

Discussion on the Path and Significance of Integrating Civic and Political Education into the Teaching of Chinese Medicine Diagnosis

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Abstract: This paper systematically discusses the theoretical basis, practical path, and significance of integrating civic and political education into the teaching of Chinese medicine diagnostics. As a core course connecting basic theory and clinical practice, the teaching reform of TCM diagnostics needs to break through the “triple structural contradiction”: cultural interpretation fault, alienation of value goals, and narrowing of evaluation dimensions. The study proposes a “multi-dimensional integration path”: at the level of top-level design, exploration and integration of elements, pedagogical innovation, enhancement of faculty, and improvement of the evaluation system. The study clarifies the significance of integrating civic and political education into the teaching of TCM diagnostics, and reconstructs the value system of “Virtual of Great Physician,” which is of great significance to break the dilemma of “triple-heavy and triple-light” in medical education, and to cultivate complex TCM talents with exquisite medical skills and humanistic sentiments.

Keywords: Civic and political education; Traditional Chinese medicine; Diagnostics; Virtual of Great Physician; Talent cultivation

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1. Introduction

1.1. Connotation and mission of civic and political education

Civic education is the educational practice of cultivating socialist builders and successors through systematic value shaping and moral guidance under the guidance of Marxist theory^[1]. Its core lies in the realization of the organic unity of “knowledge transfer” and “value leadership,” and the implementation of the fundamental task of “cultivating people with moral character”^[2]. The General Secretary of the National Conference on Ideological and Political Work in Colleges and Universities made an important statement: “We need to use classroom teaching as the main channel All other courses should be well guarded a section of the canal, planting a good field of responsibility, so that all kinds of courses and the ideological and political theory

course are in the same direction, the formation of a synergistic effect.” This important statement has provided a fundamental basis for the current teaching reform, and the ideological and political theory of the curriculum has gradually become an important concept and practice direction in the field of education. In the context of the new era of Chinese medicine inheritance and innovation, curriculum politics has become a key entry point for reconstructing the ecology of Chinese medicine education, and the organic integration of curriculum politics with Chinese medicine teaching has far-reaching significance and value ^[3]. Chinese medicine education is not only a technical carrier for the inheritance of the art of qihuang, but also a value hub for the cultivation of composite talents who are “united in medicine and Taoism.” Its teaching reform practice urgently needs to practice the General Secretary’s parenting requirements of “guarding a section of the canal and planting a good field of responsibility,” and to promote the in-depth coupling of professional advancement and ideological and political casting of the soul.

1.2. Disciplinary positioning and characteristics of TCM diagnostics

Diagnostics of Chinese medicine, as a core course connecting basic theories of Chinese medicine and clinical practice, has a curriculum system that includes four diagnostic methods (looking, smelling, questioning, and cutting), eight diagnostic modules with Chinese medicine characteristics, such as identification of internal organs, six meridians, and identification of Weiqi, Yingxian, and blood, which covers the key competence training in the construction of Chinese medicine clinical thinking, symptom differential diagnosis, and the analysis of evidence dynamics. It has an irreplaceable role in cultivating medical students’ holistic view, evidence identification, and practical skills ^[4]. For example, in the teaching of “diagnosis by observation,” students need to master the dynamic correlation between the tongue and facial color; in the link of “identification of internal organs,” they need to be able to understand the theory of Tibetan image and the evolution of disease mechanism, and to form the diagnostic thinking of “external and internal.” However, in the current teaching of TCM diagnostics, the teaching often focuses on the mechanized training of technical details such as pulse diagnosis, tongue recognition, and so on, while neglecting the inheritance of the essence of TCM culture, the penetration of medical ethics, and the shaping of the value of “Great Medical Excellence and Sincerity.”

1.3. The reality of the integration dilemma

As the main course of Chinese medicine, TCM diagnostics must undertake the mission of “unifying knowledge transfer and value leadership.” This integration is not only to respond to the call of policy, but also to materialize the socialist core values into the “benevolence of doctors in looking, hearing, questioning, and cutting,” so that the abstract theories of ideology and politics can be transformed into a perceptible clinical code of conduct. At present, although the field of Chinese medicine education has formed a consensus on the construction of the ideology and politics of the curriculum, but its practice is still facing a threefold structural contradiction: First, the cultural interpretation of the fault—the teaching of the excessive focus on pulse diagnosis techniques, tongue recognition, and other technical training, resulting in the “yin and yang and the five elements,” “the Tibetan elephant theory,” and other core theories of the philosophical implications. Empirical data show that only 41.2% of students can systematically explain its cultural relevance ^[4]; Second, the alienation of the value goal—under the impact of the medical marketization, some students downgrade the “eight outlines of the identification of evidence” into a gaming diagnostic and therapeutic skills, falling into the instrumental rationality of the “profit-making” arena, which is contrary to the essence of the requirements of the “medical is benevolent,” which highlights the importance of the integration of ideological and political education into the medical education

of the people of the world. This highlights the urgency of the integration of ideological education ^[5]; Third, the narrowing of the evaluation dimension—the existing assessment system is still dominated by static knowledge evaluation such as the identification of evidence, recitation of prescriptions, etc., weakening the value of the humanistic care of Chinese medicine kernel, and the lack of a dynamic assessment mechanism of medical ethics, humanistic qualities, and other qualities ^[6].

1.4. The need for integration

The General Secretary has emphasized that “all kinds of courses are in the same direction with the Civic and Political Science courses” ^[7], and the “triple-heavy and triple-light” phenomenon that exists in the current medical education—i.e., focusing on clinical skills rather than humanistic qualities, focusing on the transmission of knowledge rather than the guidance of values, and focusing on classroom teaching rather than the practice of nurturing people—leads to a structural rupture between the professional competence and the spirit of professionalism in the process of cultivating human resources. This has led to a structural rupture between professional competence and professionalism in the training process of talents. Especially in the field of traditional Chinese medicine, some colleges and universities still follow the traditional three-stage model of “general education-basic medicine-clinical medicine,” which makes it difficult to organically integrate the essence of traditional culture, such as “the essence of great medicine,” into the modern medical education system. From the point of view of the current curriculum, there are issues like the teaching of Chinese medicine diagnostics generally involves fragmented elements of ideology and politics, the implicit education path is not smooth, and other problems. Although some institutions offer compulsory courses such as Medical Ethics and Medical History and Literature of Traditional Chinese Medicine, there is a lack of systematic planning of the curriculum system, the teaching content is disconnected from clinical practice, and other drawbacks. Data show that more than 60% of medical schools will focus on humanities courses at the undergraduate stage, with a time and space fracture in senior professional courses; this “first humanities after the professional” unidirectional articulation mode is difficult to achieve the “silent” effect of ideological and political education. What is even more alarming is the influence of utilitarianism on the thinking of medical students, and medical students themselves do not pay enough attention to the content of the ideology and politics, so the effect of the medical field in the establishment of morality and nurturing a person is poorly coordinated. With the continuous development of Chinese medical education and the increasing social requirements for medical talents, it has become an inevitable trend to integrate the course Civics and Politics into the teaching of Chinese medicine diagnostics. In the context of the reform of medical education in the new era, the in-depth integration of curriculum ideology and professional education has become an inevitable choice for realizing the fundamental task of “cultivating morality and educating people.”

2. Path of integrating civic education into the teaching of Chinese medicine diagnostics

2.1. Top-level design: Constructing a framework for curriculum ideology and politics

Under the strategic background of “Healthy China 2030,” medical education is transforming from the “biomedical model” to the “bio-psycho-social medical model.” The unique “holistic view” and “three factors” thinking of TCM diagnostics are naturally compatible with the “people-oriented” and “systemic thinking” emphasized by the Civic Education, which provides methodological support for the construction of the Civic Education framework of the course. The teaching of Chinese medicine diagnostics needs to integrate the

ideological and political objectives into the teaching objectives, such as cultivating the professional spirit of “Great Medical Excellence and Sincerity,” reinforcing the cultural self-confidence, and establishing a scientific ethical outlook, etc.^[8]. To avoid the “double skin” between Civic-Political thinking and specialization, the Civic-Political genes of TCM Diagnostics should be explored in depth, instead of simply attaching political slogans^[9]. Through the revision of the syllabus, the Civic-Political elements should be combined with the core knowledge points of TCM Diagnostics, such as “four diagnoses” and “identification,” to form an integrated curriculum system of “knowledge-competence-value”^[10,11]. The establishment of a collaborative nurturing mechanism, with reference to the theoretical model of “moral and medical integration, medical and educational synergy,” promotes the two-way coherence of the ideology and politics courses and professional courses. For example, Marxist philosophical methodology (e.g., dialectical materialism) is introduced into Chinese medicine diagnostics to analyze the philosophical basis of Chinese medicine’s discursive thinking, and to realize the in-depth fusion of civic and political theories and professional knowledge^[12].

2.2. Strategies for the deep excavation and integration of civic and political elements

Based on the cultural characteristics of Chinese medicine, focusing on the knowledge points of Chinese medicine diagnostics, grasping the historical depth and modern mapping, systematically excavating the following three major dimensions of the ideological and political elements: (1) Traditional culture and national sentiment: Combining with the “unity of man and nature” and “benevolence of healers” in the classic literature of *Yellow Emperor’s Classic of Internal Medicine* and other classic literature, guiding students to understand the historical contribution and modern value of Chinese medicine culture^[13]. (2) Cases of famous doctors and professionalism: Through the treatment stories of famous doctors such as Zhongjing Zhang and Shizhen Li, students will be taught the professional ethics of “Great Medical Excellence and Sincerity”; and through the clinical cases of modern famous and old Chinese medicine practitioners, the concepts of rigorous treatment and patient-first medicine will be emphasized^[14]. (3) Scientific spirit and innovative consciousness: Incorporate cases of modernization and development of Chinese medicine (e.g., artemisinin research and development) into the teaching of identification, so as to cultivate the spirit of scientific exploration and innovative thinking of students^[15].

Then combining with clinical practice to carry out the penetration of ideology and politics: (1) Practical training and internship: Emphasizing standard operation and responsibility awareness in skills training such as pulse diagnosis, tongue diagnosis, etc.; cultivating empathy and humanistic care through real cases of doctor-patient communication in clinical internship^[16]. (2) Case-based teaching: Designing clinical cases containing ethical dilemmas (e.g., protection of patients’ privacy) or introducing real cases (e.g., the case of the pregnant woman who fell from a building in Yulin, Shaanxi Province), and developing the “Diagnostic Ethics Casebook,” which covers topics such as the definition of overmedication and the special circumstances of informed consent, and guides the students to discuss the ethical and legal norms of medicine^[17].

2.3. Innovations in pedagogical reform and disciplinary development

Based on outcome-based education, the “Diagnosis-Nurturing Double Helix” teaching model is formed to carry out blended teaching reform. (1) Adopting the combination of online and offline methods; online: pushing Chinese medicine culture documentaries and interview videos of famous doctors through the Catechism platform to strengthen the sense of cultural identity^[18]; offline: carrying out PBL (problem-based learning) classroom, focusing on the theme of “Chinese medicine evidence-based thinking and systematics,” guiding

students to analyze the scientificity of Chinese medicine theories from the perspective of ideology and politics^[19]. (2) Contextual simulation and role-playing, the introduction of standardized patients (SP) in the teaching of “four diagnostics,” simulating clinical scenarios, requiring students not only to complete the diagnosis, but also to reflect the respect and empathy of doctor-patient communication, to strengthen professionalism^[20]. (3) “Pair division classroom” and BOPPPS (i.e. Bridge-in, Objective, Pre-assessment, Participatory learning, Post-assessment, and Summary) mode, using the “pair division classroom” to divide the teaching into three phases of lecturing, internalization, and discussion; for example, in the “eight outline of identification,” the students were asked to not only complete the diagnosis, but also reflect the respect and empathy in patient communication. For example, in the teaching of “Eight Syllabi of Evidence,” the theory is taught first, then the case of Civics (e.g., the role of Chinese medicine in the fight against epidemics) is analyzed through group discussion, and finally the teacher summarizes the values and guides the students^[19,21,22].

2.4. Faculty development and capacity enhancement

Teachers’ role in civic and political education is crucial to further enhance teachers’ civic and political quality and professional ability, and regularly having teachers participate in thematic trainings on Marxist theory, medical ethics, and other topics, to enhance their civic and political sensitivity and ability to integrate disciplines^[23]. For example, the “Classics of Chinese Medicine Study Class” and “Non-Genetic Inheritance Program” have deepened teachers’ understanding of the philosophical thinking of Chinese medicine (e.g., the preventive view of “treating the future illness”), which can be naturally integrated into the civic-political education^[24,25]. Implementing a “dual-teacher” teacher training program, which requires teachers to have both clinical competence and mastery of civic-political education methods, to achieve the goal of “integrating morality and art”^[26]. Incorporating the spirit of “Great Medical Excellence and Sincerity” into the professional code of conduct for teachers, and strengthening teachers’ sense of mission through role model learning^[27]. Establishing a “Civics Tutor-Professional Teacher” pairing mechanism, inviting civics teachers to participate in the design of TCM diagnostic courses to ensure the accuracy and depth of the civics content^[28]. Carrying out “International Comparative Research on Chinese Medicine Culture,” for example, comparing the similarities and differences between the ethical concepts of Chinese and Western medicine, to help teachers refine the content of civics teaching with a global perspective^[29]. In the digital era, it is more important to pay attention to the cultivation of teachers’ informatization ability, regularly carry out training on the application of AI tools, data analysis, etc., improve teachers’ information technology literacy, and provide teachers with dynamically updated teaching materials by using big data and AI technology^[30].

2.5. Evaluation system and continuous improvement

Establishing a multifaceted evaluation system to incorporate classroom performance, practical reports, and medical ethical qualities into the assessment: (1) Formative evaluation: adding scores for civic and political performance (e.g., teamwork and professional attitudes) to classroom discussions and practical training reports^[20]. (2) Summative assessment: setting case study questions in the examination to examine students’ ability to apply TCM thinking to solve ethical problems and test practical knowledge and skills^[11]. (3) Feedback and optimization mechanism: Feedback is collected through student questionnaires and peer evaluation, focusing on evaluating the effect of integrating the elements of civics and politics. For example, for the teaching unit “Holistic View in Diagnosis and Treatment,” students were surveyed on whether they understood its connection with socialist core values^[10].

3. The multidimensional significance of the integration of civic and political education into the teaching of Chinese medicine diagnosis

3.1. Enhancing cultural confidence and national identity in Chinese medicine

As an important carrier of Chinese civilization, TCM diagnostics contains the philosophical thought of “the unity of heaven and mankind,” which is a clinical expression, and its holistic diagnosis and treatment mode are highly compatible with the systematic thinking of Chinese civilization. This essential connection provides natural doctrinal support for cultural identity education, making professional teaching an important field for the creative transformation of traditional culture, and the deep integration of teaching practice and ideological education has multiple dimensions of value and significance: (1) The philosophical system of “the correspondence between heaven and man” and “yin and yang and the five elements” in TCM diagnostics echoes deeply with Marxism’s materialistic dialectics. The law of the unity of yin and yang in the eight principles of diagnosis vividly illustrates the specific application of the method of contradiction analysis in traditional medicine ^[29]. By analyzing the elements of identification such as surface and interior, cold and heat, emptiness and reality, students can be guided to understand the intrinsic correlation between TCM theories and Marxist philosophy, to realize the organic fusion of traditional wisdom and modern scientific thinking, and to realize the inter-temporal dialogue with the philosophical foundations. (2) The unique diagnostic methods of the discipline, such as “to look outside and look inside” and “to take images and compare them with analogies,” carry the unique image thinking mode of the Chinese civilization. In the teaching of tongue diagnosis, the cultural metaphor of “the tongue is the seedling of the heart” is explained, transforming technical training into a cultural decoding process ^[10]; through the semiotic analysis of imagery expressions such as “the pulse is like the strings of a zither,” the pictorial thinking quality of TCM terminology is demonstrated. This kind of teaching method makes traditional cultural genes get new life in modern medical education, which is a living inheritance of cultural genes. (3) Innovative fusion of ancient and modern wisdom, combining classical theories such as “seeing the small and knowing the big picture” and “holistic concept” with modern biomedicine, and showing the scientific value of TCM diagnostics through the teaching contents such as “tongue and internal organs association.” For example, with the help of modern imaging technology to verify the diagnostic logic of “the division of external and internal,” not only to strengthen the professional knowledge, but also to enhance the cultural confidence of the modern transformation of traditional medicine. (4) The three-dimensional construction of spiritual genealogy, taking Zhongjing Zhang’s spirit of “diligently pursuing ancient teachings” and Simiao Sun’s example of “great medical integrity” as the starting point, and combining them with the practical cases of contemporary TCM practitioners in the fight against epidemics, to build up a chain of spiritual education that goes back to the past and the present. This narrative not only revitalizes historical memory, but also resonates with the professional ethics of benevolence and the national sentiment.

3.2. Fostering medical ethics and social responsibility

The integration of ideological education into the teaching of Chinese medicine diagnosis is the core link in the new era to build a “moral and artistic” cultivation system for Chinese medicine talents, and its value dimension is reflected in the deep integration of professional ethics and social responsibility: (1) realizing the reconstruction of the professional values of the times, in the process of diagnosis and treatment, the medical ethics determines whether to “treat the person” or “treat the disease” thinking orientation. In the face of poor patients, whether to choose expensive wormwood or locally sourced herbs is a test of the ability to practice the principle of “simplicity, convenience, inexpensiveness, and testing.” Medical skill is not only a means of earning a living for doctors, but also carries the sentiment of “feeling the loss of the past, hurt, and dying of the

world.” Understand that to improve not only diagnostic techniques, but also respect for the individual moral practice of life, in order to effectively improve the temperature of medicine, not forgetting the medical time and return ^[31]. (2) The sense of social responsibility and mission is steadily improving, grasping the pulse of the times and strengthening the effective connection between the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and the development of medicine. Enhance the awareness of public health services at the grassroots level, the spirit of social responsibility, prompting medical personnel to better define their duties and obligations, and to practice the original spirit and mission of doctors ^[32].

3.3. Enhancement of critical thinking skills and scientific spirit

Students’ thinking patterns are in an unsettled and active state, and their receptivity to new things is high, which is both the golden and critical period for education. Through scientific education methods and strategies, we can make full use of the characteristics of this stage to help students form a healthy thinking mode, scientific learning methods, and correct values, laying a solid foundation for their lifelong development. For example, by integrating modern ideological education into the teaching of TCM diagnostics, and integrating the Marxist method of contradiction analysis into the comprehensive judgment of tongue diagnosis and pulse diagnosis ^[33], students are required to analyze the essence of diseases from the perspective of the dynamic evolution of primary and secondary contradictions, which can not only help students understand the dialectical thinking of TCM diagnostics in a more in-depth manner, but also cultivate their scientific spirit and innovation ability. This teaching method not only reflects the traditional wisdom of Chinese medicine but also incorporates modern philosophical thinking, which has important theoretical value and practical significance. Meanwhile, deepening the understanding of dialectical thinking through comparative learning can not only help students strengthen their diagnostic skills in Chinese medicine but also exercise their critical thinking and discursive ability. Students will be able to recognize the similarities and differences between TCM and Western medicine more comprehensively, cultivate an open and tolerant scientific spirit, and lay a solid foundation for future clinical practice and academic research. It breaks the traditional teaching mode, energizes system innovation, enhances the quality and efficiency of education, transforms the learning process of students from passive reception to active evidence-seeking, stimulates the potential of scientific creativity, and cultivates the scientific attitude of rigor and truth-seeking as well as the spirit of perseverance and exploration.

3.4. Realizing the fundamental task of establishing morality and nurturing people

Through the integration of civic and political education and the teaching of TCM diagnostics, it is an important way to implement the fundamental task of establishing moral character. The civic and political education course runs through the whole process of teaching TCM diagnostics, which can make the value shaping, knowledge imparting, and ability cultivation synergistically promote each other, and through the systematic integration, the students can naturally cultivate the professional character of “helping the world with pots and kettles” while mastering the professional skills of “diagnosis of illnesses and knowing the mechanisms,” thus truly realizing the organic unity of knowledge imparting, ability cultivation, and value shaping. Ultimately, it will cultivate new-age Chinese medicine talents with both professional qualities of Chinese medicine and socialist core values. The teaching of TCM diagnostics emphasizes the “people-oriented” view of diagnosis and treatment, which resonates with the socialist core values of “harmony” and “dedication,” and through transforming “observation, hearing, questioning, and cutting” into the practical carrier of “benevolence, harmony, and sincerity,” students can grasp the pulse of the times while grasping the three-finger pulse diagnostics. Civic

education can refine the moral character of students, to learn to work, thrift, gratitude, to help others, humility, tolerance, introspection, self-discipline, etc. ^[34], this integration realizes the creative transformation of the traditional medical ethics of the “eight outlines” and the modern civic education of the “Eight Learning”: “yin and yang dialectic” into a comprehensive introspection of the thinking tools, so that “five elements of life” become a practical philosophy for dealing with interpersonal relationships, so that the “Jing Jing” and the “eight learning” of the “Eight Learning,” and the “Eight Learning” of the Civic Education of the students. The “meridian system” is a metaphor for the connection network between the individual and the society, so as to ultimately cultivate Chinese medicine talents who “hold the pulse in a moral way and establish themselves in a moral way,” and whose professional growth and moral cultivation are just like the “secret of yin and yang,” realizing the comprehensive development in the dynamic equilibrium. Ultimately, we will realize the fundamental task of cultivating moral character.

3.5. Contributing to the modernization and internationalization of Chinese medicine

Realizing the construction of an international discourse system, the integration of civic and political education into the teaching of Chinese medicine diagnosis has led to a breakthrough in the international dissemination of Chinese medicine diagnosis. Through activities such as the English Translation Challenge of Chinese Medicine Terminology and the Debate on the Similarities and Differences between Chinese and Western Medicine Terminology, students are able to better master the international expression of Chinese medicine terminology, thus promoting the international dissemination of Chinese medicine culture. In addition, the internationalized translation talent cultivation mode of TCM diagnostics course also shows the important role of the ideological construction of TCM diagnostics course in promoting the internationalization of TCM. (1) Internally: “Wei Qi and Ying Blood Diagnosis,” as an important theory of Chinese medicine’s warm disease science, was founded by Tianshi Ye in the Qing Dynasty on the basis of summarizing the experience of the previous generations, and is used as a method of diagnosis to guide the treatment of warm and hot diseases. This theory divides the development process of warm diseases into four stages: Wei, Qi, Ying, and Blood, which correspond to the severity and location of the disease, thus providing a scientific basis for clinical treatment. In the COVID-19 epidemic, Chinese medicine demonstrated its unique contribution to the fight against the epidemic through the application of the theory of “Wei, Qi, Ying, and Blood,” and highlighted the core concept of “life first” under the socialist system with Chinese characteristics. (2) Externally: Transforming TCM theories such as the “balance of yin and yang” and the “three-factor approach” into oriental wisdom for global public health governance, as well as guiding the prevention and control of chronic diseases through the identification of physical qualities, is one of the important directions for the internationalization of TCM. In the “Belt and Road” TCM centers, we will promote the communication paradigm of “mutual trust between doctors and patients” to build a human health community and enhance the ability of cultural export.

4. Conclusion: Two-way empowerment of keeping the righteousness and innovation and establishing virtues and souls

The integration of civic and political education and TCM diagnostics is by no means a simple mechanical superposition of “Civic and Political + Professional,” but rather a deep chemical reaction between “the art of qi and huang” and “the way of virtue” through the reconstruction of the logic of value, the innovation of the teaching method, and the change of the evaluation system. By integrating socialist core values, excellent traditional Chinese culture, and medical ethics into the curriculum, the organic unity of knowledge transfer

and value leadership can be realized. This kind of integration is not only a response to the era of “what kind of people to train,” but also a strategic choice to promote the integrity and innovation of traditional Chinese medicine and enhance cultural self-confidence. In the future, it is necessary to further explore the development of dynamic evaluation tools, teachers’ ability to improve the transformation of ideology and politics, and other practical problems, and to build the evaluation index of “virtue and skill” with Chinese medicine characteristics, i.e., while cultivating the professional skills of students, we should pay attention to the shaping of their medical ethics and medical style. To this end, the classical theories of Chinese medicine can be combined with modern medical education to form an evaluation index system with Chinese medicine characteristics. Construct a unique ideological and political education system for college students, so that the spirit of “Great Medical Excellence and Sincerity” can be truly integrated into the genetic sequence of diagnostic education.

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