

Reading for Ideological and Political Education: Concept and Practice

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Abstract: In recent years, the implementation of ideological and political education in school curricula across various regions has yielded limited results due to multiple factors, including spatial and temporal constraints. To address these issues, this paper proposes leveraging the educational functions of school libraries to establish a reading-based ideological and political education model. It introduces and elucidates the concept and connotation of reading for ideological and political education for the first time, reveals its characteristics, explores its value, and supplements it with specific practical cases, providing a new perspective for research and practice in ideological and political education.

Keywords: Reading for ideological and political education; Cultivating morality and nurturing talents; Ideological and political education

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1. Introduction

Cultivating builders and successors for the socialist cause who possess both moral integrity and professional competence, as well as being both revolutionary and proficient in their fields, represents a significant mission of China's educational endeavors. Currently, schools at all levels across the country, particularly higher education institutions, are encountering some deep-seated issues in the practice of ideological and political education. These issues include insufficient cross-disciplinary integration, weak effectiveness of "ideological and political theory courses," and a lack of awareness of educating all students comprehensively^[1]. To further promote innovation and enhance the quality of ideological and political education, introducing "ideological and political education through curricula" into schools can meet the need for synchronized resonance between "ideological and political education through curricula" and "ideological and political theory courses"^[2]. This approach can achieve both knowledge transmission and value guidance, and initiate an ideological and political education paradigm that moves in the same direction as ideological and political theory courses. However, in practical implementation, the reform of "ideological and political education through curricula" also faces some obstacles, namely, the lack of teaching philosophies, inadequate capabilities, and insufficient educational passion among

teachers regarding ideological and political education through curricula ^[3]. Meanwhile, the implementation of ideological and political education through curricula is constrained by time, space, and carriers, making it difficult to conduct school ideological and political education more effectively. In 2022, ten departments, including the Ministry of Education, jointly issued the *Work Plan for Comprehensively Promoting the Construction of “Great Ideological and Political Theory Courses,”* providing policy support for the innovative development of ideological and political education.

As an indispensable educational department within schools, libraries make full use of their resource advantages to construct a reading-based ideological and political education model and vigorously promote education through reading, playing an irreplaceable role. In recent years, some scholars in universities have focused their attention on the high-quality ideological and political education resources contained within university libraries, leveraging the functional advantages of libraries to aid in the construction of a comprehensive “ideological and political education curriculum” in universities. Huang and others, taking 42 “first-tier” university construction institutions as their research subjects, collected information on the implementation of ideological and political education from three aspects: reading promotion activities, spatial construction, and educational models, exploring optimized paths for ideological and political education in libraries ^[4]. However, there remains ample room for further expansion in both theoretical exploration and practical verification in existing research. Therefore, this paper, from the research perspective of promoting ideological and political education through reading, proposes the concept and connotation of reading-based ideological and political education, explores its characteristics and values, and actively explores practical paths.

2. The origin and definition of reading-based ideological and political education

2.1. Comprehensive education guides ideological and political education

In 2016, the National Conference on Ideological and Political Work in Universities explicitly proposed that “we must adhere to moral cultivation as the central task, integrate ideological and political work throughout the entire educational process, achieve whole-process and all-round education, and strive to create a new landscape for the development of higher education in our country.” This important exposition provides a clear direction for conducting ideological and political work in universities under the new circumstances ^[5].

2.2. Implementing ideological and political education through reading

In 2015, the Ministry of Education issued the *Regulations on Libraries in General Higher Education Institutions*. These regulations state that libraries are important bases for the construction of campus culture and social culture, with one of their primary functions being educational, and they should fully leverage their role in talent cultivation at schools. Libraries are responsible for ensuring the availability of documentary resources in higher education institutions. Within the context of “comprehensive education for all,” the vast array of documentary resources with library-specific educational characteristics has become a crucial medium. On one hand, these resources help students understand and deeply appreciate the essence of the excellent traditional Chinese culture; on the other hand, they provide students with authoritative and reliable ideological and political theory materials, playing a guiding role in their thoughts and helping them form correct worldviews, outlooks on life, and values ^[5], thereby achieving the goal of ideological and political education.

2.3. Enriching ideological and political education through reading

Reading-based ideological and political education employs reading as a means to carry out ideological and

political education. Broadly defined, reading refers to the act of acquiring information through human senses such as sight and hearing. Therefore, reading-based ideological and political education takes thematic reading as a focal point, and through a series of reading activities, it aims to inspire thoughts, cultivate sentiments, nourish roots, and forge souls, subtly achieving the goal of ideological and political education that fosters virtue and cultivates talent. Specifically, the so-called “reading for ideological and political education” refers to a practice in which educational institutions at all levels, represented by schools, aim to effectively enhance students’ ideological and political education levels. This is achieved by organizing professionals from ideological and political work teams to actively guide students, recommend classic reading materials, deeply excavate ideological and political elements, and ingeniously design and organically integrate implicit educational methods into a variety of reading activities targeted at ideological and political education. This approach aims to evoke resonance and identification among participants, thereby actively transforming students’ moral thoughts, regulating their social behaviors, and ultimately achieving the goal of elevating the overall moral standards of society’s citizens as a form of ideological and political education practice.

3. Connotations and functions of reading for ideological and political education

3.1. Main connotations

Reading for ideological and political education represents a new concept in ideological and political education. It emphasizes that all forms and activities of reading possess the functions of imparting knowledge, enhancing abilities, and collaboratively nurturing individuals. Within the educational context of the “comprehensive ideological and political education” perspective, reading for ideological and political education can work in tandem with ideological and political courses and curriculum-based ideological and political education to jointly construct a fortress of ideological and political education systems, particularly in schools, especially higher education institutions.

Firstly, reading for ideological and political education is a pedagogical philosophy. It emphasizes using the reading and discussion of classic works to persuade, inspire, and educate students through the ideological and political elements reflected in vivid and lively cases. It enriches, fulfills, and cultivates students with relevant theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and moral qualities, ultimately achieving comprehensive education.

Secondly, reading-based ideological and political education is a model of cultivating talent. It starts with concepts, derives and develops relevant theories, and carries out practices under the guidance of these theories. Therefore, it encompasses aspects such as theories related to reading-based ideological and political education, implementation plans, specific practical actions, and analysis and evaluation of outcomes.

Thirdly, reading-based ideological and political education is a practical endeavor in cultivating talent. Under the guidance of educational ideologies, conducting practical activities that are “implementable and yield significant results” is the essential requirement of reading-based ideological and political education. Only through educational practices can the ideological theories of cultivating talent be continuously adjusted, refined, and enriched. Hence, reading-based ideological and political education is embodied in practical actions.

3.2. Functional positioning

3.2.1. Reading-based ideological and political education shoulders the original mission of fostering virtue and nurturing talent

Using reading and related activities as vehicles, reading-based ideological and political education actively explores ideological and political elements and effectively integrates them into the process of guided reading activities, thereby conducting ideological and political education for students. Therefore, every reading activity

should closely revolve around the fundamental task of fostering virtue and nurturing talent.

3.2.2. Reading-based ideological and political education focuses on the core objective of leading values

Through targeted, planned, and organized reading activities, it aims to cultivate students in establishing correct worldviews, outlooks on life, and values, and nurture new individuals who possess both moral integrity and professional competence in the new era of socialist modernization.

3.2.3. Reading for ideological and political education combines explicit and implicit educational functions

By selecting and recommending a batch of classic books in both ideological and political disciplines and non-specialized fields, reading activities are organized for students. On the one hand, this serves as an extension of ideological and political courses, explaining in-depth concepts such as patriotism and the core socialist values to students; on the other hand, the ideological and political elements in non-specialized books can be seamlessly integrated into reading activities in a subtle manner. These two aspects complement each other, coordinating to exert both the explicit and implicit functions of reading for ideological and political education.

3.2.4. Reading for ideological and political education, along with ideological and political courses and curriculum-based ideological and political education, jointly constitute the ideological and political education system

Focusing on the essence of implementation paths, ideological and political courses are similar to the ideological and political education integrated into other courses in that both implement ideological and political education through classroom instruction. Reading-based ideological and political education can effectively fill the gaps in the field of ideological and political education conducted outside the classroom, forming a trinity framework for ideological and political education consisting of “ideological and political courses, ideological and political education integrated into other courses, and reading-based ideological and political education.” The ideological and political education system, characterized by “three driving forces advancing together,” is more diverse, reasonable, and well-rounded compared to its predecessors. This is specifically manifested in two aspects: First, it has shifted from the previous single indoctrination-style model of ideological and political education to a two-dimensional model that combines teaching and self-study. Second, it has transitioned from the previous externally-driven model to a combined model of externally-driven and self-driven education. The connections and differences among the three are illustrated in **Table 1** below.

Table 1. Connections and differences between ideological and political courses, curriculum-based ideological and political education, and reading for ideological and political education

Category	Ideological & political theory course	Curriculum-based ideological & political education	Reading-based ideological & political education
Nature	A specific course (Theoretical class)	An educational philosophy (Curriculum perspective)	An educational philosophy (Reading perspective)
Status	Core & dominant	Collaborative (Aligned with the core course)	Collaborative (Aligned with both the core course and curriculum-based approach)
Method	Teaching/lecture	Teaching/lecture	Reading activities
Time	In-class, time-limited	In-class, time-limited	Extracurricular, time-abundant

Table 1 (Continued)

Category	Ideological & political theory course	Curriculum-based ideological & political education	Reading-based ideological & political education
Space	Classroom, space-limited	Classroom, space-limited	Flexible space (in/out of classroom) suitable for reading & discussion
Content	Textbooks, content-limited	Subject materials, content-limited	Classics beyond textbooks, content-rich
Mode	Didactic instruction, external cultivation	Didactic instruction, external cultivation	Combination of didactic guidance & self-study, integrating external & self-cultivation
Interconnection	The three modes form an integrated trinity of ideological-political education, complementing and unifying with each other to build a comprehensive “Greater Ideological-Political Education” framework.		

4. Characteristics of reading-based ideological and political education

4.1. Clear focus: Enhancing students’ ideological and political cognition and practice through extensive reading

The methods and objectives of reading-based ideological and political education are clearly defined. After participating in reading activities, students’ levels of ideological and political understanding and cognition will spiral upwards through a mutually reinforcing relationship. Guided by the principle that “cognition guides practice, and practice feeds back into cognition,” high levels of cognition facilitate strong practice. Simultaneously, strong practice further promotes superior cognition. The interplay between cognition and practice, under the backdrop of continuous optimization, adjustment, and mutual adaptation, forms an organic unity.

4.2. Comprehensive participation: Led by institutions and mentors, with students taking the lead

The key elements of reading-based ideological and political education are fully present. Major institutions such as schools or libraries are responsible for comprehensive implementation, while teachers and parents provide positive guidance. Students, in turn, carry out reading plans and activities. The absence of any of these key elements will pose obstacles to the progress of reading-based ideological and political education.

4.3. Flexible approaches: Flexible choices in time, venue, and content

The implementation methods of reading-based ideological and political education are flexible and adaptable. Whether it is individual or group reading, the schedule for reading time is determined based on students’ actual circumstances. Combining online and offline approaches effectively circumvents issues such as venue shortages or conflicts. Any content that complies with regulations can be included in the recommended reading list.

4.4. Diverse forms, including environmental enhancement, poetry, dance, sharing and communication, debate competitions, etc.

The forms of ideological and political education through reading are not confined to reading itself. The

ingenious design and construction of a reading environment can provide students with a sensory impact of a reading atmosphere, mobilizing their positive emotions to facilitate the implementation of ideological and political education. Additionally, numerous forms such as poetry recitation, dance performances, post-reading exchanges and sharing, and thematic debates can serve as continuations and supplements to reading.

4.5. Broad audience, involving students from various majors

The reading list is not restricted by academic disciplines, allowing students from different majors to participate in classic book reading activities. After participating, students from various majors will, to varying degrees, experience feelings leading to insights, insights leading to contemplation, contemplation leading to change, and change leading to action.

4.6. Far-reaching impact, with continuing ideological and political education effects

Long-term reading brings not only the accumulation of knowledge but also the spiritual baptism of the moral values embedded within. This habit may have a profound and positive impact on students in the future education of their offspring.

5. The value of ideological and political education through reading

5.1. Improving the ideological and political education system

Within the existing ideological and political education system, which encompasses ideological and political courses and the integration of ideological and political elements into various courses, the introduction of reading-based ideological and political education can expand and refine the system, promoting its steady and healthy development in a systematic manner.

5.2. Expanding the theoretical framework of ideological and political education

By covering the entire process of reading-based ideological and political education, incorporating both macro and micro perspectives, and combining horizontal connections with vertical depth, we can analyze the key points and challenges in its implementation. Introducing relevant educational theories can further enrich the specific applications of these theories in ideological and political education, while also expanding the theoretical boundaries of ideological and political education.

5.3. Enriching the practices of ideological and political education

On one hand, the implementation of reading-based ideological and political education broadens the types of practices in ideological and political education, diversifies the methods of practice, and provides more references and insights for subsequent explorers. On the other hand, with theoretical support and guidance, valuable experiences can be summarized from extensive practices, significantly enriching the practical experience in ideological and political education.

5.4. Enhancing the overall educational effectiveness

As a new approach to ideological and political education, reading-based ideological and political education effectively addresses issues such as spatial and temporal limitations and monotonous forms. Combined with ideological and political courses and the integration of ideological and political elements into various courses, it forms a synergistic “joint force.” The positive and far-reaching impact of reading-based ideological and political

education on education can help enhance the overall educational effectiveness.

6. Reading ideological and political practice

6.1. Practical cases

Since 2021, the library of Chongqing Energy Vocational College has proposed and implemented a reading and education project, aiming to implement the concept of “holistic education” and practice the reading-based ideological and political education model. Through continuous efforts and persistent implementation, it has achieved remarkable educational results. The reading-based ideological and political practice mainly focuses on four aspects: (1) Recruitment of instructors and student members: Establishment of library branches in secondary colleges; (2) Reading sharing and exchange meetings: Building a platform for reading-based ideological and political exchanges; (3) Other forms of presentation: Expanding new forms of reading exchanges; (4) Sharing of works on reading-based ideological and political exchanges and personal growth “transformation” records: Establishment of a new achievement exhibition area.

6.2. Activity effectiveness

Over the past four years since the implementation of reading-based ideological and political education, according to incomplete statistics, at least 140 reading activities centered around at least 20 topics have been held across the entire school, with over 5,000 participants. Approximately 300 classic books have been recommended, and over 100 related promotional articles have been published, including more than 40 articles showcasing achievements. The themed activities related to reading-based ideological and political education have achieved favorable educational outcomes.

7. Conclusion

Reading-based ideological and political education represents a significant exploration in ideological and political education across various schools. Leveraging its unique characteristics and values, it possesses the conditions for practical implementation and in-depth exploration. With the vigorous rise of ideological and political construction in schools nationwide, reading-based ideological and political education can enrich the forms of ideological and political education, creating a scenario where “where there is reading, there is ideological and political education,” thereby contributing to the construction of ideological and political education fronts in schools in the new era. Simultaneously, research related to reading-based ideological and political education is bound to attract attention from the academic community and receive the attention it deserves.

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Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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