

Integration of Ideological and Political Knowledge across Disciplines in a Chinese Public University: A Review

Liu Ning¹, Cavin F. Pamintuan²

^{1,2}Angeles University Foundation

Abstract

For the past few years, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council have continuously promoted the strengthening of ideological and political education at the higher education level. To achieve this goal, it is crucial to build the capacity of teachers who teach these courses. Previous studies have emphasized the need for schools to continuously provide opportunities and platforms that will deepen teachers' understanding of the subject, thereby enhancing their instructional delivery. This review paper aims to analyze the ongoing discussion on designing professional development program for teachers engaged to the teaching of ideological and political education. Through review of studies from databases such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, ERIC, and China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), the study will gather relevant data essential for understanding the current status of ideological and political education and how professional development programs are being designed and implemented. The review revealed Although China's ideological and political education training for teachers has made significant progress in recent years, there are still some problems and challenges. First, the content and methods of training need to be further innovated and improved to meet the needs of educational development in the new era. Second, some teachers do not pay enough attention to ideological and political education, resulting in unsatisfactory training results (Huang, 2020). In addition, the application of modern technology in training needs to be further promoted and optimized to maximize its benefits.

Keywords: Ideological Education; Political Education; Training Program; Teachers' Knowledge;

1. Introduction

Among the goals of education is to mold morally-sound students who would be good citizens and actively participate to the nation building. To achieve this goal, the Chinese education system has embedded compulsory courses in ideological and political education, ensuring the active promotion of citizenship education among the students (Zhang & Fagan, 2016). The ideological and political education encompasses topics on ideologies and morals promoted by the government. The long compulsory ideological and political education, which consistently played a consistent and crucial role in the Chinese education system (Yue & Wang, 2022), instills an appropriate perspective of patriotism among students (Liu, Zhao, & Hugh, 2021). However, for the past 30 years, much have changed not only in the economic situation of the country, but also in the views and values of the people (Chen, 2015). Thus, it is of great importance to continuously equip the implementers of the curriculum, which

in this case, are the teachers. This is in unison with He (2019) which mentioned that there is necessity that teachers be provided with opportunity to enhance their awareness and capability to instill morality in order to effectively implement the curriculum for ideological and political education.

The Central Committee of the CPC and the State Council (2017) emphasized the need to continuously strengthen the implementation of ideological and political education, and provide more attention to the methods of its teaching in the collegiate level. The role of the Universities and Colleges to maximize the functions of ideological and political education across disciplines is mainly depend on its ability to effectively deliver theoretical courses of the ideological and political education. However, Mo (2010) which mentioned that 86.8 percent of teachers do not think that ideological and political education of students is part of their responsibility. This is contrary to the Ministry of Education (2020) and Du (2023) who mentioned that regardless of the subject being taught, the teachers in the Chinese context has the responsibility to implicitly integrate ideological and political education to all aspects of teaching. The Chinese Ministry of Education mandates the integration of political and ideological knowledge in the teaching of other subjects. Thus, regardless of which discipline, there is a need to emphasize the role of teachers in the teaching of ideological and political knowledge. This concurs with Cheng and Wang (2019) who asserted that attention must not only be given to the curriculum but also to teachers, including their ideological and political knowledge. The same is reflected in Liu et al. (2019) who asserted the need for a self-evaluation that will allow the teachers to evaluate their own “ideological and political positions,” leading to self-diagnosis and self-improvement.

It is important to equip teachers with sufficient knowledge on ideological and political education. In the study of Zhang and Fagan (2016), majority of the students acknowledged that their main source of ideological and political knowledge is their teacher, however, majority also acknowledged that they prefer to seek information from internet sources. The access of information to other sources, such as the Internet, placed great pressure for the teachers to have a strong foundation on political and ideological education. The dilemma of enhancement of political and ideological knowledge of university teachers is that they allot most of their time in doing scholarly papers, due to the fact that their promotion or advancement in their academic rank mainly depends on it; thus, lesser time is allotted to the deepening of their ideological and political education (Li, 2018). The same was reflected in Ni et al. (2022) who asserted that while teachers may possess robust professional knowledge and advanced scholarly achievements; they often lack mastery and understanding of ideological and political concepts.

Therefore, to contribute to the further enhancement of the implementation of political and ideological education, it is necessary to describe the current situation regarding how collegiate teachers from other disciplines integrate these concepts into their teaching. The teachers’ practices and cognitions should be explored to guide the design of a professional development program aimed at building teachers’ capacity to incorporate political and ideological concepts into their teaching.

2. Methodology

This study used a qualitative literature review to explore how ideological and political education is currently being integrated across different academic disciplines. The researcher gathered relevant studies from open-access databases, specifically Google Scholar and CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure). Google Scholar was chosen to collect academic papers published internationally, while CNKI, China’s national academic database, provided access to papers published within China. Using both databases allowed the study to include a mix of local and international perspectives.

To find relevant articles, the researcher used keywords like "Ideological and Political Education," "Political Education Integration," and "Ideological Education Integration." Papers were then manually sorted based on pre-set inclusion criteria. Key factors for inclusion were: relevance to ideological and political education, focus on integration across disciplines, geographical and cultural context, and theoretical or practical insights. The selected papers were organized by themes, grouping studies with similar contexts and findings to provide a clear overview of the topic.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Chinese Ideological & Political Education Policy

To provide context on the implementation of Chinese ideological and political education, the study has consolidated seven (7) government policies that describe its purpose, basis, and implementation. These seven policy documents collectively construct a comprehensive framework and set of guidelines for the ideological and political work of college students and universities in the new era. From this, it is evident that the government and national leaders place great importance on and pay close attention to the ideological and political work of college students and universities.

Policy 1: "Opinions on Further Strengthening and Improving Ideological and Political Education for College Students (Order No. 16)" was released in August 2004. It highlights the necessity of ideological and political education for college students, as they are the country's future and hope. This document seeks to improve the ideological and political quality of college students through a series of measures, to cultivate socialist builders and successors with all-round morality, intelligence, physique, and aesthetics, and to ensure that the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics has successors.

Policy 2: In his 2016 speech at the National Conference on Ideological and Political Work in Colleges and Universities, Xi Jinping highlighted the centrality of moral education and cultivation within the educational framework. He proposed integrating ideological and political work throughout the entire educational and teaching process, advocating for comprehensive and continuous education. Xi's speech outlined the direction and objectives for ideological and political activities in higher education institutions, serving as a comprehensive program and action guide for this work. His address aimed to create a new landscape for the development of China's higher education system.

Policy 3: The Outline for the Implementation of the Quality Improvement Project for Ideological and Political Work in Colleges and Universities (2017) is a significant document created and released by the Ministry of Education's Party Committee. It strives to fully implement the spirit of the Communist Party of China's 19th National Congress while also improving the level of intellectual and political activity at colleges and universities. The outline clarifies the overall goal of ideological and political work in colleges and universities: adhere to the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, focus on the overall layout of "five in one" and the strategic layout of "four comprehensives", strengthen the leadership of the Party, give full play to the educational advantages of socialist education with Chinese characteristics, take moral education as the foundation.

Four fundamental concepts are proposed: stick to the educational orientation and emphasize value guidance; adhere to the rules and be bold in reform and innovation; and adhere to the issue orientation and focus on accurate policy execution. There are ten suggested educational systems: curriculum education, scientific research education, practice education, cultural education, network education, psychological education, management education, service education, funding education, and organizational education. The implementation of this plan is critical for thoroughly increasing the quality

of ideological and political activity at colleges and universities, as well as developing new generations of leaders who will be in charge of the monumental job of national renewal.

Policy 4: The document titled "Opinions on Strengthening and Improving Ideological and Political Work in Colleges and Universities Under the New Situation (2017)" was created by the CPC Central Committee and the State Council to reinforce the party's leadership over higher education institutions while enhancing their ideological and political efforts. This document states that colleges and universities play a vital role in talent development, scientific research, social services, cultural preservation and innovation, as well as international collaboration. Enhancing ideological and political work in these institutions addresses key issues such as the type of universities to operate and their governance, maintaining the party's leadership over these institutions, and ensuring the succession of socialism with Chinese characteristics. This initiative is identified as a significant political and strategic endeavor. The document highlights five fundamental principles: maintaining the party's leadership over colleges and universities, adhering to the socialist direction in education, promoting comprehensive education involving all staff and throughout all processes, following educational, ideological and political work, and student development laws, and committing to reform and innovation.

Policy 5: In his 2019 speech at the Symposium of Teachers of Ideological and Political Theory Courses, President Xi Jinping stressed the critical importance of effectively conducting ideological and political theory courses. He highlighted the necessity of fully implementing the party's education policy to address the fundamental questions of what kind of individuals to cultivate, how to cultivate them, and for whom they are being cultivated. President Xi emphasized the importance of upholding Marxism as a guiding principle, applying socialist philosophy with Chinese characteristics in the current era, adhering to the socialist direction in school management, and fulfilling the core mission of building morals and nurturing people. He also underscored the integration of ideological and political activities throughout the entire educational process, achieving comprehensive and all-encompassing education, and utilizing classroom teaching as the primary method. These discussions are crucial for enhancing and perfecting the ideological and political work in schools, fostering new leaders for the new era who will take on the significant task of national rejuvenation.

Policy 6: The Ministry of Education, along with eight other departments, released the "Opinions on Accelerating the Construction of the Ideological and Political Work System in Colleges and Universities" in 2020. This document aims to thoroughly implement Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, expedite the development of the ideological and political work system in higher education institutions, and cultivate new-era individuals who will contribute to national rejuvenation and serve as well-rounded socialist builders and successors. These individuals should excel in morality, intellect, physical fitness, aesthetics, and labor. The opinions emphasize that, under the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought, the Party's education policy should be fully enacted, the Party's overall leadership should be upheld and reinforced, the socialist orientation in school management should be followed, and moral education should be the fundamental guiding principle.

Policy 7: The "Overall Plan for Deepening the Reform of Education Evaluation in the New Era (2020)" is a crucial document issued by the CPC Central Committee and the State Council. It aims to advance the reform of education evaluation, rectify unscientific practices, and address persistent issues such as the overemphasis on test scores, higher education, diplomas, research papers, and academic titles. The plan seeks to improve education governance, accelerate the modernization of education, build a strong education system, and provide education that aligns with public expectations. It sets specific reform

targets: within 5 to 10 years, the scientific performance levels of Party committees and governments at all levels will be significantly improved, a more effective mechanism for implementing moral education in schools will be established, and the evaluation system for teachers' dedication will be enhanced. Furthermore, evaluation methods promoting the holistic development of students will become more diverse, and social selection and employment practices will become more scientific. By 2035, an education evaluation system with contemporary relevance, Chinese characteristics, and world-class standards will be essentially established.

3.2. Curriculum for Ideological and Political Education

In China, Ideological and Political Education is a crucial undergraduate major within the higher education system. It centers on moral education which aims to enhance the ideological and moral standards of college students and support their holistic development. The curriculum comprises both theoretical and practical courses. Theoretical courses aim to deepen students' professional knowledge, establish a solid knowledge base, and help them form a correct worldview, life outlook, and values, fostering high moral qualities. Practical courses focus on nurturing students' innovative thinking, practical skills, and social responsibility, enabling them to actively contribute to society and align personal and social values.

College students are the primary recipients of ideological and political education, which includes both theoretical lectures and practical activities. "Ideological and Moral Cultivation and Legal Basis" is a mandatory public course and a significant part of the ideological and political theory curriculum, emphasizing scientific principles, ideology, innovation, relevance, and practicality. It helps students enhance their ideological, moral, and legal standards, and develop a scientific worldview, values, and moral outlook. "Principles of Ideological and Political Education," another required course for majors, covers the content, guidelines, principles, methods, and tools of ideological and political education in the current context. It examines the interaction between this education and the broader environment, improves students' skills in conducting ideological and political work, and advances the discipline's scientific nature.

In the new era, the importance of ideological and political education in colleges has gained prominence, with scholars conducting research on it from various perspectives. First, from the perspective of the discipline foundation, explore the essence of ideological and political education, education and teaching reform (Liu, 2023), and the integration of collaborative education with college students' innovation and entrepreneurship education (Liu, Gong, & Chen, 2023; Shi, 2023; Zheng, 2024). Wang (2017) in his book "Research Perspectives on Theoretical and Practical Issues of Ideological and Political Education" deeply explored the discipline foundation of ideological and political education, providing a solid theoretical foundation for the research of ideological and political education.

The second importance focuses on the organic integration of ideological and political education, such as red culture (Wu, 2023; Chen, 2024), the great party building spirit (Mei & Yang, 2024), the Yan'an spirit (Gong & Ma, 2024), the spirit of the West Route Army (Gong & Wang, 2024), and the excellent traditional Chinese culture (Lin, 2024). The research on these integration paths is of great significance for giving full play to the role of ideological and political education courses in educating people, practicing education, and improving the pertinence and effectiveness of education.

Third, the multi-dimensional perspective focuses on the consciousness innovation, development opportunities, and challenges faced by ideological and political education. With the development of informatization and networking, online ideological and political education has become a new research

hotspot. Wu (2023) believes that ideological and political education in colleges and universities plays a strong leading role in the cyberspace ecology. The advent of the era of artificial intelligence and big data has allowed artificial intelligence to drive the transformation of ideological and political education in colleges and universities (Hu, 2022), but also faces technical risks (Chen, 2022). Through value guidance, human-computer collaboration, platform construction and other methods, artificial intelligence can maximize the precise development of ideological and political education in colleges and universities (Tang & Liu, 2024).

The final importance emphasizes the value-leading role of ideological and political education (Zhang & Liu, 2023), promote the all-round progress of students in the process of soul-building and education (Xu, 2023), especially the cultivation and practice of socialist core values (Wang, 2017). At the same time, it pays attention to the problem of imperfect value guidance mechanism and proposes specific development paths (Hu, 2022). These documents and research results not only demonstrate the important position and role of ideological and political education in China's education system, but also provide rich theoretical resources and practical experience for the research and development of ideological and political education in the future.

3.3. Chinese Teachers' Training for Ideological and Political Education

With the continuous development of society and the deepening of educational reform, the ideological and political education training of Chinese teachers has received increasing attention. In terms of the content of ideological and political education training for college teachers, scholars generally believe that it should cover many aspects such as basic Marxist theory, the party's line, principles and policies, and the construction of teachers' ethics and style (Zhao, 2021; Feng, Yan, & Sun, 2019; Zhu, 2022). Chen (2019) proposed that colleges and universities can start from the three aspects of training objectives and tasks, content setting, and assessment management, and formulate a full-time teacher ideological and political education training system oriented towards teacher professional development. Feng, Yan, and Sun (2019) constructed a three-level training system of "school, college, and department" for young teachers, and believed that ideological and political education can be integrated into the daily training of young teachers to improve the effectiveness of ideological and political education for young teachers. In terms of specific training methods, various models such as topic-based teaching, situational teaching, and social practice have been widely used. Lin (2021) believes that the topic-based teaching model is of great significance in ideological and political courses. Zhao (2021) advocates the use of innovative training forms such as online and offline combination, indoor and outdoor connection, and focuses on the combination of theory and practice. Zhu (2022) proposed that social practice activities of national conditions education can be carried out, mainly to cultivate teachers' patriotism.

In terms of the main body of training, the role of university trade unions and school party committees can be brought into play (Li, Li, & Ding, 2023; Zhao, 2021), and teacher training can be organized through diversified forms to strengthen teachers' ideological and political education.

With the development of information technology, the application of modern technology in teachers' ideological and political education training is becoming more and more extensive. Wang and Zhu (2022) proposed that colleges and universities can make full use of online platforms to carry out ideological and political education for teachers, so as to improve the timeliness of ideological and political education.

Although China's ideological and political education training for teachers has made significant progress in recent years, there are still some problems and challenges. First, the content and methods of training

need to be further innovated and improved to meet the needs of educational development in the new era. Second, some teachers do not pay enough attention to ideological and political education, resulting in unsatisfactory training results (Huang, 2020). In addition, the application of modern technology in training needs to be further promoted and optimized to maximize its benefits.

4. Conclusion

This review paper highlighted the essential role of ideological and political education in Chinese higher education, driven by national policies, curriculum design, and teacher training initiatives. Seven core policy documents illustrate the government's commitment to cultivating morally and ideologically grounded graduates, guided by Xi Jinping's emphasis on comprehensive education and moral development. Policies and curriculum reforms emphasized the objective of fostering socialist values and preparing students as well-rounded members and builders of society. Furthermore, the curriculum for ideological and political education emphasizes theoretical knowledge and practical skills to equip students with a strong ethical foundation and social responsibility. Teacher training in ideological and political education has also been expanded, although there remain challenges, particularly in innovating training methods and incorporating modern technology effectively.

Despite these advances, the review identifies ongoing challenges, including curriculum gaps, resource limitations, and teacher training shortcomings. Additionally, while policies and frameworks are comprehensive, practical application and adaptation to the diverse needs of students and educators present difficulties. Ensuring that educators are equipped to translate policy goals into meaningful classroom experiences remains a key challenge for sustainable, impactful ideological education.

5. Recommendation

To address identified gaps in resource availability, curriculum flexibility, and teacher preparedness, it is essential to bolster support for ideological and political education across various fronts. First, improving resource allocation for curriculum materials, particularly by increasing funding and access to diverse teaching tools, would enable educators to deliver richer, more comprehensive lessons. A flexible, customized curriculum that adapts to the needs of different disciplines and regional contexts is also recommended. Tailoring content with real-world applications, interactive discussions, and case studies can enhance student engagement, making ideological education more relatable and impactful.

Strengthening teacher training is equally important, with a focus on practical, innovative approaches that make use of online learning and interactive workshops. Equipping teachers with up-to-date instructional techniques and digital tools would empower them to integrate moral and ideological content effectively. Additionally, establishing stronger feedback mechanisms and continuous research on teaching outcomes can provide valuable insights for refining both curriculum and policy implementation. Gathering feedback from students and educators regularly will allow for a responsive approach that aligns with changing educational needs, ultimately ensuring ideological and political education achieves its intended outcomes.

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