

Application of the Use and Gratifications Approach in the Methods of Ideological and Political Education for College Students

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Abstract—The use and gratifications approach is an important theory in the study of the effects of mass media in communication. The use and gratifications approach examines the psychological and behavioral effects of the mass media from the perspective of the audience by analyzing the motivations of the audience to contact different media and what needs of the audience are met through these contacts. Applying the use and gratifications approach in the ideological and political education activities held for college students can help educators to understand students' psychological and behavioral needs, better choose and apply various carriers of ideological and political education, and improve the effectiveness of various methods in the ideological and political education of college students.

Keywords—*use and gratifications approach; ideological and political education of college students; methods*

I. INTRODUCTION

The use and gratifications approach examines the psychological and behavioral effects of mass communication on human beings from the perspective of the audience by analyzing the audience's motivation for using the medium and satisfying their demands. Different from the traditional way of thinking which only focuses on how the messages affect the audience, the use and gratifications approach emphasizes the role of the audience and highlights the status of the audience. The theory holds that the audience's active use of the media restricts the process of media communication and points out that the use of media is based entirely on individual needs and aspirations.

The generation of the use and gratifications approach is an important turning point in the history of communication research. Most of the previous communication researches were conducted from the perspective of the communicator, and focused on how the communicator influenced the audience, while the "use and gratifications approach" shifted the focus of research to the audience. The traditional theory holds that the main task of the media in the process of communication is to persuade the audience and the audience is passive, while the "use and gratifications approach" regards the audience as individuals with specific "needs", and it holds that the media contact activities held by the audience are actually the processes to meet their own specific needs and satisfy their

motivations. In order to improve the ideological and political education of college students, we need to fully learn from and apply the rational theories and methods in other disciplines. All the theories and methods that help to improve the effectiveness of ideological and political education and achieve the ideological and political education objectives should be rationally chosen and utilized. So that the ideological and political education work can be better carried out, and positive strategies and references can be provided for improving the media literacy education and value education of contemporary college students.

II. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE APPLICATION OF USE AND GRATIFICATIONS APPROACH IN THE IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION METHODS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

According to the use and gratifications approach, in the process of information dissemination, in order to win more choices and acceptance of the audience, the mass media must fully consider the psychology and needs of the audience, understand what they need and what they resist, and it also needs to understand the motivation of the audience to choose the media. Only by understanding the needs that the audiences hope to meet through using various media can the mass media communicate information to the audience purposefully, and can the information resources transmitted and provided by the media be accepted. Only in this way can the mass media achieve satisfactory communication effects. It is the same to apply this theory to the ideological and political education methods of college students. The disseminators of educational information must first understand the needs of students, take students as the main body, know their activities and motivations of using various media, and understand what kind of satisfaction they have achieved in this process, in order to better exert beneficial influences on them in the teaching process, and to achieve the purpose of improving the quality of students in all aspects.

A. The Application of the Use and Gratifications Approach Helps to Better Understand the Psychological and Behavioral Needs of College Students and Improve the Pertinence of Ideological and Political Education of College Students

In today's ideological and political education activities of college students, more emphasis is placed on the subjective status of students, and students are placed in the center. And the psychological and ideological needs of students in the classroom and in daily life should be understood by educators to make the content or form of education better accepted by students. In modern society, people's living space is unprecedentedly wide, the channels for receiving information are diverse, and people's life is colorful. They are no longer confined to certain circles and accept certain fixed information and thoughts. Especially for contemporary college students, there are remarkable era characteristics in their thoughts and knowledge reserves. They have so-called "personality" and have their own unique views on various things. However, in the context of globalization, the openness of the world has made the various values of the West gradually spread in China, and the majority of college students have been affected more or less. This is also a reason for the diversification of contemporary college students' values. Therefore, as an ideological and political educator, it is necessary to actively understand the motivations and needs of students in their thoughts and behaviors, to understand what they are interested in, and to actively guide them to develop the interests that have a positive impact on learning or life in the process.

B. The Application of Use and Gratifications Approach Can Enhance the Effect of Information Dissemination in Ideological and Political Education

The use and gratifications approach belongs to the category of the research of mass communication effect. In communication studies, the use of this theory is to improve the effectiveness of various information dissemination ways. Similarly, in the practice of ideological and political education of college students, in order to achieve satisfactory results, it is necessary to study the methods and ways to disseminate educational information. In traditional ideological and political education activities, it is mainly to apply the methods of holding meetings, making reports, and having conversations. In modern ideological and political education activities, in addition to the traditional methods, more and more new forms have begun to be adopted by people, such as the use of activities, management, mass media and other carriers to carry out targeted educational activities. No matter which form is adopted, there is a basic direction that must be adhered to, that is, the form must be accepted by the public and can be transformed into people's own ideology and actions. So it is possible to draw on the use and gratifications approach here, study the motivations of students to use the media or participate the activities, and see what kind of satisfaction they have achieved in the process and the propensity to use or participate next time. For college students, modern communication technology not only brings unprecedented changes to their life and study, but also has a profound impact on their thoughts and behaviors. In particular, the rapid

development of network technology has led to changes in the way contemporary college students receive education. Compared with the traditional simple classroom lectures, many students prefer to choose modern media with audio-visual integration to receive relevant knowledge. Therefore, educators should pay more attention to the needs of students, actively improve the teaching methods, and improve the skills of using modern media technology to make classroom teaching more vivid and specific. And educators should be good at carrying out implicit ideological and political education for students in this process, and disseminate positive and healthy ideas to students so that they can transform these ideas into their own actions in their life, study or work.

C. The Application of Use and Gratifications Approach Can Reduce the Waste of Educational Resources and Achieve Rational Use and Development of Resources

The application of the use and gratifications approach in communication is mainly concerned with the audience's use demands for media, and the corresponding information dissemination according to the needs of the audience can not only win the audience's favor, but also reduce unnecessary waste of resources. If some of the information communicated by the media does not meet the needs of the audience, and the audience's motivations for using this media have not been satisfied, they will choose other ways to obtain their wanted content. Under these circumstances, the media's intention to spread information does not receive the corresponding responses and effects, which will inevitably result in wasted resources. Similarly, in the practice of ideological and political education, if the needs of the educated are not fully considered, the thoughts are instilled only according to the subjective ideas of the educators, or the activities without obvious themes are organized, or educators only instill knowledge and ideas to students through classroom teaching, the dissemination of educational information is not based on the actual acceptance conditions or psychological needs of the educated, it will not achieve the desired effect, but will result in a waste of resources. For example, in various campus cultural activities, it is necessary to choose the theme and form that students are interested in. Educators should not only pay attention to the surface forms of the activities or just follow the trend. No matter how many human or material resources are devoted into an activity, as long as it does not achieve certain effects or has not been well accepted by students, it is a waste of resources. In the classroom teaching, educators must also pay attention to the investigation and inquiry of the various requirements of the students. For example, educators could investigate that how the students want the teacher of the ideological and political theory course to teach the class, and which classroom teaching method they are interested in, so that the boring phenomenon of "the teacher alone has the say in class" can be avoided, and the phenomenon that while the teacher is giving the lecture on the platform, students are doing other things in their seats can be avoided, all of which will result in different levels of waste of educational resources.

III. THE SPECIFIC APPLICATION OF THE USE AND GRATIFICATIONS APPROACH IN THE IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION METHODS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

The use and gratifications approach is one of the theories of mass media effects in communication. Of course, in reality, it is closely related to the mass media. The research effect of applying this theory in the media field is more prominent. However, in terms of ideological and political education, there are also ways to learn from it. Today, in the context of emphasizing multi-disciplinary interaction, if we can rationally apply this theory in the process of ideological and political education, we could not only improve ideological and political education, especially the ideological and political education of college students, but also make an innovation of traditional methods and meet the era requirement for the study of local ideological and political education methods.

A. *Applying the Use and Gratifications Approach and Making Full Use of Various Teaching Resources to Enhance the Attraction of the Ideological and Political Theory Class in Universities*

In all kinds of teaching methods, classroom teaching is still the main way to convey information to the students today. The ideological and political theory course is a compulsory course in all colleges and universities for improving college students' theoretical accomplishments, moral cultivation, humanistic care and ways of bearing themselves. However, the actual classroom teaching effects are not so satisfactory. Many students are resentful of these courses, and even feel that such courses are of no practical use. Therefore, students are not enthusiastic in class, do not study seriously in the classroom, or use the time of these classes to complete the tasks of other subjects. All these phenomena, explained with the use and gratifications approach, may be attributed to the same reason, that students do not get their psychological or behavioral satisfaction in these classes, which will inevitably reduce their enthusiasm for learning these courses. Under the guidance of the use and gratifications approach, coupled with modern superior teaching conditions, our ideological and political educators, especially the teachers of ideological and political theory courses, can use modern multimedia technology combined with classroom teaching to teach the courses under the premise of understanding the needs of today's students. For example, educators can play movies in class and collect video and news events that reflect patriotism and collectivism to make the class more interesting and vivid. Also, educators can ask students to participate in the class in their own way, which will make students feel that they can get trained in certain aspects and thus are willing to receive relevant ideological and political education information subconsciously. In short, this theory gives us an important revelation in the teaching process, that is, we must fully consider the needs of students and adopt appropriate teaching methods under the premise of adhering to the teacher-led teaching model to enable students to obtain satisfaction in certain aspects in the teaching process.

B. *Applying the Use and Gratifications Approach to Strengthen the Construction of Campus Media and Campus Culture, and Expand the Coverage of Ideological and Political Education*

Compared with other mass media, campus media has its own unique advantages in communication, because the information disseminated by campus media is close to the actual life of students, and there are even a large number of students participating in the campus activities. Whether it is campus radio or campus TV, it brings a wealth of cultural resources to students' campus life and facilitates students' daily lives. Therefore, by analyzing the needs of students and actively playing the role of campus media in the ideological and political education, the various requirements of students may be more possible to be met, and a healthy and up-to-date learning and living environment can be created for students. As a form of ideological and political education for college students, campus culture construction is also an indispensable part. In today's campus, there are diverse campus cultures. For example, there are various cultural and sports events and various community activities, which can not only enrich students' extracurricular life, but also make them immersed in some aspects in the subtle. When organizing these activities, the educators should fully consider the needs of the students, make clear in which aspect the students need help most, and what guidance the students hope the school to provide most. For example, for the current employment situation, regular and specialized employment guidance activities can be carried out on campus. In response to the psychological pressure of students in all aspects, the school can provide students with real-time psychological counseling. And for students with poor living skills, the school can provide relevant knowledge and practical conditions for them. Only when the students' real life and learning problems have been solved will they actively participate in various campus activities, and only when students participate in the activities will the ideological and political education make practical results.

C. *Applying the Use and Gratifications Approach to Strengthen the Network Ideological and Moral Construction of College Students and Create a Positive and Healthy Network Environment*

The rapid development of Internet technology has brought unprecedented changes and conveniences to our lives, and has had a wide and profound impact on the various fields of social life and the survival and development of people themselves. For today's college students, they are inseparable from the Internet whether in their studies or lives. Young college students and young intellectuals have become the major online users in China. "Marxist political parties can win the future only if they win the support of young people." Therefore, for the ideological and political education, educators must thoroughly analyze and study the new changes in young college students' thoughts and behaviors in the network environment, understand what today's students hope to obtain in the network environment and what kind of satisfaction they want to have through the education, positively guide students according to the actual situation, and make innovations to the methods and means in the ideological and political education

of colleges and universities, in order to win the initiative of the network ideological and political education work.

The Internet is an open world, a virtual world, and an equal world. In this world, people can assume various roles, which can be producers, communicators or receivers of information. However, due to the characteristics of the network itself, it is hard to control the dissemination of a variety of information on the Internet, which may lead to the spread of some negative information. As the ideological and political educators, our task is to do a good job as the "gatekeepers" and provide a healthy network environment for the college students. From the perspective of the use and gratifications approach, our college ideological and political education workers must possess a variety of relevant professional skills, know more about students' life and study, seriously investigate their living, learning and thinking conditions, and truly understand what they need in order to adopt a targeted approach to education. The campus network construction of many schools today has achieved great results. For example, through the campus BBS, college students can get all kinds of news and information inside and outside the campus in time, participate in various discussions and express their opinions so that some students' demand for participating in public life are met. For example, the Boya Forum of Central China Normal University has information sections on academic lectures, learning exchanges, information services, and leisure and entertainment. Students often have various needs in their life and study, for example, if they want to look for part-time jobs, they can go to this forum to see the employment information. Because such information is spread through the campus network, the credibility of it is relatively high, causing that it is easier for such information to win the attention of students. Similarly, for the ideological and political education of college students, we can use such forums to provide students with information they are interested in, to solve students' ideological or psychological confusions, and to actively guide them to improve their network self-discipline and resist all kinds of bad information on the Internet. We should encourage students to form a civilized and healthy networking habit, and encourage them to transmit healthy network information to their loved ones and friends around them, so that a healthy network atmosphere and a unique network culture among the whole society could be formed through the infection of surrounding people, thus achieving the educational goals of our ideological and political educators.

IV. CONCLUSION

Any theory that has to play its role must be tested by practice and adhere to certain principles. When applying the use and gratifications approach, it is necessary to adhere to the principles of linking theory with practice and analyzing problems case by case. It is also necessary to actively make innovations in the process of practice and get close to students' life and study, understand their needs, and manage to let them accept the way we teach. Only in this way can it be available to effectively use the various carriers and methods of ideological and political education, make full use of various educational resources, and finally achieve the expected goal of ideological and political education.

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