

Research on the Current Situation and Development Strategies of WeChat Official Accounts for Ideological and Political Education in Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract: In the past decade, WeChat has rapidly become a part of people's daily lives and has emerged as a significant social tool. Concurrently, WeChat public accounts of universities have continuously evolved and become an important means of ideological and political education through the Internet. This paper examines the current development status of ideological and political WeChat public accounts in universities and proposes a strategic framework for their development based on five aspects: operational team, content dissemination, features and functions, target audience, and communication effectiveness.

In today's rapidly developing online environment, WeChat has become the most commonly used communication method among Chinese people, deeply integrated into their daily lives. With the continuous development of WeChat and self-media, WeChat public accounts have gained widespread attention and become an important channel for the public to stay informed, obtain information, and handle various matters. As part of ideological and political education in universities, ideological and political WeChat public accounts play a crucial role in value guidance, image shaping, news dissemination, cultural inheritance, and image building. The popularity, influence, and activity of WeChat public accounts in universities far exceed traditional media outlets such as campus news websites and radios. Therefore, strengthening the construction of ideological and political WeChat public accounts in universities is of utmost importance to fully leverage the role of such accounts.

1. Objectives and Significance

Strengthening the construction of ideological and political WeChat public accounts in universities is an important measure to enhance the formation of students' ideological concepts and return to core values in the context of new times. Based on the characteristics of contemporary university students and the goals of ideological and political education, WeChat public accounts are utilized to disseminate mainstream ideas and correct value concepts, cultivate students' correct ideological concepts, showcase outstanding individuals and collective examples to promote positive energy among the youth, strengthen public opinion guidance in social events and school dynamics,

and proactively seize the discourse power in online platforms.[1]

Strengthening the construction of ideological and political WeChat public accounts in universities is an innovative exploration to expand the carriers of ideological and political education and enhance online ideological and political education in the context of new times. WeChat public accounts, as platforms oriented towards public opinions and information dissemination, provide a new and effective carrier for online ideological and political education in universities. The construction of ideological and political WeChat public accounts integrates ideological and political education with the WeChat platform, effectively explores online educational resources, fully utilizes the functional and communicative advantages of WeChat public accounts, and provides strong support for continuously improving the quality of online education work and promoting the connotation-based development of online ideological and political education in universities.

Strengthening the construction of ideological and political WeChat public accounts in universities is an effective attempt to implement General Secretary's instructions on integrating ideological and political work throughout the entire process of education and achieving comprehensive and all-round nurturing of students. General Secretary emphasized at the national conference on ideological and political work in universities that ideological and political work in universities should be tailored to specific situations, keep up with the times, and adapt to changing circumstances. The use of new media technology should make the work more dynamic. Strengthening the construction of ideological and political WeChat public accounts in universities aligns with the orientation of students, educational needs, and the characteristics of the times, making online ideological and political education an essential means that permeates students' daily lives and truly reaches their minds.[2]

2. Current Situation and Analysis of Causes

Currently, there is a wide variety of WeChat public accounts in major universities, including numerous unofficial accounts from different departments and faculties. Most of these public accounts merely publish notifications and news, with only a few striking a balance between being popular among students and providing educational value without being tedious. This article mainly focuses on official WeChat public accounts in universities and does not discuss unofficial accounts from departmental or faculty levels.

Since July 2015, Tencent Weixiao has collaborated with WeChat public accounts from various universities in China to conduct a monthly ranking of national university public accounts. The evaluation criteria include the operation and management of WeChat public accounts, the number of followers, the content of articles, and the level of interaction. Each university's WeChat public account excels in different aspects such as positioning, functionality, theme selection, writing style, and formatting. Through comparative analysis, it is evident that most ideological and political WeChat public accounts in universities have the following issues:

2.1 Insufficient content appeal and inadequate depth in ideological and political education

Many ideological and political WeChat public accounts in universities solely focus on publishing campus news, utilizing the functionality of WeChat public accounts for news dissemination without incorporating original content that is compelling, interactive, and influential. As a result, they struggle to fully leverage the educational effectiveness of WeChat public accounts for ideological and political education. The main reason is the lack of top-level design and comprehensive planning in the operation of ideological and political WeChat public accounts, as well as the absence of input of original content and optimization of the content being shared.

2.2 Insufficient professionalism and experience of operators

The majority of operators for ideological and political WeChat public accounts in universities are mainly led by the propaganda department, with teachers from the respective departments guiding student teams in planning and implementation. The operation teams are relatively small, lacking in operational capabilities and experience. There is a need for a sound operational management mechanism, professional operational guidance, and centralized operational training. Additionally, the theoretical foundation and knowledge base of operators are not deep enough, resulting in a lack of flexibility in understanding national policies and theoretical principles, often resorting to a simple repetition or citation of documents.

2.3 Outdated and limited formats, insufficient functionality

When pushing articles, WeChat public accounts often exhibit a common tendency towards lengthy text, limited visual elements, and lack of diversity, which can lead to aesthetic fatigue among the audience. Exploring richer content delivery formats is necessary. Furthermore, functionality is also a consideration in WeChat public account operations. Currently, most ideological and political WeChat public accounts in universities have limitations in terms of functionality, either with minimal or no specialized sections. Incorporating frequently used features would greatly enhance user engagement.[3]

3. Research on Operational Strategies

3.1 Operational Team

First, the university should establish a politically oriented operational team for WeChat official accounts. This team should consist of individuals with strong political literacy and the ability to guide public opinion, ensuring that the WeChat official account consistently spreads positive energy and delivers a strong voice, effectively guiding the direction of online ideological and political work. At the same time, the WeChat official accounts in universities should have a clear positioning and distinct characteristics, requiring the management personnel to have a clear overall plan and top-level design. Second, the university needs to establish a highly competent operational team for WeChat official accounts. This team should consist of individuals who possess expertise in WeChat official account operations, proficiently utilize WeChat technologies, and understand regulatory practices for WeChat official accounts. Third, the university should foster a student backbone team that takes responsibility. In addition to specialized positions for WeChat account operations, it is necessary to involve student teams or part-time ideological and political teachers who have interests and expertise in WeChat account operations. The university should regularly organize training sessions on WeChat account skills, innovative thinking brainstorming, and layout and content design.

3.2 Content Publication

The university should improve the quality of published content on WeChat official accounts to attract college students through eye-catching titles, high-quality content, lively writing style, and exquisite formatting, thus bridging the gap between the account and its followers. First, the university should improve the quality of content by increasing the input of high-quality original articles with ideological and political elements. These articles should resonate with readers, strengthen the bond between the account and its followers, and meet their developmental needs.

Second, the university should establish branded sections and highlight youth role models to infuse ideological and political elements into WeChat official accounts, exerting the role of guiding public opinion and emphasizing the practical effectiveness of online ideological and political work. Third, the university should conduct ideological and political education on WeChat official accounts during significant events such as Chinese New Year, National Day, school anniversary, and the centenary of the Communist Party of China. Publish articles related to festive culture, enhance education on patriotism and school pride, and increase interaction between online and offline activities, such as organizing essay competitions, photography contests, and book reading challenges with meaningful and exquisite prizes.

3.3 Functional Approaches

WeChat official accounts possess strong social attributes, so user experience should be a priority in dissemination efforts. By fully utilizing the inherent functions of subscription accounts and service accounts, WeChat official accounts can enhance their attractiveness through various means such as selecting appropriate push timing, controlling push frequency, integrating online and offline activities, and increasing user engagement. In addition to article publications, enhancing the functionality of WeChat official accounts can significantly improve user experience and engagement. By setting up functional menus and optimizing service features, such as offering course selection, curriculum planning, class reminders, and an online student service center, if possible, the WeChat official account can transform into a comprehensive online service platform. Furthermore, the university should incorporate interactive communication sections into the account's functions, soliciting suggestions and feedback from students and teachers, actively participating in their daily lives, and conducting surveys to understand their needs. This is essential for customization and tailoring the content to better serve the interests and preferences of the account's followers. By actively engaging with the audience and seeking their input, the WeChat official account can build a stronger sense of community and foster a deeper connection with its followers. This interactive approach will not only increase the attractiveness and influence of the account but also enhance the effectiveness of online ideological and political education.

3.4 Target Audience

The target audience of WeChat official accounts in universities primarily consists of students, alumni, and individuals interested in the education industry. Compared to other enterprises or media WeChat accounts in society, the target audience of university WeChat official accounts exhibits several specific characteristics. First, they are young and mentally active, mainly comprising students born in the 1990s who have active and divergent thinking and are not fond of lengthy preaching. Second, they have higher levels of education and cultural literacy, including students, teachers, alumni, and individuals interested in the education industry, who generally possess higher educational and cultural backgrounds. Third, they are interested in campus life, enjoy onlinesocialization, and are adept at using the internet to access information. Therefore, it is crucial to closely align with the characteristics of the target audience, understand their needs, and develop customized sections that cater to their preferences. [4]

3.5 Dissemination Effect

The dissemination effect of university ideological and political WeChat official accounts refers to the impact of the information and functionalities provided by the accounts on the ideological and behavioral aspects of the target audience. The goal of dissemination effect for university WeChat

official accounts is to foster a sense of ideological identity among college students, a recognition and belongingness to the cultural ideals and ideological concepts of their respective universities. The operational team of university WeChat official accounts should understand the dissemination effect from multiple perspectives. Evaluating the feedback and assessment from the target audience is an essential approach to measure the dissemination effect. Therefore, when assessing the dissemination effect of university ideological and political WeChat official accounts, it is crucial to pay attention to the evaluation and feedback from the target audience, establish regular mechanisms for evaluation, and continuously optimize dissemination strategies at various stages.

4. Conclusion

The current development of university ideological and political WeChat official accounts presents both opportunities and challenges. Universities need to put more effort into the operational team, content dissemination, and the utilization of WeChat as a platform. This will help expand channels for ideological and political education, enrich the content of online ideological education, and create a multi-channel network for nurturing individuals. It will also contribute to the comprehensive development of online education.

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