering virtue and cultivating talents is the fundamental task of education," positioning talent cultivation as a key link in education and providing direction for educational work. This thesis enriches the connotation of ideological and political education in universities and also answers the fundamental question of "what to cultivate and how to cultivate." It deepens the understanding of the importance of ideological and political education in universities, which relates not only to the succession of the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics but also to the nation's long-term stability and the realization of the Chinese Dream. Following the laws of talent cultivation, we should utilize the Long March Spirit, seize the opportunity of deepening educational reform, and take the concept of fostering virtue and talent as the guiding principle and fundamental task to cultivate students' spirit of revolutionary idealism, hard struggle, revolutionary optimism, and unity and collaboration, thereby fostering pillars of talent for realizing the Chinese Dream [4].

4.2. Premised on Understanding the Historical Deeds of the Long March

To deeply understand the Long March Spirit, one must first study the historical deeds of the Long March, using the moving and heroic stories of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army during the march to inspire contemporary university students. The power of example is immeasurable. There are numerous touching stories from the Long March, such as climbing snow-capped mountains, eating tree bark, crossing marshy grasslands, carrying stretchers for comrades, fiercely capturing the Luding Bridge, and crossing the Chishui River four times. Using these glorious deeds of the Red Army soldiers to inspire and educate contemporary students can motivate them to regularly learn the Long March Spirit and translate it into a conscious action, taking the Red Army soldiers as their role models to spur themselves on, face difficulties without fear, remain positive and optimistic, cultivate firm willpower, and pursue a positive life. To educate and equip contemporary students with the Long March Spirit, we must organize them to study that period of revolutionary history and understand the historical context. The Red Army's Long March was an expedition undertaken under the grim revolutionary situation and amidst national peril, to save the nation from crisis and preserve revolutionary forces. Students should deeply comprehend the fearless courage of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, who were willing to make any sacrifice for national independence and people's liberation during the Long March. [5] By guiding contemporary students to read about, understand, and experience the history of the Long March, we can elevate their emotions, touch their hearts, lead them to a profound

understanding of the Long March Spirit, and make learning it a regular practice.

4.3. Based on a Deep Comprehension of the Long March Spirit

The core is to grasp the essence of the Long March Spirit, enabling contemporary university students to strengthen their lofty ideals and beliefs. The key is to use the Long March Spirit to educate and equip them, firming their ideals and convictions, and allowing them to deeply comprehend the foundation of the Long March Spirit. "Hardship leads to prosperity, ease leads to downfall"; "Hard work builds the nation, indulgence ruins the individual." Hard struggle remains a fine tradition that contemporary students must uphold. University educators should guide students to establish an outlook on life, values, and career centered on hard work and struggle, educating them to start from bit by bit, from themselves, and to practice the spirit of thrift and hard work with concrete actions. They must resolutely combat undesirable phenomena such as hedonism, money worship, and extravagance and waste, continuously study hard, withstand various external temptations, aim high, and persevere.

Educating contemporary students about the Long March Spirit means guiding them to prioritize the fundamental interests of the nation and society, and to strengthen their convictions and ideals; guiding them to learn the spirit of coming from the masses and going among the masses; guiding them to learn the spirit of fearing no sacrifice to save the nation in times of peril; guiding them to learn the spirit of unity, mutual assistance, strict discipline, and considering the overall situation; guiding them to learn the spirit of adhering to proceeding from reality in all matters. In the process of this education, the primary step for students to practice the Long March Spirit is to firm their ideals and beliefs. Understanding this lays a solid foundation for contemporary students to comprehend the core and grasp the essence of the Long March Spirit.

4.4. Conducting Practical Activities to Internalize the Long March Spirit

In educating contemporary students about the Long March Spirit, conducting social practice activities should be the pathway to internalization. First, we must cultivate students' willpower, for which social practice activities can serve as an important platform. The main forms of social practice can include interviewing Red Army veterans, visiting memorial sites of the Long March, and conducting research on the Red Army's Long March. Through these activities, students can immerse themselves in vivid real-life situations. By living and interacting with the broad masses of workers and peasants, they can learn and experience their fine qualities such as selfless dedication, hard work, and endurance. Particularly through the trials and hardships of "military training," they can temper their tenacious will, enhance organizational discipline, and cultivate revolutionary heroism and optimism, thereby internalizing the Long March Spirit into a firm belief. [6] Platforms can be established to conduct Long March Spirit education among students around major anniversaries. For example, organizing "Galas commemorating the XX anniversary of the Victory of the Long March" can embody the revolutionary idealism, optimism, hard struggle, and unity and collaboration spirit of the Long March era. We can also actively develop a series of educational forms popular among

contemporary students, such as organizing retraces of the routes taken by the Red Army, holding discussions on the Long March Spirit, and visiting red-themed exhibitions. Through these diverse and flexible educational activities, we can not only allow contemporary students to experience the hardships faced by the Red Army soldiers during the Long March, deepen their understanding of their spirit, and enhance the appeal and attractiveness of Long March Spirit social practice activities among them, but also cultivate their sound character and strong will.

4.5. Adopting Diverse Teaching Methods

Current university teaching materials contain relatively little content about the Red Army's Long March, while students are eager to learn in detail about its historical deeds and spirit, and to understand its importance to China.

To strengthen Long March Spirit education for contemporary students, we can use the Long March route as the main thread and the Spirit as the theme to compile teaching materials that are popular among students, rich in illustrations and text, for educating them on revolutionary idealism, positive optimism, hard struggle, and unity and collaboration. We can also create "Long March Spirit" websites on the internet, widely publicize them among students, put historical materials, Long March videos, teaching experiences from teachers and students, and films about the Long March online, establishing a convenient and fast platform for discussion and exchange.

Universities can also adopt a combination of various teaching methods, including textbook teaching, expert lectures, multimedia instruction, student participation in research projects and classroom discussions, performances, and organizing field studies. These methods can introduce students to the history and spirit of the Red Army's revolutionary activities during the Long March, engraving the great Long March Spirit in the heart of every student!

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