

Embedding the Sense of Community for the Chinese Nation: A Three-Stage Model for K-16 Ideological Education Integration

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Abstract: The cultivation of a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation represents a fundamental strategic objective within contemporary China’s ideological and political education framework. Although policy directives have underscored the necessity of integrating this concept across the educational spectrum, systematic pedagogical frameworks for K-16 implementation remain underdeveloped. This paper proposes a Three-Stage Embedding Model designed to align educational content with the cognitive and psychological development of students from elementary school through university. The model delineates three distinct yet continuous phases: perceptual cognition and enlightenment in elementary education, rational identity and knowledge construction in secondary education, and mission responsibility and practical internalization in higher education. By analyzing the theoretical logic of integration and charting specific curricular and extracurricular pathways, this study argues that a developmentally appropriate, spiral curriculum is essential for transforming abstract political concepts into internalized value systems. Furthermore, the paper identifies critical implementation challenges—including teacher competency, interdisciplinary coordination, and assessment mechanisms—and offers strategic recommendations for educational policymakers and practitioners.

Keywords: Community for the Chinese Nation; Ideological and Political Education; K-16 integration; Three-Stage Model; Value Internalization

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1. Introduction

The idea that we’re “a Community for the Chinese Nation” is now being used as a kind of main paradigm around how they handle the issues with their various different races and what it is exactly that makes up the entirety of who we consider ourselves as Chinese. In the past few years, it has been openly stated that we should emphasize the complete unity among all ethnic groups on our land, who share a common fate, history, and future. The “Chinese nation” sense of community was made the basic project of National unity and ethnic unity. Educationally, the Ministry of Education and other agencies have issued many directives over

the past several years that require integrating such awareness throughout the entire process of ideological and political education at all levels of schooling.

Though it is very hard because macro policy changes to specific things that are done on a day-by-day basis in schools is a bit harder, the current policies are more fragmented. This fragment is handled on an individual basis rather than as an incorporated element. Additionally, there seems to be some tendency towards a kind of univocality where identical content is provided to all groups regardless of their age group's cognition. Inevitably leads to a shallow grasp among primary school learners, a kind of cognitive dissonance or disengagement with university-level learners through this "one size fits all" methodology^[1].

As we fill some of those holes, here's a three-stage embedding model for K-16. Unlike the addition approach, "embedding" implies being integrated structurally, so the feeling of community gets into what already exists with the curriculum, campus culture, and how we do things socially. We know this is because our perception of something as valuable comes from spending time with it in a way that feels appropriate and meaningful. Therefore, by explicitly identifying which specific topics should be taught sequentially from primary school, through secondary school, to upper secondary education, teachers gain clarity on how to incorporate relevant content into their lesson plans for growing students. This approach also enables teachers to cover community awareness education through scientific methods, rather than focusing solely on its political dimension^[2].

2. Theoretical Logic and it has to be included.

Community consciousness has been integrated with K-16 education more than it just politically needed, and also has an educational and psychological basis.

2.1. The spiral curriculum and cognitive development

In Jerome Bruner's idea of a spiral curriculum, we could see that everything can be taught to every child on some reasonable basis at any time in their growth. Applied to the Community for the Chinese Nation it means we must keep revisiting over and over basic ideas—unity, diversity, common history, and a shared future—each more complexly abstractly with every new stage of student growth. In elementary school, they manifest themselves through stories and symbols, in the secondary school, the analysis of history and sociology, and, at university, criticism and application. Education has to bridge the gap between an emotional tie and a rational belief if there isn't such a spiral development^[3].

2.2. Moral development and internal value acquisition

Lawrence Kohlberg's stages of moral development, modern social learning theory said it would go from being external rule following to being internalized beliefs and values. Sense of community for the Chinese nation to be true it must pass the road from "know" (cognitive) to "feel" (affective) to "do" (behavioral). K-16 is where I'll find it on my path. Elementary education works with the feeling side of things through stories and rituals. Secondary school education is about getting smart with facts systems, while university concentrates more on how people behave themselves and think through socializing practices and connecting to a job^[4].

2.3. Social Identity and Cultural Psychology

And it doesn't talk only about mind's growth, how this sense of national identity grows in us through social psychological things. Social Identity Theory says people get self-worth from what groups they belong to. In terms of the Community for the Chinese Nation, education ought to enable a positive social identity that accommodates both ethnic uniqueness and national affiliation. Such a dual-identity model would prevent the sort of zero-sum logic so frequently applied to ethnicity. Moreover, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory states that learning is a result of society. The 'feeling of community' isn't really some sort of individual's mind-made thing; it's something we share all together—it gets passed down through talking, doing stuff, working with each other, rituals—you know that feeling when you're like, "oh yeah, I'm part of a group"? So, the school environment needs to be a "zone of proximal development," where children learn the value of unity and respect for others under the teacher's guidance and peer companionship^[5-7].

All of these have to combine with each other, which tells us that there needs to be an embedding process that has some kind of interaction or dialogue. It takes more than transferring some information, teachers need also create opportunities for intercultural discussion among the children so that they may discuss with one another on how to define themselves with respect to multiple backgrounds within a bigger country picture.

2.4. The Necessity of Systemic Integration

Fragmented education forms "value silos." If students meet with this aspect of China only via specialized classes like political theory or particular times such as ethnic unity month, it stays divided into sections and will never actually fully integrate. A full-on ecosystem kind of setup needs to be done where it's incorporated into all those subjects—language & literature, history, geography, arts, and also science stuff, for example, geo might show the linkages with regions' resources; history would be a place to look at mixing up all those cultures of different tribes; literature could do some sharing on a wide range of emotions from people from different tribes. Systemically embed, so that this consciousness would no longer be perceived as a political slogan, but rather as a basic reality of Chinese civilization and modern nation-building^[8].

2.5. Interdisciplinary synergy, ecological construction

In addition to this, there is also an ecological view towards curricular construction when one wishes to instill community consciousness within oneself. It means that we have got those two kinds of course, which are explicit and implicit. And at the same time, it includes Political theory's classes providing some theoretical basics and other subjects, for example, literature, history, or natural science as well. For example, geography shows how different places are physically related, whereas literature creates a feeling of similarity by sharing stories. This "curriculum ecology" makes sure that the community's sense doesn't seem like it's just a separate political responsibility, but instead something that is a basic part of all learning. Breaking down discipline walls, teachers create an all-around learning setting with lots of different ways of teaching the idea so the schoolwork becomes more believable and pleasing^[9].

3. The Three-Stage Embedding Model

This paper's main point is that the embedding procedure has been turned into three different developmental steps.

3.1. Stage One: Elementary school – Perceptual cognition and enlightenment

Developmental Goal: So that the child might grow an emotional connection with, an understanding of the basic culture for, as well as developing a feeling of being part of something through their senses and stories.

Now, children mostly work in the pre-operational and concrete operational stages of cognitive growth. And so with no abstract political concept. As a result, the way to do it was effective and perceptual.

Curricular Embedding: Write about “Beauty” and “Story,” in language and lit classes, show folktales of all ethnic groups as treasures for everybody; don’t make them seem like odd, unusual stuff. Music & Art: The variety of ethnic costumes, dance, and instruments is part of Chinese beauty. The main theme needs to be on friendship, mutual help, joy shared, not complex history, grievance, or theory^[10].

Symbolic Environment: Schooldom ought to have become a third instructor. Visual aspects like the idea of a group’s diversity can become part of the classroom and hall and playgrounds without being segregated. Ceremonies like raising of flags would have stories behind them about group effort and the same country marks.

Pedagogical Approach: Experiential learning has to be there. The days where we exchange our cultures, craft classes, and play together, all of them make us feel connected rather than to hear that word. And then the person teaching has to be some kind of story teller, and the emotion is going to be good for you, right? It’s more based on observation of their participation and how they’re emotionally feeling, rather than if they know the information or not.

Case Example: ‘The Story of Pomegranate Seeds’ Workshop

In a pilot programme in Xinjiang, Elementary School Teachers conducted a “Pomegranate Seeds” workshop where students from different ethnicities: Han, Uighur, Kazakh students collaborated and worked together in a mixed group by making one collage showing their common hometown, but each student had to bring an ethnic design from their own traditional culture and combine it with other designs. After the post-workshop interview, I found out that all students started seeing cultural differences as another art resource rather than a barrier. This practical activity changed the intangible idea of “unity in diversity” into a feeling of positive emotions.

Moreover, digital stories as well as interactive animations are used for visualization of some more abstract thoughts. At this stage, assessment should look at what they do, how interested they are—not how much has gone into learning it by heart but maybe using things such as a “growth portfolio” where the students’ involvement in all sorts of cultural events would be recorded.

3.2. Stage Two: Secondary school - Rationale, Identity, and Knowledge Construction

Developmental Goal: Establishing a rational understanding of ethnic relationships, historical connections, and the politics behind this social group through organized information and analytical skills.

Adolescents develop formal operations, which allow understanding abstract ideas, causality, and systems. Embedding needs to move from memory to thought and analysis.

Curricular Embedding: The concept should be based on some subject knowledge. History: The curriculum needs to put focus on “integration of different ethnicities as the main line for Chinese history.” And also highlight when there is unity with different resistance towards external invasion. Geography: students need to do analysis on different regions’ economic dependence on others as well as ecological complementarity. Politic/Ethical - theoretical basis of the Chinese nation’s community as Marxism, Traditional Chinese political thought, and others.

Critical Inquiry: Students must have permission for “Why?” & “How?” The case about fighting poverty in ethnic areas, infrastructure and policy to protect culture, there is solid demonstration of how the community does its thing in real time. Discussions and researching projects assist with getting through complicated stuff like different cultural things but still sticking together as one country, so you get to know what happens when people try splitting off based on their background (like some do), as well as looking at why it might not end up well if someone believes they’re better than all others (chauvinist).

Pedagogical Approach: Inquiry and project-based learning are essential. Teachers have to help build knowledge for their students, not just give them information. Interdisciplinary themed units such as ‘The Silk Road: Ethnic Exchange’ which links history with geography and literature. Include writing an essay, making the presentation, and writing up a research report to see if your mind has a deep analysis along with good logical flow.

Case Example: Silk Road Economic Belt Interdisciplinary Project

Secondary schools of Gansu Province: History and Geography joint creation project on the “Silk Road Economic Belt” students analyse historical trade paths and current infrastructural projects. Interviewed local business people coming from varied ethnicities and getting profits through cross-regional partnerships. Lastly, the output is a policy brief for increasing cultural tourism. It lets the pupils put down logic by applying it to facts around them, connecting the country’s growth with their ethnic groups.

Deepen rational identity by having an inquiry-based learning platform for students to access historical archive data of all the ethnic groups. Evaluation has moved into being able to think critically and to take a view on what’s going on today, whether a cultural mix is good or just separating yourself out, debate, writing an essay.

3.3. Stage Three: University mission responsibility and practical internalization

Developmental Goal: To make the sense of community into something professional mission and social responsibility that can be committed to for life. By practice-reflection-career.

The college kids are in an emerging age, making themselves for the career and the way they see things. The strategy for embedding has to work well and have something useful about it.

Curricular Embedding: The idea ought to get added to career teaching time in engineering students, it would imply having an understanding about national infrastructure strategy in ethnic regions for them; In medical students, it refers to the understanding that public health has equality when it comes to their knowledge, and also law students will need to comprehend the knowledge of the legal system as well as the ethnic region’s own law. Specialized ethnic theory, Sociology of Ethnicity and National Security course can be chosen as an optional major.

Social Practice: Internalization takes place via doing. The universities should make social practice in the ethnic region become their own institution rather than a tourist attraction. Internships, volunteer teaching, rural revival programs, and field studies—that’s like giving back to the community by getting involved. Reflection seminars after practice are very important to process our experience and link it with theory.

Campus Culture and Discourse: University campuses need to serve as little reproductions of the Chinese nation’s community. Intercultural dialogue forums, ethnic studies conference meetings, and organizations by students must have real interaction and exchange among them. Moving discourse past slogans and into the realm of academia and general public discussion. Let students do their own work and do research and public

service about ethnic unification.

Pedagogical Approach: And service learning, mentorship, and participation are also. Faculty needs to act as a partner and a guide so that they can take their career towards fulfilling the purpose of the nation. Assessments need to be based on portfolios—how high is the level of practice? Does someone think deeply about themselves, or not at all? Can they do some work out in the world?

Case Example: ‘Rural Revitalization’ service-learning program.

There was a university in Sichuan that formed a Service Learning Program. Medical and Agricultural Students were sent to spend four weeks in a Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Medical students did basic health checks for patients, and agriculture students improved yak husbandry. Through their lives and work amongst local households, they went from an understanding that had some theory to an honest feeling of empathy as well as duty. Reflection journals showed a large difference in the view of “national duty” from being something abstract to becoming a real job dedication.

Moreover, VR/AR virtual simulating classrooms can simulate history scenes or ethnic regions so that people who are unwilling or unable to go there may enjoy it as well. And the assessment mechanism has got to stress action competence, assessing the standard of social practice report writing, project feasibility as far as services go, and how thorough a critical reflection one does from an occupational point of view.

4. Implementation Pathways and Challenges

To take the three-step process into reality, we need to tackle system issues.

4.1. Teacher Competency and Training

The most serious limitation is teachers’ capability. Many instructors have insufficient interdisciplinary knowledge and teaching methods to insert the idea well. Elementary teachers may be unready for diverse cultures; secondary teachers might miss out on theory; university professors could find it difficult to link up ideas with working life.

Pathway: Build a hierarchical professional development framework. For K-12, embed ethnic education modules into teacher qualification and ongoing training. Universities create interdisciplinary teaching communities and offer grants for curriculum reform. Make a country-wide database full of wonderful stuff to learn at school and examples of what can happen.

4.2. Curriculum coordination and avoiding redundancy

Coordination is necessary, otherwise the spiral curriculum would end up as redundant drilling or unconnected parts.

Pathway: Implement the vertical curriculum map across K–16. Educational authorities have to provide some directions about learning progression by defining which main points of concept or competency are there for a certain grade band? The schools need to make up a cross-grade and cross-subject coordinating committee to inspect the material for its continuation. A digital curriculum platform helps with real-time sharing and alignment.

4.3. Assessment and Evaluation Mechanisms

We can’t get standard test results for things like worth and thoughts in people. Exam too often we do a test as

if it's some kind of test and only learn shallowly.

Pathway: Develop a multiple-dimensional evaluation structure. Younger kids use observation checklists/portfolios, and older ones have performance tasks/reflective journals/peers. The System: Go from output-based metrics (e.g., test scores) to process-based (e.g., curriculum integration quality, student engagement in social practice, campus climate survey).

4.4. Navigating cultural sensitivity and authenticity

Embedding has the danger of being tokenistic; it could also be worse and erase the true cultural distinctiveness under the guise of oneness. The Chinese people community is based on “unity in diversity”, not on same.

Pathway: A dialogue-oriented culture education; the content must be created jointly with people who represent the ethnic group so as to be genuine and honorable. Curriculums reviewed by panels should have ethnic scholars and community leaders, and emphasize how celebration of different- is the ground of unification, not division. Avoid stereotyping; make sure they're not one-dimensional nor of old representations.

Digital Empowerment & Resource Sharing

In this time in which we live, technology can make us feel like a sense of community that is unique. Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) can immerse students in different cultural experiences without breaking geography. Online platforms could promote collaboration between schools for students living on the coast and inside land to work on projects together as well. Moreover, large amounts of information analysis would assist teachers in monitoring pupils' value formation over time and offer suggestions for personal help. But we shouldn't use digital things in vain. I mean like using them in such a way that we could just call them tokens. The focus should be on real interactions and learning deeply; it's not about showing off the tech at all.

5. Conclusion

The promotion of a firm sense of group affiliation towards the Chinese ethnicity is a multi-generation program which necessitates an elaborate, developing answer in education. The three-stage embed model introduced by me provides a road map for achieving such an objective inside the K-16 system. If we line up education activities with kids' minds growing up, like how they get their eyes opened up at the start of the day and they start making things feel clearer as it gets to the middle of the road, then to them really feeling part and putting what goes on around them into action down the last part, teachers could cultivate very true, bouncy, alive ties to their motherland.

However, it depends more on how well it can actually be done than how pretty it sounds. We have to pour tons of time into developing our educators, building that large system-wide curriculum, coordinating new evaluation methods, and upholding sincere respect for local culture. The problems may be large, but so is what is at stake—both globally and internally. How will Chinese youth take this in, and make it their own for unity? Prosperity? Future? Schools must be prepared now: shift from policy documents to actual lessons, and turn ideas into real-world experiences for the next generation.

Future studies might take a longitudinal approach, following these children across the three stages to examine how their early experiences shape their later behaviors and social integration, among other relevant

outcomes. It would also be highly insightful to conduct cross-regional and cross-group comparisons to test whether the proposed model is universally applicable. As China continues to navigate the challenges of modernization and global integration, the task of schools in fostering national resilience and inclusiveness has become more critical than ever. Accordingly, this paper represents just a small step toward this broader goal: it contributes a modest effort to unpacking the concept that we, as Chinese people, belong to a shared community, and that this idea should be passed on to children and future generations.

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