

Online Ideological and Political Education for Generation Z Students in the Context of the New Era: Challenges and Strategies

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the rapid development of the internet has fundamentally reshaped the way individuals communicate, learn, and engage with society. With the emergence of new media technologies, the internet has become an essential platform for ideological and political education, especially for Generation Z (born between 1995 and 2010), who are often referred to as digital natives. These students, who have grown up surrounded by the internet, social media, and digital technologies, represent a unique challenge and opportunity for ideological and political education (Chai, 2025).

In the context of China's "New Era" – a period marked by rapid social, economic, and technological transformation – online ideological and political education has become an essential means of fostering the values and beliefs of Generation Z students (Liu, 2023).

This paper explores the role of the internet in shaping the ideological education of Generation Z students, the challenges they face in the digital age, and strategies to effectively engage them in ideological and political education through online platforms.

2. THE ROLE OF THE INTERNET IN IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION

The internet plays a pivotal role in the transformation of ideological and political education. Traditional methods of teaching, including lectures and face-to-face discussions, have given way to new forms of communication and learning that leverage digital tools. Social media platforms, online videos, and livestreams provide opportunities for reaching a broader audience, particularly students who are deeply immersed in online culture (Yang, 2024).

The integration of new media into ideological and political education has opened new avenues for both the delivery and reception of content. For example, Chinese universities are increasingly using platforms like WeChat, Bilibili, and Weibo to share educational content, foster discussions, and engage students in debates on key social issues. Additionally, the rapid rise of short videos and livestreaming platforms offers unique opportunities to capture students' attention with engaging, bite-sized content. However, the internet also introduces significant challenges. The overwhelming flow of information, combined with the spread of misinformation and the lack of content regulation, makes it difficult to guide students toward constructive ideological beliefs (Ouyang, 2024).

In this context, ideological and political education must adapt to the digital world by incorporating new methods of engagement while combating harmful online narratives (Sha, 2023).

3. CHALLENGES IN CONDUCTING IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION FOR GENERATION Z STUDENTS

While the internet offers numerous opportunities for ideological and political education, it also presents several challenges, especially in addressing the needs and behaviors of Generation Z students.

- **Information Overload and Value Confusion:** Generation Z students are constantly exposed to a vast amount

of information online, much of it contradictory or misleading. This information overload can lead to confusion about values and beliefs, as students may struggle to navigate between multiple perspectives and conflicting opinions. Without proper guidance, it is easy for them to become disengaged from traditional ideological education or adopt fragmented, superficial understandings of complex issues (Yang, 2024).

- **Virtual Social Interaction and Disconnection from Reality:** Many of Generation Z's interactions take place in virtual environments, such as social media platforms and online gaming communities. This virtual world can create a disconnect from real-world societal values, making it harder for students to engage with political and ideological content that is tied to concrete social issues. Ideological education in the digital age must address this challenge by making the content more relevant and engaging to students' lived experiences (Zeng, 2025).
- **Individualism and Rebellious Attitudes:** Generation Z is characterized by a strong sense of individuality, as well as a tendency toward questioning authority and established norms. This can make traditional top-down ideological and political education less effective. Students are more likely to reject educational content that they perceive as authoritarian or disconnected from their personal interests and values. This calls for more innovative and flexible approaches that respect students' autonomy while guiding them toward constructive societal values (Du, 2024).

4. STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE ONLINE IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION

To address these challenges, several strategies can be implemented to ensure the effectiveness of online ideological and political education for Generation Z students.

- **Creativity and Interactivity:** In order to capture the attention of Generation Z students, online ideological education should embrace creativity and interactivity. Content should not be limited to traditional lectures or articles but should include interactive elements like online discussions, quizzes, and participatory events. The use of social media platforms, live-streaming, and short videos can help make ideological education more engaging and relatable to students (Yang, 2024).
- **Establishing Positive Online Role Models:** One effective approach to online ideological education is to create and promote positive online role models who embody the values and beliefs that the education seeks to instill. These role models can be public figures, celebrities, or ordinary students who actively promote social responsibility, ethical behavior, and civic engagement. Social media can amplify their influence, providing students with role models who inspire positive action both online and offline (Ouyang, 2024).
- **Enhancing Critical Thinking and Media Literacy:** Given the vast amount of information available online, it is essential to equip Generation Z students with critical thinking skills and media literacy. This will enable them to critically evaluate online content, distinguish between credible and misleading information, and make informed decisions about the values they adopt. Integrating lessons on media literacy into online ideological education will empower students to navigate the complexities of the digital world and engage more thoughtfully with political and ideological content (Sha, 2023).
- **Combining Online and Offline Approaches:** While online platforms provide an essential tool for reaching Generation Z students, face-to-face interaction remains valuable for fostering deeper connections and discussions. Combining online education with offline activities, such as group discussions, seminars, and field visits, can create a more comprehensive and engaging learning experience. This hybrid approach ensures that students can connect theoretical concepts with real-world applications, strengthening their understanding of ideological and political issues (Zeng, 2025).

5. CASE STUDIES AND EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL ONLINE IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION

Several universities and institutions in China have already begun to experiment with online ideological education for Generation Z students, achieving positive results. For example, some universities have used WeChat public accounts to disseminate educational content, create online discussion groups, and organize live-streamed lectures featuring experts in various fields. This has helped to create a more interactive and personalized learning

environment.

Another successful example is the use of short videos on platforms such as Douyin to promote ideological education. These videos often feature engaging storytelling, current social issues, and discussions on core socialist values, reaching millions of young people in an accessible and relatable format.

At Jiangxi Normal University (where the author works), they have developed a blended model of online and offline ideological education, combining WeChat groups, interactive online workshops, and offline seminars to engage students in discussions on social responsibility, ethics, and national development. This model has seen positive feedback from students, who appreciate the flexibility and interactivity it offers.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the internet has become an indispensable tool for ideological and political education in the digital age. For Generation Z students, whose lives are deeply intertwined with the internet, online education offers a unique opportunity to foster meaningful discussions on values, ethics, and social responsibility. However, this new paradigm also presents significant challenges, including information overload, virtual disconnection, and individualism.

By embracing creative, interactive, and hybrid educational strategies, and by leveraging positive online role models and media literacy, we can overcome these challenges and develop more effective online ideological education. As we look to the future, it is essential to continue exploring innovative ways to engage Generation Z students in a digital environment that is ever-changing, ensuring that ideological and political education remains relevant and impactful in the New Era.

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