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Innovative Strategies for Implementing Ideological and Political Education in Mental Health Education Courses for Vocational College Students

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Abstract: The integration of ideological and political education with mental health courses in vocational undergraduate institutions plays a crucial role in promoting the coordinated development of both disciplines, effectively addressing the comprehensive development needs of students. Mental health education primarily aims to cultivate students' psychological well-being, enhance their emotional resilience, and support their healthy personal and academic growth. This paper examines the implementation of ideological and political education within mental health curricula at vocational undergraduate institutions, highlighting its significance in shaping students' values, fostering social responsibility, and strengthening moral awareness. By analyzing existing challenges, including curriculum fragmentation, insufficient interdisciplinary integration, and gaps between theory and practice, and by drawing on relevant educational theories and practical considerations, the paper proposes a series of innovative strategies. These strategies aim to enhance teaching methods, curriculum design, and student engagement, ultimately improving the quality and effectiveness of mental health education. The integration of ideological and political content into mental health courses not only enriches the educational experience but also contributes to the holistic development of students, achieving the overarching goal of fostering virtue while cultivating talent.

Keywords: vocational undergraduate colleges; mental health education; ideological and political education in curriculum; path innovation

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1. Introduction

In the context of modern education, vocational undergraduate institutions bear the important responsibility of cultivating high-quality technical and skilled professionals who can meet the evolving demands of society and industry. The mental health of college students not only significantly affects their personal growth, academic performance, and interpersonal relationships, but also plays a crucial role in maintaining social stability and fostering a harmonious community environment. Recognizing the interconnection between moral development and psychological well-being, educational reformers have explored innovative approaches that integrate ideological and political education into course instruction as a means to enhance mental health education [1].

Integrating ideological and political education within the curriculum provides students with structured opportunities to develop sound worldviews, life perspectives, and value systems. Beyond cognitive understanding, this integration helps nurture essential qualities such as social responsibility, ethical awareness, and a proactive sense of personal and professional mission [2]. By embedding these elements into mental health courses, vocational colleges can create a more holistic educational environment where

students are guided not only in managing stress, emotional challenges, and interpersonal conflicts, but also in aligning their personal growth with broader societal and cultural values.

Furthermore, this integrated approach encourages the development of practical skills for self-reflection, ethical decision-making, and collaborative problem-solving, thereby bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application. It also facilitates a more engaging and interactive learning experience, where students can internalize values and mental health strategies simultaneously, enhancing both their psychological resilience and moral development. In this way, the convergence of ideological and political education with mental health instruction offers a promising pathway for cultivating well-rounded, socially responsible, and mentally healthy graduates in vocational undergraduate institutions [3].

2. The Importance of Implementing Ideological and Political Education in Curriculum for College Students in Vocational Colleges

2.1. Promote the All-Round Development of Students

The deep integration of mental health education and ideological and political education in vocational curricula manifests not only through cognitive synergy but also in practical significance for students' daily psychological adjustment and value construction. When students face academic pressure, interpersonal conflicts, or career uncertainty, counseling processes such as empathetic listening and cognitive restructuring serve as effective entry points for embedding values [4]. In stress management sessions, educators can naturally introduce elements such as social responsibility, perseverance, and collective consciousness, enabling the simultaneous cultivation of psychological resilience and the formation of idealistic beliefs.

For example, role-playing activities that simulate workplace challenges during group counseling sessions not only enhance emotional regulation and problem-solving skills but also subtly convey professional ethics, craftsmanship spirit, and commitment to excellence. This dual-intervention approach effectively bridges the traditional divide between "psychological education" and "moral education," transforming the enhancement of psychological quality into a channel for internalizing values. Evidence from educational practice indicates that integrated curricula significantly strengthen students' sense of purpose, meaning in life, and social belonging. The efficacy of this approach transcends mere additive effects, operating through a coordinated mechanism that combines emotional experience, cognitive integration, and behavioral transformation. Consequently, a dynamic equilibrium is established between individual psychological development and broader societal value systems, laying the foundation for holistic student growth [5].

2.2. Implementing the Fundamental Task of Fostering People with Moral Integrity

The core mission of vocational undergraduate education extends beyond knowledge transfer and technical skill development; it is fundamentally aimed at shaping students' well-rounded personalities and cultivating noble character. Integrating ideological education into mental health courses represents not a simple curricular addition but a profound convergence of educational logic. During psychological courses that address self-identity, emotional regulation, or career planning, educators employ empathetic guidance to embed values such as patriotism, responsibility, and perseverance through cognitive restructuring. In this way, psychological adjustment becomes an opportunity for the internalization of values [6].

For instance, case studies analyzing academic setbacks can incorporate real-life narratives of exemplary professionals and master craftsmen, simultaneously enhancing students' psychological resilience and inspiring professional dedication. Scenario simulations designed to mimic workplace stress further integrate psychological

adaptation with ethical cultivation, allowing students to recognize and internalize values through lived emotional experiences. Empirical observations indicate that this integrated approach effectively elevates students' social responsibility awareness, sense of purpose, and commitment to lifelong learning, functioning through a dual-dimensional "psychology-value" interaction mechanism [7]. This educational paradigm dissolves the traditional dichotomy between psychological education and moral education, positioning mental health instruction as a pivotal mechanism for achieving virtue cultivation. It establishes meaningful connections between individual psychological growth and societal value guidance, making moral and psychological development mutually reinforcing.

2.3. Meet the Needs of the Times

Contemporary vocational college students navigate a rapidly changing macro-environment characterized by accelerated technological advancements, industrial transformation, and shifting employment landscapes. The rise of AI and automation has introduced new forms of job displacement anxiety and structural employment pressures, contributing to escalating psychological burdens. During internships and workplace practicums, students may experience career confusion, diminished self-efficacy, and avoidance behaviors. Integrating ideological education into mental health programs not only addresses these individual psychological challenges but also reshapes the interplay between psychological capital and social value formation [8].

By incorporating narratives of modern craftsmanship pioneers and mission-driven professional models, educators can strengthen students' resilience and motivation through empathetic engagement. For example, pilot programs implementing a "psychological resilience + professional ethics" dual-module framework aligned with regional industrial needs have demonstrated improvements in students' meaning-making capabilities, proactive adaptation to workplace uncertainty, and capacity for socially responsible decision-making. This approach transcends conventional cognitive-behavioral frameworks by treating social responsibility, professional ethics, and innovative qualities as core psychological variables. Ultimately, it establishes a value-oriented growth paradigm that transforms psychological support into educational empowerment, fostering technically skilled professionals with balanced personalities, contemporary commitment, and adaptive capacities suitable for evolving societal and industrial demands.

3. The Current Situation and Problems of Implementing Ideological and Political Education in Mental Health Education for College Students in Vocational Colleges

3.1. Lack of Understanding of Ideological and Political Education in Courses

Many instructors in vocational colleges still lack a comprehensive understanding of the role of ideological and political education within curriculum design. Mental health education is often perceived merely as a technical approach for emotional guidance and cognitive adjustment, rather than a vital platform for value cultivation and spiritual development. In practice, teachers frequently rely on conventional psychological teaching methods that focus primarily on surface-level skills, such as stress management, interpersonal communication, or basic emotional regulation. Instruction tends to emphasize psychological mechanisms and behavioral intervention strategies, while systematic exploration of ideological dimensions-such as ideals, patriotism, social responsibility, and professional ethics-remains insufficient.

As a result, students may master basic psychological adjustment techniques but struggle to relate these practices to broader professional missions or societal responsibilities. Some educators continue to treat ideological elements as peripheral additions, mechanically inserting them into teaching processes without contextual integration, leading to superficial value guidance. For example, in a career planning

course, instructors often analyze students' interests and competencies but fail to connect these assessments to national industrial development trends or real-world examples of grassroots technical contributions. This approach misses critical opportunities to reinforce psychological resilience through professional identity and undermines the depth of mental health education. The fragmented teaching approach reflects instructors' challenges in interdisciplinary integration and signals a misalignment with the comprehensive development goals for vocational talents in the modern era.

3.2. Single Teaching Method

Lecture-based instruction continues to dominate mental health education in most vocational colleges. In such classrooms, instructors primarily rely on PowerPoint presentations and theoretical explanations, while students remain passive recipients of information. Classroom interactions often resemble a one-way flow: teachers systematically explain concepts such as emotion regulation mechanisms or personality development theories, while students mechanically record key points. Questions and discussions are sporadic, limiting opportunities for in-depth dialogue or reflective engagement.

This formulaic teaching approach diminishes the emotional resonance central to psychological education and fails to stimulate students' self-reflection and value orientation. When ideological and political objectives are superficially introduced, abstract concepts can appear as indoctrination, potentially creating cognitive dissonance. For instance, in a "resilience training" course, instructors cited psychological models without incorporating real-life examples of professionals overcoming adversity, resulting in a disconnect between theoretical resilience training and practical value internalization. Student feedback indicates that over 60% of participants felt that classes lacked contextual immersion and meaningful connection to personal or societal values.

The rigidity of single-method teaching hinders the integration of emotional experience with value internalization and constrains the extension of mental health education toward moral cultivation. Practices that employ diversified strategies-such as role-playing, narrative sharing, group discussions, and immersive scenario simulations-demonstrate greater effectiveness in fostering synergistic development of psychological adjustment skills and social responsibility awareness.

3.3. The Construction of Teaching Staff Needs to Be Strengthened

The professional capacity of mental health education faculty in vocational colleges reveals significant limitations in effectively implementing ideological and political education through curriculum. While some instructors possess solid backgrounds in psychology, they often lack sufficient understanding of the theoretical frameworks and practical logic of ideological education. This gap hampers the organic integration of value guidance within psychological instruction.

In classrooms, teachers may skillfully explain theories such as the ABC model of emotions or stress coping strategies, but when addressing deeper value issues-such as ideals, beliefs, and patriotic sentiments-they often resort to superficial mentions or slogans, lacking theoretical depth and emotional resonance. For example, in a course on "self-identity," instructors frequently fail to situate individual growth within the context of societal missions or contemporary responsibilities, leading to shallow and fragmented value guidance.

At the institutional level, systemic support for faculty development is insufficient. Specialized training mechanisms are incomplete, participation in ideological education training is sporadic, and resource allocation is often fragmented. The absence of interdisciplinary dialogue platforms and teaching-research communities limits teachers' ability to establish substantive connections between psychological education and moral cultivation. This structural deficiency reflects a misalignment between faculty

development paths and the educational objectives of modern vocational education, highlighting an urgent need for institutional empowerment and strategic investment in faculty capacity. Strengthening teaching staff construction is essential to achieving deep integration of professional awareness, psychological expertise, and educational mission, thereby enhancing the overall quality and impact of mental health education.

4. Innovative Strategies for Implementing Ideological and Political Education in Mental Health Education Courses for College Students in Vocational Colleges

4.1. Optimize the Curriculum System

The structural reform of mental health education curricula in vocational colleges should prioritize moral education as the foundational axis, deeply embedding core values of ideological and political education into psychological development frameworks. At present, many courses remain narrowly focused on instrumental aspects such as emotional regulation and interpersonal communication, lacking systematic explanations of the interconnections between individual psychological growth and broader social value systems.

A specialized module, such as *Psychological Development and Contemporary Mission*, should be incorporated into foundational courses, with teaching content structured around professional identity, social responsibility, and patriotic sentiment. This approach facilitates the transition from "psychological adaptation" to "value construction." For instance, career planning instruction can include analyses of exemplary national artisans' psychological journeys, guiding students to align personal aspirations with national strategic missions and social contributions.

Curriculum integration should establish a dual-track mechanism combining psychological education with ideological-political education, fostering synergistic interactions between mental health courses and other relevant subjects, such as Ideological and Moral Cultivation, Legal Foundations, and Current Affairs. Through credit recognition, collaborative lesson planning, and thematic cross-course initiatives, traditional disciplinary boundaries can be dismantled, creating a vertically progressive and horizontally interconnected educational chain. Pilot programs like *Growth Narrative Workshops* demonstrate this approach, where students' personal development stories are combined with case studies of historical and revolutionary spirit inheritance, enabling dialogic teaching and significantly enhancing the depth, appeal, and penetration of value guidance.

4.2. Innovative Teaching Methods

Effective teaching methodologies should move beyond conventional lecture-based approaches and emphasize contextualized, participatory, and reflective practices. Case studies should balance real-world relevance with substantive value exploration, avoiding fragmented narratives or moralizing pitfalls. Common youth phenomena, such as disengagement from study or "involution anxiety," can serve as accessible entry points for discussion.

Structured group discussions allow students to analyze underlying cognitive biases and value disorientation, highlighting the socializing function of core values. Practical components, such as *community psychological service initiatives*, enable students to engage directly in grassroots mental health education, experiencing the unity of personal value and social responsibility through authentic interactions. Programs like the *Psychological Drama Creation Program* exemplify this approach, where students write and perform plays addressing academic pressures and career dilemmas. Dramatic scenarios embed collective spirit, perseverance, and ethical decision-making, fostering emotional resonance and value awareness. These pedagogical models not only enhance engagement but also cultivate psychological resilience, ethical judgment, and social responsibility through embodied practice.

4.3. Strengthening the Construction of Teaching Staff

Enhancing faculty capability requires moving beyond single-track skill training toward the deep integration of professional competence and educational awareness. Current teacher development programs primarily focus on updating psychological counseling techniques, often neglecting systematic reinforcement of ideological-political education frameworks.

A dual-competency-oriented research and training system should be established, integrating psychological expertise with ideological-political educational principles. Joint workshops conducted by psychology and ideological-political departments can emphasize the study of core principles in youth education and ideological guidance, strengthening teachers' ability to interpret values in context. Interdisciplinary teaching communities and regular *Psychological Education Salon* events can facilitate sustained dialogue between psychology instructors and ideological-political educators on topics such as ideal cultivation, professional ethics, and value guidance.

Pilot initiatives like the *Course Ideological Mentorship System* pair veteran ideological-political educators with psychology teachers to collaboratively redesign course content. This model allows concepts like "striving for happiness" to be embedded naturally within stress management courses, while modules on self-awareness are expanded to explore contemporary youth's historical and social positioning. Such initiatives achieve an organic coupling between knowledge transmission and value guidance, enhancing both pedagogical quality and educational depth.

4.4. Create a Good Campus Cultural Atmosphere

Campus culture should function as a critical vehicle for implicit curriculum development, fostering an immersive educational ecosystem. Routine activities, such as psychological lectures and themed class meetings, need to move beyond formality, emphasizing thematic depth, emotional resonance, and experiential learning.

Initiatives like the *Mental Growth Season* can integrate key moments-flag-raising ceremonies, skills competitions, and volunteer services-while anchoring mental health education in practical cultural campaigns, such as "Craftsmanship and Initial Aspirations" or "Youth's Declaration to the Motherland." Dormitory areas can feature *Heartfelt Walls*, encouraging students to share personal growth challenges and aspirations, with anonymous teacher responses providing ongoing value guidance and psychological support. Physical cultural spaces should reflect educational values, for example, by displaying exhibition boards in psychological center corridors that showcase outstanding graduates who have contributed to grassroots communities or national key industries. This subtle yet continuous exposure cultivates students' understanding of the connection between career aspirations, social responsibility, and psychological well-being, creating a holistic environment where mental health education and ideological-political development mutually reinforce one another.

5. Discussion

The implementation of ideological and political education within mental health courses at vocational undergraduate institutions presents both significant opportunities and inherent challenges. On one hand, the integration fosters a synergistic relationship between psychological well-being and value cultivation, promoting students' holistic development. By combining emotional regulation, cognitive restructuring, and moral guidance, educators can help students align personal growth with broader societal and professional responsibilities. The use of innovative teaching methods, such as role-playing, case studies, immersive scenarios, and community engagement, has demonstrated the potential to enhance students' psychological resilience while simultaneously reinforcing social responsibility and ethical awareness.

However, the practical application of this integrated approach reveals several limitations. First, instructors' understanding of ideological and political education often remains superficial, limiting the depth of value internalization. Without sufficient interdisciplinary training and systemic institutional support, teachers may struggle to balance psychological and moral objectives, resulting in fragmented or superficial educational outcomes. Second, traditional lecture-based and rigid pedagogical models constrain the emotional and experiential dimensions of learning, reducing the effectiveness of value-guided interventions. Even with innovative strategies, the extent to which students internalize values is influenced by individual differences, prior experiences, and the broader campus culture.

Furthermore, the integration process highlights the need for continuous curriculum reform and faculty development. Effective implementation requires not only updating course content but also creating a coherent framework that links psychological concepts with ideological and moral objectives. Faculty must be equipped with dual competencies in psychology and ideological education, and interdisciplinary collaboration should be actively encouraged to strengthen instructional quality. Institutional measures, such as establishing teaching-research communities, promoting experiential learning initiatives, and cultivating a supportive campus cultural atmosphere, play a crucial role in sustaining the long-term impact of this approach.

From a broader perspective, the integration of ideological and political education into mental health curricula serves as a model for holistic vocational education. It demonstrates that mental health instruction need not be confined to individual emotional management but can be leveraged as a platform for cultivating well-rounded, socially responsible, and professionally prepared graduates. Nevertheless, the approach requires ongoing evaluation and refinement to address contextual variations, resource limitations, and evolving societal demands. Future research and practice should focus on systematically assessing educational outcomes, exploring innovative pedagogical techniques, and developing scalable models that can be adapted to diverse institutional environments.

6. Conclusion

The integration of ideological and political education into mental health curricula at vocational undergraduate institutions is a fundamental requirement for the modernization and comprehensive development of higher education. By optimizing curriculum frameworks, innovating teaching methodologies, strengthening faculty competence, and cultivating a supportive campus cultural environment, institutions can effectively embed ideological education within mental health instruction, creating a coherent and mutually reinforcing educational ecosystem.

This integrated approach not only improves the quality and effectiveness of mental health education but also promotes students' holistic development, encompassing psychological resilience, moral awareness, social responsibility, and professional ethics. By linking individual growth with broader societal and national values, mental health education transcends its traditional role as a tool for emotional regulation and cognitive adjustment, evolving into a dynamic platform for value internalization and character formation.

Looking ahead, vocational undergraduate institutions must continue to explore, experiment, and refine strategies for embedding ideological and political education in curricula, with an emphasis on interdisciplinary integration, experiential learning, and practical applicability. Systematic faculty development, diversified pedagogical approaches, and the creation of immersive campus cultural experiences will be critical for sustaining these efforts. Through such measures, vocational colleges can make meaningful contributions to nurturing high-quality, skilled professionals who possess

balanced personalities, strong ethical foundations, and adaptive capabilities to meet the evolving demands of contemporary society and industry

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