

Integration Pathways for College Students' Ideological and Political Education and Rural Service Practice in the Rural Revitalization Strategy

Yunli Xian

Party School of CPC Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region Committee, Ethnic and Religious Theory Teaching and Research Department, Urumqi, Xinjiang, 830002, China

ABSTRACT

Against the national strategy for comprehensively advancing rural revitalization, guiding university students to understand and serve rural communities addresses fundamental questions concerning higher education: "What kind of individuals should be cultivated? How should they be cultivated? For whom should they be cultivated?" This paper delves into the challenges encountered at three levels—university mechanisms, practical settings, and student agency—during integrating ideological and political education with rural service practices. This analysis proposes integration pathways to enable university students to strengthen their ideals and convictions while honing their skills through immersive rural experiences and community service, thereby achieving a harmonious unity of personal growth and societal development.

KEYWORDS

Ideological and political education; Rural service practice; Rural revitalization; Social practice

1 Introduction

Currently, China is advancing its rural revitalization strategy, which requires indispensable talent support. As a vital group possessing innovative vitality and specialized knowledge, college students can bring new knowledge and technologies to rural areas through their participation in rural service. Simultaneously, the vast rural regions provide them with a practical base for understanding national conditions and tempering their willpower. As ideological and political education in higher education undergoes a critical transformation, extending classroom learning to the frontlines of rural revitalization promotes the integration of knowledge and action, significantly enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of such education. Consequently, exploring strategies to integrate ideological and political education with rural service practices holds profound significance. This study addresses this need by thoroughly analyzing the practical challenges in combining these two domains. By examining their specific manifestations, it explores feasible integration pathways to provide actionable methods for empowering rural revitalization through education. The ultimate goal is cultivating talents with ideological and political literacy and service capabilities.

2 The logical foundation for integrating college students' ideological and political education with rural service practice

2.1 Core talent development needs of the rural revitalization strategy

Implementing the Rural Revitalization Strategy requires experts and scholars with modern agricultural knowledge to enhance product quality and production efficiency. The development of primary, secondary, and tertiary industries also demands many creative young talents with integration capabilities to combine agricultural production with emerging sectors such as leisure tourism, culture, and wellness, thereby providing multifaceted drivers for rural economic growth. Regarding rural cultural heritage—including traditional crafts, folk arts, and ancient architectural sites—the lack of inheritance and inadequate documentation necessitates the involvement and guidance of university students majoring in history, sociology, anthropology, art design, and related fields. In rural governance, grassroots organizations in many rural areas face challenges such as an aging membership structure, slow knowledge renewal, outdated governance methods, and limited improvements in efficiency^[1]. The involvement of law, public administration, and sociology students can introduce new perspectives and working methods, thereby standardizing village management processes and significantly enhancing public service efficiency and overall service capacity.

2.2 The intrinsic alignment between ideological and political education and rural service practice

A key objective of ideological and political education in higher education is to disseminate advanced ideas, helping students establish correct worldviews, outlooks on life, and values, thereby cultivating morally upright, idealistic, and well-rounded talents. The principle of "unity of knowledge and action" serves as the guiding philosophy for rural service,

motivating students to apply their acquired knowledge to test and deepen their understanding within the practical context of rural society. Thus, the ultimate objectives of "cultivating virtue through education" and "unifying knowledge with action" are highly aligned. From an educational perspective, rural service practices transform grand themes like rural revitalization and common prosperity—central to ideological and political education—into tangible, experiential content for students. This hands-on engagement allows them to genuinely perceive the needs of the people, clarify their own direction of effort, and complete the "closed loop" of ideological and political education ^[2].

3 Practical challenges in integrating ideological and political education with rural service practices for college students

3.1 Fragmentation in university integration mechanisms

Universities exhibit pronounced fragmentation in integrating ideological and political education with rural service practices, primarily evident in curriculum design. Most institutions assign rural-themed social practice and professional internships to separate administrative departments, resulting in insufficient content coordination. Instructional staff primarily deliver macro-level theories, national policies, and value systems in classrooms, rarely guiding students on applying these theories to analyze real-world rural issues. Meanwhile, teams organizing fieldwork focus on activity logistics and safety, struggling to deepen students' theoretical understanding through practice. Theoretical instruction and practical components thus operate in parallel, failing to integrate. Additionally, practical teaching lacks long-term, systematic planning. Many universities concentrate rural service activities during winter and summer breaks, resulting in short durations and rushed preparations. Students are often limited to preliminary visits, surveys, and volunteer work. Evaluation methods fail to effectively assess changes in students' ideological understanding or the tangible value generated by their service actions. Assessments primarily focus on quantifiable metrics, indirectly incentivizing students to participate for credits or resume-building rather than genuine experiential learning and intellectual growth.

3.2 Insufficient support for rural practice settings

Many rural areas hoping to host university practice programs face significant shortcomings in hardware facilities, cooperation models, and demand alignment. Students encounter scattered accommodation, rudimentary sanitation, unstable internet connectivity, and inconvenient transportation. These logistical challenges drain considerable energy and raise safety concerns, making it difficult for universities to organize long-term, large-scale rural practice activities confidently. Many universities and rural areas lack established, official partnerships regarding cooperative mechanisms. Rural communities treat each practice activity as a one-off "event", lacking supporting operational frameworks ^[3]. Furthermore, some universities fail to thoroughly understand the genuine needs of rural communities when designing practice projects. This results in teams enthusiastically bringing prepared plans only to discover they are ill-suited to local realities. This disconnect in needs communication prevents students' services from being targeted effectively, failing to deliver tangible benefits to rural areas. This directly dampens the enthusiasm of both students and villagers.

3.3 Insufficient motivation among university students

Many students grow up and study in urban environments, forming their understanding and impressions of contemporary rural China primarily through media reports and literary depictions. These sources often provide incomplete or inaccurate information. Some students imagine the countryside as picturesque and poetic, while others perceive it as backward and harsh. This cognitive bias prevents them from approaching rural realities with objectivity and composure. When practical experiences clash with their preconceptions, the psychological gap often translates into disappointment and anxiety. Beyond cognitive issues, the disparity between students' practical skills and rural needs further erodes their confidence in participation. Rural service practice demands comprehensive, practical problem-solving skills that many students lack. When they arrive in villages with enthusiasm and find their knowledge seemingly useless, they often experience intense feelings of helplessness and frustration, diminishing their motivation for sustained engagement. The absence of long-term incentive mechanisms at the university and societal levels further undermines sustained participation. Currently, rewards for outstanding performance in rural service projects are primarily one-time honors, lacking effective linkage to long-term development pathways such as academic awards, graduate school admission preferences, or employment recommendations. This makes it difficult to motivate students toward long-term, deep engagement.

4 Integration pathways for college students' ideological and political education and rural service practice under the rural revitalization strategy

4.1 Establishing an integrated higher education system linking "curriculum - practice - evaluation"

Under the Rural Revitalization Strategy, the deep integration of college students' ideological and political education with rural service practice requires establishing an integrated education system that organically connects course instruction, practical training, and assessment evaluation. This necessitates integrating real-life narratives—such as grassroots rural cadres and returning youth leading communities toward prosperity—to illustrate how core socialist values like "dedication," "kindness," and "prosperity" manifest at the grassroots level. Inviting frontline practitioners to campus provides students with cutting-edge insights into rural development realities, equipping them with a problem-oriented mindset before entering rural settings ^[4]. Organize students to conduct thematic research in rural areas, applying learned social investigation methods to identify achievements and challenges in living environment improvements. Design and execute a small-scale, concrete service project based on these real-world needs. Regarding evaluation, process-oriented assessments gauge students' spirit of teamwork, communication attitudes with villagers, and problem-solving approaches when facing difficulties. Outcome-oriented assessment focuses on the tangible impacts generated by their service actions. This approach more authentically reflects the educational outcomes of integrating ideological and political education with rural practice, guiding students to value experiential learning and personal growth while recognizing the changes their actions bring to rural communities. This lays a solid educational foundation for merging ideological and political education with rural service practice.

4.2 Building a collaborative practice support platform

Under the rural revitalization strategy, establishing a tripartite practice support platform involving local authorities, enterprises, and universities is viable for deepening the integration of ideological and political education with rural service practices. Universities should actively engage with relevant local management units, formalizing mutual rights and obligations through agreements. Together, they can designate several rural areas as "Practical Training Bases for College Students' Ideological and Political Education and New Rural Construction." Rural areas should designate dedicated personnel to liaise with universities, accurately conveying needs and challenges in agricultural production, rural governance, cultural tourism, and other domains. Enterprises related to agriculture, online sales, and tourism development can participate as "career mentors." Concurrently, universities and local governments should jointly fund improvements to the training bases' basic accommodation, catering, sanitation, internet access, and transportation facilities. Universities should dispatch faculty experts to oversee student projects during practice while hiring experienced personnel from enterprises and local rural talent to provide localized guidance and resource support. Through this tripartite collaboration between universities, local governments, and enterprises, college students can engage in long-term, in-depth rural service practices, enhancing their ideological and political literacy and comprehensive capabilities.

4.3 Refining the "incentive-empowerment-leadership" mechanism for student participation

Participation mechanisms must be refined to deepen the integration of ideological and political education with rural service practices. At the incentive level, universities should establish specialized "Rural Revitalization Service" scholarships to financially reward outstanding student contributors financially, acknowledging their efforts and subsidizing expenses. Simultaneously, high-level, in-depth rural service outcomes should be equated with significant academic competition awards or scholarly achievements, receiving appropriate consideration in graduate school admissions, award evaluations, and other commendation processes. At the empowerment level, universities should provide pre-practice training to students, teaching them effective communication with villagers, new media operations, event planning, organizational skills, rural living safety knowledge, and emergency response methods ^[5]. During the practice period, on-campus academic advisors and off-campus field mentors should maintain close contact with students, providing timely professional guidance and psychological support. At the leadership level, ideological and political educators and academic advisors can organize seminars and sharing sessions to encourage students to reflect on the achievements and challenges they observe in rural areas. This helps them understand the profound significance of the national rural revitalization strategy and contemplate their social responsibilities as university students in the new era. Such activities achieve ideological and political education objectives, enabling students to contribute wisdom and strength to rural revitalization.

5 Conclusion

In summary, to integrate ideological and political education with rural service practices for college students, it is essential to establish an integrated educational system encompassing "curriculum-practice-evaluation," build collaborative platforms among universities, local governments, and enterprises, and implement a student participation mechanism based on "incentives-empowerment-guidance." This approach extends ideological and political education beyond theoretical classrooms into the vast rural landscape, achieving the organic unity of knowledge transmission, competency development, and value guidance. The deepening of this integration model requires continuous exploration and innovation from all parties to establish more stable and long-term cooperative mechanisms gradually. Ultimately, this will foster a win-win situation where college students gain education and develop their talents, while rural areas achieve sustainable development.

About the Author

Yunli Xian, Master's Degree, Teaching Assistant, Research Focus: Ethnic Theories.

References

- [1] Gong Jianting. Collaborative Innovation Pathways for College Students' Ideological and Political Education Oriented toward Serving Agriculture, Rural Areas, and Farmers [J]. *Agricultural Development and Equipment*, 2025, (08): 46-48.
- [2] Wang Fang, Dong Ruowen. Research on Practical Guidelines and Strategies for Ideological and Political Education of Rural College Students Under Employment Innovation Orientation [J]. *China Rice*, 2022, 28(05):139.
- [3] Chen Yuqiang, Yang Junwei, Liu Zhi, et al. Cultivation and Exploration of College Students' Ideological and Political Education System from the Perspective of Rural Revitalization [J]. *Data*, 2022, (06):75-77. 75-77.
- [4] Jiao Yipei. Exploring How Ideological and Political Education for Rural College Students in the New Era Can Support Rural Revitalization [J]. *Journal of Nuclear Agriculture*, 2022, 36(05): 1078.
- [5] Peng Binzhan. Research on the Impact of Ideological and Political Education for College Students on the Rural Revitalization Strategy [J]. *Chinese Fruit*, 2021, (11): 112.