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A THEORETICAL MODEL OF STUDENTS' POLITICAL LITERACY IN THE CONTEXT OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN CHINA

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This article characterizes the authors' perspective on the nature and structure of political literacy among university students. The authors present the axiological, cognitive, activity-based (behavioral), and reflexive components of the theoretical model of political literacy in the context of the specifics of civic education for young people in China. The article describes the functional role of each component and substantiates the connection between them in the holistic structure of political literacy as a theoretical phenomenon.

Keywords: political literacy, university students, civic and political education of students.

Introduction

The analysis of the structure of political literacy within the context of higher education is of fundamental theoretical and practical significance. Higher education represents a crucial stage in the formation of students' political literacy, as it provides a systematic educational environment in which political knowledge, values, attitudes, and behavioral dispositions are purposefully cultivated. Universities not only transmit political knowledge but also shape students' value orientations, social responsibility, and modes of political participation, thereby exerting a long-term influence on their civic development.

Existing research generally conceptualizes political literacy as a multidimensional construct encompassing political knowledge, political skills, political attitudes, and participation capacity [1; 2; 3]. Researchers who have contributed to the study of political literacy, especially in the context of civic education and political socialization of youth are David Denver and Gordon Hands. Their works consider political literacy as a set of skills and knowledge necessary for active and conscious participation in the political life of society [4].

However, despite the growing body of literature, the internal structure of political literacy remains insufficiently systematized [5]. Many studies describe its components descriptively, without clearly articulating their internal logic or developmental relationships. This problem becomes particularly salient in the context of higher education, where political literacy is not only an educational outcome but also an object of deliberate pedagogical design.

Author's Conceptual Model of Political Literacy based on an interdisciplinary analysis and taking into account the educational realities of contemporary universities – particularly within the context of the People's Republic of China – this study proposes

an authorial theoretical model in which the composition of political literacy of college students consists of four interrelated components: axiological component, cognitive component, activity (behavioral) component, reflexive component. These components form a coherent system characterized by internal hierarchy, functional differentiation, and developmental continuity. The proposed structure reflects both universal theoretical principles of political literacy and the specific features of political education in Chinese higher education, where Ideological and Political Education plays a leading role in cultivating students' political values and civic consciousness.

Main Body

We view university students' political literacy as a complex, integrative personal development reflecting the unity of values, knowledge, actions, and reflection. We have developed a theoretical model of political literacy, the content of which is presented in this article. The structure of political literacy as a theoretical phenomenon combines axiological, cognitive, action-oriented, and reflexive components, which are interconnected. The axiological component determines students' value orientation and the motivational basis for political behavior; the cognitive component provides an understanding of political phenomena and social processes; the action-oriented component reflects the practical application of political knowledge and values in socially significant actions; and the reflexive component promotes self-regulation, critical evaluation, and conscious personal development in the political sphere.

The axiological component constitutes the value-oriented foundation of political literacy and performs a system-forming function within its overall structure. Values play a significant role in students' political behavior. They shape their political worldview and political convictions, as well as their attitude toward political reality. In the context of higher education in the People's Republic of China, the axiological component of students' political culture is oriented toward socialist values, patriotism, and social responsibility.

In this study, the axiological component of political literacy is defined as: *a system of interiorized political values, value orientations, political motivations, and personality-related dispositions that guide college students' political attitudes, shape their evaluation of political phenomena, and provide intrinsic motivation for responsible participation in political and social life*. For the purposes of future empirical research, the axiological component is operationalized through five interrelated dimensions, each of which can be translated into measurable indicators (interiorization of political values; patriotic value orientation; social responsibility and civic commitment; social trust and moral-ethical orientation; value-based personality orientations and political motivation). Let us characterize them in more detail.

Interiorization of Political Values reflects the extent to which students have adopted fundamental political values as personal convictions rather than as externally imposed norms. Key indicators of the axiological component include recognition of core political values such as justice, fairness, equality, rule of law, and social harmony; acceptance of the legitimacy of the political system and its governing principles; ability to evaluate political issues using value-based criteria; stability of value orientations across different social and educational contexts.

Patriotism is understood as a value-based emotional and cognitive attachment to the state, society, and national development, rather than as unconditional or

uncritical loyalty. Key indicators include: emotional identification with the state and its historical and cultural traditions; recognition of national interests and collective goals; willingness to contribute to national development through socially constructive behavior; differentiation between constructive patriotism and extreme or exclusionary nationalism. This dimension aligns with the educational objective of fostering rational and constructive patriotism among university students in China.

Social Responsibility and Civic Commitment captures students' orientation toward public interest, collective welfare, and civic duty. Key indicators include: awareness of individual responsibility in maintaining social order and public good; willingness to fulfill civic obligations (e.g., compliance with laws, participation in collective activities); prioritization of collective interests over narrow personal gain in political judgment; readiness to engage in socially beneficial and community-oriented activities. Social responsibility serves as a motivational bridge between political values and political behavior.

Social Trust and Moral-Ethical Orientation reflects students' trust in political institutions and their adherence to moral and ethical norms in political evaluation and actions. Key indicators include: trust in political institutions, governance mechanisms, and public authority; perception of political processes as generally fair and legitimate; commitment to moral principles such as honesty, integrity, and fairness in political judgment; rejection of corruption, dishonesty, and unethical political practices.

Value-based personal orientations and political motivation encompass the personal value attitudes and political motivation of student youth. Key indicators for this aspect of student political literacy include openness to diverse political views; willingness to engage in political dialogue; a sense of personal responsibility in implementing social initiatives; and the prevalence of intrinsic political motivation based on a sense of duty over external incentives.

The cognitive component refers to the system of political knowledge, understanding, and intellectual abilities that enable students to comprehend political reality. In this study, the cognitive component of political literacy is defined as: *a system of political knowledge, intellectual abilities, and information-processing skills that enable college students to understand political institutions and processes, analyze political phenomena, and make rational political judgments*. The cognitive component constitutes the epistemological basis of political literacy and mediates the transformation of values into informed political behavior.

For empirical purposes, the cognitive component is operationalized through three interrelated dimensions: Political Knowledge; Political Thinking Skills; Political Information Literacy. *Political knowledge* refers to students' understanding of fundamental political structures, processes, and normative frameworks. Key indicators Political Knowledge include: knowledge of the political system, including the structure and functions of state institutions; understanding of political processes such as policy formulation, implementation, and supervision; awareness of national history and its role in shaping contemporary political development; knowledge of laws, regulations, and citizens' rights and obligations. Within the Chinese higher education context, this dimension includes familiarity with the basic principles of socialism with Chinese characteristics and the governance framework of the state.

Political Thinking Skills reflects students' capacity to process political information rationally and analytically. Key indicators include a system of students' political skills

and abilities: the ability to distinguish between facts, opinions, and value judgments; the ability to critically evaluate various political judgments and arguments; an understanding of cause-and-effect relationships and patterns of political phenomena and processes; the ability to synthesize political information from various sources, etc.

The concept of *information literacy* plays a key role in the cognitive component of students' political literacy. Information literacy involves students' ability to obtain, evaluate, and apply political information in the modern media environment. Key indicators of students' information literacy include a variety of skills, such as the ability to identify reliable sources of political information; the ability to objectively evaluate political content; the ability to integrate political information to make informed political decisions; and the ability to responsibly apply political information in various life and academic situations.

The activity component reflects the practical dimension of political literacy and is manifested in students' actual or potential participation in political and civic life. In this study, the activity (behavioral) component of political literacy is defined as: *a set of abilities, skills, and behavioral dispositions that enable college students to participate consciously, lawfully, and responsibly in political and civic activities*. The activity component represents the external expression of political literacy and reflects the degree to which political knowledge and values are translated into action. For empirical analysis, the activity component is operationalized through four interrelated dimensions: Political Participation Skills; Civic and Social Practice Engagement; Lawful and Normative Political Behavior; Communicative and Cooperative Action.

Political Participation Skills reflects students' practical abilities to engage in political and civic activities. Key indicators include: participation in student self-governance and collective decision-making; engagement in political discussions and public deliberation; understanding of participation channels within legal and institutional frameworks; ability to articulate political views clearly and rationally.

Civic and Social Practice Engagement captures students' involvement in social practice as a form of political learning. Key indicators include: participation in volunteer service, community activities, and social investigation; engagement in university-organized social practice programs; application of political knowledge to real-life social issues; demonstration of social responsibility through action. Social practice serves as a bridge between political theory and life experience.

Normative political behavior means adhering to legal and ethical norms in political activity. Key indicators of normative political activity among university students include adherence to the laws of their country; respect for state symbols and the Constitution of their country; avoidance of extremist, illegal, or destructive political actions; responsible use of modern digital tools for political expression, etc.

Communicative Action reflects students' ability to interact constructively with others in political contexts. Key indicators include: engagement in respectful dialogues and reasoned debates; willingness to cooperate in collective political or social tasks; ability to manage disagreement without conflict escalation; openness to diverse perspectives within collective activities. Such communicative competence is essential for constructive political participation in pluralistic environments.

The reflexive component represents the highest and integrative level in the structure of political literacy. It ensures the internal coherence, self-regulation, and developmental sustainability of political literacy by enabling individuals to consciously evaluate political

knowledge, values, and behaviors in relation to social reality and personal experience. In this study, the reflexive component of political literacy is defined as: *the ability of college students to consciously analyze, evaluate, and regulate their political knowledge, political values, and political behavior through critical self-reflection, contextual judgment, and dialectical thinking, enabling responsible and rational participation in political life.*

The reflective component of political literacy in university students includes four interrelated elements: political self-reflection; critical assessment of one's own political experience; the ability of students to integrate political values and their political behavior; and self-regulation of political behavior.

Political self-reflection refers to students' ability to critically examine their own political beliefs, attitudes, and positions. Key indicators include: awareness of one's own political views and value orientations; ability to identify the sources of one's political beliefs (education, media, family, social environment); willingness to reconsider political positions in the light of new evidence or arguments; recognition of personal biases and limitations in political judgment. This dimension reflects students' capacity for internal dialogue and self-awareness in political cognition.

Critical Evaluation of Political Experience concerns students' ability to evaluate political events, institutional practices, and personal participation experiences using rational and normative criteria. Key indicators include: ability to assess political phenomena from multiple perspectives; capacity to distinguish between facts, interpretations, and value judgments; evaluation of political decisions and policies based on legality, fairness, and social impact; reflective assessment of one's own political actions and their consequences. In the Chinese higher education context, this dimension supports the development of rational political consciousness and avoidance of emotional or impulsive political behavior.

The reflexive component also involves the *ability to integrate political values with practical behavior* in a coherent and consistent manner. Key indicators include: consistency between declared political values and actual behavior; ability to resolve conflicts between personal interests and collective or social interests; capacity to balance stability and change in political judgment; application of political principles to concrete social situations. This dimension reflects the internal unity of cognition, values, and behavior, which is a central goal of ideological and political education.

Self-regulation refers to the ability to consciously manage one's political actions, emotional responses, and participation strategies. Key indicators include: control of emotional reactions in political discussions and debates; ability to engage in rational dialogue and respectful disagreement; adherence to legal and ethical norms in political participation; avoidance of extreme, impulsive, or irresponsible political actions.

The four components are not isolated; rather, they function as an integrated system. The axiological component provides value orientation, the cognitive component supplies intellectual support, the activity component realizes practical application, and the reflexive component ensures self-regulation and continuous development. Together, they constitute a dynamic structure that reflects both the internal psychological mechanisms of political literacy and its pedagogical formation within higher education. This theoretical model provides a systematic framework for the subsequent experimental study conducted in universities of the People's Republic of China, offering clear analytical dimensions for the diagnosis, cultivation, and evaluation of college students' political literacy (table 1).

Table 1 – Operationalization of political literacy of university students

Component	Conceptual Definition	Structural Dimensions	Key Indicators
Axiological Component	A system of internalized political values, value orientations, political motivations, and personality-related dispositions that guide political attitudes and provide intrinsic motivation for responsible political participation	1. Interiorization of political values 2. Patriotic value orientation 3. Social responsibility and civic commitment 4. Social trust and moral-ethical orientation 5.Value-based personality orientations and political motivation	– acceptance of justice, fairness, rule of law, social harmony – constructive patriotism and national identification – orientation toward public interest and collective welfare – trust in political institutions and ethical norms – intrinsic political motivation and openness to dialogue
Levels of Development Primary: situational acceptance of values, external motivation Intermediate: partial interiorization, mixed motivation Advanced: stable value system, intrinsic motivation			
Cognitive Component	A system of political knowledge, intellectual abilities, and information-processing skills enabling understanding and rational analysis of political institutions and phenomena	1. Political knowledge 2. Political thinking skills 3.Political information literacy	– knowledge of political system, laws, and institutions – ability to analyze, compare, and evaluate political phenomena – critical assessment of media and information sources
Levels of Development Primary: fragmented knowledge, low analytical ability Intermediate: structured basic knowledge, emerging critical thinking Advanced: integrated knowledge, mature analytical competence			
Activity (Behavioral) Component	A set of abilities, skills, and behavioral dispositions that enable lawful, conscious, and responsible participation in political and civic activities	1. Political participation skills 2. Civic and social practice engagement 3. Lawful and normative political behavior 4. Communicative and cooperative action	– participation in student governance and collective activities – engagement in social practice and volunteer service – adherence to legal and ethical norms – respectful dialogue and cooperation
Levels of Development Primary: passive or guided participation Intermediate: regular participation with partial autonomy Advanced: proactive, responsible, and autonomous participation			

Окончание таблицы 1

Component	Conceptual Definition	Structural Dimensions	Key Indicators
Reflexive Component	The ability to consciously analyze, evaluate, and regulate political knowledge, values, and behavior through critical self-reflection and dialectical thinking	1. Political self-reflection 2. Critical evaluation of political experience 3. Dialectical integration of values and practice 4. Self-regulation of political behavior	– awareness of personal political beliefs and biases – evaluation of political actions and consequences – consistency between values and behavior – emotional control and rational self-regulation
Levels of Development Primary: low awareness and external regulation Intermediate: situational reflection and partial self-regulation Advanced: systematic reflection and autonomous regulation			

Conclusion

Thus, the theoretical analysis conducted in this paragraph makes it possible to conceptualize political literacy of college students as a complex, integrative personal formation that reflects the unity of values, knowledge, activity, and reflection. On the basis of the systemic, axiological, activity-oriented, and contextual-cultural approaches, a four-component model of political literacy has been substantiated, including axiological, cognitive, activity, and reflexive components.

Each component performs a specific function within the overall structure of political literacy and at the same time remains organically interconnected with the others. The axiological component determines the value-based orientation and motivational foundation of students’ political behavior; the cognitive component ensures understanding of political phenomena and social processes; the activity component reflects the practical realization of political knowledge and values in socially significant actions; and the reflexive component provides self-regulation, critical assessment, and and conscious personal development in the political sphere.

The proposed model takes into account both universal theoretical interpretations of political literacy and the specific characteristics of higher education in the People’s Republic of China, where ideological and political education plays a key role in shaping students’ civic consciousness and social responsibility. This contextual orientation enhances the theoretical relevance and practical applicability of the model within the contemporary educational environment of Chinese universities.

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Снопкова Е. И., Ли Хаоран. ТЕОРЕТИЧЕСКАЯ МОДЕЛЬ ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОЙ ГРАМОТНОСТИ СТУДЕНТОВ В КОНТЕКСТЕ ВЫСШЕГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ В КИТАЕ

В данной статье характеризуется авторское понимание содержания и структуры политической грамотности студентов университетов. Авторы представляют аксиологический, когнитивный, деятельностный (поведенческий) и рефлексивный компоненты теоретической модели политической грамотности в контексте специфики гражданского образования молодежи в Китае. В статье описывается функциональная роль каждого компонента и обосновывается связь между ними в целостной структуре политической грамотности как теоретического феномена.

Ключевые слова: политическая грамотность, студенты университетов, гражданско-политическое образование студентов.