

Exploration and Practice of Ideological and Political Education Reform in the Course of Veterinary Surgery at Local Universities

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Abstract: Against the backdrop of the comprehensive advancement of the “New Rural Science” initiative and the deepening implementation of the fundamental task of moral education in higher education, the cultivation of veterinary medicine professionals faces new developmental opportunities and contemporary challenges. As a core course with strong practicality and stringent technical requirements in veterinary medicine, “Veterinary Surgery” serves not only as the primary platform for imparting surgical techniques but also as a crucial vehicle for shaping students’ professional ethics, humanistic literacy, and patriotic sentiments. Based on teaching practices at local institutions, this paper conducts an in-depth analysis of the ideological and political elements embedded in “Veterinary Surgery,” systematically elaborating on the implementation pathways of curriculum-based ideological and political education from dimensions such as value guidance, element exploration, integration approaches, and innovative teaching methods. The practical outcomes demonstrate that this teaching reform has effectively enhanced students’ professional competencies and comprehensively strengthened teachers’ educational capabilities, providing a replicable practical paradigm for cultivating high-quality veterinary professionals with well-rounded development in moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education.

Keywords: Local universities; Veterinary surgery; Ideological and political education in curriculum; Teaching reform; Talent cultivation

Online publication: April 17, 2026

1. Introduction

“Veterinary Surgery” serves as a pivotal clinical course in undergraduate animal medicine education, bridging foundational knowledge with advanced practice. It covers essential topics, including aseptic techniques, anesthesia management, surgical procedures, and diagnosis of common surgical conditions, which directly determine students’ future clinical competence in veterinary practice. With socio-economic development and improved living standards, pets have become integral members of households, and the concept of animal welfare has gained widespread acceptance. Consequently, the role of veterinarians has evolved from traditional disease treatment providers to guardians of animal health, defenders of public health security, and facilitators of

harmonious coexistence between humans and nature ^[1].

Traditional Veterinary Surgery curricula overemphasize surgical skill training and anatomical-physiological knowledge, often neglecting the cultivation of students' professional ethics, legal awareness, and humanistic compassion. This results in some students possessing solid technical expertise but lacking the ability to make sound judgments in complex clinical ethical dilemmas, and failing to demonstrate the required professional responsibility in practice ^[2]. How to deeply explore the ideological-political resources in Veterinary Surgery, explore scientific and effective integration pathways for ideological-political elements, and promote the alignment and resonance between professional course teaching and ideological-political education, has become a critical issue in current veterinary medicine education reform ^[3]. Drawing on Foshan University's teaching practices, this paper explores a practical approach to reshape the educational value of Veterinary Surgery through curriculum-based ideological-political construction, achieving an organic unity of knowledge transmission and value guidance.

2. The value guidance and professional role of ideological and political education in veterinary surgery

Ideological and political education in courses is not merely a superficial combination of "ideological education + curriculum," but rather an exploration of the inherent logical power and value genes within the course, achieving a deep integration of talent cultivation and moral education ^[4]. In the teaching of Veterinary Surgery, the value guidance of ideological and political education is primarily manifested in reshaping life concepts, promoting the spirit of craftsmanship, and elevating professional missions. This approach holds irreplaceable strategic significance in the cultivation of veterinary medicine professionals.

2.1. Deepening the life philosophy of "Medical Benevolence"

The research subjects in veterinary medicine are living organisms. Whether performing routine sterilization or complex fracture internal fixation, every step of veterinary surgery directly concerns the safety and welfare of animals. The primary value of ideological and political education in courses is to guide students in establishing a professional ethical concept of "revering life and caring for animals." In specialized teaching, this value is concretely reflected in the pursuit of optimal animal welfare: whether adequate pain management is provided preoperatively, whether the surgical approach prioritizes preserving organ function over simple excision, and whether comprehensive humanistic care is offered postoperatively.

Through value-based education, students gain a profound understanding that veterinary surgery is not merely a technical process of repairing animal tissues, but also a profound act of respect and compassion for life. This ethical framework distinguishes veterinary medicine students from mere technical operators, serving as a cornerstone for earning societal respect and fostering harmonious doctor-patient relationships in their future careers ^[5]. In the current context of frequent veterinary medical disputes, veterinarians with strong humanistic qualities are becoming increasingly scarce and valuable.

2.2 Promoting the technical philosophy of "Master Craftsmen" in veterinary surgery

Veterinary surgical procedures are fundamentally characterized by precision and rigor, where even the slightest operational error may result in animal mortality or disability. Thus, the artisan spirit of "pursuing excellence and meticulousness" constitutes the professional ethos of veterinary surgeons. The role of ideological and political education in this context is to elevate the repetitive technical training into a formative experience that cultivates

students' spiritual resilience and professional competence^[6]. Through ideological and political education in courses, students come to understand that the depth of each stitch, the tightness of each hemostatic knot, and the precise placement of surgical instruments are not merely technical maneuvers but direct manifestations of professional responsibility. This pursuit of excellence in technique serves as a vital pathway to cultivate students' rigorous academic attitude and scientific inquiry spirit. In the training of veterinary medicine professionals, the cultivation of craftsmanship directly impacts the overall service quality of the veterinary industry and stands as a crucial pillar for enhancing China's international competitiveness in this field.

2.3 Enhancing the global perspective of “One Health”

The teaching and practice of Veterinary Surgery extend beyond clinical animal disease treatment, as they are closely linked to animal-derived food safety, zoonotic disease prevention, and the development of environmentally sustainable livestock farming. Integrating the “One Health” concept into teaching helps students recognize that animal health, human health, and environmental health form an inseparable organic whole^[7]. For instance, when discussing the management of infected wounds or tumor resection surgeries, students are guided to consider the transmission routes of pathogens, the ecological hazards of drug residues, and the cross-border transmission risks of zoonotic diseases. This broadened macro perspective elevates the Veterinary Surgery curriculum beyond mere technical instruction, placing it at the forefront of safeguarding national biosecurity and public health. For veterinary medicine students, this represents a vital educational component that strengthens professional commitment, fosters patriotic spirit and social responsibility, and inspires them to integrate their career development into the grand endeavor of building a robust national public health system.

3. Deep exploration and systematic construction of ideological and political elements in veterinary surgery courses

To achieve organic integration of ideological and political elements with professional teaching content, the primary task involves a comprehensive analysis and in-depth exploration of the “Veterinary Surgery” curriculum, establishing a systematic repository of ideological and political elements. Based on the knowledge framework and teaching content of “Veterinary Surgery,” the ideological and political elements contained therein are categorized into five core dimensions^[8].

3.1. Cultural confidence elements based on historical inheritance

China's veterinary surgery has a long history and profound heritage, from the castration techniques of ancient Chinese veterinary medicine to the advanced technologies of modern veterinary surgery, which embody the rich traditional Chinese cultural wisdom and the practical experience of the working people. When teaching the chapter on the development history of veterinary surgery, the focus should be on introducing the outstanding achievements of ancient Chinese veterinarians in orthopedics and soft tissue surgery, such as the classic surgical diagnosis and treatment techniques recorded in “Yuanheng's Collection of Horse Therapy”. By comparing the development of veterinary surgery between China and the West, this article showcases the struggles of China's veterinary industry from following and keeping pace to leading in some fields, with a focus on the rapid development and breakthroughs in recent decades, such as the domestication of surgical instruments for small animals and orthopedics. The aim of exploring this ideological and political element is to inspire students' national pride and cultural confidence, strengthen their confidence in professional learning, and encourage

them to inherit the essence of traditional Chinese veterinary medicine while learning modern veterinary surgical techniques. This will promote the innovative development of integrated Chinese and Western veterinary surgery and provide a “China solution” to address clinical diagnostic and therapeutic challenges.

3.2. Legal and ethical elements based on surgical standards

Veterinary medical practices are strictly regulated by national laws and regulations, with medical integrity serving as the professional baseline of the veterinary industry. When teaching chapters such as “Medical Disputes and Prevention,” “Standardized Medical Record Documentation,” and “Prescription Management,” legal education should be integrated with current laws and regulations, including the “Animal Epidemic Prevention Law” and the “Measures for the Administration of Veterinary Practitioners,” to help students clearly understand the legal boundaries and responsibilities of veterinary practice. In veterinary education focused on surgical planning and implementation, it is imperative to avoid exaggerating therapeutic outcomes, concealing surgical risks, or engaging in excessive medical practices. These principles constitute both professional technical requirements and the legal obligations and ethical baseline for veterinarians^[9]. Through consistent legal and integrity education, students should cultivate a strong sense of legal compliance and rule adherence, fostering a professional ethos of “honesty, integrity, and lawful practice.” This enables students to fully comprehend that the surgical scalpel they wield not only represents technical expertise but also carries legally mandated professional responsibilities. Any procedural violations may cross legal boundaries, causing irreversible harm to animals, pet owners, and society.

3.3. Elements of dialectical materialism in clinical diagnosis and treatment

The occurrence, development, diagnosis, and treatment of surgical diseases are rich in dialectical materialist thought, serving as an excellent teaching vehicle for cultivating students’ scientific thinking. When teaching pathophysiological mechanisms such as “local and systemic,” “injury and repair,” and “infection and anti-infection,” students are guided to analyze clinical issues from the perspective of dialectical materialism. For instance, when managing complex animal trauma, it is essential to go beyond superficial wound cleaning and suturing. A holistic approach must be adopted, considering the animal’s overall physiological condition, shock prevention, and nutritional support to establish a comprehensive clinical perspective. Similarly, during tumor resection, the focus should be on both complete lesion removal and preserving normal organ function to the greatest extent possible, embodying the dialectical unity of opposites. Such scientific thinking training helps students develop a correct worldview and methodology, enabling them to view animal diseases comprehensively, dynamically, and in a developmental context. This enhances clinical decision-making capabilities and prevents misdiagnosis or mistreatment caused by metaphysical, one-sided thinking.

3.4. Humanistic elements in doctor-patient relationships

With the booming pet economy, veterinarians now face not only animals beyond verbal description but also emotionally invested pet owners. When teaching topics like “preoperative communication,” “palliative care for animals,” and “euthanasia ethics,” instructors incorporate real clinical cases to guide students in developing scientific yet tactful approaches to informing pet owners of difficult decisions, effectively managing their grief, and achieving a balanced consideration between economic interests and animal welfare^[10]. The exploration of this ideological and political element aims to cultivate students’ empathy and clinical communication skills, reinforcing the professional philosophy that ‘medicine is a benevolent art.’ It educates students to not only master technical expertise but also pay attention to the emotional needs of pet owners, learning to listen and empathize.

This effort strives to become veterinarians with warmth and compassion, thereby effectively resolving animal medical disputes and enhancing the quality of veterinary medical services.

3.5. Elements of social responsibility based on public health

Veterinary surgeons serve as the first line of defense in the national public health system, playing an irreplaceable role in ensuring public health security. When teaching the chapter on “Surgical Management of Zoonotic Diseases,” the focus is placed on the management of rabies wound exposure and protective measures for Brucellosis joint surgeries, emphasizing the critical role of veterinarians in interrupting the transmission of zoonotic diseases and preventing laboratory infections. By analyzing typical cases such as skin procedures in human anthrax infections, students’ public health awareness and biosafety concepts are reinforced. Students are guided to closely integrate their personal career development with national public health security, fostering noble professional aspirations of serving the people and contributing to society. This enables students to profoundly realize that the surgical scalpel in their hands is not only a tool for treating animal diseases but also a powerful weapon for safeguarding national biosafety and public health security.

4. Integration approaches and implementation pathways for ideological and political education in courses

After thoroughly analyzing the ideological and political elements, the key lies in seamlessly integrating them into all teaching components—like salt dissolving in water—while avoiding forced incorporation that leads to a disconnect between theory and practice^[11]. Based on the teaching realities of local institutions, this study has developed a four-pronged approach integrating objectives, content, practice, and assessment. This method aims to achieve a natural transition and deep integration between knowledge transmission and value cultivation.

4.1. Integration of educational objectives: Restructuring the curriculum outline to establish value-oriented teaching

As the fundamental framework for course instruction, the revised “Veterinary Surgery” syllabus explicitly incorporates measurable “quality objectives” (ideological and political objectives)^[12], building upon traditional “knowledge objectives” and “competency objectives.” Each chapter’s instructional design clearly outlines corresponding ideological and political education points and implementation requirements, achieving top-level integration between ideological education and professional teaching. For instance, the “Aseptic Techniques” chapter sets the objective: “Foster a rigorous scientific attitude and strong professional responsibility, cultivate aseptic operation awareness, and prevent iatrogenic infections.” The “Anesthesia” chapter establishes the objective: “Establish a safety-first operational philosophy and professional commitment to animal welfare during anesthesia procedures.” Through this top-level design, ideological education is no longer an ad-hoc element in classroom teaching but becomes a statutory component and essential component of the curriculum, ensuring the educational direction of ideological education from the source.

4.2. Content integration: Aligning with key knowledge points

The integration of ideological and political education content must closely align with professional knowledge points, achieving seamless integration and subtle influence. This study adopts a “case analysis + value extraction” teaching model, precisely embedding ideological and political elements into specific knowledge

point explanations to achieve synchronous resonance between ideological education and professional knowledge instruction. For example, when teaching the basic operation of “knot-tying techniques,” while explaining knot structures and tying skills, emphasis is placed on the reliability and standardization of knot-tying. A cautionary case of animal hemorrhagic death due to loose hemostatic knots is cited to illustrate the professional concept of “details determine success,” educating students to maintain full concentration and eliminate negligence in medical procedures, thereby cultivating rigorous and meticulous professional responsibility. When teaching “internal fixation of fractures,” domestically developed orthopedic fixation materials and their successful clinical application cases are showcased, along with China’s technological breakthroughs and achievements in veterinary biomaterials. This inspires students’ enthusiasm for serving the nation through science and technology, fosters innovative awareness, and enhances national pride.

4.3. Integration of practice: Deepening practical operations and tempering willpower and character

“Veterinary Surgery” is a highly practical course, with laboratory and internship components serving as crucial “training grounds” for ideological and political education. This study integrates ideological and political education throughout the entire process, from experimental preparation and operational implementation to post-class organization^[13], achieving an organic combination of professional skill training and ideological and political cultivation. In simulated surgical experiments, students are required to strictly divide roles and fulfill their respective responsibilities, with close coordination among the surgeon, assistants, anesthesiologist, and instrument technician, adhering to strict aseptic operation principles. This not only enhances professional skills but also cultivates teamwork spirit and collective honor among students. A rigorous animal ethics review system is established, with clear requirements for students: pre-and post-experiment care and comfort of experimental animals, and strict prohibition of any form of abuse or rough handling. A ceremonial “preoperative salute and postoperative silence” is implemented to reinforce students’ reverence for life. Additionally, when students encounter surgical failures (e.g., suture rupture, anesthesia complications), instructors avoid simple blame or criticism. Instead, they guide students to review the operational process, analyze failure causes, and encourage them to confront setbacks and learn from failures, thereby fostering tenacious willpower and stress resilience.

4.4. Assessment integration: Establishing a multi-dimensional evaluation system to strengthen value guidance

To address the drawbacks of “score-centric” evaluation, this study reformulates course assessment methods by incorporating ideological and political performance into the evaluation framework, fully leveraging the guiding role of assessments^[14]. A “Professional Competence” scoring component is added to regular course grades, accounting for 20% of the total. Evaluation criteria include: punctuality reflecting integrity, laboratory organization demonstrating rigorous work habits, treatment of experimental animals showcasing compassion and life values, and teamwork performance demonstrating collaborative spirit, achieving process-oriented evaluation of students’ ideological and political literacy. In final exams, rote memorization-based objective questions are streamlined while open-ended case analysis questions are increased, using complex clinical cases to assess students’ ethical decision-making abilities, legal awareness, and humanistic care literacy. This diversified evaluation system guides students to shift from solely emphasizing professional knowledge acquisition to comprehensively enhancing moral cultivation and professional competence, achieving an active transition from “I have to learn” to “I want to cultivate.”

5. Innovations in ideological and political education teaching methods

To enhance the appeal and engagement of ideological and political education while avoiding monotonous didactic instruction, this study integrates the distinctive features of Veterinary Surgery courses. By adopting diversified and modern teaching approaches, students are encouraged to experience through interaction, reflect through experience, and improve through reflection^[15].

5.1. Case-based teaching method

Cases serve as a bridge connecting theory and practice, as well as a catalyst for eliciting emotional resonance among students. This study meticulously selects clinically significant cases with typical ideological and political significance, delivering value education to students through the storytelling approach in a subtle and imperceptible manner. For instance, the case study of “cystolith extraction in an elderly dog” highlights the postoperative recovery process and the heartwarming moment when the pet owner sent a thank-you letter, demonstrating how veterinary expertise supports family happiness. Similarly, the surgical cases in “wildlife rescue,” such as treating injured pangolins and migratory birds, showcase veterinarians’ responsibility and commitment to biodiversity conservation. Through authentic and vivid cases, students are moved by the stories and inspired emotionally, naturally transforming the power of role models into intrinsic motivation for professional learning^[16].

5.2. Scenario simulation teaching method

This pedagogical approach recreates authentic clinical scenarios, enabling students to immerse themselves in role-playing experiences that embody professional ethics and responsibilities. Through simulated cases such as “Informed Consent for Surgical Procedures,” “Critical Condition Notification for Pets,” and “Euthanasia Discussions,” students assume roles like veterinarians or pet owners, engaging in in-depth communication and negotiation regarding complex medical conditions, exorbitant treatment costs, and uncertain prognoses^[17]. Post-practice, instructors provide targeted feedback, guiding students to reflect on how to uphold medical principles while demonstrating humanistic care, and how to convey hope to pet owners during surgical risk disclosures. This method effectively enhances students’ clinical communication and ethical decision-making skills, exposes them to workplace pressures early on, cultivates empathy and professional accountability, and significantly shortens the adaptation period from academic to professional environments.

5.3. Flipped classroom and debate-based teaching methodology

For controversial clinical ethics topics such as euthanasia and overmedication, the integrated approach of flipped classroom and debate-based teaching stimulates students’ active thinking and in-depth exploration. Before class, students independently research and organize perspectives; during class, they engage in debate competitions to foster intense intellectual exchanges on contentious issues. This teaching method enables students to examine clinical ethics from multiple angles, not only deepening their understanding of professional knowledge but also cultivating critical thinking and discernment skills. It helps students uphold professional ethics and establish correct professional values when facing complex clinical ethical dilemmas in the future^[18].

6. Practical outcomes of ideological and political education in courses

Through a series of teaching reforms and practical explorations, the ideological and political education construction of the “Veterinary Surgery” course at Foshan University has achieved remarkable results, realizing

dual improvements in students 'professional competence and ideological-political literacy, teachers' teaching capabilities and educational abilities, as well as the quality of course teaching and its educational value.

6.1. Significant enhancement of students' professional competence

Through comprehensive ideological and political education embedded in courses, students have demonstrated positive and profound improvements in both mental outlook and professional competence. In veterinary surgical experiments, students have developed a habit of strictly adhering to aseptic techniques, with surgical instruments neatly arranged and surgical records meticulously documented. Their dedication to mastering technical skills has markedly increased, fostering a prevailing culture of rigorous and pragmatic academic integrity. More encouragingly, the professional ethos of 'reverence for life and compassion in medicine' has taken root in students' hearts. They voluntarily formed an animal protection volunteer association, dedicating their spare time to public welfare activities such as rescuing stray animals and promoting animal welfare education. During clinical internships, students have received multiple commendation letters and banners from pet owners for their meticulous diagnostic services and excellent doctor-patient communication skills, vividly demonstrating the exemplary professional demeanor and ethical standards of contemporary veterinary medicine undergraduates^[19].

6.2. Comprehensive enhancement of teachers' educational competence

The development of ideological and political education in curricula has raised higher standards for teaching staff, while also creating a pivotal opportunity to elevate professional expertise and pedagogical skills. Through collective lesson planning, teaching seminars, and external observation exchanges, educators have achieved holistic improvements in political literacy, professional ethics, and cultural literacy. This has gradually cultivated a "dual-qualified" teaching team characterized by strong political integrity, exceptional professional competence, and outstanding educational capabilities. Teachers' pedagogical philosophies have undergone a fundamental transformation. They no longer settle for being mere "knowledge transmitters" but strive to become "educational mentors" who shape students' character, conduct, and aesthetic sensibilities. Educators now prioritize not only "what to teach" but also "how to educate," skillfully uncovering the educational value embedded in their professional knowledge. This marks a proactive shift from "being compelled to implement ideological and political education" to "voluntarily embracing its role."

6.3. Continuous improvement in course teaching quality

The integration of ideological and political education has significantly enriched classroom teaching content, effectively enhancing the course's appeal and engagement. Student participation rates and engagement levels have markedly increased, with steady growth in course evaluation scores and a substantial rise in teaching satisfaction. In final assessments, students demonstrated more comprehensive and profound responses to case analysis questions, not only providing scientifically sound technical treatment plans but also conducting multidimensional analyses from ethical, legal, and animal welfare perspectives, showcasing high-level comprehensive literacy and clinical thinking abilities.

7. Conclusion

The reform of ideological and political education in veterinary surgery courses at Foshan University has achieved profound integration by deeply exploring ideological elements, innovating teaching approaches, and

transforming pedagogical methods. This initiative has infused the “salt” of ideological education into the “soup” of veterinary surgery training, ensuring the curriculum not only possesses academic depth and technical rigor but also political relevance and humanistic warmth. Looking ahead, the study will align with the era’s demands for “New Agricultural Sciences” development, closely monitoring emerging technologies, ethical challenges, and innovations in veterinary surgery. It will continuously update the ideological education case library, explore the “Internet + Ideological Education” model to deepen industry-education collaboration, and integrate cutting-edge industry trends with ideological education^[20]. The evaluation system will be optimized to solidify ideological education implementation. These efforts aim to cultivate outstanding veterinary professionals who excel in moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor development, empowering them to shoulder the mission of national rejuvenation. This initiative contributes to China’s veterinary sector advancement and safeguards national biosecurity and public health through local higher education institutions.

Funding

Project of Postgraduate Demonstration Course Construction Disclosure statement of Guangdong Province (2025KCTS 093); Project of Undergraduate Ideological and Political Education Reform Demonstration of Guangdong Province (2024); Project of Undergraduate Teaching Quality and The authors declare no conflict of interest. eaching Reform Engineering Construction of Guangdong Province (2025 Project of Department of Education of Guangdong Province (2025KCXTD045); Project of Quality Engineering of Foshan University (2025); Project of Quality Engineering of Foshan University(2023)

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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