

Three-dimensional Collaborative Model: The Experience and Contemporary Implications of Youth Ideological and Political Education of the Communist Party of China During the Yan'an Period

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ABSTRACT

The Yan'an period was the foundational stage for the Communist Party of China's youth ideological and political education system. By establishing a three-dimensional collaborative education model that integrates theoretical education, practical training, and cultural immersion, the Party successfully molded the youth into a vanguard force for the revolution. The research reveals that the Yan'an experience offers three significant implications for contemporary youth education: constructing a cognitive cultivation mechanism that unifies subjectivity and contemporaneity, building an ability empowerment platform that combines scenario-based and practical approaches, and creating a value recognition space that integrates immersive and resonant elements.

Keywords: Yan'an period, Youth ideological and political education, Three-dimensional collaborative model, Sinicization of Marxism.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Yan'an period was a critical phase in the Chinese Communist Party's thirteen-year regional governance in northern Shanxi. Under extremely difficult conditions, the Party placed great emphasis on the ideological and political education of young people. By providing systematic theoretical education, rich practical activities, and diverse forms of propaganda, it effectively ignited the revolutionary fervor of the youth, strengthened their ideals and beliefs, and enhanced their practical abilities, injecting vigorous vitality into the revolutionary cause.

This valuable experience clearly demonstrates that ideological and political education for youth is a vital means of uniting strength and driving progress. Today, amid a complex and ever-changing domestic and international landscape, strengthening ideological and political education for young people is of significant practical importance. It is a key measure for cultivating

builders and successors of socialism and an essential guarantee for realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

2. HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE OF YOUTH IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION IN THE YAN'AN PERIOD FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE THREE-DIMENSIONAL COLLABORATIVE MODEL

In essence, youth ideological and political education is a process of disseminating the Party's ideology, universally recognized social values, and behavioral norms to young people, helping them establish a correct worldview, outlook on life, and values, thereby forming correct ways of thinking and patterns of behavior.¹ It is a comprehensive

1. Ni Bangwen. On Youth-Oriented Ideological and Political Education[J], People's Tribune · Academic Frontiers, 2024, (14): 81.

concept, encompassing both formal teaching within school classrooms and extracurricular practical activities, as well as the subtle influences of social life.

During the Yan'an period, the Party's youth ideological and political work was carried out with particular vigor and success. The "three-dimensional collaborative education model" it constructed—"theoretical education to consolidate the foundation, practical tempering to hone character, and cultural immersion to cultivate sentiment"—formed an interlinked educational system that achieved the organic unity of cognitive enhancement, behavioral shaping, and emotional identification. The main components of this model are as follows:

2.1 Theoretical Education Dimension: Constructing the Cognitive System of the Sinicization of Marxism

During the Anti-Japanese War, Comrade Mao Zedong profoundly realized that it was necessary to integrate the basic principles of Marxism with China's specific reality and systematically expounded this idea. He attached great importance to theoretical education and actively organized cadres and youth to study Marxist classics such as *Das Kapital* and *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, striving to enhance the theoretical level of the revolutionary ranks.

Based on summarizing the practical experience of the Chinese revolution, Chinese Communists clearly recognized the need to break away from dogmatic imitation of Soviet experience and establish a Marxist education system suited to China's national conditions. In 1937, Mao Zedong creatively put forward the significant proposition of the "Sinicization of Marxism" and wrote important works such as *On Practice* and *On Contradiction*. These writings provided theoretical support for Marxist theoretical education and served as ideological weapons guiding the practice of the Chinese revolution.

The Yan'an period was a crucial stage for the theoretical construction of the Communist Party of China. By integrating the basic principles of Marxism with China's specific practice, a Marxist theoretical system with Chinese characteristics—Mao Zedong Thought—was gradually formed. The establishment of this theoretical innovation marked the theoretical maturity of the Communist Party of

China and laid a solid ideological foundation for the victory of the Chinese revolution.

Through innovative approaches such as the Rectification Movement and the construction of cadre school systems, Marxist theoretical education during the Yan'an period cultivated a large number of revolutionary youth with firm beliefs, laying the practical foundation for the Sinicization of Marxism. The principles advocated during this time, such as "integrating theory with practice" and "seeking truth from facts," remain core tenets of the Communist Party of China's ideological construction to this day.

Looking ahead, in the face of profound changes unseen in the world in a century, the Communist Party of China should, building upon the fine tradition of theoretical education from the Yan'an period, base itself on the characteristics of youth in the new era and the needs of social development, and promote the deep integration of Marxist theoretical education with digital technology and its close combination with the practice of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Through localized interpretation, contemporary expression, and popular dissemination, the power of Marxist truth can be continuously transformed into the spiritual driving force for national development, cultivating more 时代新人 (Shídài xīnrén, people of the era) equipped with both theoretical literacy and practical ability for the realization of national rejuvenation.

2.2 Practical Training Dimension: Creating a Tempering Ground for the Unity of Knowledge and Action

During the Yan'an period, the Communist Party of China regarded the cultivation of young people's practical abilities as a key link in enhancing their overall quality, and systematically promoted practical education through diversified models. The Party organization carefully designed practical carriers such as productive labor and military training, establishing a multi-level system of social practice activities. This enabled young people to enhance their abilities through practice, laying the foundation for undertaking revolutionary missions.

In the face of the severe economic situation in the Shanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region, to achieve the goal of self-sufficiency, the Party Central Committee launched a large-scale production movement, extensively mobilizing young people to participate in production practices such as land reclamation and textile production. A

large number of young people from urban and rural areas became the main force in agricultural production. This initiative not only alleviated the predicament of material shortages but also provided an important practical platform for young people. Taking the development of Nanniwan as an example, over 3,000 officers and soldiers transformed the barren land into "the Jiangnan of Northern Shanxi," with young people playing a key role in this process. Through forms such as "labor competition boards" and "production model evaluation meetings," the concept of "relying on our own efforts to be well-fed and well-clothed" was internalized into the revolutionary will of the young people.

By deeply participating in agricultural production, young people not only mastered basic production skills but also cultivated a willful quality of hard work and deepened their understanding of the value of labor. This practical experience enabled young people to achieve a revolutionary transformation in their ideological awareness, values, and behavioral patterns, resulting not only in abundant material production outcomes but also in the sublimation of their spiritual world.

The successful experience of practical education during the Yan'an period indicates that effective ideological and political education must break through the stereotype of preaching, transform theoretical cognition into conscious action through embodied practice, and achieve a revolutionary transformation of the subjective world while reforming the objective world. This is precisely the creative application of Marxist practical philosophy in the field of youth education, providing an important pathway for cultivating revolutionaries in the new era.

2.3 Cultural Immersion Dimension: Creating an Immersive Environment for Revolutionary Spirit

During the Yan'an period, the Communist Party of China, through systematic cultural governance strategies, constructed an immersive environment for cultivating the revolutionary spirit, achieving an organic integration of ideological development and cultural practice. This cultural immersion project was rooted in institutionalized organizational development, relying on specialized cultural institutions to establish a core network for disseminating the revolutionary spirit. The establishment of the New China Bookstore formed

a distribution hub for Marxist works, while the Lu Xun Academy of Arts systematically trained revolutionary cultural and artistic workers in literature, drama, music, and other fields. These institutions not only undertook cultural production functions but also integrated cultural practice into the revolutionary mobilization system through organized operations.

Building on this organizational foundation, the border region developed a multi-dimensional cultural dissemination system. The literary supplements of Liberation Daily and publications such as Chinese Culture formed a print media matrix, covering the vast majority of administrative villages in the border region; woodcut exhibitions, touring drama performances, and folk song concerts created mobile cultural landscapes, with the opera *The White-Haired Girl* attracting cumulative audiences of over ten thousand people; the widespread establishment of cultural clubs and mobile libraries fostered a cultural ecosystem where "everywhere becomes a classroom." This all-encompassing dissemination model deeply embedded revolutionary culture into the fabric of daily life.

The Party organization innovatively promoted participatory cultural practices, encouraging youth to transition from cultural recipients to active practitioners. The "Culture to the Countryside" movement organized young intellectuals to go deep into rural areas, improving mass literacy through literacy classes, winter schools, and night schools; it guided the masses to participate in activities such as printmaking and drama adaptation, resulting in a wealth of grassroots literary and artistic works; situational platforms like "grievance airing meetings" and "storytelling sessions" transformed abstract revolutionary theories into concrete emotional experiences. This deep participation mechanism enabled youth to internalize values through cultural production.

Through the tripartite mechanism of organizational construction, multi-dimensional dissemination, and subject-oriented practice, the cultural immersion model successfully created an immersive environment for nurturing the revolutionary spirit. In continuous cultural interactions, young people not only enhanced their knowledge and skills but also underwent a reconstruction of their values — closely linking personal destiny with the revolutionary cause and forming a stable ideological identity. This practical paradigm of embedding cultural governance into

social transformation provides an important reference for contemporary ideological development.

3. CONTEMPORARY INSIGHTS FROM YOUTH IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION DURING THE YAN'AN PERIOD

The three-dimensional collaborative education model formed during the Yan'an period — “theoretical education to solidify foundations, practical training to temper character, and cultural immersion to nurture sentiment” — provides a historical frame of reference and theoretical framework for youth ideological and political education in the new era. Under the strategic requirement of “cultivating a new generation capable of undertaking the mission of national rejuvenation,” it is essential to build upon historical experience and integrate contemporary characteristics to construct a comprehensive education system of “theoretical guidance, practical empowerment, and cultural cultivation,” thereby achieving a creative transformation of historical experience to meet modern needs.

3.1 Dimension of Theoretical Education: Constructing a Cognitive Cultivation Mechanism Integrating Subjectivity and Contemporary Relevance

During the Yan'an period, the effective dissemination of Marxist theory and the cognitive construction among the youth were achieved through the localization of theoretical interpretation and the interactivization of teaching methods. Building on this foundation, contemporary youth ideological and political education can further refine a theoretical education model of “digital empowerment + subject construction” to activate young people's subjective initiative in theoretical learning.

3.1.1 Building a Precision-oriented Theoretical Supply System

Contemporary educators can draw inspiration from the Yan'an period's tradition of integrating theory with practice. By leveraging big data technology, they can construct dynamic models of youth theoretical learning. This allows for the development of a layered and categorized theoretical education content system tailored to the

cognitive characteristics and growth needs of different groups. For instance, Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era can be translated into an explanatory framework that balances scholarly rigor and approachability. Utilizing diverse methods such as thematic seminars, case-based teaching, and scenario simulations, educators can guide young people to deepen their understanding of Marxist standpoints, viewpoints, and methods through analyzing international situations and social hot topics, thereby cultivating a “problem-oriented” theoretical thinking habit. The use of digital technologies, including big data analysis platforms, can help teachers accurately grasp students' ideological dynamics and achieve personalized teaching, enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of theoretical education.

3.1.2 Constructing a Long-term Mechanism for Ideological Guidance

The government can establish a closed-loop educational mechanism of “theoretical learning - practical verification - reflective improvement,” drawing on the systematic design of ideological education from the Yan'an period. This involves constructing a theoretical literacy assessment system encompassing dimensions such as political identification, logical analysis, and innovative application. There is a need to integrate educational resources from schools, society, and the internet to create a theoretical matrix for “inclusive ideological and political education”. This promotes the transformation of theoretical education from one-way indoctrination to two-way interaction, and extends it from periodic learning to continuous cultivation, ultimately forming a theoretical immersion ecosystem where classroom teaching, practical cultivation, and cyberspace work synergistically. Efforts should be made to build an integrated, intelligent, open, and shared “digital ideological and politics” new ecology, leveraging digital technologies to extract effective data that helps pool national strength, foster a sense of family and country, and cultivate and practice socialist core values.

3.2 Capacity-building Through Practice: Establishing a Capacity-enabling Platform Integrating Scenario-based and Practical Approaches

During the Yan'an period, practical forms such as productive labor and military training were

employed to cultivate a practice-oriented character in youth, integrating knowledge with action. Contemporary youth ideological and political education must align with national strategic needs, building a “practice-based education community” to empower young people to hone their skills through serving society and addressing real-world problems:

3.2.1 Creation of Immersive Practical Scenarios

Contemporary schools should inherit the problem-oriented and goal-driven approach of practical education from the Yan'an period. By integrating real-world contexts such as rural revitalization, technological innovation, and grassroots governance, they should establish diverse practical bases and organize youth participation in hands-on projects like policy research, social services, and technological breakthroughs. Through project-based operations and research-oriented studies, contemporary schools should guide youth to apply theoretical knowledge in analyzing and solving problems within authentic scenarios, achieving a progression from knowledge acquisition to capability transformation.

3.2.2 Construction of a Socialized Capacity-building System

Contemporary schools can draw on the organizational experiences of the Yan'an period, such as the “cultural light cavalry” and “production shock teams,” by forming theoretical outreach groups, volunteer service teams, and innovation and entrepreneurship teams. This will encourage youth to strengthen their sense of responsibility while contributing to national strategies. Establishing a cross-disciplinary practice mentorship database and inviting industry leaders to provide practical guidance will help youth translate theoretical literacy into methodologies for solving complex problems. Through case studies, experience reviews, and project roadshows, this approach will foster a practical character of “daring to take responsibility and excelling in execution.”

3.3 Cultural Immersion Dimension: Creating a Value Identification Space Integrating Immersion and Resonance

During the Yan'an period, emotional penetration and value identification with

revolutionary culture were achieved through carriers such as literary creations and ceremonial activities. Contemporary youth ideological and political education must leverage digital technology and cultural innovation to reconstruct the dissemination paradigm of red culture, forming a cultural-psychological chain among youth of “historical resonance—present identification—future inheritance”:

3.3.1 Innovation of Multimodal Cultural Products

Contemporary ideological and political teachers should carry forward the Yan'an era principle of literature and art serving the people, integrating red resources with modern communication technologies to create cultural products that are both ideological and artistic. Through formats such as animations, documentaries, and interactive visuals, revolutionary history can be transformed into perceptible and participatory cultural experiences. For example, by developing immersive red culture theme projects, youth can understand the underlying logic of historical events through role-playing and scenario reenactments, achieving the transformation of red culture from “symbolic representation” to “emotional identification.”

3.3.2 Establishment of a Regular Ritual Education Mechanism

Contemporary ideological and political teachers can innovate educational forms for traditional festivals and memorial days, drawing on the Yan'an period's honor recognition system to construct a value guidance system for youth in the new era. Through solemn ceremonies, model presentations, thematic exhibitions, and other activities, emotional identification with socialist core values can be strengthened. By exploring the contemporary connotations of the Yan'an Spirit and utilizing new media formats such as short videos and live streaming, values like “self-reliance” and “hard struggle” can be deeply integrated into the daily lives of youth, forming a cultural narrative with contemporary resonance.

4. CONCLUSION

The three-dimensional synergistic education model of the Yan'an period was, in essence, a successful exploration by the Communist Party of China in integrating ideological and political

education with the laws of youth development, demonstrating the systemic role of theory, practice, and culture in the educational process. In the digital age, only by adhering to the synergistic logic of "theoretical education anchoring the heart, practical tempering strengthening capabilities, and cultural immersion forging the spirit" can we resolve the issues of fragmentation and superficiality present in youth ideological and political education. This approach cultivates builders and successors of socialism who possess both profound theoretical literacy and the ability to shoulder the heavy responsibilities of the era. This transformation serves not only as an academic interpretation of historical experience but also as a contemporary response to the original aspiration of "fostering talents for the Party and cultivating capable individuals for the country." It provides a referential theoretical framework and practical pathway for ideological and political education of youth in the new era.

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