

Integrating College Students' Social Practice with Ideological and Political Education in the Context of Rural Revitalization: A Pathway Toward Synergistic Talent Development

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Abstract

Under China's national strategy of comprehensively promoting rural revitalization, the fundamental mission of higher education—cultivating virtue through education—has acquired new contemporary significance. This paper explores how college students' social practice, a critical component of holistic education, can be organically integrated into the ideological and political education (IPE) system, with rural revitalization serving as both the practical arena and value orientation. The study first examines the rich educational resources and timely opportunities that rural revitalization offers for IPE, then critically reflects on prevalent issues such as the weakening of ideological orientation and the “two-skin” phenomenon (i.e., disconnection between practice and IPE). The core contribution lies in proposing a four-dimensional integration framework—encompassing goals, content, methodology, and evaluation—to realize the “ideologization” of social practice and the “practicalization” of IPE. Through strategies such as strengthening value guidance, optimizing practice content, innovating organizational models, and refining evaluation mechanisms, this approach aims to cultivate a new generation of talents who understand, love, and are committed to agriculture and rural development, thereby serving the dual objectives of talent development and rural revitalization.

Keywords

Rural revitalization; social practice; ideological and political education; integration pathway; educational efficacy

1. Introduction: Context and Significance

The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China explicitly called for “comprehensively promoting rural revitalization” and emphasized “prioritizing agricultural and rural development,” setting a clear direction for China's “three-rural” (agriculture, rural areas, and farmers) work in the new era. The *Rural Revitalization*

Promotion Law further institutionalizes this strategy, identifying education, science and technology, and talent as pivotal pillars for rural transformation. As primary sites for talent cultivation and ideological guidance, higher education institutions are ethically and strategically positioned to actively engage with this national agenda and fulfill their core mission of “cultivating virtue through education” (*lideshuren*).

Concurrently, contemporary ideological and political education (IPE) in Chinese universities faces the pressing challenge of translating theoretical knowledge into authentic values and actions. While classroom instruction effectively conveys doctrinal content, it often fails to foster deep emotional resonance or value internalization. Social practice—serving as a vital bridge between theory and reality—offers a potent yet underutilized vehicle for moral and civic development. Rural communities, as foundational units of Chinese society, provide authentic contexts for national conditions education and serve as natural classrooms for fostering ideals and beliefs.

However, many current social practice initiatives suffer from superficial engagement—prioritizing form over substance, technical skills over ideological reflection—and remain disconnected from the actual needs of rural revitalization. This “two-skin” problem undermines the educational potential of practice activities.

This study therefore investigates the deep integration of college students’ social practice with IPE within the framework of rural revitalization. It aims to overcome the dichotomy between practice and ideology by proposing a coherent, systematic pathway that aligns objectives, coordinates content, innovates methods, and refines evaluation—thereby contributing theoretical insights and practical models for constructing a “great ideological and political course” (*da sixiangzheng zhi ke*) and implementing the “three-all” education paradigm (*san quan yu ren*: involving all staff, whole process, and all dimensions).

2. Theoretical Foundations: The Intrinsic Logic of Integration

A. Rural Revitalization as Fertile Ground for Ideological and Political Education

Rural China encapsulates the nation’s social, economic, and cultural realities. Immersion in rural settings enables students to directly observe urban–rural disparities, regional imbalances, and societal transformations, thereby deepening their understanding of national policies and developmental challenges. Moreover, rural communities embody traditional virtues—diligence, mutual aid, filial piety, and patriotism—that vividly manifest core socialist values. Participating in rural development is, in essence, an immersive moral education experience.

Critically, rural revitalization offers a tangible pathway for youth to align personal aspirations with national imperatives. The strategic logic that “a strong nation requires strong agriculture” can inspire students to embrace the ethos of “under-

standing agriculture, loving rural areas, and caring for farmers” (zhi nong, ai nong, xing nong), transforming them from passive observers into active contributors.

B. Social Practice as the “Transducer” and “Touchstone” of IPE

Grounded in Marxist epistemology, practice is the sole criterion for testing truth. When divorced from lived experience, IPE risks becoming abstract dogma. Social practice facilitates “learning by doing” and “understanding through action,” enabling students to validate classroom theories in real-world contexts and progress from cognitive awareness to emotional commitment and behavioral embodiment. For instance, conducting governance surveys in villages allows students to internalize the “people-centered” development philosophy; teaching or assisting farmers deepens their grasp of the mass line.

Furthermore, such practice cultivates essential competencies—field research, communication, teamwork, and problem-solving—core attributes of the new-era talent profile.

C. The Core Principle: Unity of Knowledge and Action (*Zhi Xing He Yi*)

Rural revitalization provides direction for *action*, IPE infuses *knowledge* with moral purpose, and social practice constructs the bridge for their *integration*. This triadic synergy realizes the organic unity of value formation, capability development, and knowledge acquisition—fully aligning with the “cultivating virtue through education” mandate. Only by embedding ideological elements throughout the practice process can social practice evolve into a “mobile ideological and political classroom.”

3. Current Challenges in Integration

Despite growing recognition of integration, several systemic barriers persist:

- 1. Misaligned Objectives:** Social practice is often reduced to a procedural requirement or résumé-building exercise, marginalizing its ideological and educational functions.
- 2. Disjointed Content Design:** Projects frequently lack alignment with the five pillars of rural revitalization (industry, ecology, culture, governance, and livelihoods) and show weak connections to students’ academic disciplines, leading to “learning–doing” disconnects. Ideological elements are seldom systematically integrated.
- 3. Fragmented Organization:** Faculty advisors often serve in name only, with minimal pre-departure training or on-site guidance. Student teams are hastily assembled, and ideological mobilization is inadequate.
- 4. Superficial Evaluation:** Assessment overemphasizes tangible outputs (e.g., reports, media coverage) while neglecting intangible outcomes such as shifts in values, empathy, or civic responsibility. Longitudinal tracking mechanisms are absent.

These shortcomings severely limit the educational and societal impact of social practice.

4. A Four-Dimensional Integration Framework

To address these challenges, this paper proposes an integrated model centered on **Goals–Content–Methods–Evaluation**.

A. Goal Integration: A Tripartite Framework of Values, Competencies, and Knowledge

Value-Oriented Goals: Prioritize fostering “agricultural sentiment,” social responsibility, and confidence in China’s institutional path.

Competency Goals: Develop rural-specific skills—e.g., field research, project planning, digital literacy, and grassroots engagement.

Knowledge Goals: Encourage application of disciplinary knowledge to rural challenges (e.g., smart agriculture by agronomy students; governance assessments by sociology majors), promoting reciprocal learning.

B. Content Integration: Thematic, Project-Based, and Sustainable Programming

Align projects with the five dimensions of rural revitalization:

STEM/Health Disciplines: Promote smart farming, environmental remediation, rural healthcare, and infrastructure planning.

Humanities/Social Sciences: Conduct cultural heritage documentation, intangible cultural heritage preservation, village regulation analysis, educational support, and governance studies.

Further, integrate course-based learning with IPE by situating course practicums in rural settings and explicitly linking them to ideological learning outcomes—extending “course-based ideological education” (*ke cheng si zheng*) into “practice-based ideological education” (*shi jian si zheng*).

C. Methodological Integration: Dual Mentorship, Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration, and Full-Cycle Immersion

Dual Mentorship: Assign each team both a **professional mentor** (for technical guidance) and an **ideological mentor** (for value cultivation).

Multi-Actor Collaboration: Establish partnerships among universities, local governments, agribusinesses, and village committees to co-design, implement, and sustain practice projects.

Full-Cycle Ideological Immersion:

Pre-practice: Policy briefings, rural context seminars, safety training, and ideological mobilization.

During practice: “Field classrooms,” “village dialogues,” and “thematic youth league activities” with co-living and co-laboring experiences.

Post-practice: Reflection symposia, essay contests, photo exhibitions, and short-video productions to consolidate learning.

D. Evaluation Integration: Process- and Outcome-Based, Multi-Stakeholder Assessment

Diversified Metrics: Include reflective journals, field notes, interview transcripts, and peer assessments alongside final reports, with emphasis on attitudinal and val-

ue changes.

Multi-Source Feedback: Incorporate evaluations from faculty, host organizations, team members, and—critically—rural residents.

Long-Term Impact Tracking: Monitor how practice experiences influence graduates' career choices (e.g., rural employment) and civic engagement through alumni surveys and policy impact assessments (e.g., adopted recommendations).

5. Conclusion and Outlook

In the era of rural revitalization, college students' social practice must transcend performative rituals to become a strategic vehicle for moral and civic formation. Deep integration with ideological and political education is not merely an institutional imperative but a national necessity.

The proposed four-dimensional framework—anchored in coherent goals, relevant content, innovative methods, and holistic evaluation—enhances both educational efficacy and rural development impact. Moving forward, sustained collaboration among universities, governments, and rural communities is essential to institutionalize this model through policy support, base construction, funding, and faculty development.

By transforming rural China into a “training ground” for youth and social practice into a “catalyst” for ideological growth, higher education can cultivate a new generation of talents who are truly “agriculturally literate, rurally committed, and farmer-centered”—thereby contributing youthful energy to the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation.

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