

Integration of Ideological and Political Elements into Philology Courses in Higher Education: An Exploratory Analysis and Practical Implementation within the Context of the New Era

Xie Xie*

School of Literature, Journalism & Communication, South-Central Minzu University, Wuhan 430074, Hubei Province, China

*Corresponding author: Xie Xie, caroledu@126.com

Copyright: © 2024 Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), permitting distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is cited.

Abstract: Philology is a fundamental course for Chinese majors in higher education, which contains rich ideological and political education resources. In the context of the new era, integrating ideological and political elements into the course of philology is not only an inherent requirement of the course itself but also a necessary requirement for the development of education. This article explores the practical paths of integrating ideological and political elements into the course of philology by mining its ideological and political resources, providing theoretical reference and practical inspiration for comprehensively promoting the ideological and political reform of language and literature courses in the new era.

Keywords: Ideological and political education; Philology; Practical pathway

Online publication: August 27, 2024

1. Introduction

In May 2020, the Ministry of Education in China issued further directives to universities regarding the integration of ideology and politics into curricula, promulgating the “Guiding Outline for the Ideological and Political Construction in Courses of Institutions of Higher Learning”^[1], which explicitly stated that comprehensively advancing the ideological and political construction in courses is a strategic measure to fulfill the fundamental task of cultivating individuals with moral integrity and a key responsibility to comprehensively enhance the quality of talent cultivation. Furthermore, it outlined the objectives, requirements, content priorities, and teaching systems for this endeavor. The integration of ideology and politics into curricula aims to unify explicit and implicit education by uncovering the ideological and political elements embedded within disciplinary knowledge.

In the specific context of philology courses, this integration necessitates a profound understanding of “Xi Jinping’s Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era” from historical, contemporary, theoretical, and practical perspectives. It involves leveraging professional knowledge education to guide students in deeply comprehending the core socialist values, promoting and inheriting the fine traditional Chinese culture,

and fostering cultural confidence as well as a love for the Chinese language and script.

2. The necessity of integrating ideological and political elements into Chinese philology courses in universities

The General Secretary has articulated the concept of “Ideological and Political Education in All Courses,” providing a clear direction for universities to advance. As educators in universities, we are tasked with integrating ideological and political elements into our curriculum, thereby fulfilling our educational responsibility of fostering virtue and cultivating talent, ultimately shaping a “comprehensive ideological and political education landscape”^[2].

Within China’s higher education system, philology serves as a fundamental course for Chinese language and literature majors. As a discipline delving into the inherent laws and historical-cultural connotations of language and writing, philology boasts profound cultural roots and a rich intellectual heritage, naturally aligning with ideological and political elements. Nevertheless, the current literature exploring the integration of ideological and political elements into philology courses remains scarce. Incorporating such elements into philology courses is not only a crucial step in enhancing the educational depth of the curriculum but also a necessity for nurturing modern university students with unwavering ideals and beliefs, profound cultural literacy, and a heightened sense of social responsibility. The integration of ideological and political elements into philology courses in universities represents an inevitable requirement of educational development in the new era. Therefore, we must actively explore and practice the harmonious integration of philology courses with ideological and political education, contributing to the cultivation of outstanding talents endowed with both moral integrity and professional competence.

3. Exploring the integration of ideological and political elements into philology courses in universities

As educators in linguistics at universities, it is imperative to delve deeply into the logical connections and inherent harmonies between the core professional knowledge of “philology” and ideological and political elements. On the one hand, we should “convey the truth through the profession,” consolidating intellectual foundations amidst the dissemination of values. On the other hand, we must “imbue the profession with the truth,” emphasizing value guidance in the process of knowledge impartation^[3]. In this way, philology courses can keep abreast of the times, integrating ideological and political education into their curricula, thereby achieving an organic unity between knowledge transmission and moral education aimed at fostering virtue and cultivating talent.

3.1. Exploring the cultivation of cultural confidence as an ideological and political element

As a magnificent creation of the Chinese ancestors inhabiting the Yellow River basin, Chinese characters occupy a unique value and status when compared to other classical scripts in the world. Although the emergence of proto-Chinese characters roughly coincides with the emergence of cuneiform writing in Sumer and hieroglyphs in ancient Egypt, it is solely Chinese characters that have endured for millennia without interruption, continuously carrying forward the wisdom and culture of the Chinese nation, making them the only living classical script system in the world today. As the sole exemplar of classical scripts, Chinese characters represent a magnificent cultural heritage bestowed by the Chinese nation upon human civilization. Their value is unparalleled, not only in inheriting, promoting, and disseminating Chinese culture but also in recognizing and exploring the general laws governing the development of world cultures, languages, and scripts.

From oracle bone inscriptions and bronze inscriptions to Xiaozhuan and Lishu, and then to Kaishu, the evolution of Chinese characters serves as a testament to the progress and prosperity of Chinese civilization.

Through delving into philology, students can comprehend the origins, evolution, and development of Chinese characters, analyze their morphological, structural, and semantic features, and thereby appreciate the profound cultural heritage and unique charm embodied in these characters. In the teaching of the rationale and formation of Chinese characters, the interpretation and transmission of these characters can be integrated with introductions to their carriers, such as bronzeware, thereby fostering students' cultural and national confidence. Additionally, by incorporating classical texts, poetry, and lyrics, students can be immersed in the vastness and exquisite beauty of Chinese culture.

In this process, the infusion of ideological and political elements guides students to comprehend the national spirit and value pursuits represented by Chinese characters, thereby stimulating their national pride and cultural self-confidence, and reinforcing their sense of identity and belonging to China's outstanding traditional culture.

3.2. Excavating ideological and political elements to strengthen the awareness of the Chinese national community

The core essence of the awareness of the Chinese National Community refers to the sense of identity and belonging shared by all members of the Chinese nation towards the collective entity of the Chinese nation, as well as the shared understanding and inheritance of the Chinese nation's history, culture, and values. Apart from the universally used Chinese characters, China boasts a rich diversity of over a dozen distinct scripts, each with its unique characteristics, origins, and varying scopes and durations of usage. Understanding their structures, creation processes, evolution, strengths, and weaknesses is crucial for gaining insights into the country's cultural heritage and ethnic relations, as well as enriching the theories of philology^[4]. These scripts serve as both historical and cultural archives of different ethnic groups, attesting to the multi-ethnic unity of the Chinese nation throughout history. For instance, Nüshu, a feminine script once prevalent in Jiangyong, Hunan Province, stands as one of the intangible cultural heritages. Intimately tied to Chinese characters, integrating Nüshu into educational curricula and conducting comparative analyses with Chinese characters in terms of glyphic forms, structures, and other aspects allows students to intuitively grasp the profound connections and disparities between the two. This, in turn, deepens their understanding of the unique charm of Chinese characters and the profoundness of Chinese culture. This process not only promotes students' awareness of the cultural diversity of the Chinese nation and fosters their cultural confidence but also reinforces their sense of community within the Chinese nation.

Chinese characters, as the representative script of the Chinese nation, embody a vast system rooted in a long history. Through their unique structures and evolution, they showcase the wisdom and creativity of the Chinese people. Simultaneously, Chinese characters function as a spiritual bond that unites the Chinese national community. The written Chinese language, using Chinese characters, is not exclusive to the Han ethnic group but is also adopted by many other ethnic minorities in China. Some ethnic groups have created their own scripts based on Chinese characters to document their respective languages. This cross-ethnic exchange and use of scripts exemplify the inclusiveness and symbiosis of Chinese culture.

In the philology curriculum of universities, by delving into the relationships between these scripts and Chinese characters, we can vividly illustrate the historical process of the Chinese nation's evolution. By examining the creation, structures, and evolution of scripts, we can explore the commonalities and individualities of various ethnic cultures, comprehend the status and roles of different ethnic groups within the broader Chinese family, and thereby foster a profound appreciation for the diversity and unity of Chinese culture in students. This, in turn, enhances their sense of ethnic identity and historical mission. Furthermore, it guides students to cherish the resources of the Chinese language and scripts, reinforces their cultural confidence and ethnic identity, and strengthens their awareness of the Chinese National Community.

4. Practical approaches to integrating ideological and political elements into philology courses in universities

Contemporary college students, as the native generation of internet users, possess increasingly broadened horizons and diverse interests. Teachers should adopt a student-centered approach, transcending the traditional didactic mold, and excel in designing diversified classrooms that captivate students, thereby integrating the stimulation of students' subjectivity into the cultivation of their youth development perspectives^[5]. Philology courses in universities are often characterized by strong theoretical foundations and considerable difficulty, leading to student struggles and a lack of vitality in the classroom, which are common issues in teaching these courses. To address these challenges, teachers should contemplate innovative teaching methodologies and engage in diversified instructional designs when conducting their teaching activities.

4.1. Establishing a blended online and offline teaching model

In the era of information technology, the blended learning model, which integrates online and offline teaching, offers a distinctive and effective practical avenue for integrating ideological and political elements into philology courses in universities. This teaching mode not only deeply fuses the efficient integration of online resources with the intensified interactivity of offline instruction but also presents a new face of teaching characterized by comprehensiveness, multidimensionality, and hierarchical depth.

Within philology courses, we can fully utilize a plethora of online platforms and teaching resources to conduct diverse online teaching activities. Through meticulously designed course videos and teaching slides, students can engage in self-directed learning and review at any time and from any location, transcending the traditional spatial and temporal constraints of classrooms. These resources encompass not only the fundamental knowledge and theories of philology but also incorporate rich ideological and political elements, enabling students to profoundly appreciate the vastness, depth, and enduring legacy of Chinese culture while studying philology, thereby fortifying their cultural confidence and adherence to cultural roots. Additionally, online platforms provide convenient channels for discussions and exchanges between teachers and students, allowing the establishment of dedicated discussion areas where students can engage in topic-centered debates and interactions. This format fosters an environment where students can articulate their viewpoints, listen to others' ideas, and consequently enhance their critical thinking and collaborative spirit. The blended learning model augments teacher-student interaction, fostering a classroom atmosphere of dialogue and deliberation. In offline classrooms, teachers can organize targeted activities based on online discussions such as group discussions and case analyses to further stimulate students' learning interests and motivation. Through interactions and debates, students can gain a deeper understanding of the connotations and values of ideological and political elements, enhancing their comprehensive problem-solving skills and critical thinking skills.

Moreover, the integration of ideological and political elements into philology courses through the blended learning model necessitates an emphasis on practicality and innovation. Practicality refers to enabling students to experience and comprehend the value of ideological and political elements through practical teaching activities. For instance, organizing social surveys, field trips, and other activities can allow students to experience the vastness of Chinese culture and the practical significance of ideological and political elements. Innovation, on the other hand, entails exploring teaching methods and tools that align better with students' cognitive patterns and interests. This might include utilizing modern technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and artificial intelligence (AI) to create more authentic and engaging learning scenarios, thereby enhancing teaching effectiveness.

4.2. Implementing case-based teaching

Incorporating ideological and political elements into case-based teaching within philology courses in universities not only facilitates a deeper understanding of philological knowledge among students but also nurtures their cultural awareness and self-confidence by dissecting the historical and cultural narratives behind Chinese characters. Case-based teaching, as a pedagogical approach that bridges theory with practice, selects representative Chinese characters or vocabulary, integrating their historical, cultural, and ideological and political elements, enabling students to appreciate the vastness and depth of Chinese culture through analysis and discussion.

When implementing case-based teaching, instructors should meticulously select typical cases from textbooks based on instructional needs. These cases should embody both philological expertise and abundant ideological and political elements, stimulating students' interest and contemplation. For instance, when elucidating the character “福” (*fu*, blessing), instructors can integrate its oracle bone script form, depicting hands holding an altar vessel for offerings in a ritual ceremony, signifying prayers for blessings and protection. The meaning of “福” is intrinsically linked to its radical, specifically the “示” (*shi*, signifying ritual offerings) radical. The oracle bone script of “示” resembles an altar, conveying the act of offering sacrifices to deities and spirits. Characters with the “示” radical often relate to rituals and etiquette, emphasizing why “福” cannot be written with the “衣” (*yi*, clothing) radical, as the latter primarily signifies meanings related to apparel. Conversely, the oracle bone script of “初” (*chu*, beginning) depicts clothing on the left and a knife on the right, symbolizing the cutting of fabric—the initial step in making clothes, thus conveying the notion of “beginning.”

Through such analyses, students are thoroughly introduced to the graphical structures and etymological rationales of characters and radicals like “福,” “初,” “示,” and “衣.” This comparative analysis not only aids in comprehending the structure and meaning of Chinese characters but also prompts students to contemplate the profound cultural depth, historical origins, and significance of ritual offerings and blessings behind them, thereby enhancing their understanding of traditional culture. Each case underscores the importance of philology and reminds students of the necessity to prioritize the study and preservation of traditional culture in daily life.

Furthermore, in addition to imparting traditional philological theories, instructors can appropriately integrate Chinese character designs from modern cultural and creative products to further broaden students' horizons. These products blend traditional culture with contemporary design, preserving the essence of Chinese culture while infusing new-era connotations. By analyzing the design concepts and symbolism of these products, students gain a deeper understanding of the applied culture of Chinese characters and cultural innovation amidst the commodity economy. This awareness of the practical value of Chinese characters in commerce empowers students to better inherit and innovate the culture of Chinese characters.

4.3. Implementation of project-oriented inquiry learning

The integration of ideological and political education into philology courses in universities can be achieved through the implementation of project-oriented inquiry learning. Firstly, to ensure the smooth progress of project-oriented inquiry learning, rational grouping is crucial. Teachers can divide students into several study groups based on factors such as their academic performance, interests, and personality traits. The staffing of each group should fully consider individual differences among students, aiming to achieve complementary advantages and ensure that each group possesses sufficient research capabilities and teamwork skills. After grouping, teachers should select appropriate ideological and political knowledge points and transform them into project-based inquiry questions. These questions should possess a certain degree of openness and depth, capable of triggering students' in-depth thinking and active discussions. For instance, topics such as “How does the evolution of writing systems influence culture?” and “The intrinsic connection between the Chinese character cultural sphere and the consciousness of the

Chinese national community” are suitable for project-oriented inquiry. Compared to traditional direct instruction methods, this project-based inquiry learning approach can better stimulate students’ active thinking and exploration desires, enabling them to discover the cultural factors behind language and characters. Its value-leading effect far exceeds that of directly informing students, thereby better achieving the purpose of implicit ideological and political education in courses.

Furthermore, project-oriented inquiry learning contributes to enhancing classroom interactivity and enjoyment. During the discussion and presentation process, effective interactions and exchanges can be formed among students and between students and teachers, fostering a rich academic atmosphere. Such an atmosphere not only benefits in stimulating students’ learning interests and enthusiasm but also elevates teachers’ teaching enthusiasm and sense of achievement.

5. Conclusion and prospect

The fundamental questions of education revolve around what kind of individuals to cultivate, how to cultivate them, and for whom to cultivate them. The effectiveness of fostering virtue through education stands as the ultimate criterion for evaluating all endeavors in higher education institutions. To fulfill this fundamental task, it is imperative to integrate value shaping, knowledge impartment, and capability cultivation into a seamless whole, which cannot be separated^[1]. The exploration and practice of incorporating ideological and political elements into philology courses is an inherent requirement for implementing the fundamental mission of fostering virtue through education. Integrating ideological and political elements into philology courses not only enriches course content and enhances teaching quality but also fosters students’ cultural confidence and patriotic sentiments through the cultural power embodied in Chinese characters, achieving an organic union between knowledge transmission and value guidance. If we liken professional knowledge teaching to a dragon, then the infusion of ideological and political elements serves as the “finishing touch” that brings the dragon to life^[6].

In the process of exploration and practice, we must uphold the principles of updating concepts and pragmatic innovation, striving to construct a teaching model that seamlessly blends philology courses with ideological and political elements. By deeply excavating ideological and political elements and establishing a flexible and diversified teaching approach, we integrate professional knowledge with ideological and political elements, realizing the intrinsic unity of value shaping, knowledge impartment, and capability cultivation. The construction of this teaching model not only provides new insights for the reform of philology courses but also serves as a valuable reference for the integration of ideological and political elements in other courses in higher education.

“Words unite the hearts, characters forge the Chinese nation”^[7]. In the context of the new era, the exploration and practice of integrating ideological and political elements into philology courses in universities will undoubtedly continue to advance, thereby providing robust support for enhancing the role of language and character undertakings in forging a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

- [1] Ministry of Education, 2020, Notice on Issuing the Guidelines for the Construction of Ideological and Political Education in Curriculum of Institutions of Higher Learning, viewed December 16, 2022, <http://www.moe.gov.cn/>

srcsite/A08/s7056/202006/t20200603_462437.html

- [2] Yin XN, Sun YL, 2022, Exploration and Practice of the Integrated Construction of Professional Ideological and Political Education and Curriculum Ideological and Political Education. *Journal of Shanxi University of Finance and Economics*, (S1): 127–129.
- [3] Qiu WG, 2017, The Value Implication and Generative Path of Ideological and Political Education in Curriculum. *Ideological and Theoretical Education*, (7): 10–14.
- [4] Chen QG, 1990, *An Outline of Chinese Language*, The Central University for Nationalities Press, Beijing, 161.
- [5] Feng G, 2019, *Boldly and Confidently Deliver Ideological and Political Courses: Grasping the Construction Laws of Ideological and Political Courses in the New Era*, People’s Publishing House, Beijing, 26.
- [6] Zhou DJ, 2022, *Research on the Construction of Ideological and Political Education in Curriculum in Schools in the New Era*, Tianjin People’s Publishing House, Tianjin, 68.
- [7] Tian LX, 2022, Inherit and Promote the Excellent Chinese Language and Culture to Boost Cultural Confidence and Self-Reliance, *China Education Daily*, November 28, 2022, (01).

Publisher’s note

Bio-Byword Scientific Publishing remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.