

Exploring Approaches to Integrating Cultural Confidence into Ideological and Political Education in Colleges and Universities

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Abstract: Culture embodies a profound accumulation of wisdom and functions as a spiritual bond that sustains the survival and progress of a nation. The seamless integration of cultural confidence within the ideological and political education offered by colleges and universities assumes a pivotal role in the preservation and advancement of traditional Chinese culture, as well as in fostering and instilling values among college students, while achieving the educational objectives of higher education institutions. Consequently, it is imperative for colleges and universities to continually explore approaches, strengthen the foundation of cultural confidence through innovative teaching methods and content, prioritize practical teaching approaches to enhance the perception of cultural confidence enhancement, and intensify efforts in campus culture construction to optimize the environment for nurturing cultural confidence among college students.

Keywords: Cultural confidence; Colleges and universities; Ideological and political education

Cultural confidence is a more fundamental, broader and more profound faith in the development of China. Colleges and universities are responsible for the important missions of talent cultivation, knowledge dissemination and moral education. To achieve this fundamental goal, the important role played by cultural confidence in the process of ideological and political education is indispensable. Cultural confidence and ideological and political education in colleges and universities are intrinsically closely related. Ideological and political education is rooted in a certain cultural field, while culture needs to take root with the carrier of ideological and political education in the process of inheritance and development. In the context of multiculturalism, it is important for ideological and political courses in colleges and universities to enhance the education of cultural confidence among students. This can be achieved by integrating culture into students' academic lives in a subtle and implicit manner, allowing them to internalize ideological and political education and proactively cultivate a strong sense of cultural confidence.^[1]By doing so, they can further embrace the mission and responsibility of cultural confidence and contribute to the practice of cultural inheritance, development, and innovation.

1. Core concepts and definitions

1.1 Culture

The word culture is composed of two words, “wen” and “hua”. Liu Xiang, a scholar in Western Han Dynasty, combined the words “wen” and “hua” in his Garden of Stories: On Martial Arts (Shuoyuan: zhiwu), that is, “Influence those who do not comply through peaceful means, educate them through culture, and if they do not reform their ways, they may face severe consequences.”The principle states that when governing a country, the approach of moral governance should be prioritized over the use of force. It highlights the significant role of culture in effective governance. In Western society, the term “culture” originates from the Latin words “Cultus” and “Cultm”, which signify “cultivation” and later evolved to include the education of individuals. Nowadays, the term “culture” encompasses the cumulative material and spiritual wealth generated by human beings throughout the ongoing course of social history.

1.2 Cultural Confidence

“Cultural confidence involves a country, a nation, and a political party fully affirming their own cultural values and firmly

believing in the vitality of their culture.”^[2]Specifically, it refers to an individual’s identification with and trust in the cultural values of their country and nation. Establishing a strong sense of cultural confidence serves as the spiritual foundation and emotional support for consolidating a country and a nation’s cultural soft power. Only by respecting and believing in our nation’s culture, and establishing a high level of cultural confidence and self-awareness, can we safeguard the lifeblood of cultural development. In the case of China, Chinese civilization stands as the only uninterrupted civilization in world history, thanks to the adherence and inheritance of Chinese culture by the Chinese people. The essential aspects that define Chinese cultural confidence are reflected in the following: firstly, confidence in the excellence of traditional Chinese culture; secondly, confidence in revolutionary culture; and thirdly, confidence in advanced socialist culture.

1.3 Ideological and political education

Ideological and political education encompasses organized, purposeful, and planned efforts to educate individuals with specific ideological concepts and moral norms, aiming to align their ideological and moral character and behavior with the requirements of a particular society. In the case of China, as a socialist country, ideological and political education in colleges and universities follows the guidance of Marxist methodology, taking into account China’s national conditions. Its objective is to guide college students in establishing socialist core values, enhancing their overall ideological quality and moral cultivation, and nurturing successors for socialist construction. While Western higher education institutions may not have a specific course dedicated to ideological and political education, the principles of “civic education” and “moral education” effectively serve the same purpose. These approaches aim to cultivate students’ understanding of freedom and democracy, foster democratic consciousness, and encourage the practice of democratic behavior.

2. The Implications of Integrating Cultural Confidence into Ideological and Political Education in Colleges and Universities

2.1 It is the inherent requirement of inheriting the fine traditional Chinese culture

Cultural confidence encompasses an individual’s awareness and identification with their own culture. Attaining cultural confidence requires adopting a specific psychological attitude and behavioral motivation towards one’s culture. This involves acknowledging the content system, value concepts, and moral principles that define the culture, resulting in a profound sense of recognition and emotional attachment. Consequently, the integration of cultural confidence into ideological and political education in colleges and universities becomes crucial. This integration aims to guide college students in developing an accurate understanding of the historical lineage, current reality, and future direction of China’s esteemed traditional culture. It enables students to genuinely comprehend the essence of traditional Chinese culture, fostering a deep understanding and recognition of Chinese heritage. This process instills confidence in their cultural roots and nurtures a cultural mindset characterized by reverence and devotion. Continuous efforts are required to enhance students’ cultural cultivation, cognitive abilities, and pursuit of cultural knowledge, empowering them to become unwavering advocates, promoters, and guardians of Chinese culture.

2.2 It is the proper way to cultivate the values of college students

Values, as fundamental aspects of human existence and societal consciousness, play a pivotal role in guiding personal development and shaping society at large. Young college students, being dynamic and energetic forces, represent the future of our nation and hold immense potential. Establishing appropriate values during their formative years is of utmost significance. Cultivating a strong sense of cultural confidence becomes a prerequisite for nurturing professional ethics, family virtues, social values, and patriotism in a conscientious manner. On the one hand, this integration is conducive to fostering students’ rational thinking and critical consciousness, enabling them to develop accurate perceptions of the external world and make well-informed decisions and value judgments. This, in turn, lays the groundwork for spiritual development and reinforces the essential pillars of young individuals’ lives. Additionally, it enhances the value-guiding function of ideological and political education, fostering students’ dedication to culture and cultivating a sense of cultural responsibility. As a result, students actively contribute to and engage with mainstream and progressive culture, thus serving as an enduring source of strength in the nation’s endeavor to become a country with a strong socialist culture.

2.3 It is an essential guarantee to achieve the teaching objectives of ideological and political education

The cultivation of exceptional talents is the primary objective of cultural confidence education, as talent serves as the vehicle for preserving, developing, and innovating culture. Colleges and universities, being the principal platforms and key domains of ideological and political education, play a crucial role in enhancing individuals’ cultural literacy and promoting national unity. By

emphasizing the significance of cultural confidence within the framework of the ideological and political education curriculum, colleges and universities can effectively integrate the enriching influences of advanced culture into the educational process for both educators and students. Nurturing a strong sense of cultural confidence and cultural awareness becomes a wellspring of innovation in higher education-level ideological and political education, enabling the cultivation of humanistic and spiritual qualities in students. This infusion of fresh vitality into college-level ideological and political education enhances its relevance and effectiveness in shaping individuals. Only through a deep grounding in Chinese culture and a steadfast belief in cultural confidence can we enhance the efficacy and precision of ideological and political education, comprehend the overarching developmental patterns within this field, and assist students in developing a profound understanding of the profound meaning and essential requisites of cultural confidence.

3. Approaches to integrating cultural confidence into ideological and political education of colleges and universities

3.1 Enhance teaching contents and methods through innovation to strengthen the foundation of cultural confidence

Ideological and political education in colleges and universities plays a crucial role in fostering cultural confidence and enhancing the overall quality of college students. Therefore, it is essential to adapt to the current era and create courses that are visible, tangible, and easily comprehensible. The quality of ideological and political education should be further elevated.

Firstly, there is a need to enrich the teaching content. The ideological and political education in universities should possess an open cultural perspective and a receptive mindset, seeking wisdom not only from the rich Chinese traditional culture but also drawing inspiration from global civilizations. This constant enrichment of teaching resources will cultivate a deep sense of identity, belonging, and pride in our national culture, as well as a broad cultural awareness and an inclusive perspective.

Secondly, there is a need to innovate the teaching methods of ideological and political education in colleges and universities. This entails breaking away from traditional teaching concepts and leveraging the advantages of modern information technology. By continuously introducing new approaches and revitalizing old ones, a new education model that integrates online and offline elements should be created. Innovative cultural experiential scenarios should be designed to invigorate the classroom atmosphere and infuse cultural education throughout the teaching process, all while ensuring that the educational purpose of ideological and political education remains intact.

Finally, there is a need to enhance the humanistic qualities of ideological and political education teachers. Teachers should continuously improve their professional knowledge, language expression, and overall competencies. They should stay attuned to student development, societal issues, and academic frontiers while strengthening their own sense of cultural confidence. By establishing a noble professional spirit and cultivating a profound cultural literacy, teachers can integrate emotions and knowledge, as well as connect knowledge and critical thinking in their teaching practices. This approach enables them to elevate the level of reasoning and persuasion in their instruction, ultimately guiding college students to develop a deeper and more stable cultural confidence.

3.2 Utilize practice-oriented teaching approaches to enhance the perception of cultural confidence enhancement

Practice serves as the foundation for the generation and development of cognition. Cultivating cultural confidence requires integrating theory and practice to deepen understanding through practical engagement. To effectively translate cultural confidence from internal sentiments into outward actions, it is essential to leverage the guiding function of theory in shaping culture, expand the practicality of the classroom, and harness the synergistic benefits of a multi-faceted learning environment.

Firstly, enriching cultural practice activities both within and beyond the classroom is crucial. Ideological and political education in colleges and universities should prioritize cultivating students' practical abilities, emphasizing the integration of theoretical learning and practical teaching. This approach enhances college students' capacity to bridge theory and practice, facilitating their comprehensive development. Therefore, incorporating cultural confidence into ideological and political education should leverage diverse channels and resources, expanding the boundaries of the classroom to create a holistic and immersive learning experience that encompasses both the academic setting and society. By conducting culturally-rich activities of various forms, students can implicitly acquire and comprehend cultural knowledge while also fostering spiritual engagement, emotional resonance, and the cultivation of inner strength. This approach deepens the theoretical depth and emotional warmth of ideological and political education, strengthening students' sense of national responsibility and social mission.

Secondly, it is vital to broaden the avenues for social practice in cultivating cultural confidence. University students should shift their focus from the confines of the classroom to active participation in societal activities, enhancing their social engagement skills. Colleges and universities should leverage local cultural resources to facilitate social investigations, field trips, volunteer services, and other forms of practical engagement. These activities enable students to refine their character and accumulate practical experience, expanding their learning pathways and providing exposure to the diverse and abundant cultural manifestations in society. This approach strengthens the close connection between individuals and society, effectively internalizing cultural confidence within their hearts and translating it into action.

3.3 Enhance the construction of campus culture to create an optimal environment for fostering cultural confidence

The influence of culture on individuals is subtle and profound, and campus culture serves as a defining essence and symbol of educational institutions. Therefore, colleges and universities should actively engage in the development of campus culture, foster resources for social moral education, enhance the intangible educational impact of ideological and political endeavors, expand cultural education channels, and cultivate a dynamic cultural atmosphere.

Firstly, there is a pressing need to improve the cultural infrastructure of campuses. Educational institutions should dedicate significant efforts to enhancing their cultural facilities, with a focus on integrating cultural and educational resources and exploring innovative methods and approaches. By seamlessly integrating campus culture with ideological and political courses, a distinctive and academically respectful cultural environment and learning atmosphere can be established, further enriching the educational experience and impact of ideological and political education.

Secondly, it is crucial to fully leverage the advantages of college association organizations. The establishment of diverse student associations is a vital means of enriching the extracurricular lives of college students. Well-structured and high-quality associations can enhance students' ideological and moral development and foster a proper value orientation. Therefore, strong support should be provided for the establishment of school clubs, with an emphasis on effective management. By relying on these clubs, colleges and universities can create appealing, content-rich, healthy, and high-quality cultural activities that enhance the depth and allure of cultural experiences. In this way, ideological and political education can be enhanced through engaging and educational means.

Thirdly, emphasis should be placed on the development of network culture. The rapid advancements in information technology have granted college students convenient access to information. In the context of ideological and political education for college students, educational institutions can leverage official self-media platforms such as WeChat, Weibo, and TikTok to expand channels for cultural communication. However, it is crucial to respect the physical and mental well-being of students and ensure that cultural products align with their preferences and interests. By catering to the diverse needs of students from different disciplines and conveying cultural ideas in a manner that resonates with them, the dissemination of cultural values can be more effectively achieved.

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