

Research on the Optimization of the Integrated and Collaborative Mechanism for Ideological and Political Education in Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Education Institutions of China's New Era

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Abstract: The fundamental task of moral education in the new era is the systematic construction of ideological and political education. This study comprehensively examines the development process and implementation challenges of the integration of ideological and political education in China since the reform and opening-up through literature review, case studies, and field research. The study found that China's moral education system has undergone a paradigm shift from "political education" to "comprehensive moral education," exhibiting significant policy-driven characteristics. Inadequate coordination mechanisms and limited horizontal synergy effects are the primary challenges currently facing the development of ideological and political education courses, with their root causes lying in structural contradictions in the supply side of collaborative governance mechanisms. Based on the example of the integration of ideological and political education in primary, secondary, and higher education institutions in Zhongshan City, Guangdong Province, the study proposes a new four-dimensional collaborative mechanism involving the family, school, society, and the internet. The family dimension focuses on the daily immersion in excellent traditional culture; the school dimension constructs a composite education system with spiral-shaped content development, cross-disciplinary teacher training, and multi-dimensional evaluation; the social dimension builds a platform for practical education communities; and the internet dimension innovates the digital education ecosystem. The research findings indicate that this mechanism can effectively promote the integrated connection and coordinated development of ideological and political education across all educational stages, providing a systematic, innovative solution for the modernization of the ideological and political education system in the new era.

Keywords: Integrated curriculum construction; Collaborative mechanism; Moral education

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1. Introduction

The Communist Party of China has always attached great importance to the development of ideological and political theory courses (hereinafter referred to as “ideological and political courses”). Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the Party Central Committee has comprehensively strengthened its leadership over the development of ideological and political courses, leading to fundamental and comprehensive changes in the development environment and overall ecosystem of such courses. The reform and innovation of ideological and political courses have entered a new stage of development ^[1]. In 2019, President Xi Jinping over a symposium for teachers of ideological and political theory courses in schools and proposed that ideological and political theory courses should be introduced in primary, secondary, and higher education institutions in a gradual and spiral manner. The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2022 clearly stated that “we must improve the ideological and political work system and promote the integrated development of ideological and political education in primary, secondary, and higher education institutions.” In May 2024, President Xi Jinping made important instructions on the construction of ideological and political theory courses in schools, emphasizing the need to deepen the integrated construction of ideological and political education in primary, secondary, and higher education institutions. As we embark on a new journey in the new era, the construction of ideological and political theory courses faces new circumstances and new tasks, and deepening the integrated construction of ideological and political education in primary, secondary, and higher education institutions has become a new requirement for ideological and political theory courses to demonstrate new momentum and achieve new accomplishments ^[2]. However, in the face of new situations, new tasks, and new challenges, some localities and schools still do not fully recognize the importance of ideological and political courses; classroom teaching effectiveness needs to be improved, teaching materials are not lively enough, and there are shortcomings in the selection and training of teachers ^[3]. Therefore, systematically sorting out the historical origins and development of the integrated construction of ideological and political courses in primary, secondary, and higher education, and conducting research on the mechanisms for the integrated construction of ideological and political courses in primary, secondary, and higher education have become topics that will help promote high-quality education.

2. The historical background of the integrated construction of ideological and political courses in primary, secondary, and higher education

The integrated construction of ideological and political courses in primary, secondary, and higher education in China is the result of the country’s overall planning of moral education courses and the gradual focus on integration. As one of the “five educations” in schools, moral education is not only the primary means and mechanism for independently implementing “moral education and talent cultivation,” but also runs through or is integrated into the other four educations, becoming the soul of education as a whole. With the deepening of China’s reform and opening-up and the tremendous changes in its economy and society, the positioning, content, and system of moral education have exhibited characteristics of keeping pace with the times, manifested in the prominence of “humanization” over “politicization,” the transition from single “political education” to a rich “comprehensive moral education” framework, and the shift from “campaign-style” to “integrated moral education across all levels of education.” This signifies that moral education must first cultivate a “person,” and on the basis of cultivating a “person,” it must then shape social roles, producing “socialist builders and successors.” This not only requires comprehensive moral education, or “comprehensive moral education,” which

includes moral education for cultivating a “person,” psychological education, and political education, ideological education, and vocational ethics education necessary for assuming social roles, but it should also be an open system characterized by vertical integration and horizontal coordination among its various elements.

From the first mention of “comprehensively planning the school moral education system” in the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China’s “Opinions on Further Strengthening and Improving School Moral Education” in 1994, to the overall design of the “comprehensive planning of the moral education system for primary, secondary, and higher education” in the Ministry of Education’s “Opinions on Comprehensively Planning the Moral Education System for Primary, Secondary, and Higher Education” in 2005, and further to the 2010 “National Medium- and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020)” clearly define the requirement of “prioritizing moral education.” The 2000 Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on Adapting to New Circumstances and Further Strengthening and Improving Moral Education in Primary and Secondary Schools, which called for “striving to establish a moral education curriculum system for primary and secondary schools that meets the needs of the 21st century”^[4], and other documents that have been continuously updated, moral education has consistently been a priority and subject to comprehensive planning at the national level.

3. Development of integrated ideological and political education in primary, secondary, and higher education

Since entering the new era, ideological and political education has been elevated to an unprecedented level. On March 18, 2019, President Xi Jinping over a symposium for teachers of ideological and political theory courses in schools in Beijing and delivered an important speech. He emphasized that adolescence is a critical period in life when young people need careful guidance and cultivation; that we must confidently and resolutely deliver ideological and political courses in our socialist education with Chinese characteristics. It is essential to progressively and spirally advance the teaching of ideological and political theory courses in primary, secondary, and higher education institutions, as this is a crucial guarantee for cultivating generation after generation of builders and successors of socialism^[5]. In order to thoroughly implement the important statements made by President Xi Jinping on education, especially the spirit of his important speech at the symposium for teachers of ideological and political theory courses in schools, on August 14, 2019, the General Office of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council issued the “Several Opinions on Deepening the Reform and Innovation of Ideological and Political Theory Courses in Schools in the New Era” which clearly stated at the national level that “we must uphold the political and value-oriented role of ideological and political courses in the curriculum system, coordinate the integrated development of ideological and political theory courses across primary, secondary, and higher education institutions, and promote synergies between various courses and ideological and political theory courses,” requiring that through institutional arrangements for ideological and political theory course teaching—particularly textbooks—across different levels and types of schools, vertical coordination be achieved across primary, secondary, and higher education segments, while horizontal coordination be realized through ideological and political theory courses and ideological and political elements integrated into all courses.

On December 18, 2020, the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee and the Ministry of Education jointly issued the “Innovation Implementation Plan for Ideological and Political Theory Courses in the New Era.” On July 25, 2022, the Ministry of Education and nine other departments issued the “Work Plan for the

Comprehensive Promotion of the ‘Grand Ideological and Political Education Course’” promoting the upgrade of ideological and political education courses from ‘courses’ to “educational ecosystems.” The plan proposes opening up ideological and political education courses, fully mobilizing social forces and resources, building “large classrooms,” establishing “large platforms,” and cultivating “high-quality faculty,” so that ideological and political education courses extend beyond schools to society, becoming a large classroom supported by the entire society. On December 27, 2022, the Ministry of Education’s Office issued the “Notice on the Construction of an Integrated Community for Ideological and Political Education in Primary, Secondary, and Higher Education,” requiring provincial-level efforts to establish a set of working mechanisms, incubate a batch of brand-name activities, and create a batch of model “golden courses,” among other measures, to promote the coordinated sharing of course resources, teacher teams, and practical training bases. On May 11, 2024, President Xi Jinping made important instructions on the construction of ideological and political education in schools, emphasizing the need to continue to promote the integrated construction of ideological and political education in primary, secondary, and higher education institutions^[6]. On July 18, 2024, the “Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Further Deepening Reform and Promoting Chinese-Style Modernization” once again proposed to “improve the mechanism for cultivating virtue and fostering talent, and promote the integrated reform and innovation of ideological and political education in primary, secondary, and higher education institutions,” deepening comprehensive education reform. On January 19, 2025, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the “Outline of the Plan for Building an Education Powerhouse (2024-2035).” Propose to accelerate the construction of a powerful ideological and political education system with strong ideological guidance, comprehensively build a solid foundation for ideological and political education, effectively teach the course “Introduction to Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era” systematically improve the curriculum standards for ideological and political courses in primary and secondary schools, comprehensively optimize the design of ideological and political course plans in higher education, and promote integrated reform and innovation of ideological and political courses across primary, secondary, and higher education.

At the local level, various provinces and cities have also carried out integrated construction of ideological and political courses in primary, secondary, and higher education institutions in various forms according to local conditions, and have achieved initial results. For example, Guangdong Province has successively issued documents such as the “Guangdong Province Action Plan for the Construction of Ideological and Political Theory Courses in Schools,” “Several Measures for Strengthening the Construction of Marxist Institutes in the New Era” and “Measures for Coordinating the Integrated Construction of Ideological and Political Theory Courses in Primary, Secondary, and Higher Education Institutions” establishing a working mechanism coordinated by the Provincial Party Committee’s Education Work Leading Group, led by the Provincial Party Committee’s Education Work Committee, and jointly promoted by various departments.

Guide universities to establish teaching and research departments for the course “Introduction to Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era” and deliver high-quality lectures on this course. Implement the “South Guangdong High-Quality Ideological and Political Education Course Construction Program,” and develop a series of high-quality courses such as “The Process of the Sinicization and Modernization of Marxism and the Mission and Responsibilities of Young Students in the New Era” and the “Strengthening the Nation Series” and other high-quality courses, select and build 327 high-quality ideological and political course examples at universities, 174 model course examples for college students’ public lectures on the history of the Party, and cultivate and build 100 high-quality ideological and political courses for primary

and secondary schools and vocational schools. We have improved the four-tier training system at the provincial, municipal, county, and university levels, and established seven training bases for ideological and political education teachers in higher education institutions. We have organized the Provincial Competition on Basic Teaching Skills for Young Ideological and Political Education Teachers in Higher Education Institutions and the Inter-Provincial League Competition among Guangdong, Guangxi, Hainan, Jiangxi, and Yunnan Provinces, among other activities ^[7].

4. Optimizing the integrated coordination mechanism for ideological and political education courses in primary, secondary, and higher education: A case study of Zhongshan city, Guangdong province

In August 2023, the Guangdong Province Primary and Secondary School Ideological and Political Education Courses Integration Consortium Project was officially launched, led by Zhongshan Vocational and Technical College and the Zhongshan Municipal Bureau of Education and Sports, with the participation of ideological and political education teachers from the Municipal Teacher Development Center, the Municipal Research Office, Langqing Primary School, the First Middle School of Zhongshan City, the Municipal Modern Vocational School, and researchers from the Learning Support Course Center. Concurrently, the Zhongshan Municipal Bureau of Education and Sports issued the “Notice on the Establishment of the Zhongshan City Integrated Collaborative Mechanism for Ideological and Political Education in Primary, Secondary, and Higher Education Institutions” (Zhong Jiaotong [2024] No. 26), clarifying the guiding principles, personnel composition, and responsibilities for the integrated development of ideological and political education across all levels of education, and establishing a collaborative platform for the integrated mechanism. The project team adheres to the principle of openness in ideological and political education, visiting multiple locations to explore practical bases, and signing agreements with the Zhongshan Museum, Sun Yat-sen’s Former Residence, and other red cultural resources to establish practical bases for the integrated community. Through city-wide home-school-society collaboration, comprehensive training for ideological and political education teachers, model classroom construction, practical case studies, and theoretical research, the team aims to build a “four-dimensional integrated” collaborative mechanism involving family, school, society, and the internet, achieving the core goal of holistic moral education.

4.1. Family: Inheriting excellent traditional Chinese culture and strengthening practical educational scenarios

The family is the basic cell of society and the first school for every individual, with parents serving as a child’s first teachers. “No matter how times change or how the economy and society develop, for a society, the reliance on family life is irreplaceable, the social functions of the family are irreplaceable, and the civilizing role of the family is irreplaceable” ^[8]. It is clear that the source of moral education and talent cultivation lies in the family. China has a long-standing educational tradition of “family and state as one,” such as emphasizing the progressive education of self-cultivation, family management, and state governance to achieve social stability. Additionally, it emphasizes that “if a child is not educated, it is the father’s fault,” and through behavioral norms such as the “Book of Rites” and the “Classic of Filial Piety,” the concepts of filial piety and brotherly love are repeatedly reinforced in family life. Therefore, in the integrated construction of ideological and political courses in primary, secondary, and higher education in the new era, parents must also actively assume the role of the first educators. The primary school stage is the stage of the emergence and standardization of values. Parents educate their children

in the family through everyday life scenarios. For example, through the modern adaptation of Confucian classics such as “morning reflection and evening reflection” and “brothers being friendly and respectful to each other,” as well as reading together and interactive games, children can form basic values. The secondary school stage is when adolescents develop abstract and critical thinking. Family education can utilize participatory learning methods such as family meetings and community volunteer services to enable children to better understand, participate in, and reflect on social issues, thereby deepening their consensus of core values and forming an initial sense of social responsibility. Additionally, attention should be paid to home-school collaboration in the online space. During the university stage, most young people have left their families and entered university campuses. Parents should transition from “educators” to “consultants.” On one hand, they should continue to encourage their children to complete their studies diligently and actively participate in campus activities. On the other hand, they should also focus on career guidance and life guidance for their children, encouraging them to develop themselves in a broader perspective, ultimately achieving the transition from “family members” to “members of society.”

4.2. Schools: Building a multi-dimensional and integrated education system to enhance the effectiveness of ideological and political education courses

Schools are temples of knowledge, and the ideological and political education and strengthening of students’ minds primarily take place in schools, with classrooms serving as the main venues for ideological and political education.

When making important instructions on the construction of ideological and political education courses in schools, President Xi Jinping emphasized that “we must always uphold the guiding role of Marxism, take the remarkable achievements of socialism with Chinese characteristics as the content foundation, draw strength from the fine traditional culture, revolutionary culture, and advanced socialist culture of China, explain the principles deeply, thoroughly, and vividly, adhere to the essence while innovating, and promote the high-quality development of ideological and political education courses, continuously enhancing their relevance and appeal”^[9]. As an important link in the integrated construction of ideological and political courses in primary, secondary, and higher education, schools need to build a composite education system from multiple dimensions: In terms of the integration of teaching and course content, it is necessary to establish a scientific and reasonable ideological and political course system through overall planning of ideological and political course objectives, unified textbook compilation, and the establishment of cross-stage thematic discussion courses, so as to achieve smooth connections and spiral advancement of teaching content at all stages of education. In terms of integrated teacher team development, strengthen the coordination and collaboration between local education authorities and integrated development committees, organize joint lesson preparation, teaching observations, and pedagogical training activities, and actively cultivate “1+N” teacher development communities; In terms of integrated teaching resources, strengthen digital infrastructure, enhance the utilization of high-quality resource repositories, such as implementing a credit-based management system for national, regional, and school-based resource repositories. In terms of integrated teaching methods, follow educational laws and the characteristics of students at different educational stages, adopt differentiated teaching methods such as gamified teaching in primary schools, issue-based teaching in secondary schools, and research-based learning in universities, while innovating cross-stage “relay classes”; In terms of integrated evaluation systems, avoid single-dimensional evaluation and establish a diversified scientific evaluation system, such as a dynamic evaluation system that includes knowledge mastery, value recognition, behavioral practice, and developmental growth. Furthermore, we actively integrate

resources from families, society, and the internet to form a collaborative effort, creating a new framework for education that is vertically integrated and horizontally interconnected.

4.3. Society: Building a community platform to achieve resource sharing and practical education

Society is an extension and expansion of family and school education, and it is also a testing ground and application arena for ideological and political education. The effectiveness of ideological and political education is mainly demonstrated and applied in society. The expansion from small classrooms in schools to large classrooms in society is mainly carried out through the following three aspects: first, building a large platform and creating an integrated and coordinated mechanism.

The integration of ideological and political education across primary, secondary, and higher education institutions particularly requires the coordination and guidance of local education administrative departments. For example, specialized institutions for the integration of ideological and political education across primary, secondary, and higher education institutions should be established to provide policy guidance, develop shared platforms, strengthen implementation, and promote outreach and dissemination around integrated content provision, curriculum development, methodological reform, team building, and ideological and political research ^[10].

Second, design large classrooms and develop integrated curriculum resources. Ideological and political education should not only be taught in the classroom but also in real-life social contexts. By integrating and utilizing social resources, especially those related to ideological and political education, such as museums, memorial halls, historical and cultural sites, science and technology museums, and enterprises, the existing school teaching environment can be enriched and expanded. Teachers can design diverse social practice activities to allow students to deeply experience and observe real-life situations, thereby enhancing their understanding and recognition of the content of ideological and political education courses.

Third, cultivate great teachers and optimize the integrated teaching team. The key to running good ideological and political theory courses lies in the teachers. In addition to the existing team of ideological and political teachers in schools, we should actively invite social forces to participate in the construction of ideological and political courses, such as scientists, educators, heroic models, master craftsmen, and red base interpreters, who can all join the part-time teaching team. For example, we can design programs where heroic role models share their growth experiences, allowing students to appreciate the historical responsibility of being new people of the era who are living in the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics and called upon to shoulder the great task of national rejuvenation.

4.4. Network: Innovating education models and building a new digital ecosystem

The Internet is the fourth space for the dissemination of knowledge and ideological and political education in modern society. Its unique interactivity and reach provide new possibilities for ideological and political education. Online interactions and online life are essentially extensions of real-life interactions and real life. They shape individuals' values and behavioral patterns in the interplay between the virtual and the real. To achieve the goal of integrated ideological and political education across all levels of education, the online space must also be co-constructed. First, create a positive online atmosphere and culture. "The online space should be clear and healthy, with a good ecological environment that serves the interests of the people" ^[11]. By optimizing the content supply of online works, ensure that the information content in cyberspace is healthy, positive, and in line with socialist core values. Allow students to absorb positive energy in cyberspace. Second, utilize the internet to innovate and

reconstruct teaching models. For example, carry out blended online and offline teaching, utilize cyberspace for flipped teaching, resource sharing, etc., to enhance the appeal and influence of ideological and political education courses. Third, establish online interactive platforms for schools, families, and communities, and build online co-education platforms to jointly discuss the content and arrangements of ideological and political education courses.

Under the strategic deployment of the Party's 20th National Congress on the "three-in-one" strategy of education, science and technology, and talent, the construction of a coordinated mechanism for the integrated development of ideological and political education in primary, secondary, and higher education institutions should follow the logic of systems theory. Families should consolidate the foundation of values through the modern transformation of traditional cultural genes, schools should strengthen the effectiveness of the main channel through multi-dimensional collaborative innovation, society should construct and expand the temporal and spatial dimensions of education through practical platforms, and the internet should reshape the educational ecosystem through technological innovation. These four mechanisms, while differing in their functional roles, share common value objectives, forming a closed-loop collaborative education system where families lay the foundation, schools consolidate the core, society refines, and the internet empowers, providing a practical pathway for the high-quality development of ideological and political education in the new era.

5. Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the historical origin, research status and current challenges of the integrated construction of ideological and political education courses in primary, secondary, and higher education institutions, this study has distilled a "four-dimensional integrated" collaborative path from the case of Zhongshan City, Guangdong Province. The research shows that constructing a multi-dimensional education system that integrates family culture infiltration, school system collaboration, social resource linkage, and network ecological reconstruction is an effective way to solve the structural contradictions, such as the academic stage fragmentation and field separation existing in traditional ideological and political education.

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