

# *Emotional Talk in Ideological and Political Guidance for Children and Adolescents: Connotation, Dilemmas and Practical Paths*

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**Abstract:** As a key interactive form promoting children's emotional socialization, emotional talk has not been fully explored for its applied value in ideological and political guidance for children and adolescents. Based on defining the connotation of emotional talk, this study extends it from the family context to ideological and political education, and explains its unique roles in value internalization, emotional resonance and ideological shaping. Facing current practical dilemmas such as one-way indoctrination, emotional disconnection and role dislocation, this paper constructs practical paths centered on refined talk, personal narrative transformation and counselors' role transformation from three dimensions: methodological innovation, content transformation and role reconstruction. It aims to provide theoretical reference and practical guidance for enhancing the effectiveness and emotional appeal of ideological and political guidance for children and adolescents.

## 1. Introduction

It is crucial to seize the critical period when young people form and establish their values and guide them to establish correct outlooks on life and values.<sup>[1]</sup> Following this spirit, the Opinions of the CPC Central Committee on Comprehensively Strengthening the Work of the Young Pioneers in the New Era clearly requires "strengthening political enlightenment and value shaping for children and adolescents"<sup>[2]</sup>. The Measures for the Administration of Young Pioneers Instructors further defines instructors as "guides to life pursuits", "servers for healthy growth" and "creators of a sound development atmosphere"<sup>[3]</sup>. Ideological and political guidance for children and adolescents should not only solve the problem of "knowledge" but also achieve resonance in "emotion" and internalization in "will"; emotion is precisely the key link connecting cognition and identification. Drawing on the concept of emotional talk in emotional socialization research, this paper attempts to explore practical paths to boost ideological and political guidance for children and adolescents through emotional dialogue, so as to provide reference for instructors to better play their roles as guides and servers.

## **2. Theoretical Connotation of Emotional Talk in Ideological and Political Guidance for Children and Adolescents**

### **2.1 Connotation of Emotional Talk**

In foreign family context research, “emotional talk” refers to the interactive behavior between parents and children around emotions. Its classic definition is: the conversation involving emotional content in which parents name various emotional states, explain the causal relationship of emotions, and discuss coping strategies for emotional experiences during interaction with their children.<sup>[4]</sup> Research on emotional socialization indicates that emotional conversations serve as a central pathway for children to understand, express, and regulate their emotions, playing a foundational role in the development of their social skills.<sup>[5]</sup> When parents adopt a nuanced, highly responsive narrative style, it not only helps enhance children’s emotional understanding<sup>[6]</sup> but also promotes the formation of a coherent self-concept and positive interpersonal relationships<sup>[7]</sup>. Furthermore, empirical evidence suggests that children who frequently engage in emotional conversations demonstrate greater empathy and cooperation<sup>[8]</sup>. As research progresses, the theoretical scope of emotional conversations is gradually extending beyond the family setting into educational contexts. Wei Yahong defines teacher-student emotional conversations as “purposeful verbal interactions between individuals regarding the causes and consequences of emotions,” emphasizing that they serve as a crucial avenue for teachers to educate students about emotions<sup>[9]</sup>. However, Fei et al. point out that teachers’ positive responses to young children’s emotional expressions are key to enhancing their emotional competence.<sup>[10]</sup> This study holds that in the context of ideological and political guidance for children and adolescents, emotional talk can be defined as purposeful and interactive verbal communication between instructors and children and adolescents around emotional experience, emotional cognition and emotional regulation. Such communication not only focuses on the expression and understanding of emotions, but also guides children and adolescents to deeply think about social phenomena, values and behavioral norms related to emotions, so as to promote the positive development of their ideological understanding and emotional attitudes.

### **2.2 Value of Emotional Talk in Ideological and Political Guidance for Children and Adolescents**

Emotional talk has unique value in the field of ideological and political guidance for children and adolescents. From the perspective of educational objectives, ideological and political guidance is committed to promoting the all-round development of children’s ideology, psychology and values, while emotional talk focuses on emotional communication and guidance, which can deeply insight into the ideological confusion and value confusion hidden behind children’s emotions, so as to carry out targeted ideological guidance. From the characteristics of educational objects, children and adolescents are in a critical stage of physical and mental development, with rich emotional experience but insufficient emotional regulation ability. Taking specific emotional experience as the entry point, emotional talk integrates ideological education content into emotional communication, which conforms to children’s cognitive development rules and psychological demands, lays a foundation for cultivating their moral literacy and social ability, and promotes the formation of cultural identity of “Learning from Pioneers in Childhood, Growing up to Be Pioneers”<sup>[11]</sup>. From the perspective of methodological innovation, emotional talk breaks the one-way indoctrination mode and advocates an equal and interactive communication mode. Instructors are no longer superior managers, but organizers, listeners and guides of emotional dialogue with children and adolescents, stimulating children’s willingness to participate in a relaxed and harmonious atmosphere, so that they can imperceptibly accept ideological and political education in active

communication and realize the transformation from “passive learning” to “active learning”.

### **3. Practical Dilemmas of Ideological and Political Guidance for Children and Adolescents**

The traditional ideological and political education model often overemphasizes knowledge imparting and behavioral norms, but ignores the internal needs of educational objects as emotional subjects, resulting in insufficient emotional connection and value internalization for children and adolescents, which has become the main obstacle to improving educational effectiveness.

#### **3.1 Methodological Dilemma: Instructors Stick to the Traditional One-way Knowledge Indoctrination**

Ideological and political education is not simply imparting theoretical knowledge, but aiming at the unity of knowledge and action, requiring educational objects to deeply understand and identify with the ideological system contained in education and actively practice it in daily life.<sup>[12]</sup> However, the traditional one-way indoctrination mode leads to long-term stagnation of educational effectiveness in the category of knowledge, falling into the dilemma of separation of knowledge and action, ignoring children’s subjective identity and reducing them to onlookers of education.<sup>[13]</sup> In practice, many instructors are used to directly quoting grand concepts such as “national rejuvenation” but fail to connect them with children’s specific life experience, making these contents abstract knowledge symbols without emotional resonance. The educational process is dominated by PPT presentations and oral explanations, and children’s learning stays at the level of mechanical recitation, making it difficult to transform concepts into daily actions.<sup>[14]</sup> This indoctrination mode inhibits children’s internal learning motivation and independent thinking ability, and the transformation from “knowledge” to “action” loses internal motivation.

#### **3.2 Content Dilemma: Grand Narratives Are Difficult to Integrate into Children’s Emotional World**

Grand narratives construct an educational narrative system with universality, integrity and authority as the core.<sup>[15]</sup> Such a narrative itself has a value-leading function, but when it is divorced from children’s cognitive development level and daily life experience, it is difficult to form an effective connection. From the perspective of Piaget’s cognitive development theory, children and adolescents in the concrete operational stage and formal operational stage have initial logical reasoning ability, but their understanding of abstract concepts still highly relies on specific situations and personal experience. The universal logic and overall vision relied on by grand narratives require audiences to have strong abstract thinking ability and rich social experience, which children and adolescents do not possess. When the narrative starting point is much higher than the cognitive starting point, children and adolescents cannot find reference objects in their own experience and establish effective meaning connection<sup>[3]</sup>. Even if they remember relevant expressions, it is difficult to implement them from cognition to emotion, let alone integrate them into value judgments in daily behavior.

#### **3.3 Role Dilemma: Instructors Alienate into Superior Managers**

The Measures for the Administration of Young Pioneers Instructors (2023) states: “Young Pioneers organizations at all levels should strive to guide Young Pioneers instructors to be guides to young pioneers’ life pursuits, organizers of practical experience, servers for healthy growth, protectors of legitimate rights and interests, and creators of a sound development atmosphere”<sup>[16]</sup>.

This role positioning requires instructors to have multiple identities as educators, servers and companions, and the relationship with young pioneers should be equal, close and caring. However, in practice, instructors often regard themselves as authorities, tending to issue instructions rather than communicate equally. This kind of communication is not an exchange between unique spiritual individuals, but emotionless communication for their own needs, and the interpersonal emotional relationship between instructors and children is short-term and unstable, ending with the activity.<sup>[17]</sup> When the role focus shifts from “accompanying growth” to “issuing orders”, an emotional barrier forms between instructors and children. This not only weakens the affinity of ideological and political education, but also makes emotional communication difficult to carry out effectively. Children and adolescents often choose passive cooperation rather than active participation, making ideological and political guidance difficult to penetrate into children’s hearts.

#### **4. Practical Paths of Emotional Talk in Ideological and Political Guidance for Children and Adolescents**

Based on the theoretical connotation and practical needs of emotional talk, this paper proposes practical paths from three dimensions: methodological innovation, content transformation and role reconstruction: breaking through the limitations of one-way indoctrination with refined talk, promoting value and emotional internalization with personal emotional stories, and improving professional literacy of emotional support and value guidance with instructors’ role transformation.

##### **4.1 Methodological Breakthrough: From One-way Indoctrination to Two-way Interactive Refined Emotional Talk**

To realize the value of emotional talk, the primary thing is to promote a fundamental upgrading of methodology, shifting from one-way preaching to a two-way and interactive dialogue mode, and the key lies in adopting refined and heuristic conversation strategies.

As a dialogue strategy, refined talk guides children to conduct in-depth and coherent narration of emotional events by providing rich details, expanding topic content and giving positive feedback. The deep-seated goal of this method is to help children integrate scattered and vague emotional experiences into complete autobiographical memories with clear meaning, so as to naturally deepen their emotional understanding and promote the integration of values and self-concept in the narrative process. Research on parent-child memories indicates that a highly detailed conversational style not only significantly increases children’s engagement in dialogue but also, through “scaffolding” support, provides models for constructing detailed and coherent personal narratives—a process that is crucial for children’s emotional socialization and the internalization of values.<sup>[18][19]</sup> In the context of ideological and political guidance for children and adolescents, instructors can learn from this strategy and use concrete detailed questioning and causal analysis to guide children to realize the value integration of emotional experience. In this way, children and adolescents do not simply state facts, but reprocess and reconstruct their emotional reactions, value judgments and results with the help of instructors, thus effectively enhancing the depth, coherence and personal relevance of value narratives.

Open-ended questions are significantly different from simple yes-or-no Q&A, requiring children to think more deeply, organize language and explain viewpoints. “Wh-questions” such as “why” and “how” can effectively stimulate children’s more complex thinking and language output, and exercise their reasoning and expression ability<sup>[20]</sup>. In the framework of emotional talk, the core function of open-ended questions focuses on guiding children to conduct emotional attribution, perspective-taking and hypothetical thinking on value conflict situations.<sup>[21]</sup> In ideological and political guidance, the application of this strategy requires constructing a progressive question chain

to stimulate constructive thinking and guide value exploration. Through well-designed open-ended questions, instructors can not only stimulate more sincere emotional expression of children and adolescents, but also promote endogenous value reflection, so that children and adolescents naturally form personalized understanding and identification of complex emotions and abstract concepts in the process of actively organizing answers.

#### **4.2 Content Implementation: From Grand Narratives to Perceptible and Empathetic Personal Emotional Stories**

The deepening of ideological and political guidance effectiveness lies in the transformation from grand narratives alienated from individual life to personal meaning stimulating internal resonance, and the organic connection between external abstract social values and children's internal emotional experience and life experience.

Abstract moral concepts and political values are often difficult to penetrate into children's emotional and cognitive levels if only presented through grand narratives. Therefore, the core task of ideological and political guidance practice is to build a bridge connecting abstract values and individual vivid experience, guiding children to actively explore and construct the individual meaning of values in real and vivid experiences. The deep-seated mechanism is that human beings generally organize experience and understand themselves and the world through stories rather than dogmas; connecting external value events with children's "story world" and emotional memory is the key to promoting the coordinated development of their cognition and emotion and realizing value internalization.<sup>[22][23]</sup> In practice, macro concepts far from children's life can be connected with their perceptible emotional moments, promoting them to transform from passive recipients to active meaning constructors—extracting corresponding emotional imprints and specific events from their own memory and emotional experience, and directly linking abstract concepts with inner pride, touching moments or personal feelings of collective warmth. Through such meaningful construction with emotional temperature, external values precipitate into internal psychological understanding, realizing the transformation from "I know" to "I feel", "I experience" and finally to "I identify".

If constructing personal meaning is compared to building a bridge between values and experience, the collective recollection of emotional events is a key path to strengthen the connection and enhance value narratives. Research on autobiographical memory reveals that recollection of past emotional events plays a core role in self-concept construction, and these memories carry more information about the self than neutral events<sup>[24]</sup>. Collective recollection can systematically shape children's emotional self-concept from multiple dimensions such as "self-definition", "relational self" and "emotional coping". This indicates that individuals' recollection and narration of emotional events are not just a repetition of past experiences, but a continuous re-interpretation and integration of these experiences, thus shaping a coherent self-image. In the context of ideological and political guidance, systematically guiding children and adolescents to review emotional events has the dual effect of transforming collective experiences into value learning materials. For successful events containing positive values, value reinforcement is realized through detailed review.

#### **4.3 Role Return: From Superior Managers to Growth-accompanying Guides**

The educational effectiveness of ideological and political guidance ultimately depends on the role transformation of instructors from managers to guides. The traditional "manager" role centered on discipline restraint and instruction transmission can no longer meet the complex needs of value socialization. Instructors need to shift from external regulation to internal guidance, becoming supporters on the road of growth, resonators in emotion, and fellow travelers in value exploration.

The primary premise for realizing this transformation is the systematic improvement of professional literacy. The professional literacy of Young Pioneers instructors is “a necessary requirement beyond the ideological and political awareness level in the educational sense”<sup>[25]</sup>, which determines that their professional development must expand from focusing on activity organization and theoretical imparting to mastering the laws of children’s physical and mental development, scientifically identifying the emotional expression and value cognitive level of children and adolescents of different ages, so as to teach according to age and guide according to circumstances. The effectiveness of the “guide” role is finally realized through micro-practices in daily interaction, and emotional mirroring and scaffolding support are two key skills. Emotional mirroring requires instructors to help children clarify and accept their own emotional experience through accurate identification and feedback, laying a psychological foundation for subsequent value guidance<sup>1</sup>. Scaffolding support originates from Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development theory, which points out that there is a gap between children’s “current development level” and “potential development level”, and the gap between the two is the zone of proximal development<sup>[26]</sup>. Scaffolding teaching is designed based on this zone, emphasizing providing appropriate temporary support and gradually withdrawing with the development of children’s abilities. Its core is support rather than replacement—teachers should encourage independent exploration in the parts that children can complete independently, and provide necessary help in the parts that they cannot complete independently.<sup>[27]</sup> In the context of ideological and political guidance, this process not only realizes immediate problem clarification, but also shapes children’s dialectical thinking and ideological resilience through continuous thinking training, and its educational effectiveness far exceeds directly providing definite conclusions.

As an innovative path of ideological and political guidance for children and adolescents, the core value of emotional talk lies in breaking the barrier between traditional preaching education and children’s cognitive experience with emotion as a bond. This paper reveals how emotional talk transforms abstract core social values into emotional experience and life narratives that children can perceive, empathize with and internalize through strategies such as concrete questioning, personal story transformation and instructors’ role transformation. It requires educators to transform from authoritative “knowledge transmitters” to “guides” of emotional resonance, and stimulate children’s internal motivation for value exploration through refined question design and emotional support. In the future, with the deepening of relevant research, the application scenarios of emotional talk will further extend from schools to families and communities, forming a joint force of collaborative education, injecting lasting emotional power and value support into children’s spiritual growth, and truly helping them buckle the first button of life and grow into new people of the times with ideals, abilities and responsibilities.

## 5. Conclusion

This study focuses on the application of emotional talk in ideological and political guidance for children and adolescents, systematically clarifies its connotation and value, analyzes the practical dilemmas existing in current ideological and political guidance, and constructs targeted practical paths from methodological innovation, content transformation and role reconstruction. The research finds that emotional talk, as an innovative interactive form, can effectively break the limitations of traditional one-way indoctrination, bridge the gap between grand narratives and children’s emotional world, and correct the role dislocation of instructors, thus enhancing the emotional appeal and practical effectiveness of ideological and political guidance. By adopting refined talk strategies, transforming grand narratives into perceptible personal emotional stories, and promoting instructors to transform into growth-accompanying guides, emotional talk can help children and adolescents

internalize abstract values into their own emotional experiences and behavioral norms, and truly realize the educational goal of “infiltrating the heart and educating people with emotion”.

However, this study also has certain limitations. On the one hand, the research mainly focuses on the theoretical construction and path design of emotional talk, and lacks empirical verification of its practical effect; on the other hand, the discussion on the application of emotional talk in different age groups and different scenarios (such as family and community) is not in-depth enough. In the future, follow-up research can carry out empirical studies to test the effectiveness of the proposed practical paths, and further expand the application scenarios of emotional talk, explore the collaborative mechanism of emotional talk in school, family and community, so as to form a joint force of ideological and political education for children and adolescents. At the same time, it is also necessary to strengthen the research on the professional training of instructors, help them master the skills of emotional talk, and better play the role of emotional communication and value guidance, so as to provide more solid support for the healthy growth of children and adolescents and help them establish correct values and grow into new people of the times with ideals, abilities and responsibilities.

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