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A Practical Exploration of Integrating "Four Histories" Education into University Ideological and Political Education Classes Using Digital and Intelligent Technologies in the New Era

Kaiwen Tan^{1,*}
¹ Hainan Vocational University of Science and Technology, Haikou, China

* Correspondence: Kaiwen Tan, Hainan Vocational University of Science and Technology, Haikou, China

Abstract: As digital technologies become increasingly integrated into the field of education, higher education institutions face the contemporary imperative to enhance the overall quality and effectiveness of their ideological and political theory courses. As an essential component of implementing the fundamental mission of fostering virtue through education, the "Four Histories" education program still has significant room for improving its educational impact. This paper focuses on the central theme of leveraging digital and intelligent technologies to seamlessly integrate "Four Histories" education into ideological and political education classrooms. It examines this critical issue from two primary perspectives: value implications and practical implementation pathways. First, it elucidates the profound value of digital-intelligent integration in strengthening students' ideals and convictions, addressing limitations of traditional teaching methods, and building a smart education system. Then, it proposes specific strategies centered on updating educational philosophies, establishing comprehensive resource systems, innovating interactive teaching models, developing specialized faculty teams, and reconfiguring teaching evaluation systems. Ultimately, this study aims to provide a robust theoretical and practical reference for the modernization and continuous development of ideological and political education classrooms in the new era, ensuring that advanced digital tools effectively serve the core objectives of moral and civic education across various academic disciplines and institutional contexts.

Keywords: digital education; political education; smart classrooms; moral education; educational technology

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1. Introduction

Advancing the "Four Histories" education constitutes a foundational component of ideological and political education in universities and is essential to fulfilling the fundamental mission of cultivating moral character and talent [1]. The rapid advancement of digital and intelligent technologies offers new pathways for deeply integrating "Four Histories" education into ideological and political classrooms, while also presenting practical opportunities to address existing pedagogical challenges. Transforming technological capabilities into pedagogical strengths—and ensuring that "Four Histories" education is meaningfully internalized and embraced by students—has emerged as a pressing priority for university ideological and political education work. This article examines this issue with the aim of supporting both innovation and continuity in classroom-based ideological and political education.

The value of integrating "Four Histories" education into university ideological and political education classes through digital and intelligent technologies:

1.1. Implement the Fundamental Task of Fostering Virtue through Education and Strengthen the Foundation of Young Peoples Ideals and Beliefs.

Ideological and political education courses play a vital role in fulfilling the fundamental mission of fostering virtue and nurturing talent; among these, historical education grounded in major national developmental milestones represents the component that most profoundly resonates with students' minds and hearts. Today's young students grow up in the digital age, and their ways of thinking and habits of information consumption differ significantly from those of previous generations [1, 2]. Traditional, textbook-based teaching approaches often fail to meaningfully engage them; however, the integration of digital and intelligent technologies has effectively transformed this landscape. Through the use of virtual reality technology, students can immerse themselves in historically significant sites such as the Zunyi Conference Site, the Yan'an Cave Dwellings, and locations associated with major historical campaigns, experiencing pivotal decisions and collective efforts through embodied perception. Big data profiling enables teachers to accurately identify students' cognitive difficulties and conceptual challenges, and to deliver targeted key historical narratives—spanning foundational national development, post-1949 institutional building, economic modernization, and social progress—transforming value-oriented education from one-way transmission into interactive dialogue. When students personally participate in the reconstruction of historical scenarios through digital exhibition halls and virtual simulation experiments, the enduring significance embedded in these historical narratives is no longer confined to textual descriptions in books but gradually internalizes into a coherent value system, thereby solidifying the foundation of ideals and beliefs among the younger generation.

1.2. Promote Innovation and Reform in Ideological and Political Education Classrooms to Overcome the Challenges Associated with Traditional Approaches to Ideological and Political Teaching.

For a long time, ideological and political education classes have faced practical challenges such as low attendance rates, insufficient student engagement, and a weak sense of benefit; the root cause of these issues lies in the misalignment between teaching offerings and students' actual needs. Digital and intelligent technologies provide a new pathway to address this dilemma. Smart classroom systems can collect students' real-time feedback during class sessions, enabling teachers to dynamically adjust their teaching pace and case selection to implement personalized instruction. The adoption of a blended learning approach—combining online MOOCs and micro-lectures with offline seminars—overcomes temporal and spatial limitations, allowing students to revisit key moments from the "Four Histories" at any time and place, and has made the flipped classroom model widely adopted [3]. Intelligent Q&A and contextual simulation tools transform abstract theoretical explanations into concrete, problem-based scenarios—for example, by leveraging digital twin technology to reconstruct trajectories of socioeconomic development, thereby guiding students to reflect on institutional strengths through data comparison. This approach represents not merely a refinement of traditional teaching methods, but rather a comprehensive redesign of the instructional process, content organization, and assessment mechanisms. As a result, the ideological and political education classroom shifts from a teacher-centered, one-way delivery model to a space for deep teacher–student interaction, and from rote memorization to cognitive training, significantly enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of teaching.

1.3. Establishing a Smart Ideological and Political Education System to Support the High-Quality Development of Higher Education.

The value of digital and intelligent technologies extends beyond localized enhancements in individual classes or courses; it must support the comprehensive restructuring of the university's ideological and political education system. This entails deep integration of "Four Histories" education with digital and intelligent platforms, dismantling data silos among classroom instruction, practical research and study activities, and daily administrative operations to establish a seamless, closed-loop educational ecosystem that bridges in-class and extracurricular learning, as well as online

and offline modalities. Leveraging existing digital campus infrastructure, universities can build a unified smart ideological and political education platform that consolidates teaching resources, student behavioral records, and assessment data—enabling dynamic, individualized growth profiles for each student and rendering ideological education outcomes quantifiable, traceable, and amenable to iterative refinement. Furthermore, digital and intelligent tools enhance faculty development: intelligent lesson preparation systems provide rapid access to authoritative historical materials, while data analytics support formative and summative evaluation of student learning, reducing administrative burdens and enabling instructors to focus more intensively on pedagogical innovation and value-oriented guidance. When technological infrastructure, curriculum design, faculty capacity, and evaluation mechanisms operate cohesively within an integrated framework, ideological and political education evolves from experience-based practice to evidence-informed practice—thereby reinforcing the substantive, high-quality advancement of higher education [4].

2. Practical Approaches to Integrating Digital and Intelligent Technologies into the Implementation of "Four Histories" Education in Higher Education Institutions Ideological and Political Education ...

2.1. Update Educational Approaches and Establish an Ideological and Political Education Philosophy Centered on the Integration of Digital and Intelligent Technologies.

The transformation of educational mindset serves as the prerequisite for all practical explorations; therefore, ideological and political education teachers must first shift from viewing digital and intelligent technologies solely as auxiliary tools to fully internalizing their pedagogical potential—recognizing them as integral enablers for student development through the "Four Histories" curriculum, rather than superficial technical enhancements [5]. Higher education institutions should embed digital and intelligent literacy within routine professional development frameworks for ideological and political education faculty. Through thematic workshops, classroom observation sessions, and case-based discussions, institutions can support teachers in recognizing the substantive compatibility between digital and intelligent methodologies and the instructional goals of the "Four Histories," while reinforcing the foundational principle that technology must consistently align with and advance core educational aims. At the strategic level, universities may align the implementation of "Four Histories" education with broader smart campus initiatives by constructing a unified digital platform supporting lesson preparation, instruction, and assessment—thereby delivering stable, integrated technical infrastructure for frontline educators. At the teaching and research level, interdisciplinary collaborative lesson design should be institutionalized, enabling ideological and political education faculty and information technology specialists to co-develop topic-specific instructional plans, ensuring coherence between technical implementation and pedagogical intent from the outset.

Taking the thematic teaching unit on China's modern economic and social development as an example, the teacher designed a seminar-based lesson incorporating digital and intelligent methodologies, centered on the evolution of rural production organization. Prior to class, an online learning platform distributed historical footage and primary source materials related to Xiaogang Village, guiding students through preparatory inquiry using targeted questions; during class, interactive digital charts visualized trends in agricultural output and household income between 1978 and 1985, supporting structured group analysis of institutional change; after class, digital feedback tools collected student reflections and emerging questions, informing the teacher's identification of key conceptual entry points for subsequent instruction [6, 7]. This entire sequence is anchored in the educational objectives of the "Four Histories"; digital and intelligent tools consistently function to present historical evidence and scaffold analytical engagement, thereby repositioning the teacher as a learning facilitator and value-oriented guide rather than a sole knowledge transmitter.

2.2. Establishing a Digital and Intelligent Teaching Resource System for the Four Histories-Based Ideological and Political Education

Building a digital and intelligent teaching resource system for ideological and political education grounded in historical study revolves around transforming scattered historical materials, videos, and case studies into systematic, usable, authoritative, reliable, and easily searchable digital content, thereby providing a stable and dynamic knowledge foundation for classroom instruction. Schools can establish a resource development team comprising experienced educators, subject-matter specialists in history, and information technology professionals. This team should systematically organize library collections, local historical records, oral histories, and authoritative audiovisual materials into four thematic categories—namely, the history of the Party, the history of the People's Republic, the history of modernization initiatives, and the history of socialist construction—to create a well-structured digital resource repository. In terms of resource format, the repository should include not only original archival documents, foundational texts, and historical photographs but also develop immersive content such as virtual simulations, digital exhibition spaces, and contextual animations to meet the practical needs of various thematic topics and instructional phases. When resources are added to the repository, their provenance, usage rights, and intended audience should be uniformly documented, and classification search functions along with keyword tagging should be implemented to enable teachers and students to quickly locate the required content. Additionally, a dynamic updating and academic review mechanism should be established, whereby a qualified scholarly team will rigorously evaluate each newly added resource to ensure factual accuracy and pedagogical appropriateness, thereby safeguarding instructional integrity.

Taking the teaching of the Long March spirit as an example, the school leveraged its digital resource repository to develop a thematic lesson that integrates the study of historical materials with experiential learning. Before the lesson, students used the resource platform to access original telegrams, march diaries, and topographic maps from the Long March, enabling them to independently reconstruct the conditions faced during the crossing of the grasslands. During the lesson, virtual simulation technology was employed to recreate the pivotal scene of capturing the Luding Bridge, allowing students to engage with the resilience and strategic thinking demonstrated in that historical episode through embodied participation. After the lesson, the resource repository continued to provide documentary footage of Long March memorial sites across various regions along with relevant scholarly analyses, enabling students to extend their learning as needed. Every phase of this lesson was supported by the resource repository; teachers could effortlessly access authoritative historical materials, while students were empowered to engage in independent inquiry. Thus, digital resources were effectively transformed into powerful tools that facilitate deep learning [8, 9].

2.3. Innovating the Digital and Intelligent Classroom Teaching Model for the "Four Histories" Ideological and Political Education Course

The classroom teaching model serves as the direct vehicle for implementing the educational philosophy of the 'Four Histories.' The integration of digital and intelligent technologies should not be limited to simple enhancements in courseware presentation; instead, it should drive a comprehensive restructuring of the entire teaching process. Schools can leverage smart classrooms to establish a blended teaching framework—comprising pre-class online preview, in-class contextual inquiry, and post-class practical extension—that seamlessly connects these phases, ensuring that the study of the 'Four Histories' spans the full cognitive journey of the learner. In the pre-class phase, online platforms provide historical materials, multimedia resources, and guided learning questions, enabling students to develop initial insights through independent study. During the in-class phase, virtual reality and scenario simulations are employed to create historical contexts, allowing students to engage in role-playing and situational decision-making around specific topics, thereby fostering an understanding of the inevitability of

historical choices through embodied participation [10, 11]. In the post-class phase, data-driven platforms are utilized to assign open-ended inquiry tasks, guiding students to extend their classroom knowledge to real-world applications.

Taking the teaching of the May Fourth Movement as an example, a contextual inquiry lesson was designed around the core question of why progressive young people chose the Marxist path. Prior to the lesson, the learning platform provided students with original articles from *New Youth*, the diplomatic context of the Paris Peace Conference, and video materials depicting youth movements across various regions; students then completed a historical research task based on a worksheet and submitted their preliminary questions [12]. During the lesson, the classroom was divided into several contextual groups, each representing different social groups—such as young students, merchants, workers, and intellectuals. Each group used the historical materials they had gathered to justify their own stance and engaged in a simulated debate exploring how the patriotic movement fostered intellectual awakening. The Smart Classroom system collected the groups' viewpoints and arguments in real time, presenting the key points of divergence as word clouds and distribution maps; based on this data, the teacher identified students' cognitive biases and guided the discussion toward deeper exploration. After class, the students compiled their inquiry reports in small groups, linking the contemporary relevance of the May Fourth Spirit to their own personal growth.

The innovation of this teaching model lies in the fact that digital and intelligent tools consistently serve students' active knowledge construction; virtual scenarios are not meant to replace thinking but to stimulate it, while real-time data is not used to monitor students but to support the diagnosis of learning outcomes. As a result, the ideological and political education classroom shifts from the mere transmission of knowledge to the generation of values; within authentic task-based contexts, students undergo a complete transformation—from the comprehension of historical materials to emotional resonance and ultimately to the internalization of values [4]. This innovative teaching approach truly translates into tangible educational effectiveness.

2.4. Building a High-Caliber, Digitally and Intelligently Equipped Ideological and Political Education Faculty

Teachers serve as the primary implementers of integrating digital and intelligent technologies into the "Four Histories" classroom instruction; the quality of the teaching workforce directly determines the upper limit of educational effectiveness. Building a high-caliber team of digital and intelligent ideological and political education teachers requires coordinated efforts across multiple dimensions—including professional training, pedagogical research, and incentive mechanisms. Schools can establish a tiered and categorized training system: for newly appointed young teachers, emphasis should be placed on operational proficiency with digital and intelligent platforms and effective utilization of digital resources; for key faculty members, professional development should focus on instructional design that meaningfully integrates digital and intelligent tools with the "Four Histories" content; and for subject leaders, priority should be given to cultivating leadership capacity—enabling them to model best practices and advance collective pedagogical innovation. Training formats must be closely aligned with authentic classroom practice and may include thematic workshops, instructional diagnostics, classroom observations, and comparative lesson studies, thereby supporting teachers' capability growth through iterative, practice-anchored refinement.

At the teaching and research organization level, schools can foster interdisciplinary teaching and research communities, facilitating structured collaboration between ideological and political education teachers and information technology specialists on targeted thematic projects to jointly address competency gaps. A robust evaluation and incentive mechanism is equally essential; incorporating digital and intelligent teaching competencies into teacher performance appraisal and recognition frameworks enables institutions to provide targeted support to teams demonstrating excellence in developing digital and intelligent ideological and political education classrooms. Such institutional

guidance strengthens sustained professional commitment. When teachers' digital literacy, pedagogical proficiency, and professional identity are concurrently strengthened, the development of digital and intelligent ideological and political education classrooms gains a resilient human resource foundation, ensuring effective implementation of all student-centered initiatives anchored in the "Four Histories" curriculum.

2.5. Establish a Digital and Intelligent Whole-Process Teaching Evaluation System

Teaching evaluation serves as an important benchmark for assessing the effectiveness of education grounded in the "Four Histories" initiative; however, traditional evaluation methods often rely solely on single-exam scores to determine the success or shortcomings of teaching practices, which makes it difficult to accurately reflect the true trajectory of students' ideological development. The establishment of a digital and intelligent, whole-process teaching evaluation system was designed precisely to overcome this limitation. Schools can leverage smart educational platforms to collect process-oriented data—including students' pre-class preparation, classroom participation, post-class assignments, and practical activities—and create digital learning portfolios that span the entire learning journey, thereby shifting the focus of evaluation from outcome-based judgments to process-based tracking. In terms of evaluation content, this approach not only assesses students' understanding of fundamental historical facts related to the "Four Histories" but also examines the quality of their thinking as demonstrated in contextual inquiry, opinion expression, and value judgment, thereby avoiding the use of a single score to obscure the rich substance of ideological education. Regarding the stakeholders involved in evaluation, it is possible to integrate teacher assessments, student self-evaluations, and peer assessments; by utilizing digital and intelligent tools, this enables the diversified aggregation and objective presentation of evaluation data, making the evaluation results more comprehensive and credible.

Taking the instructional assessment for the thematic unit on land redistribution in the early years of the People's Republic of China as an example, the teacher integrated the "whole-process" approach into the entire assessment design. Before class, the platform automatically recorded the duration and quality of students' preparatory work with historical materials, using this data as a reference point for the cognitive starting point; during the lesson, students engaged in group discussions focused on the significance of land redistribution; the intelligent system collected the perspectives from each group and generated a word cloud, enabling the teacher to observe students' levels of understanding and cognitive tendencies; after class, students presented their learning outcomes in the form of digital reports, and peers conducted peer assessments based on an evaluation scale; the system then automatically aggregated all the data to generate personalized assessment feedback [13]. By analyzing the comprehensive data recorded throughout the entire process, the teacher made a holistic judgment of each student's progression in terms of historical material comprehension, perspective expression, and value alignment, thereby adjusting subsequent teaching strategies and providing students with specific recommendations for improvement.

The strength of this evaluation system lies in its reliance on data yet extending beyond mere data utilization: quantitative metrics help teachers gain a comprehensive understanding of students' learning progress, while qualitative descriptions capture the aspects of ideological education that are difficult to quantify. Through the dynamic accumulation of digital archives, the effectiveness of the "Four Histories" learning initiative can be continuously monitored and receive timely feedback; thus, evaluation is no longer a one-time conclusion but has become a sustained driving force that permeates the entire teaching process and fosters the mutual growth of both teachers and students. This digitally and intelligently driven, end-to-end teaching evaluation system provides a solid foundation for the steady improvement of the quality of education through the "Four Histories" approach [4, 9].

3. Conclusion

Digital and intelligent technologies have expanded opportunities for integrating the "Four Histories" education into ideological and political education classrooms. This integration involves updating educational philosophies, developing comprehensive resource systems, innovating teaching methodologies, strengthening faculty capacity, and refining evaluation frameworks. Coordinated progress across these dimensions is essential to achieving cohesive educational impact. As digital technologies continue to evolve, smart approaches to ideological and political education are expected to deepen further. These advancements support more resonant and immersive learning experiences, helping students strengthen their values and commitments through engagement with historical content. Such approaches contribute to cultivating a generation equipped to meet contemporary societal responsibilities.

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