

Study on the Path to Empower Adolescents' Ideological and Political Education through Revolutionary Veterans' Oral History

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Abstract

This study aims to explore effective pathways through which the oral histories of revolutionary veterans can enhance the ideological and political education of adolescents. Our survey on adolescents' current understanding of red culture revealed shortcomings in existing educational practices, including rigid methodologies, limited resources, and a disconnect between theory and practice. Although adolescents recognize the value of red culture, these shortcomings hinder a deeper comprehension of its essence. To address this, the study proposes an immersive educational model centered on a three-phase process: "collection, organization, application" of oral histories, based on summarizing and categorizing oral history materials. Case studies demonstrate that this model, which integrates red education throughout the process, can effectively revitalize red resources, significantly increasing the appeal and effectiveness of education. It thus serves as a practical reference for guiding adolescents to establish beliefs and carry forward the red gene.

Keywords

Red education; Red culture; Oral history; Adolescents; Ideological and political education

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1. Introduction

The imperative to strengthen adolescents' ideological education is underscored by the national vision that "the people have faith, the nation has strength, and the country has hope" ^[1]. Adolescents, being the future of the nation and the embodiment of that hope, constitute the foundation for building a strong nation. Consequently, instilling sound education in them is crucial to ensuring

that the red gene and the revolutionary torch are passed down through the generations ^[2]. Effectively narrating red stories, leveraging red resources, and strengthening red culture education among adolescents are therefore vital components on the path to national rejuvenation. This aligns with the directive from the report to the 20th CPC National Congress, which advocates to "promote the spiritual lineage of Chinese Communists with the

great founding spirit of the Party as the source, make good use of red resources, and strive to nurture a new generation capable of undertaking the mission of national rejuvenation”^[3]. Among these resources, the oral histories of revolutionary veterans stand out as a particularly valuable historical and cultural heritage. They serve as a unique and potent educational resource, offering an objective medium for adolescents to perceive and connect with this history across time and space.

However, significant challenges persist. The gradual passing of these revolutionary figures and the fading of their memories render the systematic collection and preservation of their oral histories an urgent task. Simultaneously, engaging the primary audience for this education—adolescents, the inheritors of this revolutionary spirit—has become increasingly difficult. Amidst rapid information technological development, the gap between adolescents and red culture appears to be widening. Exposure to diverse, and sometimes harmful, ideologies and rhetoric can skew their values, necessitating timely correction^[4]. Furthermore, current ideological education often over-relies on theoretical input and lacks practical engagement, failing to inspire students’ enthusiasm for learning. This study confronts this dual challenge head-on, seeking practical pathways to enhance the quality of red culture education and facilitate adolescents’ deep internalization of its core spirit^[5,6].

2. Research design and methods

2.1. Questionnaire survey design

This method aims to assess adolescents’ current level of awareness and identification with red culture, as well as their demand for different red education methods. Taking into account the practical circumstances of adolescents across different age groups, two separate questionnaires were specifically designed for primary school students and university students. The feedback collected will be analyzed to identify and summarize the existing problems and their causes in red education for adolescents, thereby providing data support for subsequent research on innovative educational pathways.

2.2. Interview arrangements

This method was designed to collect fundamental

information about revolutionary veterans’ life experiences, key contributions, and personal histories through interviews. The gathered oral history materials were systematically analyzed and organized. The goal is to extract and refine the red culture spirit and stories applicable to the ideological and political education of adolescents for classroom use, thus providing a content foundation for innovating red education pathways

2.3. Application of case study analysis

This method aims to collect feedback from adolescents after they experience the innovative red education pathways in classrooms and activities. Through a comparative analysis of adolescents’ grasp of and interest in the ideological and political concepts under traditional red education methods, this case study approach seeks to verify the advantages and identify any limitations of using revolutionary veterans’ oral histories. The findings are intended to provide direction for optimizing future educational pathways.

3. Research findings and analysis

3.1. Investigation and analysis of the current state of red education for adolescents

This study employed two distinct questionnaires tailored for different age groups: one for high school and university students, focusing on their evaluation of existing teaching models and their grasp of the red culture spirit; and another for primary and junior high school students, emphasizing their level of awareness regarding red culture and the main channels through which they gain this understanding^[7,8]. The survey was conducted both online and offline across eight prefecture-level cities in Zhejiang Province. A total of 700 and 500 questionnaires were distributed, respectively, with 653 and 426 valid responses successfully collected. Through systematic data collation and analysis, five key characteristics summarizing the current state of red education for adolescents were identified.

3.1.1. High recognition but superficial understanding

Contemporary adolescents are frequently exposed to red culture through various channels such as textbooks, red-themed films, and songs, among other channels, in

their daily lives. Most students acknowledge the positive role of understanding red culture in self-improvement. However, their knowledge often remains superficial, with limited depth in understanding the core connotations of red culture and the essential value of the red spirit.

3.1.2. High identification with red culture and demand for diversified education methods

Contemporary adolescents hold a high level of identification with red culture, regarding it as a valuable spiritual treasure of the Chinese nation. This is reflected in their lifestyles, behaviors, values, and ways of thinking. Simultaneously, they exhibit strong expectations for more diverse forms of red education and actively desire to acquire more knowledge in this field.

3.1.3. Low evaluation of current red education models, leading to poor resonance

Regarding the red education conducted in schools, contemporary adolescents believe there is considerable room for improvement. Their participation frequency, engagement level, and overall experience in red education and related activities are generally low. They find that some methods fail to spark interest, often resulting in passive knowledge acquisition and diminished educational effectiveness.

3.1.4. Rigid educational models and lack of vivid teaching materials

Classroom textbook learning remains the primary channel for students to acquire knowledge about red culture in schools. However, most teaching resources currently used are predominantly in text and image formats, leading to inflexible methodologies. The lack of “vividness” in these resources makes it difficult for students to develop a deeper impression of red culture.

3.1.5. Singular approach in implementation, failing to integrate practice with theory

Current red education practices often fall short in effectively integrating red cultural resources with ideological and political education. A disconnect exists between practical activities and theoretical teaching, frequently manifesting as insufficient theoretical grounding in practical activities and a lack of hands-on

experience in theoretical instruction.

3.2. Compilation and analysis of revolutionary veterans’ oral histories

This study conducted interviews with 335 revolutionary veterans across 16 provincial-level administrative regions in China. We collected their personal stories and reflections, forming a rich archive of over 300,000 words of oral history transcripts and a substantial volume of audio-visual materials. Through systematic sorting and refinement, this study categorizes the oral histories into the following six distinct historical stages and thematic types, each defined by its historical context and the original aspiration and mission of the interviewees.

3.2.1. “Preserving the flame of the Chinese revolution”

In the arduous early days of the revolutionary cause, pioneers faced immense challenges. Their preservation of the revolutionary flame through sheer will and sacrifice epitomizes their unwavering commitment to faith and conviction.

3.2.2. “Safeguarding national sovereignty and throwing off colonial slavery”

Facing foreign aggression during a time of national existential crisis, they fought heroically to defend the nation’s dignity, forging a crucial part of the spiritual lineage of Chinese Communists.

3.2.3. “Liberating the whole of China and working for the people’s interests”

The pursuit of national liberation and the fundamental interests of the people motivated revolutionary veterans during the Liberation War. Their stories, often marked by a pragmatic and pioneering spirit, show the justness and historical necessity of the revolutionary cause.

3.2.4. “Safeguarding national security and restoring national dignity”

When the newly founded motherland faced foreign threats and aggression, the revolutionary veterans resolutely defended the nation’s independence and sovereignty at the risk of their lives. This spirit of sacrificing the small self for the larger self is a profound example of putting the interests of the country and the people first.

3.2.5. “Being a Party’s ‘red brick,’ contributing to national construction”

At a time when the country faced the tremendous task of rebuilding from the ground up, the spirit of the revolutionary veterans is characterized by dedication and self-reliance. Their stories are part of the history of national construction, showcasing the spirit of hard work and perseverance during the socialist period.

3.2.6. “Building socialism and achieving national rejuvenation”

During the period of Reform and Opening-up, they carried forward the spirit of innovation, working to revitalize the nation. Their dedication has since served as an inspiration, motivating later generations to pursue the goal of national rejuvenation.

3.3. Development and feedback on the three-phase red education model

To address the identified issues in adolescent red education, this study developed an immersive educational pathway based on a three-phase process of “Collection-Organization-Application” of revolutionary veterans’ oral histories. By actively engaging adolescents in all three phases, the model aims to create a “flipped classroom” effect that integrates practical experience with theoretical learning^[9]. This model was implemented among over 500 adolescent students on a class-by-class basis. The teaching effectiveness was subsequently evaluated using case study analysis to gather feedback.

3.3.1. Oral history collection phase

The primary focus of this phase is to transform adolescents from passive recipients into active field researchers. On the premise of establishing contact with the interviewees and clarifying the purpose and direction of the interviews, students participate in designing the interview outlines, conducting on-site interviews, and recording audio-visual materials^[10]. This immersive fieldwork fosters a closer connection between the students and the revolutionary veterans, effectively guiding them to develop a personal interest in this history.

3.3.2. Oral history organization phase

This stage encourages students to participate in the post-interview data analysis and processing. Through methods such as writing biographies, editing documentaries, producing short videos, creating stage play scripts, and adapting song-and-dance performances, students are guided to identify key learning themes, understand the historical context of the interview content, and extract the core spiritual elements of the interviewees^[11,12]. This process transforms fragmented stories into systematic educational resources, which enhances students’ analytical skills and deepens their comprehension of the essence of the red spirit.

3.3.3. Oral history application phase

This stage emphasizes the shift in students’ roles. Through the “flipped classroom” approach, students supplement and actively utilize the oral history findings compiled in the second phase^[13]. By acting as primary presenters, they demonstrate and explain these contents to their schools, classes, and communities. This guides students to become proactive inheritors and disseminators of red culture, enabling them to achieve a thorough integration of knowledge through the process of active dissemination and sharing^[14,15].

3.3.4. Teaching effectiveness feedback

The effectiveness of the model was evaluated using a multi-method approach^[16,17]. For specific teaching cases, data were collected through online questionnaires, pre- and post-class interviews, classroom observations, and analysis of student assignments. Analysis revealed that, compared to routine classroom learning, students participating in this teaching activity demonstrated a deeper appreciation and understanding of red culture and spirit, along with increased interest in learning red history. Nearly 80% of the students reported that this learning model provided them with a greater sense of achievement and responsibility. Although some students noted the relatively high time investment required by this teaching method, overall feedback was predominantly positive.

4. Research summary and implications

4.1. Research summary

This study addresses a critical issue: how to innovate

ideological and political education for adolescents in an era of diverse value-shaping challenges, to effectively pass on the red gene. By systematically collecting, organizing, and analyzing the oral histories of revolutionary veterans across China, this research has not only constructed a spiritual lineage framework categorizing six historical stages but, more importantly, has designed and implemented an innovative “immersive” red education model based on a three-phase “Collection-Organization-Application” process. This model transforms adolescents from passive knowledge recipients into active history explorers, organizers, and communicators. It effectively bridges the theory-practice gap, thereby enhancing the appeal, engagement, and overall effectiveness of the education. Consequently, this study provides a concrete pathway for revitalizing and utilizing red oral history resources and offers an operational, practical solution for innovating adolescent ideological and political education in the new era.

4.2. Practical implications and recommendations

4.2.1. Integrating oral history resources into the curriculum system

It is recommended that primary, secondary, and higher education institutions incorporate local revolutionary veterans’ oral histories as significant local curriculum resources. This can involve developing school-based curricula, thematic readers, and red culture study tours centered on these oral histories, making the content more vivid and locally relevant.

4.2.2. Promoting the “three-phase” immersive teaching model

Ideological and political education courses can adopt the “Collection-Organization-Application” pedagogy through project-based learning. Teachers can guide students to conduct interviews, organize stories, and present their findings in formats like micro-lecture videos or thematic presentations, creating a “flipped classroom” where students become the primary agents of their learning.

4.2.3. Establishing an online oral history repository for red education

Given the urgency of preserving these memories as the generation of veterans ages, establishing an online repository is crucial for sustainable development. A shared database can transcend geographical limitations, facilitating better circulation and utilization of red resources nationwide.

4.3. Conclusion

This study confirms that the “immersive” education model, centered on the oral histories of revolutionary veterans, serves as an effective pathway connecting the past with the present and empowering adolescent ideological and political education. By integrating the inheritance of the red gene into adolescents’ active exploration and creative expression, this model not only responds to current challenges in red education but also provides a practical perspective for cultivating a new generation capable of undertaking the mission of national rejuvenation.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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