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A Study on Innovative Approaches to Ideological and Political Education in Private Higher Education Institutions Against the Background of Building a Strong Educational Nation

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Abstract: Building China into an educational powerhouse is a foundational initiative for achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. As an integral component of China's higher education system, private universities bear the important mission of cultivating a new generation suited to the demands of the contemporary era. On this new journey toward strengthening China's education sector, the question of how to enhance the quality and effectiveness of ideological and political education in private universities, and to establish a system tailored to the unique characteristics of private education, represents a contemporary issue with significant theoretical value and practical relevance. Taking the distinctive nature of ideological and political education in private universities as a starting point, this paper systematically elucidates the bidirectional coupling logic between the construction of a strong education system and ideological and political education in these institutions. It provides an in-depth analysis of the current developmental limitations faced by ideological and political education in private universities, particularly regarding content adaptation, form innovation, distinctive feature highlighting, and resource integration. Furthermore, it proposes four innovative pathways: deepening strategic connotations to optimize the content system; innovating educational platforms to create diverse learning scenarios; leveraging institutional distinctive features to promote disciplinary integration; and integrating educational resources to foster synergistic collaboration. Ultimately, this paper aims to provide theoretical reference and practical guidance for the high-quality development of ideological and political education in private universities.

Keywords: education system; private universities; ideological education; educational innovation; talent development

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1. Introduction

National education policy has emphasized the strategic priority of advancing China's development as a globally competitive education system, with cultivating well-rounded individuals possessing both moral integrity and professional competence as the core educational objective [1]. Private higher education institutions have made significant contributions to expanding access to tertiary education in China, producing a substantial number of graduates equipped with applied knowledge and practical skills. In contemporary educational contexts, optimizing the unique operational advantages of these institutions to advance innovative approaches in ideological and values education remains a key challenge requiring systematic attention [1, 2].

2. An Interpretation of the Internal Logic between Building a Strong Educational Nation and Ideological and Political Education in Private Higher Education Institutions

2.1. The Core Educational Essence of Building a Strong Education System

The strategic essence of building China into a leading educational power extends beyond mere material aspects—such as expanding the scale of educational institutions or improving physical infrastructure—and is fundamentally geared toward enhancing the quality of talent cultivation. The principle of "cultivating virtue and nurturing talent" serves as the core tenet of this strategy; it defines the fundamental purpose of education: to foster a new generation capable of contributing meaningfully to societal development and national progress. Achieving this goal requires the establishment of a systematic educational model that encompasses the refinement of ideological literacy, the nurturing of civic responsibility, the development of comprehensive competencies, and the cultivation of innovative thinking. In the new era, higher education has moved beyond its traditional role as a mere platform for the transmission of knowledge and skills; instead, the consolidation of students' ideals and beliefs, the formation of their value systems, and the shaping of their moral outlooks have become central focuses of educational endeavors. This strategic orientation provides a clear value framework and directional guidance for the advancement of ideological and political education across all levels and types of higher education institutions [1, 3].

2.2. The Unique Characteristics of Ideological and Political Education in Private Higher Education Institutions

Private higher education institutions possess distinctive features in institutional governance, student composition, educational orientation, and learning environments—features that significantly shape the implementation of ideological and political education [4]. As a core educational mission, cultivating applied talents endows their pedagogical practices with an inherently vocational character; thus, professional competence development and practical skill enhancement occupy central positions in their curricular design and teaching delivery. Student populations in these institutions display considerable diversity in ideological outlooks, value orientations, and life experiences—factors that both increase the receptivity of students to ideological guidance and necessitate more precise, individualized educational strategies. Furthermore, social capital plays a vital supporting role in institutional operations, closely aligning educational goals with market needs and industrial development trends [5]. This interplay yields three defining attributes: ideological guidance, vocational relevance, and personalized student development—collectively establishing a robust foundation for differentiated innovation in ideological and political education.

3. The Coupling Logic between Building a Strong Education System and Ideological and Political Education in Private Higher Education Institutions

A deep-seated coupled relationship of mutual empowerment and mutual reinforcement exists between the development of a strong education system and ideological and political education in private higher education institutions [2, 6]. Strategically, the national initiative to build a strong education system provides a clear policy framework, establishes value standards, and outlines development pathways for the transformation and upgrading of ideological and political education in these institutions; such top-down guidance encourages innovations in educational philosophy, pedagogical models, and operational mechanisms, thereby accelerating progress in addressing structural gaps in talent development. Practically, given that private higher education institutions constitute a major segment of the higher education sector—with student enrollment significantly exceeding that of traditional undergraduate universities—the overall enhancement of ideological and political education quality plays an irreplaceable role in strengthening the broader higher education ecosystem for talent cultivation and consolidating foundational educational capacity; it also ensures a steady supply of highly competent applied professionals to support national development goals. This interplay generates a virtuous cycle wherein strategic objectives drive practical innovation, and the outcomes of practice, in turn, reinforce strategic advancement—revealing an inherent pattern of synergistic evolution and symbiotic development [7, 8].

4. The Current State of Ideological and Political Education in Private Higher Education Institutions Amid the Efforts to Build a Strong Educational Nation

4.1. The Degree of Integration between Educational Content and Strategic Needs Requires Improvement.

An examination of the current content framework and foundational theoretical instruction in ideological and political education at private higher education institutions reveals that these approaches remain predominant, with content models exhibiting notable rigidity [9, 10]. The educational imperatives outlined in the Strategic Plan for Building a Stronger Education System, the evolving demands of national development, and the core values of the contemporary spirit have not been fully incorporated into the existing curriculum. There remains significant scope to strengthen the organic alignment between curriculum design and national strategic priorities, societal transformation, and industry development trends. In particular, integration of content aimed at cultivating a sense of mission and responsibility among young students in the new era—and enhancing their understanding of contributions to national advancement—remains underdeveloped. Overall, current content models require enhancement in responsiveness to contemporary challenges and strategic coherence; however, a gap persists between prevailing practices and the elevated standards necessary for nurturing high-caliber talent under the goal of building a stronger education system.

4.2. There Is a Relative Lack of Innovative Approaches in Contemporary Educational Delivery Methods.

An examination of the current implementation approaches to ideological and political education in private higher education institutions reveals that classroom-based theoretical instruction remains the primary teaching format. However, both the frequency and quality of offline practical educational activities, as well as the development and application of immersive educational scenarios, have not yet reached full maturity [11]. The potential of digital technologies and new media platforms as pedagogical tools has not been fully realized; their innovative integration into ideological and political education remains preliminary. This relatively traditional educational approach exhibits a certain degree of misalignment with the cognitive habits and learning preferences of young people in the new era, resulting in suboptimal outcomes in fostering interactive engagement, creating immersive learning experiences, and achieving emotional resonance.

4.3. Insufficient Alignment between the Talent Development System and the Application-Oriented Institutional Positioning

Private higher education institutions have consistently emphasized applied and vocational-oriented approaches as central to their talent development mission—a principle that should fundamentally inform the design of their ideological and political education models. In practice, however, prevailing ideological and political education frameworks remain largely generic, failing to fully incorporate the distinctive academic strengths and vocational training objectives unique to these institutions. Integration between ideological and political education and professional knowledge instruction, professional competence development, and industry-specific ethos cultivation remains insufficient. Moreover, coordination among diverse educational components requires systematic strengthening. Consequently, the targeted effectiveness and distinctive advantages of ideological and political education initiatives have yet to be fully realized.

4.4. The Comprehensive Collaborative Education Framework Has Not Yet Matured.

In the current implementation of ideological and political education in private universities, efforts primarily rely on two key pillars: ideological and political classroom teaching and dedicated ideological and political work teams. Campus culture development, extracurricular activities, and university-enterprise cooperation projects constitute valuable resource platforms for ideological and political education; however, their educational potential remains underutilized. Moreover, coordinated mechanisms

among campus-based educational components have yet to be fully established, and fragmented implementation persists to some extent. Meanwhile, external educational resources—including partner enterprises and social practice platforms—face challenges in effective integration into ideological and political education frameworks, limiting the diversification of educational settings.

5. Innovative Practice Pathways for Ideological and Political Education in Private Higher Education Institutions Against the Background of Building a Strong Education System

5.1. Deepen the Strategic Essence and Build a Content System Tailored to Nurturing Talent for a Strong Nation.

To drive the strategic restructuring of the content and delivery models for ideological and political education in private higher education institutions, it is essential to closely integrate the core objectives of building a strong education system with actual talent development practices. Educators should seamlessly incorporate national strategic development needs, the characteristics of the contemporary era, and evolving social dynamics into every stage of curriculum design. Teaching content should move beyond traditional one-way transmission of theoretical knowledge and instead adopt a multidimensional educational framework that fosters strategic thinking, cultivates a sense of mission and responsibility, and inspires an innovative spirit. The curriculum system must align closely with national strategic initiatives—including advancing science and technology, strengthening talent development, and promoting innovation-driven growth—by transforming major achievements, key technological advancements, and practical experiences from national development into dynamic teaching resources. This enables students to grasp the trajectory of national progress through theoretical learning and reinforce their sense of responsibility and mission through concrete case analysis. Furthermore, regional economic development, industrial transformation and upgrading, and emerging industry trends should be integrated into instructional scope, helping students establish meaningful connections between personal growth and national advancement. Taking the "Intelligent Manufacturing Engineering" professional ideological and political education program as an example, instructors can deeply align the strategic goals of "Made in China 2025" with course content. When addressing technological transformations associated with Industry 4.0, they may highlight China's progress in high-end equipment manufacturing—from initial technology adoption to collaborative advancement, and increasingly to leadership in select domains. By examining representative cases—such as breakthroughs in 5G communication technologies, rapid development in new energy vehicle systems, and leading global contributions in unmanned aerial vehicle applications—students can be guided to appreciate the strategic importance of independent innovation for advancing manufacturing capabilities, thereby motivating active engagement in intelligent manufacturing fields and pursuit of professional aspirations. As students cultivate a professional commitment to supporting industrial upgrading, they naturally develop alignment with values emphasizing contribution to national development through engineering expertise and a sense of duty toward advancing scientific and technological capacity.

5.2. Innovate Educational Platforms and Create Immersive, Diversified Learning Environments

To align with the cognitive characteristics and learning preferences of young people in the new era, private higher education institutions should move beyond the spatial boundaries and conventional formats of traditional classroom teaching and establish a more comprehensive, multi-dimensional ideological and political education platform system. The deep integration of digital new media platforms has expanded the possibilities for educational innovation. By leveraging lightweight, engaging content formats—such as developing short-form ideological and political micro-lectures, organizing thematic discussion forums, and designing interactive quiz games—

ideological and political content can be seamlessly embedded into students' everyday online experiences. This approach enables core values and national development goals to be conveyed to young students in a more accessible and digestible manner. Meanwhile, implementing offline practical education scenarios is equally important. By systematically integrating diverse platforms—including campus cultural activities, study tours to sites of historical significance, community service initiatives, and corporate internships and training programs—students can engage in immersive ideological and political education experiences. Taking the ideological and political education for the "Tourism Management" major as an example, instructors can organize students to conduct research projects on tourism resources in historic revolutionary base areas. As students visit heritage sites, interview local residents, and collect historical narratives, they not only fulfill market research and route design requirements of their professional curriculum but also gain firsthand experience in understanding and transmitting historical spirit within authentic contexts. When students propose recommendations for local tourism development, they naturally connect their professional competencies with cultural preservation and regional development strategies. Through the practical process of designing themed study tour products and creating civic education itineraries, students deepen their appreciation of cultural confidence and their role in national advancement. This educational approach—integrating theoretical instruction into real-world settings and embedding value-oriented guidance throughout professional training—transforms ideological and political education from abstract exposition into tangible, perceptible, experiential, and internalized learning.

5.3. Building on Institutional Distinctive Features to Promote the Integration of Ideological and Political Education with Academic Disciplines

The core mission of cultivating applied talent at private higher education institutions provides a clear practical direction for the specialized development of ideological and political education. To establish an ideological and political education model that aligns with the unique characteristics of each institution, it is essential to thoroughly explore the ideological and political resources as well as the core values of professional spirit inherent within various academic disciplines, and to organically integrate the spirit of craftsmanship, sense of professional responsibility, professional ethics and conduct standards, and the vision of building a strong nation and establishing a successful career into the entire professional teaching process. The implementation of curriculum-based ideological and political education should achieve comprehensive coverage, eliminate the barriers between ideological and political education and professional education, and transform every specialized course into a vehicle for value transmission. Based on the career development paths and job competency requirements of students across different disciplines, differentiated ideological and political education plans should be designed to effectively realize the tripartite educational objective of providing ideological and value guidance, nurturing professional competence, and shaping professional literacy. Taking ideological and political education in the e-commerce major as an example, instructors can integrate professional ethics topics—such as integrity in business operations and the protection of consumer rights—into their lectures on online marketing strategies. By analyzing real-world cases of dishonesty, such as false advertising or misleading data practices, that have emerged during large-scale e-commerce events like the "Double 11" shopping festival, instructors can guide students to understand that business integrity is not only a cornerstone of individual career development but also a fundamental pillar of integrity essential for the healthy growth of the national digital economy and the advancement of a strong nation. In e-commerce live-streaming practical training courses, instructors can integrate the Rural Revitalization Strategy with e-commerce-based agricultural support initiatives by organizing students to design marketing plans for local specialty agricultural products [12–14]. This approach enables students to grasp the contemporary mission of contributing to the nation through their professional expertise

during their technical training, while strengthening their sense of social responsibility in supporting regional economic development.

5.4. Integrate Educational Resources to Foster a Comprehensive, Collaborative Educational Ecosystem.

To further advance ideological and political education in private higher education institutions, it is essential to strategically integrate various educational resources—both on- and off-campus—and consolidate fragmented educational efforts into a cohesive, synergistic whole. At the institutional level, a regular collaborative mechanism should be established among ideological and political education teachers, subject-specific faculty, and student counselors—utilizing formats such as periodic joint meetings, collective lesson-planning sessions, and the sharing of educational case studies to facilitate information exchange and the transfer of best practices among these stakeholders. Additionally, barriers between different educational domains—such as classroom teaching, campus cultural activities, and student daily management—should be removed, ensuring that ideological guidance naturally permeates every aspect of students' academic and personal development. Private higher education institutions possess inherent advantages in fostering industry-academia collaboration, which opens up significant opportunities for expanding external educational resources. By establishing a two-way educational partnership with collaborating enterprises, core professional values—including dedication to one's field, ethical conduct in practice, and pursuit of excellence—can be integrated into the curriculum for ideological and political education. Leveraging resources such as social practice bases, historically themed educational venues, and community service platforms, private universities can build a comprehensive educational network that fosters collaboration between academia and industry, as well as between academia and local communities [15]. Taking the ideological and political education program for the "Software Engineering" major as an example, instructors can collaborate with technical experts from industry enterprises to jointly design a practical course centered on the theme of "Information Security and Social Responsibility," guiding students to visit cybersecurity companies for observation and learning, and inviting corporate engineers to share their insights on technological ethics and societal impact. Students are then organized to visit the National Cybersecurity Education Base for an immersive learning experience, where real-world case studies are used to help them gain a deep understanding of the relationship between responsible technology use and broader societal well-being. Upon completion of the course, the counselor is responsible for follow-up and organizing thematic seminars; in subsequent courses, professional faculty will integrate explanations of relevant technical specifications, thereby establishing a closed-loop educational framework encompassing "corporate practice – base experience – classroom deepening – daily guidance." This approach enables students to gradually develop a sense of responsibility and mission to contribute meaningfully through science and technology across diverse educational settings.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, advancing the development of education systems provides a strategic orientation for renewing ideological and political education in private higher education institutions. These institutions should capitalize on this opportunity by systematically strengthening curriculum design, pedagogical models, instructional methods, integration of institutional academic strengths, and interdepartmental coordination mechanisms. Such efforts are essential to comprehensively enhance the effectiveness of ideological and political education, supporting the cultivation of highly competent applied professionals grounded in sound ethical foundations and robust disciplinary expertise. Future work must prioritize deeper theoretical inquiry and sustained practical experimentation to develop adaptable, evidence-informed frameworks for ideological and political education in private higher education contexts.

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