

Construction of Ideological and Political Education in English Teacher Education Courses in Local Normal Universities: Objectives, Connotations, and Implementation Paths

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Abstract: The integration of ideological and political education into university curricula represents a new trend in holistic, comprehensive, and all-around education. The concept of “ideological and political education in English teacher education courses” embodies an interdisciplinary approach to curriculum reform. Grounded in the principle of fostering moral integrity, it aims to create high-quality courses by seamlessly integrating the transmission of knowledge and skills with the guidance of ideological values. This study explores the status quo, significance, and implementation pathways for integrating ideological and political education into English teacher education courses, providing valuable insights for future curricular development.

Keywords: Ideological and political education; English teacher education courses; Implementation paths

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1. Introduction

At the National Conference on Ideological and Political Work in Colleges and Universities, the General Secretary stressed the need to “focus on fostering virtue and integrating ideological and political work into every aspect of education.” Universities, as key venues for ideological and political education, should enhance their ideological and political consciousness while ensuring that teachers, as the primary drivers, play a central role in the classroom.

By integrating knowledge transmission, skill development, and value guidance, all courses can align with ideological and political goals to create a synergistic educational effect. English teacher education courses, as the primary channel for cultivating the moral character and educational skills of primary and secondary school English teachers, are crucial for teaching reform and for achieving the goal of training qualified English teachers for local basic education ^[1].

This paper constructs a descriptive framework for ideological and political education in English teacher education courses from both vertical (scope of ideological and political education, main tasks, and key strategies) and horizontal (four ideological and political education chains) dimensions. It also explores the connotations and implementation paths of integrating ideological and political education into English teacher education courses in practice. This paper aims to answer the following questions:

- (1) What is the status quo of ideological and political education construction in English teacher education courses in local normal universities?
- (2) How can the implementation paths be constructed based on the objectives and connotations of ideological and political education construction in English teacher education courses?

2. Status quo of ideological and political education construction in English teacher education courses

2.1. The need for strengthening value guidance

Currently, the English teacher education programs offered by universities have become important bases for training English teacher candidates. However, there have been various misconceptions regarding the orientation of these programs: some universities focus more on the development of advantageous disciplines, gradually marginalizing English teacher education; some universities overly emphasize technical skills, leading to an over-technicalization of training goals and processes; and some universities even produce “teaching machines” that lack inner spiritual growth, thereby neglecting the cultivation of teachers’ inner spirit and undervaluing the theoretical significance of English teacher education courses ^[2]. The basic concept of ideological and political education provides direction for the development of English teacher education courses. The organic integration of English teacher education courses with ideological and political education is a key support for the future development of English teacher education, aiming not only to cultivate the professional skills of teacher candidates but also to strengthen moral education, fostering a sense of responsibility, teaching expertise, and the ability to enlighten students.

2.2. The need for strengthening practical training

One of the basic concepts of English teacher education courses is to strengthen the practical aspect of the curriculum. However, most university teacher education programs have not yet fully broken down the boundaries between higher education and basic education, resulting in limited depth of collaboration and a closed-loop training model ^[3]. The teaching tasks are primarily undertaken by education-related teachers, with students lacking channels for communication and interaction with actual primary and secondary school teaching practices. Consequently, the content taught in English teacher education courses is, to some extent, disconnected from real educational situations, leading to graduates of English teacher education programs being unable to effectively grasp the principles of education and teaching due to their lack of understanding and perception of teaching practice. Ideological and political education sets clear requirements for practical courses, emphasizing that professional practical courses should focus on students’ learning and thinking, guiding them to develop strong practical skills, innovation capabilities, and problem-solving skills. English teacher education programs should continuously explore implementation methods for teacher education courses under the guidance of the basic concept of ideological and political education, increasing collaboration between universities and basic education to cultivate students’ ability to solve practical problems.

3. Significance of ideological and political education construction in English teacher education courses

3.1. An intrinsic requirement for fulfilling the fundamental task of fostering virtue

Ideological and political education involves integrating the principles of ideological and political instruction into the broader curriculum, beyond just designated political courses ^[4]. In universities, this approach incorporates the content and objectives of ideological and political education into all professional courses, ensuring the achievement of educational goals through both specialized and ideological-political theory courses. In the context of university English teacher education programs, this concept is applied to create a curriculum system that trains high-quality, professional English teachers. The integration of ideological and political education into these courses is a holistic approach, focusing on fostering virtue as a core educational mission. It leverages classroom teaching as the primary channel for integrating ideological and political education into various aspects of the English teacher education curriculum, thereby establishing a comprehensive Sanquan educational model that includes all participants, processes, and aspects of education. Through ongoing reforms in ideological and political education, universities aim to create a curriculum where ideological and political principles are interwoven with course content, generating a synergistic effect that aligns knowledge transmission with value guidance. Thus, the active promotion of ideological and political education is essential for fulfilling the fundamental goal of virtue cultivation and enhancing the moral development of future English teachers.

3.2. A fundamental guarantee for conducting moral education for teachers

The “Guidelines for the Construction of Ideological and Political Education in Higher Education Courses” emphasize that education-related courses should focus on strengthening moral education for teachers, highlighting moral cultivation in the classroom, setting examples, establishing rules to guide students in developing the professional ideals of “being a teacher with noble character and integrity,” cultivating a sense of patriotism, legal compliance, and professional ethics, as well as the ability to impart knowledge, teach skills, and solve problems. This education should integrate the love for the country, education, and students, with a conscious commitment to moral integrity in both personal conduct and teaching, striving to become “four-have” good teachers with ideals and beliefs, moral integrity, solid knowledge, and a caring heart, while unswervingly following the path of socialist education development with Chinese characteristics.

Moral education for teachers is primarily conducted through practice and reflection, discovering problems in practice, solving problems through reflection, and ultimately deepening the understanding of professional ethics through the positive interaction between the two. Teacher education courses mainly emphasize the basic concepts of lifelong learning, being student-centered, and practice-oriented. These three basic concepts respectively emphasize the implementation methods, goals, and carriers of teacher education courses. Being student-centered emphasizes the cultivation of teacher candidates by focusing on the formation of correct views on students, teachers, education, and the necessary educational knowledge and skills, with the ultimate goal of understanding the internal regulations of the teaching profession; practice-oriented emphasizes the carriers of moral education, providing the necessary conditions for teacher candidates to practice moral education; lifelong learning reflects the process and method of moral education, emphasizing that the cultivation of moral education is a continuous process of practice, reflection, and improvement, avoiding the pitfalls of hasty results ^[5]. Students in English teacher education programs can receive systematic moral education through these courses, practicing professional ethics in reflective practice, and eventually forming excellent moral qualities. Therefore, conducting ideological and political education in English teacher education courses is a powerful guarantee for strengthening moral education for teachers and cultivating students’ ability to practice moral

education.

3.3. Important paths for practicing ideological and political education

Many teaching contents in English teacher education courses contain elements of ideological and political education, making them important paths for practicing ideological and political education. For example, in the course “Middle School English Curriculum Standards and Teaching Methods,” the teaching integrates English teaching knowledge, teaching skills, and moral education, achieving a subtle influence on students. In the context of the construction of the new liberal arts, there is a need to establish an interdisciplinary teaching awareness. By constructing a system of ideological and political education, the knowledge of pedagogy, psychology, education, biology, and other disciplines can be integrated, cultivating students’ interdisciplinary thinking patterns and enhancing their initiative in discovering educational sentiments and humanistic spirit. This process internalizes the spirit of “being a teacher with noble characters and integrity” and externalizes it in action, shaping them into well-rounded educators with both moral integrity and knowledge.

A search for “ideological and political education” on the China National Knowledge Infrastructure platform returns 21,062 results. However, narrowing the search to “ideological and political education in English majors” reduces the results to only 386, with most studies focusing on the theoretical aspects of its necessity, feasibility, and implementation strategies. Research specifically on “ideological and political education in English teacher education courses” is even more limited, with no established, replicable models currently available for integrating ideological and political education into these courses.

4. Implementation paths for ideological and political education construction in English teacher education courses

The framework in this study is structured along both vertical and horizontal dimensions. The vertical dimension is divided into the scope of ideological and political education, its primary tasks, and key strategies ^[6]. The scope outlines the general areas where ideological and political education is integrated into English teacher education courses, encompassing four main areas: course content, management of the teaching environment, assessment systems, and teacher-student interactions. Collectively, these areas create a comprehensive system for ideological and political education. The primary tasks involve outlining the responsibilities of foreign language teachers within each of these areas, such as incorporating educational elements into lesson plans, setting rules and playing key roles, developing new assessment methods, and enhancing self-cultivation. The key strategies include four approaches for effectively implementing ideological and political education in foreign language courses: subtle influence, rule-based management with prompt feedback, incorporating ideological and political elements into assessments, and role modeling combined with a balance of strictness and kindness. These strategies are designed to enhance the effectiveness of ideological and political education in the curriculum.

The horizontal dimension of this study is divided into four ideological and political education chains: the content chain, management chain, assessment chain, and teacher behavior chain. Each chain consists of three elements: scope, tasks, and strategies. The content chain focuses on course content, requiring English teachers to explore educational elements and design lesson plans that subtly influence students’ character, emotions, cultural appreciation, and beliefs. The management chain emphasizes the management of the teaching environment, where teachers establish strict rules and lead by example. By employing rule-based management alongside timely praise and criticism, teachers create a positive environment that fosters students’ growth. The assessment chain involves integrating ideological and political functions into the assessment system, aiming

to achieve comprehensive education through a new assessment framework. Finally, the teacher behavior chain calls for educators to continuously self-improve through interaction with students. By modeling behavior that balances strictness with kindness, teachers encourage students to develop self-discipline and view their teachers as role models, thereby fostering respect and trust. These four chains must work in unison, creating a harmonious and effective system for ideological and political education within foreign language courses.

The first framework illustrates four ideological and political education chains, with the content chain as the core, around which the other three chains are structured. In the context of English teacher education, teachers are the key leaders, designers, and practitioners of ideological and political integration. Thus, their ideals, beliefs, educational awareness, teaching artistry, and professional ethics directly influence the effectiveness of this integration within the curriculum.

The second framework outlines three sequential tasks for integrating educational elements into the teaching content of English teacher education courses: understanding educational goals, analyzing teaching content, and designing classroom plans. First, teachers must thoroughly grasp the educational goals, which are hierarchical and can be divided into four levels. The first level includes the educational goals set by the state, school, and department; the second level refers specifically to the overarching goals of English teacher education courses; the third level addresses the objectives of various English teacher education courses, such as English Curriculum Standards and Teaching Methods, English Teaching Design and Practice, Oral English for Teachers, English Testing and Evaluation, and English Teaching Case Analysis; the fourth level focuses on the unit teaching goals within a particular course, which can be further broken down into goals for each lesson or activity. The higher-level goals encompass those at the lower levels, meaning that when foreign language teachers design specific classroom objectives, they must ensure alignment with the overarching goals.

With a comprehensive understanding of the educational goals, teachers must then conduct a thorough analysis of the content they teach. Ideological and political elements are often embedded within teaching materials or may be implicitly conveyed through practice activities. Teachers should first clarify the explicit core knowledge and skills of the English teacher education curriculum but should go beyond that to uncover the embedded educational elements, including value orientation, emotional development, and self-management skills ^[7].

5. Conclusion

The “Ideological and Political Education in English Teacher Education Courses” is an interdisciplinary curriculum reform practice. It is a curriculum construction practice based on fostering virtue, aiming to build high-quality courses and effectively achieve the integration of knowledge and skills transmission with ideological value guidance. This paper focused on several issues in the construction of ideological and political education in English teacher education courses: the status quo, significance, and implementation paths. However, the paper only presented a preliminary discussion on these issues, and more research and practice of ideological and political education in courses are required.

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