

# Practical Logic and Optimization Path of the Effectiveness of Teaching Methods in Ideological and Political Theory Courses

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**Abstract:** Since the Party Central Committee has explicitly requested the running of excellent ideological and political theory courses, the teaching methods of ideological and political theory courses have become a major topic of discussion in academic circles. A gap remains between the current teaching methods of ideological and political theory courses and those in the new era. In order to improve the nurturing effect of key courses, it is necessary to study the basic logic of its effectiveness enhancement from the perspective of practice. In the new era, it is essential to take the spirit from the series of important speeches of the Party and national leaders on ideological and political theory courses as guidance, draw on the effective teaching ideas of Comenius that reflect “fun,” “convenience,” and “thoroughness,” closely combine the teaching practice, as well as select and apply the teaching methods based on the concept of three “combinations” and two “innovations,” *i.e.*, combining students, teachers’ teaching styles, and teaching contents; and innovating and practicing the integrated teaching method of diversified integration as well as the new teaching method of media technology-integrated smart classroom.

**Keywords:** Ideological and political theory course; Teaching methods; Effectiveness; Practical logic

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## 1. Introduction

Entering a new era, the Party and the State have prioritized ideological and political theory courses in key courses as the fundamental task of establishing moral education. On the eve of Teachers’ Day in 2020, the Party and State leaders set ardent expectations for the majority of teachers, urging them to “actively explore the new era of education and teaching methods.” According to a review on the development of China’s ideological and political theory courses, teaching methods have given ideological and political theory courses a fresh impetus and improved its teaching effectiveness. However, the evaluation of students on teaching methods is relatively poor according to a survey conducted by experts<sup>[1]</sup>. Key courses play an important role and are carried out using certain methods. The important value and role of methods in reaching educational goals and achieving nurturing effects provide great significance to methodological research on effectiveness. A literature review on the performance of the poor effectiveness of teaching methods in ideological and political theory courses is conducted, followed by a cause analysis, taking the three-dimensional effectiveness evaluation theory of Comenius, “fun,” “convenience,” and “thoroughness,” as the theoretical framework for research and the new requirements for the construction of ideological and political theory courses in colleges and universities in the new era as a guide. Thereafter, strategies for improving the effectiveness of teaching methods in ideological and political theory courses are proposed to

help key courses play its purported role.

## **2. Poor effectiveness of teaching methods in ideological and political theory courses**

In educational activities, the effectiveness of a method refers to the advantage of a method that can be used by educators and that is widely recognized by educatees to achieve educational goals. According to Shen, ideological and political education methods are the links and intermediaries in the establishment of relationships in ideological and political education activities; therefore, it is an inherent requirement that effective ideological and political education methods must have multifaceted adaptability<sup>[2]</sup>. The use and effectiveness of teaching methods are directly influenced by the educators' own knowledge structures and knowledge systems. Teaching methods have adaptability to educators; the basis and principles of method selection should be based on the premise of following the law of ideological and psychological development of educatees. Teaching methods also have adaptability to educatees; methods serve the purpose, and the selection of teaching methods should be based on the purpose of education. Teaching methods have adaptability to the purpose of education; as the main channel of ideological and political education, the effectiveness of teaching methods and their connotation have the same nature. The aforementioned three "adaptabilities" can be regarded as the three criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching methods in ideological and political theory courses.

### **2.1. Teaching materials are far from reality and the times and are not adapted to students**

The inadaptability of teaching methods to the object of education refers to the fact that the teaching methods are not conducive to the establishment of good communication, the relationship between educators and educatees, the stimulation of the latter's internal drive to learn, and their subjectivity. Different teaching methods require different materials as support. According to a research on the evaluation of ideological and political theory courses and teachers' teaching in 8,030 undergraduates from 52 colleges and universities in China, 26% of students felt that the "teaching cases are out of touch with students' reality." The principle means of improving the attractiveness of classroom teaching is to relate to reality. Student may feel bored if the teaching cases that are beyond their knowledge and experience; in addition, the interaction between teachers and students may also be affected. On the contrary, cases that meet the students' cognitive range and related to the discourse system of students' lives are more likely to arouse students' interest, stimulate their learning enthusiasm, and increase their participation in learning. The case teaching method is the most commonly used teaching method for teaching ideological and political theory courses. However, some teachers do not pay enough attention to current affairs, and some continue using cases from old lesson plans. As a result, the effectiveness of teaching methods is likely to be affected.

### **2.2. Connotation and operation process are not clearly understood and mastered by some teachers or adapted to teachers**

The inadaptability of teaching methods to educators refers to the inability of teachers to understand the application teaching methods in a comprehensive manner and their unskilled use. This makes it difficult to maximize the effectiveness of the teaching methods in the teaching process. Several studies have shown that some teaching methods are not used naturally or smoothly enough and there is a tendency to use teaching methods dogmatically; hence, they behave somewhat rigidly in actual teaching practice<sup>[3]</sup>. Since teachers do not fully understand the connotation of teaching methods, the phenomenon of "rigidity" is bound to appear in the implementation process, resulting in a poor teaching process. Teachers would only be able to fully master the teaching methods and optimize the effectiveness of teaching methods in the teaching practice of ideological and political theory courses if they have a clear grasp of the entire method application process.

### **2.3. Entertainment tendency weakens the teaching ideology and theoreticality and is not adapted to the purpose of teaching**

The inadaptability of teaching methods to the teaching purpose refers to the failure of teaching methods in serving the teaching purpose and achieving a reasonable teaching effect. The main purpose of ideological and political theory courses is to enhance students' knowledge and build their confidence in Marxist theory, improve their theoretical literacy, and externalize it in practice. No matter what teaching methods are used, this purpose should be met. The current teaching of ideological and political theory courses has over-relied on images, videos, and other multimedia technical means, transferring the content in textbooks to online videos, and incorporating the originally standardized and rigorous ideological and political theory course with strong entertainment color<sup>[4]</sup>. According to previous research data, ideological and political theory courses were thought to be "overly entertaining with unclear teaching objectives" in 19.7% of students. Students tend to immerse themselves in the entertainment environment as a result of the attractive and "exciting" entertainment aspect, which steals their attention from the actual teaching content and weakens the value and ideology of the content, as well as the theory behind it.

### **3. Analysis of the reasons for the poor effectiveness of teaching methods in ideological and political theory courses**

Comenius advocates that effective teaching methods should have the attributes of "fun," "convenient," and "thorough." These three attributes correspond to the three elements of classroom teaching: the educated, the educator, and the teaching goal. The reasons for the shortcomings of the teaching methods are discussed in this section.

#### **3.1. Lack of understanding of the subjectivity of the educatees and failure in meeting the psychological needs of students**

According to Comenius, the prerequisite of effective teaching is students' active willingness to learn and the manifestation of students' subjectivity. The current teaching methods are not adapted to students' problems, mainly because students' internal drive to learn has not been stimulated, the subjectivity of educatees has not been brought into play, and there is a lack of subjective initiative. In modern teaching activities, both teachers and students share a common goal. Teachers' teaching activities and students' learning activities are centered on students' growth and success. However, there are times when they are influenced by the traditional teaching concept. Hard indoctrination traces of some teachers are still evident. They strengthen the will of teachers, weaken students' subjectivity, and shelve the psychological needs of learning to some extent. According to a survey, students present a higher degree of recognition to the case teaching method because this method has a storytelling plot with a beginning and an end. It replaces the boring abstract theory indoctrination with concrete and vivid cases, which revitalize the teaching content and strengthen the classroom subject. This is particularly true in events where contemporary cases originating from social life practice are used. Theory thus becomes vivid and dynamic by entering students' world and highly integrated with practice<sup>[5]</sup>. Overall, the case teaching method enhances students' learning experience. Other than that, combining ideological and political "small classroom" with social "big classroom" to form a "big ideological and political classroom"<sup>[6]</sup> may be effective. This dynamic and open teaching method, which links theory and practice, presents real and typical problems to students, which makes it easier for students to externalize what they learn from the course into daily life practice. In that way, it can improve students' theoretical self-consciousness of using various theories to analyze and solve problems, stimulate students' interest in classroom learning, and thus achieve the teaching objectives.

### **3.2. Lack of understanding of the application and characteristics of teaching methods, and detachment from teachers' own reality**

Convenience, with regard to teaching methods, means that a method is not only simple to apply and operate, but also easier to achieve the teaching purpose. The current issue in which the teaching methods are not suitable for teachers is due to the fact that teachers do not have a clear and proficient grasp of how to use these teaching methods. Any teaching method has unique connotations, characteristics, processes, and shortcomings. In the teaching of ideological and political theory courses, teachers must really know themselves and their peers to be able to use these methods easily and achieve effective teaching effects. First, the effectiveness of teaching methods and teachers' teaching style are closely related. For ideological and political teachers, the diversity of teaching styles is objective. The psychological base factors of the effectiveness of teaching are as follows: ideological and moral cultivation, knowledge structure, way of thinking, personalities (temperament, poise, *etc.*), teaching ability; and depth, breadth, intensity, and speed of teaching <sup>[7]</sup>. Teachers often refrain from integrating their own feelings and the spirit of Marxist truth into the interpretation of each concept and case <sup>[8]</sup>. As a result, the effectiveness of teaching methods weakens. Second, different teaching methods are applied to different teaching categories. Some teaching methods focus on knowledge mapping and cultivating students' critical thinking and skills, which are more applicable to practical teaching. Other teaching methods focus on explaining knowledge and cultivating knowledge cognition, which are more applicable to knowledge-based teaching. There are also some teaching methods that are oriented to trending social issues, focusing on the theoretical explanation and guidance of important and difficult issues to improve theoretical literacy; these teaching methods are more applicable to theoretical teaching.

### **3.3. Lack of understanding of teaching objectives and unsatisfactory teaching effect**

According to Comenius, only a number of students are thoroughly equipped when they graduate; the majority are equipped with surface knowledge without receiving any real education because what they learn is as such: most of it (knowledge) merely passes through their heads and is not firmly fixed there <sup>[9]</sup>; moreover, the thoroughness of teaching is lacking. The thoroughness of teaching in ideological and political theory courses refers not only to the students' understanding of knowledge, but also the content of teaching that has been grounded in the brain and heart. Knowledge is "written into memory," integrated into thought, becomes the support of ideals and beliefs, and practiced socially. The current problem in which teaching methods do not adapt to the teaching objectives is attributed to teachers' failure in understanding the teaching objectives and their cognitive ambiguity of the value of these objectives. Ideological and political education is reflected as ideological education through knowledge education, with the goal of spreading and promoting Marxist scientific theories. It is highly theoretical and ideological, and its education process begins from the analysis and understanding of knowledge to "writing into memory," followed by practicing. Effective teaching methods are important for fixing knowledge in one's memory. In addition, there is a strong purpose to both teaching and learning, which is to pass the assessment of the course. As the most direct way to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching, the course assessment plays the role of a baton in the choice of teaching methods. The current assessment method of ideological and political theory courses, which is a biased knowledge, ideological, and theoretical assessment, is still lacking. The reason for the teaching objectives tending to be knowledge-based is the lack of clarity of the teaching objectives in Marxist education although there is some relation to the complexity of the course assessment itself. The knowledge-based orientation of the teaching objectives directly affects the choice of teaching methods.

#### **4. Suggestions for improving the effectiveness of teaching methods in ideological and political theory courses**

In view of the current teaching methods of ideological and political theory courses, the detached teaching materials from the actual courses and the students, the unclear and uncertainties in the connotation and operation process of the methods, and the one-sided pursuit of attractiveness, catering to students, entertainment tendencies, and other problems, combined with the aforementioned reasons, we recommend that ideological and political teachers establish the concept of three “combinations” and two “innovations” in the selection and use of teaching methods.

##### **4.1. Combine the characteristics of students’ thinking and professional reality to choose appropriate teaching methods**

In the information age, college students have become veritable netizens through the internet. With increasing social openness, college students tend to flaunt their individuality and open-mindedness. The acceleration of social development accentuates the intergenerational characteristics of college students, which are the characteristics of college students in the new era. Classroom teaching is a practical activity involving interaction between the subject and the object. In order to choose teaching methods not only from the perspective of educators, but also from the perspective of educatees and the teaching goals, ideological and political teachers need to pay attention to trending topics in the network. In that way, they would be able to choose cases and topics that are “hot” and “trending.” You can choose cases and topics that are “hot” and “headlines”, and choose events that happen on the university campus as materials. Such actual cases in life can make students feel close and interested, and stimulate the internal drive to learn. On the other hand, the cases and themes involved in the teaching methods are combined with students' disciplines and majors. Science and technology majors can choose cases and themes related to scientific research, military and police majors choose more cases and problems in military and police, teacher training majors focus on cases of teachers, and medical majors focus on cases and themes related to the medical world. Although some cases and themes have common applicability, they still cannot be uniform, and different institutions and different majors use the same teaching design. Only by going to the students' life field to choose the vivid cases, can we enter the students' mind world, which is the distinctive issue of “fresh and lively” and “delightful” proposed by Mao Zedong.

##### **4.2. Combine the teaching style of teachers to choose appropriate teaching methods**

The key to the value of a teaching method lies in the teacher’s ability to use the method flexibly. Since teaching methods cannot be part of the teacher’s skilled use and understanding of a problem, the majority of ideological and political teachers need to examine their own personalities, strengths in professional subjects, language characteristics, teaching skills, *etc.*, in order to determine their own teaching style based on their choice of teaching methods. Ideological and political teachers should consciously cultivate personalized teaching methods in conjunction with their own teaching style as an innovation of teaching methods. In teaching practice, some colleges and universities request their teachers to jointly explore and practice certain teaching methods. This is of positive significance from the perspective of teaching mode brand building. The teaching methods that teachers adopt for specific courses need to be based on the actual situation of the course in combination with the teacher’s own teaching style, without deliberately pursuing a team approach. In actual practice, ideological and political teachers should consider their own knowledge level, logic, and language characteristics, as well as other teaching styles in choosing appropriate teaching methods.

### **4.3. Combining teaching content with appropriate teaching methods**

In order to address the issue that teaching content and teaching methods do not match well and the methods cater to students weakening the content, the majority of teachers of ideological and political theory courses need to take the attributes of ideology in ideological and political theory courses as a major premise, clarify the relationship between content and form, and select methods that are suitable for the teaching content. Certain teaching contents require specific teaching methods to be presented and strengthened, and there are certain teaching methods that will enable the teachers to present the teaching content appropriately. Teaching methods are closely related to the teaching form; thus, any change or reform of teaching form must revolve around the reform of content. This is an objective law that teaching methods should adhere to<sup>[10]</sup>. The unity of content and form is required for teaching methods to work in the teaching process. The methods must be subordinated to and serve the specific teaching content. In the selection of teaching methods, it is necessary to take into full consideration of knowledge transmission and the sublimation of ideas, *i.e.*, the unification of intellectualization and moralization of curriculum.

### **4.4. Innovation and practice of multi-faceted integration of comprehensive teaching method**

Innovation is the Party Central Committee's requirement for the reform of ideological and political theory courses. The reform and innovation of teaching methods is the right thing to do. It is known from previous analysis that different teaching methods have different effectiveness and complementary advantages. Therefore, in response to the issue that the teaching methods of ideological and political theory courses cannot achieve "thoroughness," teachers of ideological and political theory courses need to use comprehensive teaching methods. They should actively transform the old concept of seeking the best teaching method to integrating the effectiveness of various teaching methods on the basis of in-depth research, reasonable innovation, and combining the actual teaching content, their own teaching style, and actual student learning, with the innovative practice of multi-faceted integration of various teaching methods. The integrated method is not the simultaneous use of multiple teaching methods but rather the exploration of the internal consistency of different teaching methods and the integration of multiple teaching methods. According to Shen, people's concern for the effectiveness of practical activities should not only be focused on the effectiveness of the results of practical activities, but also on the extent to which the practical activities effectively meet their needs. It should also focus on the effectiveness of the elements that constitute the practical activities and the ways and conditions of specific practical activities, which would be effective for the production of results<sup>[2]</sup>. All teaching methods have shortcomings; hence, how to build on the strengths and avoid the shortcomings is the basic principle for the selection of teaching methods. The teaching of ideological and political theory courses is different from other disciplines. In addition to its focus on knowledge, it also focuses on the ideological and theoretical reach. Effective complementarity can be achieved by avoiding the shortcomings of different teaching methods and integrating the advantages of different methods.

### **4.5. Innovative practice of new teaching methods of media technology-integrated smart classroom**

The reform and innovation of the ideological and political theory courses is a clear requirement of the Party Central Committee to improve the teachers' information technology skills and apply modern information technology to the teaching of ideological and political theory courses. On the one hand, modern media technology, which integrates graphic, text, sound, and video, can be applied to the teaching of ideological and political theory courses as it draws college students into the state of "mind flow" with full commitment and fits ideally into the way new era college students accept information, reflecting the sense of intimacy and enhancing the attractiveness. On the other hand, it helps dispel the dullness brought about by the ideological and theoretical nature of the course and enhances the "fun" in the course. In view of the tendency

of entertainment in such a context, it is necessary to dialectically analyze the teaching methods and affirm the positive effect of media technology application on classroom teaching without blindly abandoning traditional teaching methods. The advantages of traditional teaching methods are found in the clarity of the teaching content, teaching ideas, and teaching purpose, the control of the key points, and various other aspects. On the basis of traditional teaching methods, teachers must use media technology in an appropriate manner and pay attention to limiting the video options. Each lesson is designed in such a way that a short 10-minute video is chosen because the attention of college students can only last for about 10 minutes, especially in video-assisted teaching<sup>[11]</sup>. The use of new media technology is an important value point for ideological and political theory courses to “come alive.” It strengthens the endogenous gravitational force of classroom teaching and is the premise for creating a smart classroom. Taking the successful experience of traditional teaching methods and integrating the advantages of new media technology to create a new teaching method, smart classroom will become an important development trend of effective teaching methods for college ideological and political theory courses. Teachers should fully comply to the law of education and follow the teaching development, understand the advantages of new technology, new means, and new media to achieve high-quality teaching, innovate classroom teaching methods and means through new information technology, and realize the deep integration of new technology and classroom teaching.

## **5. Conclusion**

Teaching methods have the property of tools. They are the intermediaries and tools for classroom educators to educate people. As the saying goes, “If you want to do a good job, you must first make use of tools.” The mastery and understanding of “things” are the prerequisite for selecting and using “tools,” and the familiarity and proficiency of “tools” is the guarantee of “good things.” In the selection of effective teaching methods, it is not only necessary to study the applicability of the teaching content and gain familiarity with the application of the teaching methods, but also take into account of the students’ needs. These three aspects must be considered in order to ensure the maximum effectiveness of the teaching methods, especially with regard to ideological and political theory courses. Interest is the premise of the effectiveness of a teaching method, simplifying it is the key to the effectiveness of the teaching method, and the thoroughness of the teaching objective is the value of the effectiveness of the method. Ideological and political teachers must fully understand the personalities of students, integrate the actual subject specialization, their own teaching style, and the actual teaching content, take advantage of the traditional mode and new media, innovate and implement comprehensive teaching methods, adapt to the law of education, conform to the purpose of education, and reach a realm of both teaching and learning. Although this study analyzes the effectiveness of teaching methods, the research on specific methods for each ideological and political theory course is lacking, thus requiring further studies.

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