

The Leading Path of Ideological and Political Education for Generation Z College Students and Generation Alpha Students

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The ideological and political education of Generation Z and Generation Alpha students should not only focus on common issues but also cater to individual needs. By integrating commonality with individuality, it can achieve collaborative innovation, effectively address new challenges brought by digital and intelligent technologies, and guide them to consciously embrace the mainstream socialist ideology, thereby achieving the desired outcomes of ideological and political education.

Keywords: ideological and political education, generation Z college students, generation Alpha students

The ideological and behavioral characteristics of Generation Z college students and Generation Alpha students share both commonalities and individualities. A thorough analysis of their formation background and core manifestations, combined with the requirements of ideological and political education in the new era, and the proposal of targeted guiding paths, are key to our Party's efforts to engage contemporary China youth. Through literature analysis and practical research, this study clarifies the challenges faced by ideological and political education for Generation Z and Generation Alpha students. By exploring collaborative guiding paths and constructing an ideological and political education model that aligns with the growth patterns of both generations, it provides theoretical support and practical references for nurturing a new generation capable of shouldering the great task of national rejuvenation. However, this study also has certain limitations, primarily manifested in insufficient analysis of foundational, academic, and theoretical concepts and categories, which require further deepening. This topic has strong contemporary relevance and remains highly promising for future research. If possible, future studies will further deepen academic research along this theme, theoretically dispel misconceptions in the field, and advance the study of ideological and political education for Generation Z and Generation Alpha students.

Adhere to the Fundamental Principle of Moral Education

President Xi Jinping pointed out, "Building a strong education system is a complex and systematic project that requires us to closely focus on the fundamental task of fostering virtue and nurturing talent, with the aim of cultivating socialist builders and successors who develop comprehensively in moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education" (People's Daily, 2024-09-11 (01)). The principle of "fostering virtue and nurturing talent" has been established as the fundamental guideline for collaborative leadership. Whether it is conducting education on ideals and convictions for Generation Z college students or providing value enlightenment for Generation Alpha students, the goal should be to cultivate a new generation capable of shouldering the great task

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of national rejuvenation. Socialist core values should be integrated into all aspects of education and teaching to ensure that both generations maintain high consistency in ideology and politics, always adhering to the correct political direction and value orientation. In practice, with the fundamental task of “fostering virtue and nurturing talent” as the premise, detailed education systems and target content should be formulated and implemented for different generations. For example, in line with the characteristics of Generation Z college students, such as their independence and emphasis on self-actualization, ideological and political education should strengthen theoretical armament, particularly focusing on guiding them to establish the lofty ideal of communism and the common ideal of socialism with Chinese characteristics, clarifying their positioning in realizing the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation and their historical mission and responsibilities. Considering the special stage of value formation and digital growth process of Generation Alpha students, it is important to guide them in fastening the first button of life, cultivating good behavioral habits and moral character. In ideological and political education, vivid methods such as immersive AI experiences, role model inspiration, and animated audio stories can be employed to spread truth, goodness, and beauty, and to strengthen education in patriotism and collectivism.

Besides, we should guide the two generations to be in step in thought and behavior, not only to recognize the current mainstream values in thought and value, but also to transform the thought and cognition into personal behavior through practice, so as to ensure that the fundamental task of “establishing virtue and educating people” can take root and bear fruit in the process of practice.

Targeted and Precise Education Based on the Characteristics of Two Generations

According to the different developmental characteristics and feature differences between the two generations, targeted classification policies and precise education should be implemented. For example, Generation Z college students exhibit a strong sense of autonomy and possess certain digital literacy. In practical activities, methods such as team naming and research-based teaching can be employed to enhance their participation and independence during the learning process, thereby deepening theoretical understanding. For instance, discussions and research can be conducted on current political hot topics like “Chinese-style modernization” and “the spirit of the Fourth Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee.” Considering the characteristics of Generation Alpha students, such as active imaginative thinking and a preference for interaction, more emphasis should be placed on abstract values, which can be transformed into concrete behavioral guidance through easily accessible scenarios and interactive games. For example, participating in social service activities can strengthen their sense of collective honor, while short films like animations can showcase China’s traditional excellent culture and patriotic spirit. At the same time, it is essential to actively establish a monitoring mechanism for the ideological dynamics of both generations. Through various forms such as big data analysis, psychological counseling, and questionnaire surveys, regular analysis should be conducted to promptly grasp the real-time ideological changes and demand shifts of both generations, thereby providing valuable information for targeted policies and precise education. This ensures that education achieves the effect of “one key opening one lock.”

Make Full Use of Digital Technology to Innovate the Way of Ideological and Political Education

The “dual-track education” model adopted by post-pandemic generations has spurred the proliferation of high-quality educational mobile applications. These apps deliver learning resources through video, audio, and

multimedia formats (Wang, 2024), offering advantages like rich content, diverse formats, and breaking geographical barriers. Therefore, it's crucial to actively promote the deep integration of digital intelligence technologies with ideological and political education, creating a digital ecosystem tailored to the characteristics and needs of Generation Z and Alpha students. On one hand, we should leverage diverse digital technologies to develop educational systems that resonate with both generations. For instance, utilizing multi-platform digital education tools, we can create comprehensive ideological education models and virtual simulation systems that cater to young students' needs for theoretical learning, social interaction, and immersive experiences. Specifically, to address Generation Z's preference for immersive experiences, we could develop "virtual red culture museums" where students can "step into" revolutionary historical settings through VR technology, allowing them to "immerse" themselves in the invaluable spirit embodied by revolutionary pioneers. Additionally, we could design "theory challenges" in the form of mini-games or mini-programs, transforming content about the Party's innovative theories and socialist mainstream ideology into engaging quizzes and knowledge competitions to actively attract youth and stimulate their learning motivation. For Alpha students, the focus should shift toward entertainment value, interest-driven approaches, and diversified content. Through engaging animation courses such as patriotic-themed puzzle games and animated series featuring China's excellent traditional culture, we can deliver ideological and political education in a harmonious environment. On the other hand, digital intelligence technologies like precision algorithms enhance the targeted nature of ideological education. By analyzing online learning behaviors, comment browsing records, and social interaction data of Generation Z and Alpha students, we can accurately grasp their ideological trends, digital footprints, interests, and learning patterns. For instance, through big data-driven system recommendations, when intelligent algorithms detect that a Generation Z or Alpha student is particularly interested in ecological conservation topics, content related to "Xi Jinping's Ecological Civilization Thought" can be pushed to them. For Alpha students experiencing psychological discomfort or ideological confusion during specific periods, timely guidance content should be generated and delivered. Additionally, popular educational methods favored by Generation Z and Alpha students—such as influencer interactions, live streaming, self-directed exchanges, and bullet-screen interactions—can be utilized. Inviting renowned ideological education teachers, model workers, outstanding social figures, and role models to combine online and offline approaches can break educational barriers, enhance the fun, appeal, and effectiveness of ideological education, and integrate mainstream ideology into the learning lives of these two generations through more diverse and engaging formats.

Building a Multi-dimensional Integrated Collaborative Education System

The ideological and political education for Generation Z and Alpha students requires systematic thinking to integrate educational resources, ultimately forming a collaborative education system. This multidimensional collaborative education system primarily encompasses four dimensions: family, school, society, and digital platforms. At the family level, it is crucial to recognize the role of family in ideological education. Rather than shifting all responsibilities to schools and society, families should strengthen their role through various means. Parents should lead by example, establish correct educational concepts, and employ appropriate methods to guide students. Through interactions, they can subtly convey mainstream values with love and warmth. For instance, parents should first develop scientific values themselves and collaborate with their children using digital technology in ideological education, adopting approaches familiar to Generation Z and Alpha students. At the school level, ideological courses should serve as the primary platform, ensuring alignment between curriculum

and ideological education. Beyond systematically teaching the Party's innovative theories in ideological courses, educators should incorporate ideological elements into specialized subjects. For example, integrating patriotic spirit exemplified by scientists who dedicated their lives to the nation into natural science curricula. Additionally, integrating collective lesson planning among ideological course teachers, counselors, homeroom teachers, moral education instructors, and subject teachers will form a collaborative educational community where everyone participates. At the societal level, we must fully expand educational resources and spaces by leveraging government agencies, enterprises, cultural venues, and revolutionary heritage sites. Establishing "Grand Ideological and Political Education" practice bases will provide richer social resources for ideological education of Generation Z and Alpha students. For instance, enterprises can serve as practice bases to cultivate students' career perspectives, while inviting industry leaders to guide these generations in establishing correct worldviews, life views, and values. On the digital front, comprehensive internet governance should be implemented to create a conducive learning environment. Digital technologies like micro-animations, short videos, and H5 should be utilized to deliver ideological education content through popular platforms such as Xiaohongshu and Bilibili, transforming complex theories into engaging digital works. Additionally, we must strengthen supervision of online ideological education content, with particular attention to harmful ideologies like historical nihilism and hedonism that significantly impact Generation Z and Alpha students. By enhancing their critical thinking skills, we can turn cyberspace into the primary arena for ideological education of these generations.

Connection Education Based on the Integration of Ideological and Political Education in Primary, Secondary and Higher Education to Strengthen Value Guidance

Specifically, in terms of content continuity, the primary and secondary school stages focus on the enlightenment of moral emotions and the cultivation of behavioral habits, helping teenagers establish simple feelings and basic understanding of the country, society, and family through vivid stories and situational experiences. The higher education stage, on the other hand, emphasizes the expansion of theoretical depth and the development of critical thinking skills, combining professional studies with social practice to guide young people in deeply understanding the latest achievements of the Sinicization and modernization of Marxism, and fostering the lofty ideal of communism and the common ideal of socialism with Chinese characteristics. In terms of methodological continuity, primary and secondary schools can actively introduce high-quality educational resources from universities, such as inviting college student volunteers to conduct "big hand holding small hand" pairing assistance activities or organizing university ideological and political teachers to deliver thematic lectures in primary and secondary schools. Universities, in turn, can guide college students to integrate their theoretical knowledge with the practical aspects of ideological and political education in primary and secondary schools through social practice, internships, and training, creating a positive situation where educational content spirals upward and educational methods complement and reinforce each other, avoiding gaps or inefficiencies in ideological and political education across different educational stages. Moreover, the current Generation Z is in their university years, while Generation Alpha students are mostly in primary and secondary school. This integrated model of ideological and political education across all educational stages can truly achieve "big hand" holding "small hand," fostering collaborative interaction between the ideological and political education of Generation Z and Generation Alpha students.

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