Research on the Integration Path of Ideological and Political Education in the Design Thinking and Expression Course

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Abstract: This study explores the integration path of ideological and political education in the course Design Thinking and Expression of environmental art design, aiming to enhance students' innovative thinking, social responsibility, and awareness of sustainable development. Based on the core philosophy of design thinking (people-oriented, problem-solving, and interdisciplinary collaboration) and the elements of ideological and political education in courses (moral education, cultural confidence, sustainable development, and social equity), the study proposes implementation paths for optimizing course objectives, adjusting course content, innovating teaching methods, and optimizing the evaluation system. Through project-based learning, situational teaching, and interdisciplinary collaboration, combined with practical cases such as historical district renewal, environmental design for rural revitalization, and green commercial space design, it has been verified that the effective integration of ideological and political elements in courses can enhance students' cultural identity, sense of social responsibility, and design innovation ability. This study provides theoretical support and practical demonstration for the ideological and political reform of environmental art design courses. In the future, interdisciplinary collaboration can be further deepened, social practice applications can be expanded, the evaluation system can be improved, and the systematic development of ideological and political courses can be promoted.

Keywords: Ideological and political education; Design Thinking and Expression course; Integration path

1. Introduction

1.1. Research background

In recent years, China has deepened the ideological and political construction of courses in the field of higher education, emphasizing the organic integration of professional education and ideological and political education to achieve the fundamental task of "cultivating morality and fostering talents." In 2016, the *Opinions on*

Strengthening and Improving Ideological and Political Work in Colleges and Universities Under the New Situation issued by the State Council clearly stated that the educational role of various courses should be fully utilized, and professional courses should integrate socialist core values, excellent traditional Chinese culture, ecological civilization construction, and other content, so that ideological and political education runs through the entire process of talent cultivation [1]. In 2020, the Ministry of Education further issued the *Guiding Outline for the Construction of Ideological and Political Courses in Colleges and Universities*, proposing that the construction of ideological and political courses should combine the characteristics of disciplines to enhance students' social responsibility, humanistic literacy, and innovative spirit [2]. In this context, as an important discipline connecting society, culture, and ecological environment, the teaching content and training objectives of environmental art design major urgently need to adapt to the needs of social development. However, the current environmental art design education still has the problem of emphasizing skills over values and form over substance. Some courses do not pay enough attention to issues such as social responsibility, cultural identity, and sustainable development. This leads to a lack of sensitivity to social issues and consideration of design ethics while cultivating students' innovative abilities. Therefore, how to effectively integrate ideological and political elements into environmental art design teaching to achieve the comprehensive educational goal of design education has become an important topic in higher education reform.

1.2. Research purpose and significance

With the advancement of higher education reform, how to effectively integrate ideological and political elements into professional courses, so that students can establish correct values, enhance social responsibility, and promote humanistic care while mastering professional knowledge and skills, has become an important issue. The environmental art design major not only needs to cultivate design talents with innovative thinking but also should guide students to pay attention to social realities such as ecological sustainable development, historical and cultural protection, social equity, and coordinated urban and rural development. This study aims to explore the integration path of ideological and political education in the Design Thinking and Expression course, to enhance students' innovation ability and sense of social responsibility, mainly involving the following aspects: (1) Course objective optimization: Integrating social responsibility, cultural identity, and the concept of sustainable development on the basis of knowledge imparting and skill cultivation. (2) Course content adjustment: Designing practical tasks in combination with social issues, guiding students to pay attention to cultural, ecological, and social issues. (3) Teaching method innovation: Adopting project-based learning (PBL), situational teaching, interdisciplinary collaboration, and other methods to enhance the ideological and political education function of the course. (4) Evaluation system optimization: Adding indicators such as cultural value, social responsibility, and sustainability to the traditional design evaluation system to improve the diversity and comprehensiveness of evaluation. This study has certain theoretical value to provide support for the ideological and political construction of environmental art design courses. It also has practical significance in promoting the upgrading of talent training models, encouraging students to solve real problems with design thinking, and enhancing their sense of social responsibility and innovative practical ability. At the same time, the research results can provide examples of ideological and political implementation for other practical disciplines, helping colleges and universities achieve the goal of "cultivating morality and fostering talents."

2. Theoretical basis

In the context of contemporary higher education reform, Design Thinking, as an innovative problem-solving approach, plays an increasingly important role in environmental art design teaching. Meanwhile, the advancement of ideological and political courses requires that professional courses strengthen value guidance while imparting knowledge and skills, cultivating students' social responsibility, cultural identity, and awareness of sustainable development. The two have a high degree of agreement in educational goals, teaching methods, and practical paths, which can promote each other and jointly enhance the educational value of environmental art and design courses.

2.1. Core concept of Design Thinking

Design Thinking is a user-centered, interdisciplinary collaboration and innovation practice-oriented way of thinking, widely used in spatial planning, landscape design, and indoor environment optimization in the field of environmental art design. Its core philosophy mainly includes Empathy, Define, Ideate, Prototype, and Test & Iterate. These core concepts of Design Thinking not only promote innovative practices in environmental art design but also provide methodological support for the effective integration of ideological and political courses, enabling students to enhance their sense of social responsibility and form design concepts that meet social needs in the process of solving real problems.

2.2. Core elements of ideological and political courses

As an important teaching reform direction in higher education, ideological and political courses emphasize integrating ideological and political education into professional courses, achieving an organic combination of knowledge imparting, ability cultivation, and value shaping [3]. In environmental art design courses, the core elements of ideological and political courses are mainly reflected in several aspects such as cultivating morality and fostering talents, cultural confidence, sustainable development, and social equity. These core elements of ideological and political courses not only enhance the comprehensive educational function of environmental art design education but also provide a clear value orientation for the teaching practice of Design Thinking. Through the integration of ideological and political education, environmental art design courses can transcend the traditional skill training mode and cultivate design talents who are more concerned with social needs, cultural consciousness, and ecological responsibility.

2.3. The convergence of Design Thinking and ideological and political courses

Design Thinking and ideological and political courses have a high degree of agreement in goals, methods, and practical paths. Their integration can not only improve the teaching quality of environmental art design courses but also more effectively guide students to form correct values in practice. The convergence of the two is mainly reflected in the following aspects:

    (1) Consistent people-oriented philosophy: Design Thinking emphasizes user experience and social needs, while ideological and political courses focus on people's comprehensive development and social responsibility. Both emphasize people as the core and achieve a positive response to social issues through design.

    (2) Problem-oriented education model: The "problem definition" aspect of Design Thinking requires students to identify and analyze social issues, such as ecological environmental protection, urban renewal, and rural revitalization, which highly aligns with the focus of ideological and political courses on social responsibility and practical issues.

(3) Innovation-driven practical methods: Design Thinking emphasizes innovative solutions, while ideological and political courses encourage the integration of socially responsible innovation in professional education. The combination of the two helps cultivate compound talents with both innovative spirit and social responsibility awareness [4].

(4) Interdisciplinary collaboration teaching method: The implementation of Design Thinking often requires combining sociology, ecology, psychology, engineering technology, and other disciplines. Similarly, ideological and political courses need interdisciplinary integration to help students more comprehensively understand the social value and ethical considerations of design.

Through the practice-oriented approach of Design Thinking, ideological and political courses can be more deeply integrated into environmental art and design courses. This enables students to spontaneously develop concerns about social issues in teaching links such as project practice, social research, and interdisciplinary collaboration. As a result, they can embody humanistic care, social responsibility, and the concept of sustainable development in the actual design process.

3. Implementation paths of ideological and political education in courses

3.1. Course objective optimization

Traditional environmental art and design education often focuses on aesthetic expression and technical practice, with less involvement in deep values such as social responsibility, cultural identity, and ecological sustainability. To meet the requirements of ideological and political construction in the new era, course objectives should shift from pure skill cultivation to social value guidance, building a teaching system that integrates professional ability, innovative thinking, and social responsibility. By optimizing course objectives, students can enhance their cognition of social equity, cultural inheritance, and ecological sustainability while mastering design methods and expression skills, prompting them to reflect on the social value of design in practice.

3.2. Ideological and political integration into course content

To effectively integrate ideological and political education into the Design Thinking and Expression course, it is necessary to strengthen social issues in content settings, enabling students to enhance cultural confidence, environmental awareness, and social responsibility while learning professional knowledge [5].

(1) Combination of traditional culture and modern design: Through cases such as intangible cultural heritage crafts, local cultural elements, and historical building preservation, students can inherit and innovate local culture in their designs, enhancing cultural identity.

(2) Green design and sustainable development: Concepts like low-carbon design, eco-friendly building materials, and sustainable city planning are emphasized, guiding students to focus on the environmental impact of design and cultivating awareness of sustainable development.

(3) Social equity and spatial optimization: Through practices like accessible design, aging-friendly community renovations, and urban-rural public space optimization, students are guided to consider how design can promote social equity and inclusive development.

3.3. Teaching method innovation

To achieve effective integration of ideological and political education in courses, innovative teaching methods are needed, enabling students to deeply understand social issues, cultural values, and ecological sustainability

during the practical process, and form a design thinking that meets social needs.

(1) Project-based learning (PBL): Combining social realities such as rural revitalization, community renovation, and cultural heritage preservation, students are organized to conduct project research based on real cases, enhancing their social responsibility in the process of solving practical problems.

(2) Situational teaching: Through teaching methods like case simulations, social surveys, and role-playing, students experience social realities, guiding them to incorporate humanistic care and social value considerations into the design process.

(3) Interdisciplinary cooperation: Integrating with disciplines like sociology, ecology, psychology, and management, students' horizons are broadened, enabling them to form a more comprehensive understanding of aspects such as spatial design, cultural research, and user experience analysis, improving the social adaptability of design proposals.

3.4. Evaluation system optimization

The traditional evaluation system for environmental art and design courses mainly focuses on the innovativeness, technical performance, and visual aesthetics of the works, with less emphasis on social value and cultural impact. To further enhance the teaching effectiveness of ideological and political education in courses, a multi-dimensional evaluation system needs to be constructed, covering the following aspects:

(1) Cultural inheritance: Evaluating students' innovative use of traditional cultural elements and regional characteristics in their designs [6].

(2) Social responsibility: Examining whether the design proposals focus on social equity, public welfare, and social needs, and measuring their social contribution.

(3) Ecological sustainability: Analyzing the impact of design works on environmental friendliness, resource conservation, and sustainable development to ensure that designs align with environmental protection principles.

(4) User feedback and social impact: Combining feedback from community residents, industry experts, and users to evaluate the social adaptability and user recognition of design proposals, enhancing the practical orientation of teaching evaluation.

4. Case analysis of ideological and political practice in courses

In the Design Thinking and Expression course, the effective integration of ideological and political education is not only reflected in theoretical teaching but also needs to be strengthened through practical cases. The following select actual cases focusing on cultural inheritance, social responsibility, and sustainable development to explore how to enhance students' humanistic literacy, social responsibility awareness, and ecological sustainability concepts through project practice, achieving deep integration of ideological and political education in the course.

4.1. Historical district renewal design: Cultural inheritance orientation

This case aims to combine traditional culture protection with modern design innovation, cultivating students' cultural identity and design innovation abilities. Through research on historical districts, traditional buildings, and intangible cultural heritage spaces, students need to optimize spatial functions, enhance cultural experiences, and increase public participation while preserving historical textures. During the design process, students must not only focus on restoration strategies for historical buildings but also adapt traditional culture to contemporary

social needs in line with modern lifestyles. This project helps cultivate students' awareness of respecting cultural diversity and guides them to practice cultural confidence and inheritance innovation in environmental design.

4.2. Rural revitalization environmental design: Social responsibility orientation

This case is set in the context of the rural revitalization strategy, focusing on the issue of uneven development between urban and rural areas, and encouraging students to contribute to rural revitalization through environmental design [7]. The project selects actual rural spaces, such as public activity areas, village landscapes, and traditional house renovations, requiring students to propose feasible design solutions that meet rural development needs while respecting the local ecological environment and social culture. Through interaction with local residents, governments, and related institutions, students can deeply understand social issues such as rural spatial optimization, agricultural landscape protection, and community vitality enhancement, enhancing their sense of social responsibility and public service awareness in project practice.

4.3. Green commercial space design: Sustainable development orientation

This case focuses on the integration of green design and commercial spaces, aiming to guide students to practice sustainable development concepts in shaping the business environment. Students need to design commercial spaces that meet the requirements of environmental friendliness, resource conservation, and sustainable operations, centering on elements such as low-carbon building materials, energy-saving technologies, and green spatial layouts. The project requires students to explore how to achieve a balance between environmental and economic benefits in commercial spaces using strategies like ecological building design, smart environmental protection technologies, and recyclable materials. Through practice, students can deeply understand the application value of sustainable development concepts in design and cultivate their awareness of actively practicing green design in their future careers.

5. Research conclusion and prospects

5.1. Conclusion

This study explored the integration of ideological and political education into the curriculum of environmental art design courses through design thinking, and analyzed its educational value through practical cases. The research indicates that design thinking, as a people-oriented, problem-solving, and interdisciplinary collaborative innovation method, highly aligns with the core philosophy of ideological and political education in the curriculum, effectively promoting the teaching reform of environmental art design courses. By incorporating ideological and political elements such as cultural inheritance, social responsibility, and sustainable development into the Design Thinking and Expression course, students not only enhance their innovative thinking and design expression abilities but also strengthen their sense of social responsibility, humanistic care, and awareness of sustainable development [8].

Furthermore, the introduction of ideological and political education in the curriculum expands the social value orientation of design education, making environmental art design focus not only on aesthetic expression and technological innovation but also on social equity, cultural identity, and ecological sustainability. Through project-based teaching, situational simulations, and interdisciplinary integration, students develop a more comprehensive design thinking in practice and cultivate a design methodology with a stronger sense of social responsibility. Therefore, the deep integration of ideological and political education not only improves teaching quality but also pushes environmental art design education toward a more diversified, socialized, and human-

oriented direction.

5.2. Prospects

Despite this study proposing implementation strategies for the integration of ideological and political education and design thinking, there is still room for further optimization in practical teaching. Future research can explore the following aspects:

(1) Deepening interdisciplinary collaboration and expanding the teaching mode of ideological and political education in the curriculum: Design thinking is essentially an interdisciplinary methodology. In the future, it is necessary to strengthen the integration of environmental art design with sociology, ecology, psychology, and other disciplines, making the implementation of ideological and political education in the curriculum more multidimensional and systematic. Through interdisciplinary cooperation, course content, teaching methods, and practical applications can be further expanded, providing students with a broader design perspective.

(2) Enhancing social practice and increasing the social impact of design proposals: The ultimate goal of ideological and political education in the curriculum is to cultivate design talents with a sense of social responsibility. Therefore, future teaching should further strengthen the teaching mode combined with social practice, such as school-enterprise cooperation, social research, and public welfare design projects, to enhance students' social participation. Simultaneously, a platform for industry-university-research integration should be established to encourage students to connect course learning with actual social needs, making design proposals more realistic and socially influential.

(3) Constructing a scientific evaluation system for ideological and political education in the curriculum: Currently, the effectiveness evaluation of ideological and political education in the curriculum still mainly relies on traditional work displays and theoretical assessments. In the future, a more comprehensive and practice-oriented evaluation system should be explored. Methods such as social feedback mechanisms, project impact assessments, and user experience surveys can be introduced to establish a diversified evaluation system that better aligns with the goals of ideological and political education in the curriculum, more scientifically measuring students' growth and the effectiveness of ideological and political education in the curriculum.

In summary, future environmental art design education should continue to explore the deep integration path of ideological and political education and design thinking in the curriculum, promoting the optimization of teaching modes, practical applications, and evaluation systems, laying a more solid foundation for cultivating innovative and socially responsible design talents.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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