

Strategies for Integrating Socialist Core Values into College Students' Daily Lives: A Three Holistic Education Perspective

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Abstract: *From the perspective of the Three Holistic Education framework, integrating socialist core values into the daily lives of college students represents a critical step in strengthening value education and enhancing the practical effectiveness of ideological and political education in higher education institutions. By examining the current status and identifying existing problems in this integration process, this study engages with the full spectrum of students' lived experiences. It seeks to continuously enrich and expand the scope, content, and boundaries of the Three Holistic Education model, thereby enhancing the precision, relevance, and effectiveness of education. These efforts contribute to advancing the comprehensive development of ideological and political work in universities and to fulfilling their fundamental mission of fostering virtue and cultivating well-rounded individuals.*

Keywords: *Three Holistic Education, socialist core values, daily life of college students, ideological and political education*

1. Introduction

In 2016, the National Conference on Ideological and Political Work in Higher Education Institutions underscored that ideological and political work should be integrated into the full cycle of education and teaching, so as to materialize the principle of whole-process and all-round education. Building on this guiding principle, relevant national authorities subsequently issued the Opinions on Strengthening and Improving Ideological and Political Work in Higher Education Institutions under the New Situation, which formally identified all-staff, whole-process, and all-round education as a fundamental principle guiding ideological and political work in universities. Further advancing this policy framework, the General Office of the Ministry of Education released the Notice on Launching Comprehensive Reform Pilot Programs of Three Holistic Education in 2018. This document proposed constructing an integrated education system across macro, meso, and micro levels, with the explicit aim of resolving structural imbalances and addressing inadequacies in ideological and political education. Within this context, the practice of modernization with Chinese characteristics embodies the adherence to Socialist Core Values. This value system, which emphasizes national prosperity, social harmony, and individual moral integrity, serves as the fundamental orientation for Chinese-style modernization, offers a core response to the question of "what kind of people to cultivate", and functions as a guiding principle permeating the entire higher education system. As a theoretical and practical response to the question of "how to cultivate people," Three Holistic Education has emerged from the Communist Party of China's long-term exploration of ideological and political work. Consequently, implementing Three Holistic Education constitutes a core principle for advancing socialist core values education in universities.

The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China further emphasized the need to integrate socialist core values into the construction of the rule of law, social development, and daily life. This directive highlights the importance of translating abstract value principles into lived experiences and represents a critical step toward enhancing the effectiveness of ideological and political work in higher education. However, empirical findings from this study-based on an analysis of policy documents from 23 universities and survey data from more than 2,200 students across 21 institutions-reveal several persistent challenges. These include limited participation by educational stakeholders, insufficient activation of students' subjectivity, discontinuities across different stages of

students' learning and development, and incomplete integration within students' everyday living spaces. As a result, formalistic practices remain prevalent, with socialist core values often confined to slogans, displays, or policy documents rather than being genuinely embedded in daily life. Against this backdrop, this paper focuses on the pressing question of how socialist core values can be effectively integrated into the daily lives of university students from the perspective of Three Holistic Education. In particular, it explores practical pathways for facilitating the transformation of socialist core values from internalized beliefs to externalized actions.

2. Innovating Educational Approaches and Strengthening Practice to Promote All-Staff Conscious Engagement

The pursuit of socialist modernization with Chinese characteristics is grounded in the commitment to core socialist values, the strengthening of ideals and convictions, and the promotion of fine traditional Chinese culture-all of which serve as the cornerstones of individuals' all-round development. From this perspective, the ultimate goal of Chinese-style modernization lies in achieving the all-round development of human beings. Accordingly, university students are expected not only to acquire advanced scientific knowledge and develop adaptive capacities for future career challenges, but also to consciously cultivate and practice socialist core values. Through continuous moral self-improvement, students can enhance their judgment, understanding, and capacity for action, thereby growing into well-rounded individuals who integrate moral integrity with professional competence and align knowledge with practice. The survey of this article shows that the recognition of the national, social and citizen levels of socialist core values among the college students surveyed reached 95.15%, 94.19% and 95.42% respectively. In comparison, a survey published by Guo Chaozui in 2014 showed that the scores of the interviewed college students for the three levels of socialist core values were 82.4 points, 81.32 points and 82.61 points [1] respectively. Compared with earlier empirical findings, these results indicate that sustained educational efforts have significantly strengthened students' value identification, thus providing a solid ideological foundation for further integration into daily life.

At the same time, the process and effectiveness of integrating socialist core values are shaped by multiple interacting factors, including individual agency, organizational participation, and institutional environments. The survey reveals that students with stronger political affiliation, higher levels of involvement in student organizations, and better academic performance tend to report more positive experiential perceptions. These groups generally demonstrate greater self-motivation and capacity for proactive engagement, enabling them to deepen their understanding and internalization of socialist core values through personal development. Nevertheless, current university practices remain overly focused on macro-level resource input, while students are often positioned as passive recipients rather than active subjects of education. In many cases, socialist core values are introduced as externally imposed norms rather than organically integrated elements of daily life. Without meaningful student participation, the notion of "all-staff education" remains incomplete. Therefore, universities must clarify the subject, object, content, and pathways of integration, and systematically address the questions of why, through what means, and in what ways socialist core values should be embedded in students' everyday experiences.

In order to understand, one must begin with experience and move from experience to general understanding; to learn how to swim, one must enter the water. [2] Effective value education must be grounded in practice. As experiential learning allows abstract principles to become tangible, universities should expand opportunities for students to engage in volunteer service, social practice, cultural activities, student organizations, and institutional governance. These practices enable students to experience socialist core values in concrete contexts, strengthen their sense of social responsibility, and deepen value identification. At the same time, educational activities should explicitly articulate the values they embody, ensuring that value guidance and substantive quality are continuously enhanced. Teacher-student interaction plays a crucial role in this process. Teachers should integrate values education into both classroom instruction and daily engagement, guiding students through personal example and dialogue. Moreover, students' autonomy and initiative must be respected, particularly in institutional practices such as evaluation, management, and activity organization. By involving students in planning and decision-making processes, universities can foster experiential understanding of values such as democracy, fairness, and the rule of law, while avoiding unintended negative outcomes caused by overly administrative approaches.

3. Entering Community Spaces and Advancing Student-Centered Practices to Enhance Process-Based Experience and Sense of Gain

Only when a value system is integrated into social practices and internalized by individuals via experiential participation can it exert substantial impacts. This assertion constitutes a core principle of Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. From both a theoretical and practical perspective, however, universities' understanding of integrating socialist core values into students' daily lives remains relatively limited. In many cases, socialist core values are still narrowly interpreted as components of moral education, without sufficient recognition of their systematic structure, internal hierarchy, and rich connotations. This conceptual limitation has resulted in a cognitive gap between abstract value discourse and students' lived experiences, thereby weakening the effectiveness of integration in practice. Moreover, the inherent difficulty of evaluating values has contributed to the marginalization of socialist core values within assessment mechanisms. Under the dominance of quantitative indicators, values education is often diluted into symbolic or optional elements rather than functioning as a meaningful guiding force. As a result, socialist core values risk being reduced to formal requirements rather than lived principles.

As Marx and Engels noted, "the people are the producers of their own ideas, thoughts, etc.". [3] Traditional approaches to ideological and political education in universities have been characterized by a strong "classroom-centered" orientation, in which education acts as an intermediary separating students from their real-life contexts. Although theoretical instruction constructs an abstract version of "daily life," this representation increasingly diverges from students' actual experiences. In reality, students are autonomous and active subjects of their own lives who develop value understanding and identification primarily through practice. Since ideological and political work is fundamentally concerned with human development, and socialist core values aim to respond to people's aspirations for a better life, educational practice must shift decisively toward a student-centered orientation.

Accordingly, integrating socialist core values into students' daily lives requires continuous innovation in educational philosophy, methods, content, and platforms, particularly by directly addressing real-life problems and value conflicts encountered by students. As the primary channel, ideological and political theory courses should enhance theoretical depth through pedagogical innovation and differentiated case selection tailored to students' academic backgrounds and developmental stages. This approach can help overcome tendencies toward excessive knowledge transmission or disciplinary isolation and promote the unity of knowledge acquisition and value identification. Professional courses, as supplementary channels, should avoid superficial or slogan-based approaches to curriculum-based ideological education. Instead, socialist core values should be meaningfully integrated with disciplinary knowledge through careful decomposition and contextual interpretation. At the same time, universities should accelerate the construction of an integrated "greater ideological and political education" framework, promoting coordination among ideological theory courses, curriculum-based ideological education, and practical components. Through systematic collaboration, students can gain a clearer understanding of what socialist core values are, why they matter, and how they can be recognized and practiced in everyday life. In addition, the continued development of "one-stop" student community initiatives is essential. By encouraging educators and support staff to engage directly with students' living spaces and respond to their practical concerns, universities can create environments in which students genuinely experience the guiding role of socialist core values. This approach helps avoid the detachment that occurs when student management is overly delegated to administrative structures or external service providers, leaving educators absent from students' lives beyond the classroom.

4. Extending Boundaries and Strengthening Multi-Actor Coordination to Build an All-Round Integration Framework

The development practice of contemporary China has proved that consistently adhering to the guidance of the Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era in education, as well as consolidating Socialist Core Values, is crucial to fostering firm ideals and convictions among students. Socialist Core Values derive from the universal value aspirations inherent in social reality and are ultimately translated into daily practices through educational dissemination, ideological communication, and behavioral guidance. Rather than being imposed externally, values are shaped by lived experiences, as it is life itself that determines consciousness. [3] From this perspective, rich and evolving daily life is not only the source of socialist core values but also the fundamental space in

which they are realized. Detached from lived contexts, values risk becoming abstract and ineffective. Integrating socialist core values into daily life therefore involves resolving tensions between universality and particularity, as well as between moral elevation and everyday practicality. [4] This process reflects the unity of value cognition and value practice, enabling individuals to transcend immediate circumstances through value-oriented action. [2]

Empirical findings from this study indicate that universities have made meaningful progress in integrating socialist core values into ideological theory courses, professional curricula, campus culture, and social practice. While these areas constitute important components of student life, they do not fully encompass students' everyday experiences. Consequently, a gap remains between partial integration and comprehensive immersion, suggesting that the "practical implementation gap" of values education has yet to be fully bridged. Contemporary social transformation and technological development have significantly expanded students' life-worlds beyond the traditional boundaries of family and campus. Students' daily lives now extend into internships, social practice, volunteer service, part-time employment, career training, travel, and online interaction, with cyberspace functioning as a second living space. This expansion requires socialist core values to evolve in both breadth and depth, keeping pace with the changing contexts of students' lives.

To address this challenge, universities, families, and society must work collaboratively to construct a multidimensional integration framework across both temporal and spatial dimensions. Universities should embed socialist core values within institutional culture, including school ethos, history, mottos, academic traditions, student organizations, and campus activities, thereby providing students with opportunities to express themselves while internalizing shared values. Families, as the most fundamental social units, should actively cooperate with universities, guiding students through positive role modeling and value-oriented family traditions. At the societal level, communities and internship or employment organizations should align their governance practices and cultural environments with socialist core values, reinforcing consistency across students' life contexts. In addition, efforts should be made to draw upon the historical roots of socialist core values in traditional Chinese culture and promote their creative transformation and innovative development. Coordination between offline and online spaces is equally important. By engaging proactively in students' digital environments, utilizing data-driven technologies, and integrating values into platform algorithms, universities can strengthen guidance while mitigating risks associated with artificial intelligence, short-video recommendation systems, information echo chambers, and segmented online cultures.

5. Improving Institutional Design and Mechanisms to Promote Normalized and Sustainable Integration

The education of Socialist Core Values is inextricably linked to institutional design in higher education, which necessitates a systematic review and optimization of university policy frameworks from the perspective of value orientation. By embedding socialist core values into institutional frameworks and aligning value discourse with policy language, universities can promote the normalization and sustainability of values integration in students' daily lives.

The "Overall Plan for Deepening the Reform of Educational Evaluation in the New Era" points out that "educational evaluation is related to the direction of educational development. The Plan emphasizes that educational evaluation plays a decisive role in shaping institutional orientation and development priorities." Comprehensive evaluation is a comprehensive evaluation of college students' moral, intellectual, physical, artistic, and labor behaviors and performance over a period of time. It basically covers all life fields and behaviors of college students, with high attention and awareness, and strong normative influence. This article analyzed the comprehensive assessment policies for college students in 23 colleges and universities and found that none of them have clearly adopted socialist core values as the normative orientation of the policy; only 7 colleges and universities have included "promoting and practicing socialist core values" as one of the contents of ideological and moral evaluation, accounting for only 30.4%. The core values of socialism have not yet been fully reflected in policy texts, although "democracy" (6 times, accounting for 26.1%), "civilization" (13 times, accounting for 56.5%), "harmony" (2 times, accounting for 8.7%), "justice" (13 times, accounting for 56.5%), "patriotism" (7 times, accounting for 30.4%), "integrity" (6 times, accounting for 26.1%), "friendliness" (1 time, accounting for 4.3%), etc. have been reflected, but "prosperity", "freedom", "equality", "rule of law" and "dedication" have not yet been reflected. The level of integration of socialist core values is low, still at the technical level, and not very leading. The value orientation of university policies and systems has not yet reached the "clear-cut" standard, and the efforts to guide and

promote the integration of socialist core values into the daily life of college students through system construction are weak.

Institutional reform should therefore extend beyond ideological education and student management to include teaching organization, academic support, and logistical services. Flexible and student-centered policy design can enhance students' sense of autonomy and fairness, thereby reinforcing value identification. For example, mental health education should not be limited to problem remediation but reframed as a pathway toward cultivating harmonious campus environments, thus enhancing its value-oriented function. Finally, institutional effectiveness depends on the individuals who formulate and implement policies. University administrators, counselors, teaching assistants, and support staff should strengthen their own understanding and practice of socialist core values, ensuring coherence between policy intentions and daily management. Since institutions regulate both students and educators, this process itself embodies principles such as equality and the rule of law. By leading through example, all educational stakeholders can contribute to a more authentic and effective integration of socialist core values into university life.

6. Conclusion

From the perspective of Three Holistic Education, this paper has explored practical strategies for integrating socialist core values into the daily lives of college students. By focusing on students' lived experiences, the study emphasizes the importance of shifting value education from abstract discourse to concrete and sustained practice. The analysis demonstrates that effective integration requires not only curricular and institutional support, but also active student participation, process-based engagement, and coordinated efforts across educational, social, and community contexts.

Overall, the findings suggest that embedding socialist core values within everyday life is essential for enhancing the practical effectiveness of ideological and political education in higher education. By strengthening experiential pathways and improving institutional mechanisms, universities can better fulfill their fundamental mission of fostering virtue and promoting the all-round development of students.

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