

Study on the Effective Integration Path of “Aesthetic Education + Ideological and Political Education”

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Abstract: *This study concentrates on the pivotal topic of unifying aesthetic education and ideological-political education within colleges and universities, employing the comprehensive "Grand Ideopolitical Education" framework. By investigating the inherent compatibility and real-life challenges of integrating aesthetic and ideological-political education, the paper underscores their importance and feasibility for a deeper amalgamation. The objective is to devise effective implementation strategies for this integration, ultimately offering valuable insights for enhancing the ideological and political education system in higher education institutions.*

Keywords: *Grand Ideopolitical Education; Aesthetic Education + Ideological-Political Education; Profound Integration*

1. Introduction

The essence of ideological and political education in higher education institutions is about educating “people”; while aesthetic education focuses on appreciation and the cultivation of sentiment. In 2020, the Central Committee of the Communist Organization of China and the State Council issued the “Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving Aesthetic Education in Schools in the New Era,” proposing that “school aesthetic education serves as an important carrier for moral education and personal development” [1]. Strengthening the integration of aesthetic education and moral education provides a fundamental guarantee for the deep integration of aesthetic education and ideological and political education in higher education institutions. At present, “enhancing the affinity and pertinence of ideological and political education” [2] is a key aspect of improving ideological and political education work in higher education institutions in the new era, and aesthetic education is an excellent “catalyst” for enhancing its affinity and pertinence. In the new era, we must break down the barriers between aesthetic education and ideological and political education based on the “grand ideological and political” framework, making our ideological and political education more approachable. In March 2021, General Secretary proposed: “We should make good use of the ‘grand ideological and political course’” [3]. The concept of “grand ideological and political course” provides a powerful engine for the deep integration of aesthetic education and ideological and political education; under the new circumstances, we must grasp the pattern of “grand ideological and political,” adhere to the core of “utmost goodness,” find the entry point of “utmost beauty,” and achieve deep integration of aesthetic education and ideological and political education, thus promoting significant progress in college students’ ideological and political education..

2. The Significance of Deep Integration of “Aesthetic Education + Ideological and Political Education” under the Perspective of “Grand Ideological and Political Education”

2.1 *The deep integration of aesthetic education and ideological and political education is a natural choice to achieve the educational goals of higher education institutions.*

The essence of higher education is to cultivate well-rounded individuals, and the deep integration of aesthetic education and ideological and political education is an essential path to achieving the comprehensive development of students. Aesthetic education enables our ideological and political education to be more approachable through its gentle form. Specifically, the deep integration of aesthetic education and ideological and political education helps cultivate contemporary college students’ positive moral emotions, resist negative influences, and guide them in shaping an optimistic value system. Deep integration is an inevitable choice and ultimate goal to return to the essence of

education. Higher education is not merely the imparting of theoretical knowledge but also the enlightenment of students' souls and the fostering of well-rounded character. The deep integration of both aspects also represents the integration of diverse educational concepts in higher education institutions and the sharing of abundant educational resources, ultimately shaping students' well-rounded personalities and fostering comprehensive and diversified development. This process, in turn, truly achieves the goal of nurturing the soul and character of students in higher education institutions.

2.2 Moral Education as the Foundation for Aesthetic Education: Setting the Direction for Development

From a definitional perspective, moral education focuses on norms, emphasizing the cultivation of students' adherence to social rules and principles, while aesthetic education emphasizes freedom, liberation of students' thinking, and facilitating creative personalized development. As different layers of the human spiritual world, moral education serves as the foundation and prerequisite for aesthetic education. It provides norms and spiritual assurance for aesthetic education, thereby playing a guiding role in establishing its content. Without noble morals and grand ideals, the implementation and development of aesthetic education would be difficult, and people would be unable to distinguish beauty, ugliness, and good from evil. In the new era, the educational goal of promoting the spirit of Chinese aesthetic education carried by aesthetic education requires the protection and guidance of moral education. Only then can the youth of the new era shoulder the responsibility of cultural inheritance and development on the correct path and direction.

2.3 Aesthetic Education Promoting Virtue: Aesthetic Education Enhances Moral Education

Kant once said, "Beauty is the symbol of virtue." Aesthetic education inherently possesses the function of moral education. The pleasure, freedom, and artistic nature of aesthetic education are precisely what is lacking in ideological and political education. Specifically, aesthetic education can leverage its pleasurable nature to enhance the appeal of ideological and political education, thus cultivating students' values. It can utilize its freedom to fill the void of dogmatic ideological and political education, thereby strengthening students' sense of responsibility. Moreover, it can exploit its artistic nature to add vitality to ideological and political education, consequently improving students' moral qualities^[4]. Aesthetic education not only enriches the educational forms of ideological and political education but also creates a favorable environment for its implementation. The deep integration of the two fully exploits the flexibility of aesthetic education, compensating for the dull and monotonous ideological and political education that previously emphasized only theory, thus achieving the objectives of carrying and promoting virtue through beauty.

3. The Intrinsic Compatibility of the Deep Integration of "Aesthetic Education + Ideological and Political Education" under the Perspective of "Grand Ideological and Political Education"

3.1 Consistency of Educational Concepts

Aesthetic education aims to promote students' aesthetic abilities, ultimately achieving a well-rounded personality. On the other hand, ideological and political education seeks to foster students' correct worldviews, outlooks on life, and values through moral education, thereby cultivating their noble moral character. Although aesthetic education and ideological and political education differ in specific content and educational approaches, their essence is the same, as both aim to cultivate well-rounded youth in the new era. "Moral education provides direction and value foundation for the cultivation of the new generation, while aesthetic education lays the aesthetic foundation for their comprehensive development." Thus, the ultimate goals of both are consistent, striving to achieve the harmonious unity of truth, goodness, and beauty^[5].

3.2 Interconnectedness of Educational Content

Aesthetic education focuses on cultivating students' sentiments and purifying their minds through various forms and content of beauty, including social, artistic, and natural beauty. Beauty in various fields not only provides aesthetic experiences but also, to a certain extent, extols various virtues such as loyalty, kindness, honesty, trust, and politeness, all of which are essential aspects of spiritual

civilization actively advocated in contemporary society [6]. Ideological and political education, on the other hand, focuses on the in-depth moral education and effective value guidance for students, with patriotism, labor education, and Chinese traditional culture education as the main content. These subjects not only enlighten students' aesthetic minds but also, together with aesthetic education, help shape their perfect personalities, achieving the unity of truth, goodness, and beauty. In summary, both aesthetic education and ideological and political education aim to achieve the goal of holistic education. The effective integration of the two promotes the mutual advancement of their content.

3.3 Complementarity of Educational Forms

From the essence of education, both aesthetic education and ideological and political education emphasize subtly educating students to promote the development of a perfect personality and the cultivation of noble morals. However, in the specific implementation process, ideological and political education emphasizes rationality, often using a serious and rational approach to educate students, achieving moral norms and ideological education. In contrast, aesthetic education emphasizes sensibility, adopting a relaxed, pleasurable, and free approach to educate students, achieving aesthetic concept education and aesthetic ability education. Ideological and political education leverages the "soft" role of aesthetic education, making it more appealing and engaging. Aesthetic education, on the other hand, benefits from the "rigid" role of ideological and political education, achieving the educational purpose of "cultivating virtue and assisting humanity." The two educational forms complement each other, jointly promoting students' comprehensive development.

4. Effective Pathways for the In-depth Integration of Aesthetic Education and Ideological and Political Education in the Context of "Grand Ideological and Political Education"

Currently, the integration of aesthetic education and ideological and political education remains at the superficial level of mechanical blending, without achieving a comprehensive and three-dimensional fusion of the two. Based on the context of "Grand Ideological and Political Education," the integration of aesthetic education and ideological and political education in higher education institutions should not be a simple addition of the two. Instead, it should delve into their roots and essence, focusing on five aspects: strengthening the concept of aesthetic ideological and political education, innovating the content of aesthetic ideological and political education, constructing the environment for aesthetic ideological and political education, expanding the platforms for aesthetic ideological and political education, and building a team for aesthetic ideological and political education. By doing so, it will promote the in-depth integration of ideological and political education and aesthetic education, achieving coordinated education.

4.1 Strengthening the New Concept of Aesthetic Ideological and Political Education

In the new era, higher education institutions must profoundly recognize that the in-depth integration of aesthetic education and ideological and political education is complementary, realizing a "genetic" fusion of the two by achieving a $1+1>2$ effect. The youth of the new era are vibrant, energetic, creative, and proactive, which requires our education to be equally dynamic and lively. This is precisely where the enhancement of aesthetic education comes in, by fully utilizing its aesthetic characteristics to make ideological and political education more humanized and appealing. This cultivates a group of lively individuals, rather than cold machines. Therefore, the priority in promoting the in-depth integration of the two is to continuously establish and strengthen the value guidance of the concept of aesthetic ideological and political education, thereby improving the education capacity and level of higher education institutions.

4.2 Innovating the New Content of Aesthetic Ideological and Political Education

Innovating the content of aesthetic ideological and political education is the spiritual pillar for promoting their in-depth integration. Firstly, it is essential to fully explore the aesthetic ideological and political resources within the campus. On the one hand, using ideological and political education materials and various disciplinary materials as entry points, explore the aesthetic elements and resources of natural beauty, social beauty, and artistic beauty contained in each discipline, highlighting the aesthetic presentation of theoretical knowledge, thereby enriching the content of aesthetic ideological and political education. On the other hand, with classroom education as the entry point and

using aesthetic education as a catalyst, achieve harmonious beauty in teaching objectives, vivid beauty in teaching content, diverse beauty in teaching forms, and emotional beauty in the teaching process, revitalizing the new vitality and vigor of ideological and political education classes. Aesthetic education is a tonic for enhancing the pertinence and effectiveness of ideological and political education. Therefore, it is necessary to fully integrate aesthetic education into all aspects of ideological and political teaching to achieve the aestheticization of ideological and political education. Secondly, starting from off-campus locations, make use of social educational venues such as museums, monuments, exhibition halls, art galleries, and cultural centers to guide contemporary college students to carry forward the outstanding traditional virtues of China. This approach realizes the co-construction, sharing, interaction, and interconnection of on-campus and off-campus aesthetic ideological and political education content, promoting the innovation of aesthetic ideological and political education content.

4.3 Building a New Environment for Aesthetic Ideological and Political Education

Constructing an aesthetic ideological and political education environment is a way to achieve invisible education. On the one hand, colleges and universities should focus on the second classroom, carry out cultural activities that bring elegant arts to campus, and, based on students' different needs and characteristics, rely on campus activities to create unique "one school, one feature" or "one school, multiple features" brand characteristics. This approach utilizes the nourishing function of campus culture. On the other hand, combining the characteristics of the school, college, and major, give full play to the software conditions such as the school motto, school spirit, educational philosophy, and spirit, as well as hardware conditions such as school buildings and facilities, conveying the spirit of aesthetic ideological and political education and creating a campus atmosphere that embraces goodness and beauty. At the same time, leverage the students' living and learning circles, allowing the atmosphere of aesthetic ideological and political education to penetrate into classes, dormitories, and classrooms. This will broaden the educational coverage of aesthetic ideological and political education, create a favorable atmosphere for "educating people with aesthetics," and achieve the subtle influence of aesthetic ideological and political education.

4.4 Expanding High Platforms for Aesthetic Ideological and Political Education

The rapid development of the Internet provides necessary conditions for the deep integration of aesthetic ideological and political education, which is also a trend in the new era. Therefore, it is essential to make full use of the technological advantages of "Internet+" and actively utilize the informatization and community functions of online platforms. By establishing and improving the online platform for the deep integration of aesthetic ideological and political education, the coverage of resources can be enriched. On the one hand, an online section of aesthetic ideological and political education resources can be created, linking resources from various colleges and regions to achieve real-time sharing of diverse and comprehensive aesthetic ideological and political education resources. This can address the current situation of students' impetuous thoughts, the lack of cultural aesthetics, and the emotional void in their online world. On the other hand, using VR and AR technology for real-time simulation, create a "cloud tour" section to enable students to visit and explore various patriotic education sites anytime, anywhere. This immersive experience can enhance students' national pride and guide them to strengthen their cultural confidence. By expanding the platform for aesthetic ideological and political education through digital education, a three-dimensional blending of aesthetic ideological and political education can be achieved.

4.5 Building a Strong Team for Aesthetic Ideological and Political Education

Shaping noble teaching ethics and cultivating excellent teaching styles are crucial measures for achieving deep integration of ideological and political education and aesthetic education in colleges and universities in the new era [7]. As the main implementers of ideological and political education, the role of university teachers is irreplaceable. Therefore, it is necessary to gather efforts from various parties to build a team of aesthetic ideological and political education teachers with high political beliefs, moral quality, aesthetic literacy, and strong professional capabilities. On the one hand, regular training and learning on aesthetic knowledge for university teachers should be organized, guiding them to establish an aesthetic teaching philosophy, achieve both internal and external self-improvement, and enhance their aesthetic literacy. On the other hand, relevant social aesthetic educators and experts should be invited to schools to conduct related seminars and academic conferences, and collaborate

with in-school teachers to establish aesthetic ideological and political education studios and research organizations, thus enhancing the theoretical literacy of the teacher team in aesthetic ideological and political education. At the same time, university teachers themselves need to constantly pay attention to the improvement of their moral and aesthetic literacy, infect and educate every student with their unique personal charm, reject the concept of "teaching only without educating," and truly achieve the mission of imparting knowledge and resolving doubts.

In the new era, higher education institutions must profoundly explore the unique educational advantages and emotional characteristics of aesthetic education. They must connect the moral attributes of character education with the emotional aspects of aesthetic education. Through continuous practical exploration, innovative new models of in-depth integration between aesthetic education and ideological and political education should be developed. By leveraging strengths and avoiding weaknesses, deep integration of aesthetic education and ideological and political education can be achieved, thus addressing the fundamental nature of higher education. This approach aims to cultivate morally cultured, spiritually benevolent individuals capable of shouldering the responsibility of national rejuvenation in the new era, promoting the connotative innovation and development of ideological and political work in higher education institutions.

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