

## Article

# Research on the Characteristics and Practice Path of Ideological and Political Education for Students in Applied Undergraduate Colleges

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**Abstract:** As a core carrier in the popularization process of China's higher education, applied undergraduate colleges serve regional economic and social development and undertake the mission of cultivating high-quality applied talents. Their ideological and political education work closely aligns with the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education and the training objectives of application-oriented talents, thereby presenting distinctive characteristics and an internal practical logic. Based on the school-running orientation, the structural features of student groups, and the developmental needs of applied undergraduate colleges, this paper systematically expounds the core characteristics of ideological and political education in this context, namely career orientation, practical integration, collaborative linkage, and precise pertinence. Furthermore, it analyzes prominent practical problems, including the disconnection between ideological and political education and professional curricula, the singularity of practical education carriers, the insufficient adaptability and professionalization of teaching staff, and the relative imperfection of institutional and mechanism design. Drawing on practical experience from ideological and political work in Chinese colleges and universities, the paper explores an innovative practice path characterized by professional integration, practical empowerment, multi主体 collaborative linkage, and precise policy implementation. The study aims to embed ideological and political education throughout the entire process and all dimensions of talent cultivation, effectively enhance its educational effectiveness, and provide both theoretical guidance and operational reference for the high-quality development of ideological and political education in applied undergraduate colleges in the new era.

**Keywords:** applied undergraduate colleges; ideological and political education; talent cultivation; educational characteristics; practice path; professional integration; fostering virtue through education

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## 1. Introduction

Against the dual backdrop of the optimization and adjustment of China's higher education structure and the transformation and upgrading of industries, applied undergraduate colleges have transitioned from focusing on scale expansion to emphasizing qualitative development. These institutions now serve as a critical bridge between higher education and societal employment, playing a pivotal role in cultivating technical and professional talent. Unlike academic undergraduate colleges, which prioritize theoretical research, academic innovation, and scientific inquiry, applied undergraduate colleges are guided by the principle of "rooting in local contexts, aligning with industries, and serving industrial needs." Their primary focus is on enhancing students' practical operational skills, professional application capabilities, and comprehensive professional competencies. This distinct orientation necessitates that their ideological and political education diverges from the traditional models employed by

academic institutions [1]. Instead, it must adopt a unique, differentiated, and pragmatic developmental approach tailored to their specific mission and objectives.

Currently, students in applied undergraduate colleges exhibit unique characteristics [2, 3]. They are often characterized by active and innovative thinking, strong practical skills, and a heightened focus on vocational skill acquisition and employment prospects. However, they frequently demonstrate limited initiative and depth in theoretical learning. Their values tend to be diverse and open, making them more susceptible to the influence of online trends and societal utilitarianism. Challenges such as weak ideals and beliefs, unclear career planning, a lack of craftsmanship spirit, and insufficient responsibility are evident among some students. Additionally, certain colleges face issues such as an overemphasis on theoretical instruction at the expense of practical application, prioritizing classroom learning over extracurricular engagement, and a disconnect between ideological and political education and professional training [4]. These challenges hinder the alignment of educational practices with the core requirements for cultivating applied talents.

In light of these challenges, it is essential to deeply explore the intrinsic characteristics of ideological and political education within applied undergraduate colleges. Identifying the shortcomings and bottlenecks in current practices and developing practical strategies that align with the institutional orientation and the unique traits of students are critical steps [4, 5]. These efforts are not only fundamental to fulfilling the core educational mission of fostering virtue but also serve as key measures to advance the qualitative development of applied undergraduate colleges [6]. By enhancing the quality of talent cultivation, these initiatives hold significant practical value in improving the ideological and political education systems of higher education institutions in the contemporary era [7].

## **2. Core Characteristics of Ideological and Political Education for Students in Applied Undergraduate Colleges**

### *2.1. Career Orientation of Educational Goals*

Applied undergraduate colleges prioritize cultivating high-quality applied talents who can excel in front-line production, construction, service, and management roles. The primary focus of education in these institutions is on students' career development and their ability to adapt to specific job roles. This emphasis inherently shapes the ideological and political education provided, giving it a distinct career-oriented approach [3, 8]. Unlike academic undergraduate colleges, which emphasize broader academic values such as research ethics, scientific inquiry, and aspirational ideals, applied undergraduate colleges integrate professional ethics, workplace norms, and practical skills into their educational framework [9]. This includes fostering qualities such as dedication, integrity, adherence to laws, effective workplace communication, and teamwork. These elements are seamlessly embedded throughout the educational process to guide students in forming appropriate perspectives on careers, employment, and values. Additionally, the curriculum incorporates targeted ideological and political education tailored to meet the demands of local industries and evolving market trends. This approach equips students with a deeper understanding of workplace expectations, enhances their sense of responsibility, and ensures they align their professional skills with ethical standards. By achieving a harmonious balance between technical proficiency and moral integrity, students are prepared not only to meet the technical demands of their roles but also to uphold the ethical standards required by their respective industries [1, 10].

### *2.2. Practical Integration of Educational Content*

Practical education serves as the cornerstone of applied undergraduate education, embodying its most distinctive feature in the realm of ideological and political education [10, 11]. This approach transcends the traditional confines of classroom-based theoretical instruction, fostering a dynamic integration of ideological and political education with

practical teaching methodologies, collaborative industry-education initiatives, school-enterprise partnerships, internships, and hands-on training [12]. By embedding ideological and political elements into diverse practical activities—such as professional skill development, community engagement, voluntary service, enterprise internships, and academic competitions—students are provided with opportunities to internalize responsibility, strengthen resilience, and cultivate a sense of national pride through experiential learning. For instance, the principle of striving for excellence and the craftsman spirit is seamlessly incorporated into engineering-focused training programs, while the importance of ethical business practices and social accountability is emphasized in business-oriented practical education. Similarly, the values of dedication and public service are instilled through internships in service-oriented professions, ensuring that ideological and political education transitions from theoretical frameworks to practical applications, and from classroom settings to real-world professional environments. This holistic approach enables students to deepen their understanding and appreciation of ideological and political concepts through active participation and personal experience, fostering a well-rounded educational journey that bridges theory and practice.

### *2.3. Collaborative Linkage of Educational Subjects*

The education model of applied undergraduate colleges emphasizes the integration of industry and education alongside school-enterprise cooperation as its central focus. This approach broadens the scope of ideological and political education, transitioning it from being confined to internal teams such as ideological and political educators and counselors to establishing a collaborative framework involving multiple educational entities. Within schools, a comprehensive system is developed where ideological and political educators, subject-specific instructors, counselors, and administrative staff collectively contribute to embedding ideological and political elements into the curriculum. This ensures that all staff members actively participate in fostering a holistic educational environment. Beyond the campus, external entities such as enterprises, industry organizations, local authorities, and community groups are engaged to enhance the educational process. Key figures from these sectors, including enterprise leaders, exemplary industry professionals, and technical specialists, are invited to serve as external mentors, introducing professional culture, industry standards, and the spirit of craftsmanship into academic settings. This triadic collaboration among schools, enterprises, and societal forces dismantles the traditional isolation of ideological and political education within higher education institutions. By integrating internal and external resources, this model aligns educational efforts more closely with societal needs, industry practices, and students' career aspirations, thereby establishing a comprehensive and multidimensional educational network that fosters both academic and professional growth.

### *2.4. Precise Pertinence of Educational Objects*

Students in applied undergraduate colleges exhibit unique group characteristics in terms of ideological cognition, learning habits, and developmental needs. Additionally, their individual differences are pronounced, necessitating a highly targeted approach to their ideological and political education. Unlike their counterparts in academic colleges, these students tend to prioritize practicality and utilitarian outcomes, showing less enthusiasm for abstract theoretical learning. Instead, they are more receptive to concrete, scenario-based educational content that aligns closely with their personal and professional development. Consequently, ideological and political education must be firmly rooted in the students' current ideological realities, professional attributes, and career aspirations. It is essential to move away from a generalized, "one-size-fits-all" educational model and instead adopt a differentiated approach tailored to the specific needs of students based on their majors, academic levels, and group characteristics. For instance, freshmen may benefit from a focus on ideals, beliefs, school regulations, and

adaptation strategies. Sophomores and juniors could be guided through professional ideology, the cultivation of professional quality, and the development of a craftsman spirit. Seniors might require education centered on employment guidance, workplace adaptation, integrity, performance, and responsibility. Intern students, on the other hand, could benefit from targeted instruction on workplace ideology, safety awareness, and professional ethics [6, 7]. By adhering to the principle of teaching students in accordance with their aptitude and implementing precise strategies, the affinity and effectiveness of ideological and political education can be significantly enhanced.

### **3. Practical Dilemmas in Ideological and Political Education in Applied Undergraduate Colleges**

#### *3.1. Disconnection Between Ideological and Political Education and Professional Education, Prominent "Separation" Phenomenon*

Currently, a significant issue persists in some applied undergraduate colleges, where ideological and political education remains disconnected from professional education, leading to a prominent phenomenon of "separation." Ideological and political theory courses are often taught independently, lacking meaningful integration with professional practice, industrial development, and the specific needs of various disciplines. This disconnection results in teaching content that heavily emphasizes theoretical explanations, making it challenging to engage students or foster a sense of relevance to their professional aspirations. Simultaneously, many professional educators continue to prioritize technical skills and knowledge over ideological and political dimensions. They often view professional teaching solely as a means of transferring expertise, neglecting the broader educational potential of integrating ideological and political elements into their curricula [6]. This approach fails to naturally embed ideological and political education into professional courses and practical training, thereby weakening its impact. Consequently, the lack of synergy between these two educational components undermines the overarching goal of cultivating well-rounded applied talents. Without a collaborative framework, the potential for ideological and political education to enhance professional learning and contribute to holistic student development remains unrealized.

#### *3.2. Single Practical Education Carrier, Insufficient Effectiveness of Ideological and Political Education*

Applied undergraduate colleges emphasize practical teaching; however, the methods employed for ideological and political practical education in some institutions remain limited to traditional approaches, such as voluntary service and social research. These methods often lack integration with professional practice, collaborative school-enterprise initiatives, and enterprise internships, which diminishes their effectiveness. Furthermore, certain practical activities are conducted in a superficial manner, lacking systematic planning, targeted objectives, and long-term sustainability. This disconnect prevents the seamless incorporation of ideological and political education throughout the practical learning process. Additionally, the development of collaborative platforms between schools and enterprises for ideological and political education is notably underdeveloped [7, 11]. Enterprises often exhibit low levels of enthusiasm for participating in such initiatives, which undermines their potential contribution to fostering professional qualities and the spirit of craftsmanship. Consequently, ideological and political practice education frequently lacks industrial relevance and professional specificity, making it challenging to achieve its intended goals of shaping students' character and enhancing their overall competencies.

#### *3.3. Insufficient Adaptability of Teaching Staff, Need to Improve Educational Ability*

The teaching staff responsible for ideological and political education in applied undergraduate colleges face challenges related to limited structural diversity and insufficient adaptability in their abilities. Internal educators and counselors often lack

practical experience within enterprises and industries, resulting in a limited understanding of professional norms and specific needs within various fields [8]. This gap makes it challenging to integrate ideological and political education with real-world professional contexts during teaching and counseling activities. Additionally, professional instructors frequently lack comprehensive training in ideological and political theories, which hinders their ability to effectively interpret and apply curriculum ideology and politics. This deficiency restricts their capacity to identify and incorporate ideological and political elements into specialized courses, leading to rigid and formulaic teaching methods. Furthermore, the development of external ideological and political tutor teams remains incomplete, with enterprise tutors facing barriers to active participation due to unsound mechanisms. This situation prevents the establishment of a stable and collaborative educational framework, ultimately limiting the ability of the teaching staff to address the practical demands of applied ideological and political education effectively.

### *3.4. Imperfect Education Mechanism, Insufficient Collaborative Education Force*

Certain applied undergraduate colleges have yet to establish and refine a fully integrated education mechanism that encompasses all staff, processes, and dimensions of educational activities. Communication and collaboration between various departments and colleges within these institutions remain insufficient, leading to fragmented efforts. Ideological and political education is predominantly managed by specialized departments and counselors, with minimal involvement from professional faculty, administrative units, and training centers. Furthermore, the off-campus school-enterprise collaborative education framework often exists in name only, lacking well-defined responsibilities, systematic assessment protocols, and effective incentive structures. Enterprises frequently exhibit limited enthusiasm for participating in ideological and political education initiatives. Additionally, schools and enterprises often fail to align their objectives, content, and methodologies for such education, which hinders the effective integration of internal and external educational resources [9]. This disconnect makes it challenging to establish a cohesive and synergistic educational force capable of achieving comprehensive and impactful outcomes.

## **4. Innovative Practice Paths of Ideological and Political Education in Applied Undergraduate Colleges**

### *4.1. Deepen the Integration of Ideological and Political Education and Professional Education, Implement the Concept of Curriculum Ideology and Politics*

The key to addressing the disconnect between ideological and political education and professional education lies in achieving comprehensive integration of curriculum ideology and politics, thereby establishing a collaborative education framework that combines ideological and political courses with curriculum ideology and politics. To begin with, the teaching content of ideological and political theory courses should be refined to incorporate elements such as industrial ideology, professional values, local cultural heritage, and the spirit of craftsmanship. These elements should be tailored to align with the specific characteristics and industry demands of applied undergraduate programs [10]. Employing diverse teaching methodologies, including case-based learning, scenario-based instruction, and project-oriented teaching, can significantly enhance the relevance and practical application of ideological and political courses. Furthermore, it is essential to reinforce the educational responsibilities of professional educators by providing specialized training on curriculum ideology and politics [6]. This training should empower educators to identify and integrate ideological and political themes within various professional courses, embedding concepts such as professional ethics, craftsmanship, accountability, and patriotism seamlessly into instructional activities, practical training, and research projects. This approach ensures that the transmission of knowledge and the cultivation of values occur concurrently and harmoniously. Lastly, a

robust evaluation mechanism for curriculum ideology and politics must be established. This mechanism should assess the effectiveness of its implementation and incorporate these evaluations into the criteria for teaching performance reviews and professional title advancements. By doing so, professional educators are encouraged to proactively embrace their role in fostering both academic and ideological growth among students.

#### *4.2. Enrich Practical Education Carriers, Build an All-Round Ideological and Political Practice System*

Considering the unique attributes of practical education in applied undergraduate programs, it is essential to establish a comprehensive four-dimensional ideological and political practice system encompassing classroom practice, campus practice, social practice, and post practice. Firstly, leveraging internal training centers and innovation bases facilitates professional training, skill enhancement competitions, and entrepreneurial activities, fostering students' ability to excel and innovate through hands-on experiences. Secondly, cultivating a campus ideological and political cultural identity involves organizing events such as vocational skill festivals, industry-focused lectures, and model worker engagements, thereby creating an environment that values professional excellence and dedication. Thirdly, students should be encouraged to participate in voluntary services, social investigations, and rural development initiatives, which enhance their sense of social responsibility and commitment to broader societal goals [2]. Lastly, strengthening collaboration between educational institutions and enterprises integrates ideological and political education into internships and corporate training [8]. By involving experienced enterprise professionals as mentors, students gain exposure to professional ethics and workplace standards, enabling them to refine their skills and develop a strong professional ethos within authentic work environments. This holistic approach ensures that students are equipped with both technical expertise and a deep understanding of their societal and professional responsibilities.

#### *4.3. Strengthen the Construction of Teaching Staff, Improve Comprehensive Ability of Ideological and Political Education*

Developing a robust team for ideological and political education requires a strategic approach that integrates full-time and part-time educators while fostering collaboration between internal and external resources. To enhance the capabilities of internal educators, it is essential to provide targeted training programs that encourage them to engage deeply with enterprises and industries. This engagement allows educators to gain valuable practical experience, thereby improving their ability to deliver education that is both theoretical and application-oriented [7]. Additionally, regular training sessions focused on ideological and political theory, as well as innovative teaching methodologies, should be conducted to elevate the proficiency of professional educators in integrating ideological and political elements into their curriculum. Simultaneously, the appointment mechanism for external ideological and political tutors should be refined to include exemplary individuals such as industry leaders, enterprise experts, and distinguished alumni. These external tutors can contribute significantly by participating in lectures, sharing experiences, offering practical guidance, and conducting other enriching activities. Furthermore, establishing a collaborative framework between internal educators and external tutors is crucial. This partnership can facilitate the co-design of educational content and the implementation of practical activities, thereby creating a synergistic model that combines the strengths of full-time and part-time educators for comprehensive ideological and political education.

#### *4.4. Improve the Collaborative Education Mechanism, Gather Internal and External Educational Forces*

Establish a comprehensive education mechanism that integrates school leadership, enterprise participation, social coordination, and collective responsibility [4]. Within schools, form a dedicated leadership group for ideological and political education to unify and coordinate efforts across various departments, including ideological and political education units, academic affairs offices, secondary colleges, student affairs offices, and youth league committees. Clearly define the educational responsibilities of each department, implement a cross-departmental collaborative framework, and ensure education is delivered comprehensively, covering all staff, processes, and dimensions. Beyond the school environment, strengthen partnerships between schools and enterprises by formalizing agreements that outline enterprise responsibilities in student internships and the cultivation of professional competencies. Incorporate the effectiveness of enterprise contributions into the evaluation of school-enterprise collaborations [8, 10]. Additionally, leverage social resources such as local governments, community organizations, and educational practice bases to create off-campus platforms for ideological and political education, thereby broadening the scope of educational opportunities. Simultaneously, refine the assessment and evaluation system for ideological and political education by integrating students' ideological development, professional skills, and practical achievements into a holistic evaluation framework [9, 12]. Establish a diversified and process-oriented evaluation mechanism to standardize and ensure the sustainable advancement of ideological and political education practices.

### **5. Conclusion**

Ideological and political education in applied undergraduate colleges serves as a pivotal mechanism for fostering virtue through education and cultivating high-quality applied talents. Its defining features, including career orientation, practical integration, collaborative linkage, and precise pertinence, distinguish it from similar educational approaches in academic undergraduate institutions. However, this educational framework faces significant challenges, such as insufficient integration with broader educational systems, limited diversity in practical carriers, inadequate adaptability among educators, and underdeveloped collaborative mechanisms. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach, including enhancing the synergy between professional education and ideological and political education, diversifying practical education methods, strengthening the professional development of teaching staff, and refining collaborative education frameworks. These strategies are essential for improving the effectiveness of ideological and political education and ensuring its alignment with the evolving demands of applied undergraduate institutions.

In the context of contemporary societal and educational advancements, applied undergraduate colleges must prioritize their foundational mission of fostering virtue through education while aligning with institutional goals and student development needs. This necessitates continuous innovation in the concepts, content, and methodologies of ideological and political education. By integrating ideological and political education with industry-education collaboration, practical teaching, and professional training, these institutions can establish a distinctive educational framework tailored to applied undergraduate courses. Such efforts aim to cultivate high-quality applied talents equipped with robust professional skills, unwavering ideals and beliefs, exemplary professional ethics, and a profound sense of social responsibility. These graduates will play a critical role in driving regional economic growth, supporting societal progress, and contributing to industrial transformation and modernization, thereby addressing broader developmental challenges and fostering sustainable advancements in various sectors.

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