

The Value of Chinese Traditional Culture in Ideological and Political Education in Higher Education Institutions: An Exploration

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Keywords: Traditional culture, higher education, ideological and political education

Abstract: In the current context of rapid socio-economic development in China, various aspects of the university's ideological and political education environment and content have undergone significant changes. As university students represent the main force supporting social development in the future, it can be said that the level of ideological and political education among university students directly affects the overall healthy development of the country. Therefore, in such a context, universities need to actively promote reforms in ideological and political education, harness the advantages of China's excellent traditional culture, and effectively integrate it into ideological and political education. By inheriting and promoting China's excellent traditional culture, the aim is to continuously enhance students' ideological and moral levels. This article provides an in-depth analysis of the value and application of China's excellent traditional culture in ideological and political education at universities.

With the rapid development of social productivity in recent years, people have enjoyed material abundance, but also experienced clashes and impacts of diverse social values. Western individualism and social ideologies reflect and contrast with the current social situation in China, causing many individuals to lose their direction amidst the clash of these two value systems. Schools bear the responsibility of cultivating qualified talents for society, and students' psychological qualities, moral standards, and thinking patterns greatly influence their lives in society, while also impacting the general societal values. Therefore, ideological and political education in schools becomes particularly important.

1. The Intrinsic Connection between Chinese Traditional Cultural Education and Ideological and Political Education in Universities

Chinese traditional culture is the comprehensive embodiment of ideas, politics, morality, customs, religion, philosophy, and lifestyle developed by the Chinese nation throughout its long history. It is a stable national culture formed through long-term accumulation. Ideological and political education in universities refers to purposeful, planned, and organized educational practices that influence students' ideological, political, and moral development, aiming to cultivate qualified

college students in terms of their thoughts and morals. Essentially, ideological and political education falls within the scope of cultural education. In the context of ideological and political education in Chinese universities, traditional cultural education plays an irreplaceable and unique role. Professor Zhang Yaocan, one of the founders of ideological and political education in Chinese universities, pointed out that the development and innovative research of the discipline of ideological and political education cannot be separated from the inheritance and promotion of excellent traditional Chinese culture, traditional virtues, and fine revolutionary traditions.[1]

Traditional culture is a crucial factor for the survival and development of a nation. History is the sum of human experiences, and traditional culture is the crystallization of human spiritual wisdom. In different historical periods, humans always face common problems, and the successful experiences, lessons from failures, and profound understanding of life left by our predecessors can provide valuable guidance for modern people. Only by respecting history can we face reality correctly. The inheritance of traditional culture is an undeniable fact.

Traditional culture is an inexhaustible source of ideological and political education in universities. The role of education lies in passing on the excellent culture accumulated by previous generations through profound historical contemplation, nurturing moral conscience, and educating humanity. Higher education is a critical part of a nation's education, and ideological and political education in universities must be rooted in the deep soil of traditional culture. Firstly, Chinese traditional culture, especially Confucian ethics, embodies profound principles that educate us on how to be good human beings. Secondly, Chinese traditional culture is rich in patriotic thoughts and spirit of dedication. Ideological and political education in universities is the final stage of education for the majority of individuals, and a considerable number of college students will soon become participants in the socialist modernization construction as they enter society. They need to be nurtured with a positive attitude towards social life, a correct perspective on reality, a love for life, and a pursuit of ideals. Therefore, ideological and political education in universities can actively utilize the educational resources of Chinese traditional culture and organically integrate ideological and political education with traditional cultural education.[2]

Of course, Chinese traditional culture not only contains the essence that transcends time but also elements limited to specific eras. How to extract the essence while eliminating the dross is an important issue that must be addressed in the effective integration of Chinese traditional cultural education and ideological and political education.

2. Problems in Current Ideological and Political Education in Higher Education Institutions

2.1 Emphasis on intellectual education over moral education

Currently, domestic universities place great importance on the cultivation of students' professional skills, providing a solid foundation for their intellectual development and acquisition of professional knowledge. However, in comparison, the practice of moral education among students is insufficient. Most ideological and political education courses in universities only focus on the theoretical knowledge imparted in the classroom, with little attention given to students' moral development and practical application.

2.2 Prioritization of reality over ideals

China has undergone transformative changes, equivalent to several centuries of Western industrial revolution, within a few decades of reform and opening up. Many college students have been excessively influenced by the economic aspects of the era, becoming pragmatic and placing economic interests as their primary consideration, thereby neglecting fundamental qualities as

university students.

2.3 Strong individual characteristics, weak practical abilities

Contemporary college students, mainly born in the 1980s and 1990s, have relatively comfortable living conditions and have been doted upon by their parents since childhood. Such a lifestyle leads them to be self-centered and possess strong self-esteem and individuality. However, they often lack self-management and self-control abilities, and their physical and mental well-being may present some issues.

2.4 Internet addiction and increased psychological problems

The vast amount of information available on the internet, coupled with the hidden nature of the online environment, exerts significant temptation on university students, who are in a stage of immature psychological development and are highly receptive to new things. The complex and challenging online environment has polluted our moral education environment and poses a great challenge to ideological and political education for college students.

3. The Spiritual Value of Traditional Culture in Ideological and Political Education in Higher Education Institutions

The emergence of issues in current ideological and political education in higher education institutions can be attributed, to some extent, to the deficiency in traditional cultural education. Many university students, while embracing Western novelty, lack a discerning attitude and highly admire Western values of individualism and utilitarianism, while sneering at Chinese traditional culture. They perceive traditional culture as outdated, rigid, and synonymous with feudalism, without delving into its profound meanings. Chinese traditional culture has undergone centuries of evolution and abandonment, with its outstanding ideas shining with wisdom in every historical period. The promotion of traditional cultural education in universities holds tremendous significance for the ideological and political education of college students.[3]

3.1 The profound Chinese culture enhances students' sense of national pride.

The Chinese nation boasts a long history and splendid civilization. Insisting on promoting traditional cultural education in higher education institutions will instill a sense of pride in every student towards their own culture. This sense of national pride will enable them to firmly uphold their cultural position amidst the intense ideological conflicts of modern society, without losing their direction.

3.2 The spirit of self-improvement inspires students' enterprising spirit.

The enduring existence of the Chinese nation can be attributed to its spirit of self-improvement. The Book of Changes (Yijing) describes this spirit as "the strong thrive, gentlemen strive for self-improvement." The Analects of Confucius also offers examples of striving for progress, such as "Three armies can be deprived of a commander, but a gentleman can never be deprived of his will," and "A scholar must enlarge his broadness and firmness; his burden is heavy and the road is long." This enterprising and self-improvement spirit enables contemporary students to realize that they carry the imprint of the national spirit, thus motivating them to explore and constantly strive for progress.

3.3 The philosophical concept of harmony between heaven and humanity nurtures students' humanistic care

Chinese ancient traditional culture emphasizes the harmonious coexistence of human beings and nature. The sages believed that there should be correspondences among heaven, earth, and human beings. The Zhuangzi states, "Heaven and earth are the parents of all things," while the Book of Rites (Liji) states, "Sincerity is the way of heaven; sincerity is the way of man." This concept of tolerance, benevolence, and harmony guides students to love nature and society, to integrate themselves harmoniously with nature and society, and to cultivate a tolerant and harmonious interpersonal relationship, enabling them to naturally and smoothly integrate into future social life.

3.4 The attitude of diligence and love of learning cultivates students' modest character.

Ancient Chinese scholars approached life and learning with an optimistic and proactive attitude, treating learning as their passion and pursuit, regardless of their economic and social conditions. Confucius made it clear in the Analects, "The master said, 'He who exercises government by means of his virtue may be compared to the north polar star, which keeps its place and all the stars turn towards it'" and "Learning without satiety and instructing others without being weary." Zhang Zai, a Northern Song scholar, expressed the intellectual pursuit of intellectuals in traditional culture in his work "Western Inscription" with the phrase "For the sake of establishing the heart of heaven and earth, for the sake of fulfilling the destiny of the people, for the sake of continuing the study of the past sages, for the sake of eternal peace for all generations." This optimistic and eager-to-learn spirit helps contemporary college students recognize the weight of their responsibilities and enables them to pursue knowledge and spiritual fulfillment with a positive attitude. [4]

4. Specific measures to strengthen the education of excellent traditional culture in universities are as follows:

4.1 Strengthen the grassroots party and student organization in universities to play a leading role in promoting the ideological and political consciousness of students

Party and student organizations should care for and support students who actively pursue progress, guiding them to embrace lofty ideals, study diligently, work hard, and actively engage with party and student organizations. Additionally, organizing and encouraging students to participate in social practice activities can deepen their understanding of the great achievements of reform and opening up, increase their awareness of national affairs, enhance their sense of social responsibility, and improve their ability to discern right from wrong.

4.2 Establish an outstanding and reliable teaching staff to effectively implement students' humanistic education

Confucius, the founder of the Confucian school of thought, advocated that one should rectify oneself before rectifying others, stating, "When the person is correct, they will naturally act correctly; when the person is not correct, even when given orders, they will not follow them." He emphasized the importance of teachers' moral cultivation, believing that teachers should focus on self-improvement to maintain their own prestige and gain students' love and respect. Another Confucian sage, Mencius, said, "I have not heard of anyone who can help others to become upright while being crooked themselves." This highlights the role of a guiding figure's exemplary character. Teachers in schools serve as role models for students and have a significant impact on their

personalities through both words and deeds. Teachers should pay special attention to integrating their words and actions, embody various exemplary qualities, and establish a good professional ethics image.

4.3 Make full use of internet platforms to carry out comprehensive education on the excellent traditional culture of our country

The rapid development of information and internet technology provides both opportunities and challenges for promoting outstanding traditional culture in universities. Universities should utilize internet platforms and leverage their rich human resources to occupy online spaces, establish excellent traditional culture websites that integrate ideology, knowledge, and contemporary characteristics, digitize and promote the cultural heritage, traditional artworks, and research achievements of our country's traditional culture. By vigorously publicizing and coordinating the promotion of excellent traditional culture online and offline, students can have immediate access to a wealth of information, combining their emotional and rational understanding of outstanding traditional culture. Furthermore, universities should establish a team consisting of counselors, class teachers, ideological and political education workers, and political theory teachers, among others, to enter the online world, understand students' ideological dynamics, identify hot and challenging issues they are concerned about, and conscientiously carry out online ideological and political education.

4.4 Strengthen the education of students in civilized etiquette to enhance their cultural literacy

Throughout history, China has been a country that highly values rituals and etiquette. Etiquette is an integral part of culture. Universities should fully tap into the potential etiquette resources of our excellent traditional culture and offer elective courses on ancient etiquette, public relations etiquette, social etiquette, and more. Specialized education should focus on teaching students how to maintain polite and civilized speech and behavior, present themselves in a neat and generous manner, show courtesy and respect when interacting with others, and consciously abide by social ethics. These efforts will help students transform their spiritual outlook. [5]

4.5 Vigorously enhance the campus cultural construction of universities and create a distinctive and enjoyable cultural environment for students

To cultivate a strong campus cultural atmosphere, universities should regularly organize various cultural and artistic activities such as literary salons, calligraphy and painting exhibitions, and performing arts shows. Additionally, specific educational activities related to inheriting our country's excellent traditional culture, including discussions on moral and ethical construction, lectures on knowledge, should be conducted. Moreover, universities should establish dedicated educational websites on campus networks, allowing students to appreciate excellent literary and artistic works from our traditional culture and witness outstanding works created by their teachers and classmates. Through firsthand experiences, students can gain profound insights into the vast and splendid traditional culture of our country, benefiting immensely from it.

5. Conclusion

Chinese traditional culture is the culmination of thousands of years of civilization and wisdom of the Chinese nation. The excellent ideas embedded in traditional culture have significant guiding significance in enhancing the psychological qualities of university students, refining their

personalities, and cultivating positive and healthy interpersonal relationships in today's society. Under current circumstances, the ideological and political education in schools should adapt to the actual conditions of students, guiding them in using the excellent ideas from traditional culture to develop a sound character and maintain an optimistic and firm psychological mindset. At the same time, traditional cultural education in schools should keep pace with the times, continuously improving itself with new methods and content, integrating excellent approaches into the educational process, and truly achieving the integration of the old and the new, and the fusion of the traditional and the contemporary. Only in this way can the inclusive and embracing spirit of traditional culture be truly demonstrated.

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