

# Suggestions for Promoting the Integration of Ideological and Political Education in Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Schools

Yingying Lan\*

Marxism College, Liaoning University, Shenyang 110036, China

\*Corresponding author: Yingying Lan, jingying510@126.com

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**Abstract:** This paper discusses the necessity and implementation strategies for the integration of ideological and political education across primary, secondary, and tertiary education institutions. According to the report from the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, this strategy aims to promote the further development of ideological and political education in terms of concepts, content, methods, and implementation frameworks. Firstly, the strategy emphasizes enhancing systemic thinking by viewing ideological and political education across different educational levels as a comprehensive project, optimizing the structure both vertically and horizontally. Secondly, the strategy advocates for advancing the integration process by deepening the concept of ideological and political education across all educational levels and strengthening the educational connections between different educational segments. Thirdly, it involves constructing an integrated discourse to transform the content and presentation of the curriculum. Emphasis is placed on top-level design to ensure the party's unified leadership over ideological and political education, optimizing the educational system, and perfecting institutional frameworks. Finally, by optimizing collaborative mechanisms for education, improving teamwork among educational staff, enhancing platform functions, and leveraging disciplinary leadership, the effective implementation of ideological and political education is ensured. This paper aims to provide theoretical and practical suggestions for promoting the integration of ideological and political education across different educational levels, optimizing educational structures and content through systematic thinking and top-level design, and ensuring educational connectivity across various educational segments. It further emphasizes collaborative mechanisms to enhance the functionality of educational teams and platforms, contributing to the comprehensive development and perfection of ideological and political education integration in the new era.

**Keywords:** Ideological and political education; Integration; Systemic thinking; Top-level design; Collaborative mechanisms

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## 1. Introduction

The party and the state have always placed great importance on the ideological and political education of

young people. The report from the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China proposes, “To cultivate people with socialist core values, perfect the ideological and political work system, and promote the integration of ideological and political education across primary, secondary, and tertiary education.”<sup>[1]</sup> This strategic decision is expected to further develop and perfect school ideological and political education in terms of concepts, content, methods, and implementation framework. This initiative not only extends ideological and political education to the entire school system but also aims to deepen the ideological and political education in schools to achieve the goal of nurturing morally upright talents. From the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China to the present, the country has accumulated rich experience in the construction of moral education integration and the practice of integrated political courses across different educational levels. However, to cultivate talents that meet the requirements of the new era and to assist in achieving the second centenary goal, working methods need to be continually innovated in the process of advancing the integration of ideological and political education across different educational levels.

## **2. Enhance systematic thinking**

Systemic thinking views the object of cognition as a whole system, understanding it deeply through considering the interactions between the system and its elements, the relationships among elements, and the system’s interaction with its environment. This approach emphasizes holism, comprehensiveness, and synergy. In February 2017, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued “Opinions on Strengthening and Improving Ideological and Political Work in Universities under the New Circumstances,” which advocates for “comprehensive education involving all members, throughout the whole process, and in all aspects”, known as “three comprehensives education”<sup>[2]</sup>. This is a systematic arrangement for ideological and political work in universities. Compared to the integration of moral education in primary and secondary schools, the integration of ideological and political education focuses more on the deep integration and enhancement of politics and ideology. Compared to the integration of political courses, the integration of ideological and political education more comprehensively reflects the educational requirements of “three comprehensive education.”

### **2.1. Strengthen the overall system construction of ideological and political education in primary, secondary, and tertiary education**

Through systemic thinking, view the ideological and political education across different educational levels as a comprehensive project to optimize the ideological and political education structure throughout the entire school system. Vertically, it is necessary to deepen the integration process of ideological and political education across different educational stages, emphasize the concept of an educational community, and coordinate the ideological and political education across various educational stages sequentially and gradually. Horizontally, the concept of “broad-sense political education” should be advocated, and the integration of education should be strengthened from multiple aspects such as educational elements, resources, and pathways. Specifically, from the perspective of educational elements, it is necessary to perfect the integration of objectives, content, textbooks, faculty, practice, and evaluation systems of ideological and political education. From the perspective of educational resources, strengthen the comprehensive use of resources from school and society, history and reality, inside and outside of class, offline and online. From the perspective of educational pathways, take the integration of ideological and political courses across different educational levels as the core, and systematically promote the integration of ideological and political education. Simultaneously, these vertical and horizontal measures should be effectively combined to ensure the comprehensive development and continuous advancement of ideological

and political education, providing a solid foundation for educational reform in the new era and promoting innovation and development in education.

## **2.2. Promote the integration process of ideological and political education across different educational stages in primary, secondary, and tertiary education**

In China, schools at all levels have always placed high importance on ideological and political education. Despite this, there are still issues such as insufficient connections and autonomous actions, which hinder the formation of an effective educational synergy. To achieve the integration of ideological and political education across different educational levels, based on strengthening ideological and political education for university students and political work in higher education institutions, schools need to follow a “gradual and spiraling” strategy to strengthen the connections of ideological and political education across different educational levels. This process mainly involves extending the political education requirements of higher education to primary and secondary education stages, thereby promoting the comprehensive integration of ideological and political education across different educational stages. The physical and cognitive development of adolescents is a process from immaturity to maturity, so it is necessary to set ideological and political education objectives and select educational content according to the patterns of human growth and the internal laws of education for cultivating morality, achieving a spiraling rise in education. Therefore, to advance the integration of ideological and political education across different educational levels, it is necessary to grasp the characteristics of contemporary youth development, the cognitive characteristics and behavioral patterns of different educational stages, and ensure that ideological and political education at each educational level has its role, effort, gain, and achievement. Simultaneously, it is essential to strengthen the concept of a communal ideological and political education system across schools, enhance communication and collaboration between different educational stages, and ensure that ideological and political education continuously plays a role in the growth process of students.

## **3. Strengthen top-level design**

The essence of integrating ideological and political education across primary, secondary, and tertiary education lies in holistic construction, necessitating comprehensive planning, coordination, and strategic thought, and underscores the importance of top-level design. In August 2019, the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the General Office of the State Council issued “Several Opinions on Deepening the Reform and Innovation of School Ideological and Political Theory Courses in the New Era,” providing strategic direction for the innovative reform of ideological and political courses in schools. The document specifically proposed “coordinating the integration of ideological and political courses across primary, secondary, and tertiary education” and the establishment of a “Guidance Committee for the Integrated Construction of Ideological and Political Courses” by the Ministry of Education. These measures provide policy support and organizational assurance for the integration of ideological and political education. The Ministry of Education has established 32 “integrated communities for ideological and political courses across primary, secondary, and tertiary education” nationwide, laying a solid institutional foundation for local implementation.

### **3.1. Ensuring the party’s unified leadership over ideological and political education in schools**

Securing the Party’s unified leadership over ideological and political education in schools is critical to perfecting the educational work pattern. It is necessary to fully implement the framework where “Party committees

lead, with coordinated management by all departments”, ensuring that the party’s educational policies are executed at every educational stage. As schools serve as the training grounds for future socialist builders and successors, ideological and political education directly impacts the long-term development of both the party and the country. Thus, strengthening the party’s comprehensive leadership in school ideological and political education is crucial. First, the core role of the party in ideological and political education must be clarified. Leadership and directives from the Party Central Committee serve as the guiding compass, ensuring that the educational direction remains aligned. Party committees at all levels should play a leading role, unify thoughts, and clarify tasks. Furthermore, it is essential to establish and maintain a scientifically structured organizational leadership system. Party committees at all levels should set up leadership groups for ideological and political education work, responsible for overall coordination and fostering societal-wide participation. School party committees must effectively fulfill their primary responsibilities, with principals and secretaries taking personal charge and team members working collaboratively to fully mobilize the enthusiasm and creativity of teachers. Lastly, evaluation and supervision mechanisms must be strengthened. A comprehensive evaluation system for ideological and political education should be established, with regular inspections and timely problem-solving. Party committees at all levels must enhance their supervisory roles to ensure the effective implementation of all plans. Through scientific evaluations and rigorous supervision, the work of ideological and political education can continuously advance to new levels.

### **3.2. Optimizing the school’s ideological and political education system**

Strengthening top-level design is crucial to optimizing the school’s ideological and political education system and continuously promoting the integration of ideological and political courses across all educational levels, highlighting their core role in the overall construction of ideological and political education. According to the “Basic Requirements for Ideological and Political Theory Courses in Higher Education of the New Era” released by the Ministry of Education on April 12, 2018, “Ideological and political theory courses undertake the task of systematically educating university students in Marxist theory. They solidify Marxism’s guiding role in the ideological domain within universities, adhere to the socialist educational direction, are the main conduits and core courses for fully implementing the party’s educational policies and accomplishing the fundamental task of fostering character and civic virtue, and are the main courses for strengthening and improving ideological and political work in universities and realizing the connotative development of higher education.”<sup>[3]</sup> Therefore, the integration of ideological and political courses across primary, secondary, and tertiary education plays a decisive role in enhancing students’ ideological and political education and strengthening the integration of the education system. Additionally, to drive the integrated development of “educating all members, throughout the whole process, and in all aspects” across all educational levels, it is essential to devise specific implementation plans targeting both “three comprehensive education” and the “ten major education systems,” enabling their effective application within ideological and political education across all educational levels. Under the framework of integrated ideological and political education across all educational levels, this means extending the “three comprehensive education” strategy and constructing the “ten major education systems” methods from higher education to the primary and secondary education levels, adhering to the principles of full participation, comprehensive coverage, and holistic education. Special emphasis should be placed on leveraging the educational potential in teaching, research, practical activities, cultural construction, the online environment, psychological counseling, management systems, service provision, funding policies, and organizational structures to achieve resource integration and build a strong educational synergy.

### **3.3. Optimizing the structural framework of ideological and political education**

Strengthen top-level planning and optimize the institutional framework to build and enhance the system promoting the integration of ideological and political education across primary, secondary, and tertiary education levels. Local education administrative departments should draft and issue policy documents that facilitate the integration of ideological and political education across these educational stages, fully leveraging the normative, motivational, and directive functions of the system to provide solid policy support and institutional backing for this integration. Firstly, education administrative departments must comprehensively coordinate educational resources across different educational stages and regions, developing scientifically sound and rational resource allocation plans to ensure the effective utilization and fair distribution of ideological and political education resources<sup>[4]</sup>. It is essential to intensify inter-school collaboration among primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions, promoting interaction, communication, and cooperation between schools at different educational stages to create a well-integrated and mutually beneficial environment. Secondly, education administrative departments should improve the flexible mobility and collaborative mechanisms of ideological and political education teachers within the region across different educational stages. This can be achieved through teacher exchanges, mutual learning programs, and other methods aimed at improving the overall quality and teaching standards of the teaching staff, thereby facilitating the sharing and optimization of educational resources. Moreover, it is crucial to encourage and support all schools to actively engage in autonomous cooperation between universities, primary, and secondary schools, as well as among primary and secondary schools themselves, based on principles of convenience and mutual assistance. This involves exploring and innovating methods for integrating ideological and political education. By conducting joint teaching, co-creating courses, and sharing resources, schools can improve close cooperation and exchange of experiences, pushing the integration of ideological and political education to higher levels. In summary, by strengthening top-level planning and optimizing the institutional framework, constructing and perfecting the system that promotes the integration of ideological and political education across different educational levels can effectively elevate the overall standard of ideological and political education. This approach cultivates well-rounded socialist builders and successors who are developed intellectually, morally, physically, aesthetically, and in terms of labor skills. Such a comprehensive educational approach ensures the continuous development of individuals who can contribute effectively to societal and national goals.

## **4. Improving collaborative mechanisms**

The integration of ideological and political education across primary, secondary, and tertiary education is a complex systemic project that necessitates effective collaboration among different stakeholders and diverse resources. Developing a rational and efficient collaboration mechanism is crucial for the successful advancement of this initiative. It is also essential to strengthen communication and coordination among various departments to collectively drive progress.

### **4.1. Optimizing the educational collaboration mechanism across different stages**

In July 2021, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the “Opinions on Strengthening and Improving Ideological and Political Work in the New Era”, which emphasized “strengthening school ideological and political work, accelerating the construction of school ideological and political work systems, and implementing the project to nurture new individuals for our times.”<sup>[4]</sup>. This guideline not only clearly outlines the important task of nurturing youth for the new era but also plans deployments from the perspective of constructing a school’s ideological and political system, providing

fundamental guidance for the integration of ideological and political education across all educational levels. The report from the 20th National Congress further encouraged youth to “aspire to be young people of the new era who have ideals, the courage to bear responsibilities, the resilience to endure hardships, and the willingness to strive.”<sup>[5]</sup> Nurturing such youth should not be limited to any single educational stage but should be facilitated through continuous education and stage-wise enhancement from elementary to university levels. All educational institutions should regard cultivating new-era youth as their duty. Given that students at different educational stages have diverse developmental characteristics, the content, methods, and means of ideological and political education necessarily exhibit essential independence and variation. Therefore, ideological and political education in primary, secondary, and tertiary education should not only reflect the unique advantages of each stage but also achieve vertical collaboration. The significant task of nurturing capable new individuals for national rejuvenation should be integrated throughout all educational levels, ensuring that educational goals at different stages have their emphases and are progressively advanced. Each educational level has its area of responsibility and should guard its segment well while focusing on smooth transitions and collaborative cooperation between different levels of ideological and political education.

#### **4.2. Improving the collaborative educational mechanism among educational teams**

Following the principle of “involvement of all in education”, the educational concepts of “ideological and political courses within curriculum” and “broad ideological and political education” should be implemented, actively exploring and constructing a collaborative education structure among teachers of ideological and political courses, other subject teachers, and counselors. Moreover, it is necessary to promote collaborative education work among teachers, administrative staff, and other personnel, and encourage the creation of a joint mechanism among ideological and political education teams across all educational levels. First, bridge the divide between ideological and political education teachers and subject-specific teachers. Whether it is ideological and political education teachers or other subject teachers, all bear the crucial task of fostering character and virtue, which requires schools to enhance teachers’ awareness of “ideological and political courses within curriculum”, forming a collaborative education pattern. For example, ideological and political education teachers and subject teachers could establish mutual assistance groups, merging their expertise to create more professional collaborative education teams. Second, actively organize a pairing program between young and middle-aged Marxist theory experts, senior teachers, and primary and secondary school ideological and political education teachers to construct an integrated system of ideological and political educators across all educational levels. Arrangements could be made for primary and secondary school teachers to serve as visiting scholars at universities, conduct joint lesson planning, and precisely align educational content across different stages, thereby promoting the construction of integrated teacher teams for ideological and political education across all educational levels.

#### **4.3. Enhancing the collaborative functionality of educational platforms**

The educational platforms referred to here are the necessary environments or conditions for conducting ideological and political education. Considering the “ten major education systems” perspective, the primary task is to fully utilize classroom teaching as the main avenue. Additionally, this should include social practice, online environments, and platforms utilizing new technologies. To advance the integration of ideological and political education across primary, secondary, and tertiary levels, it is crucial to effectively use these diverse educational platforms and continuously improve the mechanisms for collaborative education across these platforms, enhancing the effectiveness of integration efforts through synergy. Particularly as new-era youth

are “digital natives”, it is necessary for the realm of ideological and political education to expand to online platforms, integrating ideological and political education across all educational levels with the internet, using the network to expand students’ knowledge and information exposure, which is an effective way to diversify and enhance the practical impact of ideological and political education efforts. For instance, by establishing online micro-classes, constructing a new pattern of network-based education in the digital era, using videos and instructional explanations as content carriers, and employing online learning and virtual classrooms as learning formats, leverage the detailed, innovative, and profound nature of micro-lessons in ideological and political education. Promote a shift in ideological and political education from a teaching-centered to a learning-centered approach, enabling students to become actively involved and accepting participants.

#### **4.4. Utilizing disciplinary leadership**

In the integration of ideological and political education across all educational levels, the positioning of disciplines mainly revolves around the primary discipline of Marxist theory and the secondary discipline of ideological and political education. It is essential to fully leverage the construction of these disciplines to support and advance the integration of ideological and political education across primary, secondary, and tertiary education, and to build a coordinated mechanism between discipline construction and ideological and political education. The “Several Opinions on Deepening the Reform and Innovation of School Ideological and Political Theory Courses in the New Era” issued by the Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council in 2019 emphasizes: “Fully leverage the leading role of Marxist theoretical disciplines”<sup>[6]</sup>. As part of this discipline, ideological and political education courses, which primarily teach Marxist theory and conduct ideological and political education, are considered “key courses” and occupy a central position in achieving the fundamental task of fostering character and civic virtue. Additionally, ideological and political education courses play a crucial role in enhancing the guiding role of Marxist disciplines. Therefore, it is advisable to use the discipline of Marxist theory to train professional personnel and teachers for ideological and political education.

### **5. Conclusion**

In summary, advancing the integration of ideological and political education across primary, secondary, and tertiary education not only helps to enhance students’ ideological and political literacy but also plays a significant role in achieving the goal of nurturing well-rounded socialist builders and successors. Through this strategic decision, schools can further refine the concepts, content, methods, and implementation frameworks of school ideological and political education, thereby improving the quality and effectiveness of education. Systematic top-level design and effective collaborative mechanisms are key to achieving this goal. By optimizing the education system and strengthening coordination and cooperation among different educational stages, outstanding talents can be cultivated in the new era educational context, who possess firm ideals and convictions, good moral character, solid knowledge and skills, and healthy physical and mental qualities. Especially by comprehensively utilizing classroom teaching, social practice, online platforms, and other educational pathways, and by strengthening the collaborative education mechanisms among ideological and political education teachers and other subject teachers, a new pattern of education can be constructed that involves everyone, covers the entire process, and addresses all aspects.

## Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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