

A Study on Enhancing the Effectiveness of Ideological and Political Education in Universities from the Perspective of Cultural Confidence

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Abstract: In the new process of developing socialism with Chinese characteristics and the practice of building Chinese-style modernization, the contemporary significance of cultural confidence has become increasingly prominent, serving as a vital spiritual cornerstone for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The China of the new era is undergoing unprecedented profound transformations and developments. While the economy and society continue to advance and technology progresses steadily, it requires robust cultural strength to unite the people and guide their direction. This paper takes cultural confidence as its starting point, elucidates its essence and its value for ideological and political education in higher education institutions, and analyzes the practical challenges currently faced by such education. Building on this foundation, it proposes a series of enhancement strategies aimed at establishing a new educational model that not only embodies mainstream values but also resonates deeply with young people's experiences, thereby achieving a fundamental shift in ideological and political education from mere knowledge transmission to cultural identity cultivation.

Keywords: Cultural confidence; Ideological and political education in higher education institutions; Effectiveness; Value recognition; Cultural experience

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1. Introduction

Ideological and political theory education in higher education institutions serves as the primary platform for guiding young students' values. The excellent traditional Chinese culture constitutes the spiritual foundation of our nation and a vital source for nurturing cultural confidence. Integrating this cultural heritage into ideological and political theory courses is essential for achieving universities' educational goal of "cultivating virtue and nurturing talents," and represents a crucial pathway to foster young students' ideals and beliefs while strengthening their patriotic sentiments through cultural confidence. Currently, with the accelerated globalization process and increasingly frequent interactions among diverse cultures, the information technology revolution has transformed young students' cognitive patterns and value orientations, posing unprecedented challenges to traditional ideological and political education models. Against this backdrop, leveraging profound cultural heritage to enhance the appeal of education has become an urgent contemporary challenge

that requires immediate resolution.

2. The connotation of cultural confidence and its value to ideological and political education in universities

2.1. The connotation of cultural confidence

Cultural confidence is a theoretical concept whose core lies in the integration of Marxist cultural theory with China's excellent traditional culture. Essentially, cultural confidence manifests as a nation, a country, and every individual's firm belief and conscious recognition of their own cultural values. The theoretical framework of cultural confidence can be understood at three progressive levels. Institutional confidence constitutes the foundational level of cultural confidence, requiring full confidence and acceptance of the socialist system with Chinese characteristics and its operational mechanisms. Theoretical confidence represents a deeper level, primarily demonstrated through a steadfast belief in the scientific validity and truthfulness of the theoretical achievements of Marxism adapted to China's context and contemporary needs. Value confidence, as the highest level of cultural confidence, encompasses profound recognition of the core values, spiritual aspirations, and cultural character of the Chinese nation. In the new era, cultural confidence must preserve the uniqueness of national culture within global cultural exchanges and mutual learning, while also achieving creative transformation and innovative development based on inheriting the essence of traditional culture, thereby contributing China's wisdom to building a community with a shared future for mankind ^[1].

2.2. The value of cultural confidence in ideological and political education in higher education institutions

Cultural confidence infuses profound spiritual strength into ideological and political education in higher education institutions. Its value-guiding function provides an ideological core that transcends utilitarian and instrumental approaches, elevating educational activities beyond mere knowledge transmission or behavioral norms to a noble mission of cultural preservation and spiritual cultivation. The rich historical heritage and powerful spiritual vitality inherent in cultural confidence address the ideological dilemmas faced by contemporary college students amidst diverse value systems, offering stable value frameworks for their character development and spiritual growth. The identity-building function manifests through cultural confidence's ability to foster emotional resonance with Chinese culture, cultivating a deep sense of belonging and pride based on cultural understanding. When students truly comprehend the unique charm and global significance of Chinese culture, national pride emerges naturally as a cultural identification rooted in the heart that proves more enduring and compelling than external preaching. The practice-oriented function demonstrates that cultural confidence extends beyond cognition and emotion, inspiring young students to actively engage in cultural preservation and innovation. Guided by cultural confidence, students proactively assume responsibilities as cultural inheritors and innovators: safeguarding and promoting outstanding traditional culture while driving its creative transformation and innovative development aligned with contemporary characteristics, thereby achieving organic integration of personal growth and cultural advancement.

3. Challenges facing the effectiveness of ideological and political education in universities today

3.1. The disconnection between educational content and youth cultural experience

Contemporary college students have grown up in an era where globalization and the digital revolution converge, giving their cultural experiences a distinctly hybrid character. Various cultural phenomena, including the virtual imagination inherent in anime culture, the emotional projection inherent in fan culture, and the identity construction facilitated by online communities, have become deeply embedded in the daily lives of young people. While existing ideological and

political education content boasts solid theoretical foundations and core values, there remains a cognitive gap between its discourse and meaning interpretation and the cultural experiences of youth ^[2]. This gap stems less from inherent flaws in the educational content itself and more from relatively lagging transformation mechanisms. Traditional grand narrative models often fail to effectively convey values, leading to profound confusion among certain student groups regarding meaning attribution and identity formation, thereby undermining the intended educational outcomes.

3.2. The transformation from historical memory to value identification faces obstacles

The fragmented nature of information dissemination and the potential influence of historical nihilism pose multifaceted challenges to historical education in universities. While some students possess basic knowledge of China's national struggles since modern times, its revolutionary traditions, and the achievements of reform and opening-up, this understanding often remains superficial, limited to factual memorization or symbolic recognition. The transition from knowledge acquisition to value identification lacks essential emotional engagement and experiential components, preventing rich historical resources from fostering deep cultural identity among students. The cognitive gap between the macroscopic narrative of history and the micro-level experiences of individual lives creates a disconnect between history's profound weight and the immediacy of contemporary realities. This disconnection hinders the natural evolution of historical memory into cultural pride and impedes the effective development of responsibility and commitment among young students.

3.3. The ability to discern values under multicultural impact requires enhancement

The widespread dissemination of Western cultural products, the deep penetration of neoliberal ideologies, and the everyday manifestation of consumerist logic collectively create a complex cultural context shaping contemporary college students' value systems. In this environment where diverse value systems intertwine, some students exhibit fluctuating judgment criteria when confronted with different cultural value frameworks. This phenomenon typically does not manifest as direct skepticism toward mainstream culture or explicit resistance, but rather as a subtle state of "value suspension." While students often recognize the rationality and validity of mainstream values intellectually, their translation of these values into personal behavioral guidelines and life principles may be influenced by pragmatic thinking, revealing a tendency toward "refined" interest considerations. Such dynamics undermine the intrinsic driving force of value education and diminish the profound effectiveness of ideological and political education.

3.4. Insufficient emotional engagement and cultural experience depth in the educational process

In recent years, ideological and political education in universities has made positive progress in formal innovation, with a growing diversity of practical activities and experiential programs. However, during actual implementation, some institutions still exhibit a tendency to prioritize form over substance and activities over authentic experiences. Educational designs often focus excessively on the comprehensive delivery of knowledge points and explicit behavioral standards, while paying insufficient attention to students' emotional responses, aesthetic perceptions, and cultural belonging experiences during participation. These design approaches tend to render educational activities superficial, with student engagement remaining largely a passive reception. Educational experiences lacking deep emotional involvement struggle to resonate with students' inner psychological structures and fail to foster the development of stable personality traits. The outcomes typically demonstrate strong visual and auditory impact but insufficient cognitive and emotional engagement, posing challenges to enhancing the effectiveness of ideological and political education.

4. Strategies for enhancing the effectiveness of ideological and political education in universities based on cultural confidence

4.1. Deepening the youth cultural landscape and innovating the educational discourse system

In the context of the new era, young people have grown up in an environment intertwined with digitalization and networking. Their cognitive frameworks and value orientations are profoundly shaped by online culture, subcultures, and popular culture. Traditional one-way didactic approaches struggle to resonate with this generation. Educators in ideological and political education must proactively integrate into the cultural ecosystem of youth, skillfully capturing the distinctive discourse characteristics of Generation Z. They should transform grand narratives into youthful expressions, converting political theories into relatable, vivid, and emotionally engaging language^[3]. This transformation isn't merely about catering to youth culture; rather, it builds on cultural confidence to guide values and foster creative adaptation, establishing a discourse framework that combines intellectual depth with youthful warmth. Taking the course "Basic Principles of Marxism" as an example, instructors can move beyond textbook-based lectures by utilizing popular media formats like short videos, internet memes, and anime characters to connect abstract philosophical concepts with real-life concerns, such as employment anxiety, emotional struggles, and identity issues. When teaching the theory of contradiction, educators can introduce students to the common dilemmas of "involution versus lying flat," guiding them through case studies and interactive discussions to apply dialectical analysis in examining the relationship between personal development and contemporary opportunities. When explaining "historical materialism," educators can integrate Bilibili's China Intelligent Manufacturing series videos to help students understand the dialectical relationship between productive forces and production relations through the transition from China's manufacturing to China's innovation. This approach not only preserves the scientific rigor and seriousness of the theory but also aligns with the aesthetic preferences and learning habits of young audiences, transforming ideological education classes from "being forced to listen" to "voluntary engagement." Educators should excel at establishing an integrated online-offline discourse dissemination matrix, leveraging platforms such as WeChat Official Accounts, Weibo, and TikTok to build new media brands for ideological education, achieving round-the-clock educational coverage and facilitating the subtle infiltration and dissemination of mainstream values within the youth cultural sphere.

4.2. Activating historical memory carriers to facilitate identity formation

Local history, institutional histories, family histories, and other "micro-historical" resources serve as crucial bridges connecting abstract historical concepts with concrete life experiences. Through this approach, history is no longer merely a collection of distant symbols but transforms into warm, vivid life stories^[4]. By incorporating interactive methods such as oral history interviews, exhibitions of historical artifacts, and immersive scenario reconstructions, students' multiple senses are engaged, fostering natural emotional resonance. The core of educational design lies in establishing a comprehensive transformation chain: "cognitive acquisition – emotional stimulation – value identification – conscious action." This enables students to undergo a profound shift from external knowledge to internal conviction during participatory experiences. Taking the teaching of "China's Modern and Contemporary History Outline" as an example, instructors can organize students to visit local revolutionary sites, collect oral recollections from veteran revolutionaries or builders, and produce visual records of family historical transformations, allowing students to experience the authentic pulse of historical progression firsthand. During interviews, students hear their ancestors recount the dramatic changes in living conditions before and after land reform; while organizing old photographs, they observe the close connection between their family's fate and national development; and during visits to revolutionary memorial halls, they handle artifacts once used by martyrs. Students cease to be mere observers of history but become active participants in its transmission and co-creators of its meaning, transforming the weight of history into genuine cultural pride and a sense of youthful responsibility.

4.3. Strengthen cultural comparative awareness and refine value judgment capabilities

Strengthening cultural comparative awareness does not merely involve listing various cultural phenomena; it requires guiding students to discern the similarities and differences in spiritual essence beyond superficial distinctions, thereby establishing their own cultural identity amidst the collision of diverse cultures. Throughout this process, students must develop critical thinking and rational analytical skills to maintain clear judgment when confronted with the infiltration of Western values—neither excessively rejecting foreign civilizational achievements nor blindly idolizing other nations’ development models, but rather forming robust value judgment frameworks through dialectical selection. The key to honing value judgment lies in cultivating students’ ability to examine cultural phenomena from multiple dimensions. Students should not only observe the surface manifestations of cultural phenomena but also delve into the ideological factors and historical contexts underlying them. Through systematic comparative analysis training, students can gradually internalize the core socialist values with Chinese characteristics through repeated cognitive practice, establishing a value framework that aligns with contemporary demands and national identity, thereby maintaining political steadfastness and value clarity in the complex and ever-changing international discourse environment. Taking the “Ideological, Moral, and Legal Education” curriculum as an example, instructors may design comparative studies on professional ethics between Eastern and Western contexts, selecting the German craftsman spirit and the Chinese “Great Master Craftsman Spirit” as case studies to guide students in analyzing their similarities and differences in historical origins, value connotations, and modern expressions. Subsequently, students are required to group-based analyze divergent interpretations of “dedication” across different cultural backgrounds and produce comparative analysis reports. Debate activities can also be organized in the classroom to present diverse viewpoints, with teachers intervening and guiding at appropriate moments. This approach helps students grasp the intrinsic alignment between the core socialist values and China’s excellent traditional culture, preventing them from developing an either-or binary mindset, thereby enabling cultural confidence to take root in the profound foundation of theoretical understanding and emotional identification.

4.4. Creating an immersive cultural context to deepen the level of embodied experience

For ideological and political education to achieve profound effectiveness, it must move beyond mere theoretical exposition and establish a comprehensive experiential space that integrates mind and body. The key to creating immersive cultural environments lies in immersing students in authentic cultural settings, allowing them to experience the intrinsic charm of culture through firsthand engagement. This educational philosophy advocates transforming abstract values into tangible life practices, enabling cultural inheritance to occur through natural participation. Local cultural resources can be fully utilized, for instance, by organizing field trips to historic villages where students listen to elders recount past stories in traditional streets and appreciate ancestral wisdom through the architecture of traditional dwellings^[5]. Traditional craft workshops such as paper-cutting, embroidery, and wood carving can also be implemented, allowing students to experience the focus and joy of manual creation under master instructors’ guidance, thereby deepening their understanding and appreciation of traditional culture through the sense of accomplishment derived from completed works. Additionally, innovative interpretations of classical texts require diverse presentation formats: students may adapt historical anecdotes into theatrical scenes to grasp ancient minds through role-playing, or use modern dance to convey the poetic essence of classical poetry, expressing cultural rhythms through bodily language. When participating in cultural activities, students are not passive recipients but active builders of cultural meaning. Through concrete cultural practices, they gain intuitive understanding, develop value identity through emotional resonance, and ultimately transform this identification into conscious cultural confidence and proactive engagement.

5. Conclusion

In summary, the introduction of cultural confidence has opened a new path for research on the effectiveness of ideological

and political education in universities, shifting from “external indoctrination” to “internal awakening.” To overcome the challenges in achieving practical effectiveness, it is essential to consciously ground efforts in the subjectivity of Chinese culture and transform historical resources into everyday experiences that resonate with young people. Future research should focus more on the micro-level mechanisms of strategy implementation, exploring how to accurately delineate the psychological process through which cultural identity translates into action by combining qualitative tracking with quantitative assessment methods.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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