

# Research on the Value Implication and Practical Path of Implicit Ideological and Political Education for College Students

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## Abstract

**Implicit ideological and political education is characterized by concealment, openness, diversity, and persistence. It is an important approach to enhancing the effectiveness of ideological and political education in colleges and universities, playing an irreplaceable role in cultivating new-generation talents who shoulder the great responsibility of national rejuvenation, fulfilling the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education in higher education, and addressing the new changes among contemporary college students. In response to the new developments and demands in the education of contemporary college students, the advantages of implicit education are gradually emerging. We should give full play to the role of implicit ideological and political education through paths such as systematic optimization, student-centered approaches, emotional integration, exemplary teaching, and ideological consolidation, so as to achieve the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education.**

## Keywords

**College students; Implicit education; Practical path; Ideological and political education.**

## 1. Introduction

Implicit ideological and political education is one of the important methods of ideological and political education in colleges and universities. At the symposium for teachers of ideological and political theory courses in schools chaired by General Secretary Xi Jinping on March 18, 2019, among the "Eight Unifications" proposed for the reform of ideological and political theory course teaching, it includes "upholding the unity of explicit education and implicit education". [1] Teachers of ideological and political theory courses should not only pay attention to the powerful momentum of explicit education in teaching but also leverage the subtle and silent effect of implicit education. This paper explores the definition and characteristics of implicit ideological and political education, excavates the value implication of implementing implicit ideological and political education in colleges and universities, and puts forward specific practical approaches for its implementation in close combination with the reality of college students and higher education institutions.

## 2. Definition and Characteristics of Implicit Ideological and Political Education

### 2.1. Definition of Implicit Ideological and Political Education

The concept of "implicit education" originates from the monograph *Life in Classrooms* published by American educational sociologist Jackson in 1968. Implicit education, as opposed to explicit education, refers to guiding students to directly experience and imperceptibly acquire educational experiences beneficial to their physical and mental health and all-round personality development in the educational environment of schools. [2] The so-called implicit ideological and political education is an educational means by which educators "hide"

educational purposes and contents in certain environments or atmospheres in an imperceptible and unnoticeable way, enabling the educated to actively accept, absorb, and internalize them, thereby achieving the moral education effect on the educated.

## 2.2. Characteristics of Implicit Ideological and Political Education

**Concealment.** The most prominent feature of implicit ideological and political education is its concealment, often achieving educational goals in an invisible manner. First, the concealment of educational forms. Compared with traditional education dominated by explicit activity carriers, implicit education has more concise and hidden forms of expression. For example, case discussions, classroom debates, thematic speeches, reading exchanges, social surveys, and visits organized around social realities and practical issues of college students are excellent carriers. Second, the tacit nature of the teaching and learning processes. Sukhomlinskii believed that the less obvious the educational intention and purpose are to the educated, the easier it is for them to accept and internalize. [3] In contrast to explicit education with clear intentions and direct goals, implicit education skillfully conceals moral education motives and weaves educational purposes into life situations and practical fields. Relying on diverse carriers such as campus architecture, cultural landscapes, club activities, and social practices, it integrates educational contents such as value cultivation and moral shaping into daily scenes "seamlessly". When students are immersed in such an environment, they naturally interact with educational elements in an immersive real situation and complete cognitive reconstruction through emotional resonance. This "moistening things silently" educational method often produces more profound and lasting educational effects, internalizing moral cultivation and values into students' spiritual foundation like a spring breeze.

**Openness.** Implicit ideological and political education breaks through the limitations of time and space in traditional classroom teaching, with more diverse and flexible educational forms and more sufficient utilization of teaching resources. First, openness in educational space. Implicit education transcends the functional solidification of traditional learning spaces and liberates the construction of educational scenarios from fixed functional divisions. Its activity space is no longer confined to closed classrooms or standardized campus fields but extends its educational tentacles to every corner indoors and outdoors, as well as multiple fields inside and outside the campus in a flexible and open manner, allowing learning to occur quietly in naturally flowing scenarios. Second, openness in educational time. Implicit education exists both in and after class. Students can freely arrange their time to choose activities and independently determine the amount of learning time according to their preferences, development needs, acceptance intensity, and physical conditions.

**Diversity.** First, the content of implicit ideological and political education is diverse. It covers politics, economy, culture, society and other fields. It includes not only traditional ideological and political theoretical knowledge, but also knowledge of moral norms, laws and regulations, history and culture. Second, the carriers of implicit ideological and political education are diverse. Its forms keep enriching in line with the changing requirements of the educational environment and educational objects, adopting methods more suitable for college students. For example, implicit education is carried out through such carriers as the campus environment, dramas, student associations, cultural activities and social practices, and its means and methods are innovated under the environment of online new media.

**Persistence.** The persistence of implicit ideological and political education is mainly reflected in its influence on the educated. It emphasizes the internal influence and identity of students, exerting a silent and imperceptible effect on the shaping of college students' values, their criteria for judgment, and their behavioral choices. Although implicit education requires considerable time and long-term nurturing, its educational depth and influence are more enduring.

### **3. Value Implications of Implicit Ideological and Political Education**

#### **3.1. At the National Level: Fostering a New Generation of Young People Capable of Shouldering the Mission of National Rejuvenation**

On May 11, 2024, at the Promotion Meeting on the Construction of Ideological and Political Courses in Schools in the New Era, General Secretary Xi Jinping issued important instructions on the construction of ideological and political courses in schools, emphasizing the need to continuously break new ground in ideological and political education in the new era and strive to cultivate more new-generation young people who are loyal to the Party, patriotic, dedicated, and capable of shouldering the mission of national rejuvenation. Building a strong educational nation hinges on higher education as its leading force. Higher education must play its leading and guiding role, fulfill the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education, and better serve national strategies and economic and social development. [4] Implicit education yields long-term effects, with its educational impact lasting a lifetime. It focuses on cultivating college students' comprehensive capabilities, including physical and mental quality, ideological literacy, and innovative practical abilities, thereby helping to nurture well-rounded "all-round talents." Implicit ideological and political education not only pays attention to students' ideological and moral character but also promotes the improvement of their overall quality and facilitates their all-round development through rich campus culture, social practice, and other activities. College students are the main force driving China's socialist modernization drive. The ideological and political quality of the entire college student group directly affects the economic and social development of the country and regions. Implicit ideological and political education encourages college students to explore through practice and learn through experience, which helps stimulate their innovative thinking and enhance their practical capabilities, thus injecting new vitality into social development. By cultivating talents with noble moral character, solid academic knowledge, innovative thinking, and dedication, implicit ideological and political education provides a solid talent guarantee for this great cause. In the process of learning and growth, college students continuously improve their comprehensive quality and prepare themselves to shoulder the important task of national construction in the future. They will contribute their strength to the prosperity and strength of the country in different positions and write a magnificent chapter in national development.

#### **3.2. At the Social Level: Conducive to Fulfilling the Fundamental Task of Fostering Virtue through Education**

The report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) states that fostering virtue is the essence of education. Ideological and political courses in colleges and universities play a pivotal role in fostering virtue through education and cultivating a new generation of young people capable of shouldering the mission of national rejuvenation. On March 18, 2019, General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized at the Symposium for Teachers of Ideological and Political Theory Courses in Schools that "ideological and political theory courses are the key courses for fulfilling the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education". [5] Currently, the role of this "key course" is confronted with numerous challenges. With the highly developed Internet, college students receive information more rapidly but also more diversely. Erroneous ideological trends such as historical nihilism, hedonism, and individualism exert adverse impacts on contemporary college students, hindering the formation of their core socialist values. As a complementary approach to explicit education, implicit ideological and political education can better achieve the educational goal of fostering virtue through education. Rooted in the requirements of the times and in light of the ideological realities of college students, implicit education methods actively employ traditional media such as newspapers, periodicals, magazines, television, and films, and innovatively utilize popular

modern emerging multimedia communication carriers and means including video websites, social media platforms, and mobile applications. These methods transform ideological and political education resources embedded in fine traditional Chinese culture—such as noble moral character and patriotic sentiments—into vivid Chinese stories. This enables college students to imperceptibly absorb such information and internalize it into a positive psychological identity of goodness, leading them to deeply recognize and accept mainstream values and behavioral norms, and thus develop good moral qualities. In this way, the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education in ideological and political education at colleges and universities is accomplished.

### **3.3. At the Student Level: Meeting the Development Needs of Generation Z College Students**

Colleges and universities in China have entered a new era in which Generation Z college students—who are distinctive in personality, independent, inclusive, and rational—constitute the main body of students, representing profound changes in the objects of education. Generation Z college students are a generation that has grown up against the backdrop of rapid economic growth, smaller-sized family structures, changes in social parenting patterns, and the popularization of the Internet [6]. As a new generation of learners whose educational and living environments have undergone profound transformations, they hold a greater esteem for individual values, liberal concepts, and personality development. Traditional education mainly adopts an indoctrination model, which easily leads to student resistance. Implicit education is characterized by its concealed nature. It usually integrates students' psychology and preferences, and exerts subtle influence through approaches that students find agreeable and acceptable, making educational objectives implicit and alleviating students' resistance. While protecting students' sense of autonomy, implicit education provides sound guidance imperceptibly, enabling college students to accept educational content unconsciously and enhancing the effectiveness of ideological and political education. As a supplement to explicit education, implicit education achieves educational goals through daily behaviors, publicity activities, and other inconspicuous ways that students encounter routinely but barely perceive, thus leading to more ideal educational effects. This educational approach is closer to the real life of college students, easier for them to accept and internalize, and thereby produces long-term and profound impacts.

## **4. Practical Paths of Implicit Ideological and Political Education**

### **4.1. Systematic Optimization: Improving and Perfecting the Mechanism of Implicit Ideological and Political Education**

Implicit education is a complex and comprehensive systematic project that covers material, spiritual, cultural, social and many other fields. It requires the establishment and improvement of relevant mechanisms and the input of necessary funds for the development and integration of implicit education resources, so as to enhance the attention of colleges and universities and teachers to implicit education and the effectiveness of implicit ideological and political education.

To promote the improvement of the mechanism of implicit ideological and political education, it is necessary to coordinate the advancement of the teaching system of "Three Comprehensive Education" (education by all staff, throughout the whole process, and in all dimensions). General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized at the Symposium for Teachers of Ideological and Political Theory Courses in Schools: "We must adhere to the unity of explicit education and implicit education, tap into the ideological and political education resources contained in other courses and teaching methods, and realize education by all staff, throughout the whole process,

and in all dimensions." [7] From the perspective of education by all staff, all members of colleges and universities, including leaders, teachers, students, and administrative staff, should take active actions and form benign interactions in educational and teaching activities. From the perspective of education throughout the whole process, it is necessary to follow the laws of ideological and political education and the formation of students' ideological and moral qualities, set up a reasonable teaching process that meets students' current learning needs, update educational concepts, innovate classroom teaching methods, conduct two-way and equal interactions with students instead of the traditional "teacher talks and students listen" model, return the main body of the classroom to students, improve students' enthusiasm, and give full play to their initiative. From the perspective of education in all dimensions, in addition to traditional classrooms, we should make good use of online education resources, spread ideological and political elements through official school media platforms and famous teachers' self-media platforms, and create a good cultural environment, living environment, classroom environment, and public opinion environment.

#### **4.2. Being Close to Students: Enriching Educational Methods and Contents**

Implicit ideological and political education does not only exist in classrooms; it is also ubiquitous in our daily life and social activities. First, strengthen quality-oriented education and integrate it into various activities. Colleges and universities should make full use of the implicit ideological and political education resources in the teaching process, enrich educational methods and contents, bring students a more diverse experience, and carry out teaching in ways and means that are more in line with college students' preferences to achieve moral education effects. For example, organizing themed campus dramas can enhance the two-way benign interaction between teachers and students. In the whole performance process, both the performers and the audience are educators and educatees, expressing themselves in a comfortable and relaxed way. While educational information is input, the audience gives feedback during the viewing process to further optimize the performing arts. In the process of interaction, students can easily understand and master the content of ideological and political education, which is also of great benefit to stimulating their enthusiasm and initiative. Second, seize important nodes to carry out themed education. As an important carrier of educational practice activities, the ideological and political education situation is an immersive education environment carefully constructed by educators. As a key element of the ideological and political education practice system, it is indispensable and has the functions of strengthening and infecting people's ideological morality and ideological and political education. In a specific ideological and political education situation, the educatees' feelings are deeper, and the impact on them is greater. For example, on the occasion of celebrating the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China, students can be led to visit relevant red bases, allowing them to step out of the classroom into practice and better understand the red spirit. Third, do a good job in publicity and education to resist bad thoughts. Teachers should update educational means, take academic activities, scenario simulations, academic discussions, etc. as carriers to gradually infiltrate moral education into students, and strengthen the coordination of scientific and technological education and humanistic education. Improve the development and utilization of implicit ideological and political education resources in various courses, deepen college students' enthusiasm for participating in social practice activities and voluntary services by carrying out diverse themed publicity and education activities, adhere to the working principle of "being close to students' thoughts and entering students' lives", combine ideological education with the solution of students' concerns and practical difficulties, so as to enhance the appeal and impact of ideological education.

### **4.3. Setting an Example by Personal Conduct: Focusing on the Construction of Teachers' Professional Ethics and Conduct**

Teachers will unconsciously integrate their outlook on life, values and worldviews into classroom teaching activities, which is undoubtedly an implicit influence on students. Teachers' classroom teaching is by no means a simple knowledge transfer, but a concrete presentation of their personality charm and spiritual qualities. As an implicit and silent teaching method, setting an example by personal conduct essentially integrates ideological and political education into people's daily life, work and various interpersonal relationships. Educatees can inspire their inner moral conscience and moral consciousness by observing and emulating the behaviors of exemplary educators [8]. Students naturally have a strong tendency to imitate in the course of their growth, and are particularly deeply influenced by teachers' words, deeds, and ways of thinking. Students' inherent inclination to follow and learn from teachers requires educators to exert an exemplary effect through both instruction and personal demonstration. With a down-to-earth attitude and the virtue of integrating knowledge with practice, teachers should incorporate correct values and attitudes toward life into daily educational practice, so as to provide students with vivid, perceptible, and replicable role models. Given students' natural trust and respect for teachers, educators should not only consolidate their professional knowledge, but also cultivate a positive worldview, outlook on life, and values. Through their own moral cultivation and spiritual realm, teachers can guide students to construct a rational, objective, optimistic, and enterprising mindset, helping them move forward steadily on the path of growth.

The cultivation of teaching staff constitutes the foundation for implementing implicit ideological and political education. Teachers play a leading and exemplary role, and an excellent educational team contributes positively to achieving ideal educational outcomes. Therefore, first of all, efforts should be made to strengthen the cultivation of teachers' comprehensive qualities and establish a standardized and rigorous assessment and evaluation system. For example, teachers' research and academic performance should be evaluated regularly; those with earnest attitudes and outstanding achievements should be rewarded, while those with poor performance should be duly criticized. Students should be invited to conduct anonymous course evaluations and put forward suggestions for instructors every semester. Regular training and assessment should be carried out to prevent inertia, perfunctory performance, and slackness in work. Secondly, teachers' personal charm is a tremendous implicit educational resource. Teachers respected by students usually achieve better teaching effects, and students are more willing to accept their guidance. Accordingly, teachers should discipline themselves in daily life—dressing appropriately, using proper language, and abiding by academic norms—to set a sound educational image and role model for students. This enables students to maintain a pleasant mood in daily learning and take the initiative to communicate and study with teachers. Lastly, a harmonious teacher-student relationship serves as a lubricant for achieving moral education effects. As an important educational approach, implicit education subtly draws teachers and students closer through an “invisible hand”, accomplishing teaching tasks and strengthening effects in a relaxed and harmonious atmosphere. During teaching, teachers should communicate with students in an equal manner and maintain appropriate closeness within reasonable boundaries, changing students' stereotyped impression of teachers as rigid and serious, so that students can gain knowledge and enjoy the learning process.

### **4.4. Integrating Emotion into Environment: Cultivating Excellent Campus Culture**

Excellent campus culture constitutes an important resource for implicit education. Campus culture plays a significant role in shaping students' integrated character and inspiring their creativity.

First, campus material culture. College students are almost constantly immersed in the campus environment—whether in classrooms, libraries, canteens, or other campus spaces. All these places exert a profound influence, edification, and shaping effect on college students' moral character. The story of "Mencius' mother moving three times" reveals that environment exerts an important potential impact on human development. The university campus environment carries the content of implicit education; every plant and tree on campus influences students imperceptibly. From slogans beside flowers and trees on the roadside to large-scale campus buildings, all should be integrated with the content of implicit ideological and political education. Through visible and explicit material forms, the educatees are influenced and edified invisibly, so as to inspire and cultivate their noble moral qualities.

Second, campus spiritual culture. Different from material culture, spirit is not a directly visible or tangible entity, but a latent form expressed through psychological activities such as human thinking, emotion, and will. Spirit exerts a crucial guiding function; though non-material, it represents a force that drives practice. For instance, the happy life of New China was jointly created by numerous revolutionary martyrs and heroes through heroic struggles. In the past, amid harsh conditions and a weak material foundation, China was not favored and had few supporters. Yet the passionate patriotism and lofty spirit sustained every hard-working Chinese citizen, and the unyielding determination inspired every dream-chasing individual. It was precisely this patriotic spiritual force that guided countless Chinese people to strive forward, enabling us to enjoy a happy life today. Campus spiritual culture likewise exerts a long-lasting influence on every student's moral conduct. School buildings may be renovated, plants and trees replaced, yet campus spirit exerts a profound impact on students. Regardless of the passage of time, it still shines brightly in an invisible way.

Third, campus institutional culture. Institutions serve as a visible guide. Establishing and improving campus institutional culture is an important step to effectively give play to the implicit educational function of institutional culture. From a deep-level logic, individuals' respect for and practice of social rules are rooted in their recognition of and compliance with campus institutions. The formulation of rules and regulations in colleges and universities is not intended to impose rigid constraints and mandatory management, but to construct a value-leading system with core socialist values as its core through flexible guidance and humanized services, helping students achieve the unity of self-growth and social value in the practice of rules. To begin with, when formulating institutions, colleges and universities should adopt questionnaires and interviews to fully understand students' needs and aspirations, and establish relevant campus regulations accordingly. Furthermore, in the implementation of institutions, measures should be taken in light of actual conditions and handled appropriately. Students who seriously violate disciplines and laws should be taken seriously and disciplined accordingly, guiding them to consciously abide by rules and institutions on the basis of understanding and recognition. Finally, in the feedback on institutional effectiveness, educators should timely observe students' conditions, listen to their appeals, maintain and develop reasonable contents, standardize unreasonable rules, and continuously optimize and improve the system based on students' feedback.

#### **4.5. Uniting Hearts and Casting Souls: Taking the Initiative to Occupy New Positions of Online Ideological and Political Education**

In the Internet era, people are more inclined to express their opinions online. Teachers should make full use of the Internet as a means of implicit education resources, interact and communicate with students, and establish an equal and harmonious teacher-student relationship. The Internet is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, students can obtain information faster and learn about the latest developments in academic research and new national development policies. On the other hand, in the virtual cyberspace with complex and

mixed information, students are easily trapped in cognitive confusion and value perplexity. As an important user group of the Internet, college students' ideological consciousness is easily affected by the public opinion environment[9]. As the main force of Internet users, college students are still in the shaping stage of their ideological concepts. Facing the complex and changeable network public opinion ecology, they are easily impacted by diverse trends of thought and false information, which in turn affects their value judgment and ideological orientation. Teachers are the guiding lights for students in the illusory virtual world. Students are not rational enough in filtering and judging information. Teachers should actively guide students to establish correct value orientations and rational thinking, help them distinguish right from wrong under diverse trends of thought through ideological enlightenment and behavioral demonstration, avoid falling into value misunderstandings, fasten the "first button" of life, and escort their healthy growth. We must firmly grasp the Internet as an important implicit education resource, expand the fields and space of explicit education, and contact students or parents through online meetings, video calls, telephone communications and other means. The way of online communication weakens the seriousness of traditional face-to-face talks, shortens the distance between students and teachers, enables students to have something to say and dare to say, so that teachers can better carry out teaching work and achieve high efficiency in exerting the role of implicit education. With the rapid development of the Internet and the rapid popularization of social software such as Kuaishou, Douyin and Weibo, some students are addicted to online entertainment and cannot extricate themselves, wasting their time in numb and boring short videos. False and exaggerated luxurious lifestyles, shopping channels flooded with fake goods and eye-catching videos with bad trends on the Internet have made some young people develop the wrong value of "studying is not as good as being an Internet celebrity", which seriously affects the shaping of students' good moral qualities. Teachers should take the initiative to occupy new positions of online ideological and political education, keep pace with the times, carry out online ideological and political education by establishing official school public accounts, shooting short videos reflecting positive social energy, and producing audio and video materials telling the stories of the Communist Party of China, the stories of reform and opening up, and the stories of the new era. We can also set up knowledge quizzes, comment interactions and sharing activities on social platforms to integrate education into students' daily life and achieve educational goals in an invisible way.

## 5. Conclusion

As an organic supplement to explicit education, implicit education has immeasurable functions and values in deepening the effectiveness of ideological and political education in colleges and universities and cultivating all-round adaptable talents meeting the requirements of the new era. As the core position for ideological and political education of college students, colleges and universities undertake the key mission of cultivating positive socialist core values among college students. To effectively improve the quality of ideological and political education for college students, ideological and political education work in colleges and universities has become a key focus. Ideological and political education for college students is an interconnected systematic project. Promoting the high-quality development of implicit education requires fully activating the synergistic effects of multiple elements such as educator guidance, student internalization, campus cultural infiltration, and cyberspace empowerment. Only by building a multi-dimensional and linked education pattern can we effectively integrate the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education into the whole process of education and teaching, and consolidate the ideological foundation for college students' growth and success.

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