

## Connotation -Characteristics -Path

### -- A Study of China's "Great Ideological and Political Education"

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#### Abstract

The concept of "Great Ideological and Political Education" embodies a comprehensive education system that encompasses "big classroom, big platform, big teachers, big courses, big subjects, big processes, and big fields." The connotation of this concept is reflected in its consistency and holism of educational goals, progressive and complementary content, appropriate and continuous methods, and directional and pluralistic evaluation. The implementation path of this concept involves the integration of learning segments, discipline integration, organizational guidance, home-school collaboration, and social participation.

#### Keywords

"Great Ideological and Political Education"; Connotation; Characteristics; Path.

#### 1. Introduction

In China, the Communist Party of China (the CPC) and the government have long recognized the significance of ideological and political theory teaching, guided by Marxism. The course on ideological and political theory holds immense importance as it forms the fundamental task of nurturing people's virtue, which is directly related to the crucial problem of who to train, how to train them and for whom they are trained in China[1]. On March 18, 2019, during a symposium of teachers of ideological and political theory courses in schools, General Secretary Xi Jinping of the CPC emphasized the importance of making good use of the "Great ideological and political course" while combining it with reality[2]. Subsequently, on August 19th, 2022, the Ministry of Education of China, along with other departments, released the Work Plan for Comprehensively Promoting the Construction of "Great Ideological and Political Courses," advocating for the persistence in running ideological and political courses, enhancing the awareness of problems, highlighting the practice orientation, fully mobilizing the strength and resources of the whole society, building "big classes," creating "big platforms," and appointing "big teachers"[3]. Obviously, The concept of "Great Ideological and Political" Education not only highlights the essential features of ideological and political education but also indicates the path for its development in China's new era.

#### 2. The Connotation of "Great Ideological and Political Education"

When it comes to ideological and political education, it is often associated with the educational term "moral education." In the realm of education, the advocacy for "great moral education" has been longstanding. The concept of "grand moral education" refers to the use of school moral

education as the primary channel for communicating the relationship between school, family, and society, and for creating a comprehensive moral education system to form an overall joint force for the ideological and moral education of teenagers.

"Great ideological and political education" and "Great moral education" are related yet different educational concepts. The connotation of "Great moral education" provides a reference point to understand the meaning of "Great ideological and political education." The academic community has developed several main viewpoints on the interpretation of the connotation of "Great ideological and political education," including: (1) the coordination of the "five educations" of morality, intelligence, body, beauty, and labor to improve students' overall quality; (2) the coordination of the design of the objectives, contents, ways, and means of ideological and political education at each stage, with ideological and political education activities reflecting relevance and differences, connecting effectively and step by step, and constructing a well-connected system of educational methods such as in-class teaching and extracurricular practice; (3) the cultivation of teachers' ideological and political quality and the building of a pattern of educating people covering teaching, management, and service; and (4) the creation of a "community of ideological and political education" with the participation of family, school, community, and government[4].

The understanding of the connotation of "great ideological and political education" is embodied in seven aspects: (1) the big classroom, which promotes the combination of small ideological and political classrooms and big social classrooms, utilizes existing public bases, develops on-site teaching topics, and sets up a number of practical teaching bases of "Great Ideological and Political Course" by topic for the development of teaching practice; (2) the big platform, which builds a national ideological and political course teaching and research system, organizes the development of a number of high-quality teaching resources, and launches a number of ideological and political "golden courses" to promote the unified use of front-line teachers; (3) the big teachers, which refers to expand the pool of knowledgeable instructors through augmenting the number of teachers, creating a team of full-time and part-time instructors, and increasing the proportion of educators specializing in ideological and political courses within educational institutions to improve the overall quality of education. (4) the big courses, which focus on infiltrating and implementing ideological and political education into subject courses, cultural courses, practical courses, and other courses, forming the overall effect of educating people in the whole course; (5) the big body, which focuses on the joint efforts of teachers, parents, public figures, students themselves, student companions, and other full-time educators; (6) the big process, which observes the growth stage and course of people, and constructs a lifelong education system for children, primary schools, middle schools, and universities; and (7) the big field, which builds an education system covering all fields such as schools, families, society, and networks.

### **3. The Essential Characteristics of "Great Ideological and Political Education"**

#### **3.1. "Great Ideological and Political" educational objectives are consistent and holistic**

The essential characteristics of "Great Ideological and Political Education" encompass various aspects. Firstly, the educational objectives must be consistent and holistic. Ideological and political education belongs to the category of ideological education and is a realistic requirement put forward by the Communist Party of China (CPC) and Chinese government based on social development. Simultaneously, it meets the beautiful pursuit of ideology, morality, and sentiment of the majority of young people. The nature of ideological and political

education dictates that the goals of all courses, subjects, periods, and fields must be consistent, and efforts should be made to achieve the same origin and mutual connection.

The fundamental goal of ideological and political education is to cultivate the soul of the nation, correct world outlook, outlook on life and values, and nurture builders and successors of the socialist cause. All ideological and political education activities in China regard this general goal as their focus. The integration of ideological and political courses in universities, primary and secondary schools should be deepened continuously to achieve this objective.

Taking different school periods as an example, the specific goals of different stages of education are distinct. At the primary school stage, the objective is to enlighten ideological and moral education, stimulate students' enthusiasm for loving the party, patriotism, life and family, and cultivate their good behavior habits. At the middle school stage, the goal is to guide students to grasp the basic moral knowledge and the principle of being human, understand the question of "what is" from the knowledge level, form a correct ideological concept, consolidate the ideological foundation, clarify the political direction, and cultivate political literacy. At the university stage, the focus is to cultivate the ability of logical thinking and dialectical thinking, guide students to learn to analyze and solve problems, find out the questions of "why" and "how to do it" from the theoretical level, and strengthen their responsibility.

### **3.2. "Great Ideological and Political Education" embodies progressive and complementary educational content**

The arrangement of educational content should be guided by educational goals and always centered around them. From a vertical standpoint, the arrangement of educational content in different school periods should fully consider students' cognitive characteristics and practical understanding abilities. This arrangement should also be internally linked, moving from shallow to deep and from low to high, thus forming a reasonable gradient. From a horizontal standpoint, different courses, subjects, and fields should leverage their respective advantages, complementing and collaborating with each other.

For instance, in different school periods, primary and secondary schools should prioritize ideological and political education as the main line and consider the emphasis and depth of the educational content at each stage. At the primary school stage, the focus can be on "thought+morality," while at the middle school stage, it can be on "thought+politics," and at the university stage, it can be on "thought+politics+theory." It is evident that the content of ideological and political education in different periods should be interconnected, and the university stage should deepen and expand upon the primary and secondary schools' foundations.

### **3.3. "Great Ideological and Political" educational methods pursue appropriateness and continuity**

Effective ideological and political education requires the use of appropriate and continuous educational methods. The appropriateness of an educational method is closely related to its impact on students. Therefore, ideological and political educators must choose the most suitable educational methods based on students' age, cognitive abilities, and personality traits to improve educational outcomes. At each growth stage, students exhibit unique differences, which means that ideological and political educators must remain flexible and employ a variety of educational methods to ensure that their approach aligns with the needs of each student.

Furthermore, achieving continuity between educational methods is crucial. By gradually guiding students through each stage of education, educators can facilitate better educational results. As such, educators must pay close attention to the selection and innovation of educational methods, continually improving the quality of education to foster the all-round development of students.

### **3.4. "Great Ideological and Political" education evaluation is characterized by a focus on directionality and pluralism.**

Evaluation of "Great Ideological and Political Education" is a vital component in guiding educational practices. The evaluation process aims to assess students' individual ideological and political performance, as well as their position on social issues, worldview, and outlook on life. The evaluation should incorporate directionality and pluralism, thereby conforming to Chinese socialist core values.

To effectively evaluate "Great Ideological and Political Education," it is important to establish clear evaluation purposes and criteria that align with societal needs. The evaluation should also comply with curriculum standards and implement national education policies. Furthermore, personalized and systematic evaluation indicators should be designed, taking into account the differences among individual students. The methods used for the evaluation should be diversified, including observation, interviews, investigations, growth record bag evaluations, and performance evaluations. It is imperative that the evaluation process is approached with care and precision to ensure that it effectively promotes the development of students' ideological and political education, meets the requirements of education policies, and addresses the needs of society.

In conclusion, the evaluation of "Great Ideological and Political Education" requires a focus on directionality and pluralism, and should consider the characteristics of individual students. It is important to use diversified evaluation methods, align with societal needs, comply with education policies, and aim for precision to effectively guide the development of students' ideological and political education.

## **4. The Implementation Path of "Great Ideological and Political Education"**

### **4.1. Integration of learning segments**

For a considerable period, Chinese ideological and political education has been compartmentalized, characterized by unsystematic, disjointed, uncoordinated, and repetitive teaching materials in each section. This fragmented approach has yielded insignificant results in the implementation of ideological and political education, and the evaluation system has been formalized with little effect. Additionally, the practice system of ideological and political education has fallen out of touch, and the proportion of the ideological and political education team system is below standard, with inadequate professional quality. Overall, all sections of ideological and political education lack a comprehensive guarantee system.

As such, it is necessary to establish a green channel between study sections and form an all-encompassing integration of teaching materials, teaching, evaluation, practice, teaching staff, and security system to improve the effectiveness of ideological and political education.

### **4.2. Discipline integration**

The integration of teaching content, human resources, and educational technology across disciplines is crucial in enhancing the overall effectiveness of "Great Ideological and Political Education". Through the integration of course content, teachers' role behavior can be continuously improved to realize the goal of "curriculum ideological and political". During the university stage, Basic Principles of Marxism, Introduction to the Theoretical System of Mao Zedong Thought and Socialism with Chinese Characteristics are the key courses of ideological and political

education. These courses possess theoretical, historical, humanistic, and practical significance, thereby assigning them an essential task of ideological and political education.

Nonetheless, the professional features of universities and colleges should be taken into account, and professional courses must be combined to explore ways to engage students and encourage

their participation. By doing so, the core values of the courses can be fully implemented, leading and inspiring students' enthusiasm.

### **4.3. Organizational guidance**

Chinese government and the CPC have consistently prioritized organizational construction and have established three levels of organizations - the China Young Pioneers, the China Communist Youth League, and the CPC organization - to cater to different stages of youth growth. This arrangement reflects the coherence of ideological and political education. It is the responsibility of ideological and political educators to fully utilize the leadership of these organizations in this education.

There are several ways to leverage the leading role of these organizations in ideological and political education. First, one could lead by example, by playing the role of an ideological and political model and organizing exemplary activities to promote such virtues. Additionally, one could leverage the influence of ideological and political education experts to improve the educational literacy of ideological and political teachers. Second, team-building activities that promote mutual assistance and collaboration between grassroots organizations in different schools and classes can drive joint development and enhance ideological and political education. Third, competition-based activities with a focus on ideological and political education can stimulate young people to compare, learn, catch up, and help each other at the ideological and political level.

In conclusion, the effective use of organizational leadership can promote and enhance the role of ideological and political education in the development of young people.

### **4.4. Home-school collaboration**

Family education and school education both offer unique advantages, but each has its challenges. The family unit is a child's primary source of affection and the first place where they receive ideological and political education. Parents play a critical role as a child's first teachers. On the other hand, school-based ideological and political education has a more explicit purpose, is implemented systematically, and is carried out by professional educators.

The Family Education Promotion Law of the People's Republic of China, passed during the 31st session of the 13th NPC Standing Committee on October 23rd, 2021, recognizes the close integration and coordination between family, school, and social education[5]. Primary and secondary schools, as well as kindergartens, should collaborate with parents to promote co-education and invite experts in family education to teach related concepts, knowledge, and methods. To optimize educational outcomes, family and school-based ideological and political education must complement and reinforce each other. By working together, they can form a cohesive force that enhances educational outcomes.

### **4.5. Social participation**

In a statement made by General Secretary Xi Jinping, it was emphasized that ideological and political education should not only take place in the classroom and at home, but also extend to all aspects of social life[6]. This means that individuals from various backgrounds should be involved in guiding students to move beyond the confines of their academic and familial environments and immerse themselves in real-world experiences, thus enhancing their comprehensive qualities in ideological and political education.

One effective method for achieving this objective is to organize small-scale civil society practice activities in schools. Before the activity, teachers play a crucial role in helping students understand the scope of social issues related to public policy. This involves leading students to conduct investigations and visits within their own families and communities, prompting them to return to the classroom with questions and concerns. Students are then asked to choose the most serious, urgent, and common issues to study as a group by voting, followed by the



formation of four task groups: problem investigation, policy explanation, best scheme, and action plan.

Each group conducts thorough research, interviews professionals, and analyzes and demonstrates their findings. A hearing is then held, inviting heads of relevant departments, problem-solving experts, lawyers, and other relevant individuals to discuss the demonstration scheme. Finally, the groups communicate and publicize their findings with the aim of solving the identified problems. This process has proven to be highly effective in promoting comprehensive qualities of ideological and political education among students.

"Great Ideological and Political Education" has provided a new direction and specific implementation paths for cultivating Chinese builders and successors of the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era. This concept has become the core thought and focus of guiding the future Chinese ideological and political education and shaping the educational behavior of future ideological and political educators.

## Acknowledgments

The paper is funded by The Ideological and Political Theory Teaching Institute of the School of Marxism in East China University of Political Science and Law (2023).

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