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Research on the Path of Promoting the Construction of Marxist Political Economy Curriculum System from the Perspective of New Liberal Arts

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Abstract: In the digital economy era, new information technologies are rapidly empowering all economic sectors and transforming traditional educational paradigms. Consequently, China is in urgent need of interdisciplinary talents equipped with a profound grasp of advanced information technologies and a keen insight into future economic scenarios. As a fundamental discipline within China's ideological and educational framework, Marxist political economy currently faces an urgent demand for comprehensive modern curriculum reform. This study systematically explores the strategic construction path of the Marxist political economy curriculum system under the innovative new liberal arts framework. It critically analyzes the core principles of the new liberal arts initiative alongside the strategic importance of Marxist political economy in contemporary China. Furthermore, the research identifies the primary challenges inherent in traditional Marxist political economy curricula, including persistent disciplinary rigidity, a noticeable disconnection from dynamic economic realities, and the reliance on outdated teaching models. To address these critical issues, a robust multi-dimensional reform framework is proposed. This framework emphasizes promoting interdisciplinary integration, innovating curriculum content by seamlessly combining classic theoretical foundations with China's modern economic practice, and reforming pedagogical methods through technology empowerment and inquiry-based learning. Additionally, it advocates for developing a diversified and comprehensive evaluation system. Ultimately, this paper concludes that integrating Marxist political economy with the new liberal arts is a vital strategic task to cultivate exceptional talents possessing theoretical depth, practical abilities, and strong national identity, thereby significantly contributing to national development and cultural confidence.

Keywords: new liberal arts; political economy; curriculum reform; digital economy; higher education

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1. Introduction

By 2026, China's higher education system is undergoing systematic and profound transformations [1]. Central to this reform is the new liberal arts initiative, which seeks to redefine humanities and social sciences education to address the multifaceted challenges of the 21st century [2]. This initiative marks a significant shift in educational philosophy, transitioning from a focus on "scale expansion" to "connotative development," emphasizing quality enhancement and the integration of technological advancements. The primary objective is to cultivate modern interdisciplinary talents capable of addressing real-world issues, fulfilling national strategic priorities, and fostering cultural confidence. This approach underscores the importance of aligning education with societal needs, ensuring that graduates possess the skills and knowledge required to navigate complex global and domestic challenges effectively.

At the same time, Marxist political economy maintains a foundational role within China's economic theory and ideological education framework. In recent years, significant efforts have been made to strengthen its position and adapt it to contemporary needs. For

instance, the Ministry of Education has outlined ambitious goals to establish a comprehensive curriculum system centered on Marxist political economy, spanning undergraduate, master's, and doctoral education levels. This system aims to integrate theoretical knowledge with practical applications, thereby laying a robust foundation for the development of an independent knowledge system in Chinese economics. Additionally, new textbooks, such as *Socialist Political Economy with Chinese Characteristics*, have been introduced and piloted in numerous universities, reflecting the commitment to modernizing and enriching the curriculum. Furthermore, national policies have emphasized the importance of transforming innovative theoretical achievements into educational materials and incorporating real-world cases into teaching practices. The integration of social practice and digital education into Marxist political economy courses has also been highlighted as a critical area for development, ensuring that the discipline remains relevant and dynamic in the face of evolving societal and technological landscapes [3].

However, the traditional curricula for Marxist political economy continue to face several challenges. These programs are often criticized for being overly theoretical and abstract, with a predominant focus on interpreting classic texts rather than addressing contemporary economic issues. This approach limits the ability to analyze real-world problems and hinders the integration of modern economic practices. Teaching methods are predominantly lecture-based, lacking interactive elements and case-based learning, which results in passive student engagement and insufficient development of critical thinking and practical application skills. Additionally, the content of these curricula is updated at a slow pace, failing to adequately address emerging phenomena such as the digital economy, globalization, and financialization. To align with the dynamic, integrated, and application-oriented principles of the new liberal arts initiative, it is imperative to reimagine the structure and delivery of Marxist political economy courses [4]. This re-conception should focus on fostering active learning environments, incorporating contemporary case studies, and ensuring that the curriculum evolves in tandem with societal and technological advancements.

This paper seeks to address these gaps by offering a systematic analysis and a forward-looking blueprint for reforming Marxist political economy curricula. It begins by elucidating the conceptual framework of the new liberal arts initiative and examining the contemporary significance of Marxist political economy. Subsequently, it identifies the inherent challenges within the current curriculum and proposes a comprehensive set of strategies for improvement. These strategies encompass curriculum design, content innovation, teaching methodologies, and evaluation mechanisms. By adopting these measures, the paper aims to contribute to the theoretical discourse and practical implementation of higher education reform in China. The ultimate goal is to ensure that Marxist political economy not only retains its foundational role but also evolves into a dynamic, future-oriented discipline that stimulates intellectual curiosity and equips students with the skills needed to address complex economic and societal challenges effectively.

2. Conceptual Framework

To effectively analyze the reform paths, it is essential to first establish a clear understanding of two fundamental concepts: the new liberal arts initiative and the contemporary relevance of Marxist political economy [5]. The new liberal arts initiative represents an interdisciplinary approach aimed at integrating traditional humanities with modern technological and scientific advancements, fostering innovation and adaptability in academic disciplines. Meanwhile, Marxist political economy provides a theoretical framework for examining economic structures and societal dynamics, emphasizing the importance of equitable resource distribution and social development. The intersection of these two concepts creates a unique foundation for reform, offering both challenges and opportunities to redefine academic priorities and methodologies in alignment with evolving societal needs.

2.1. Core Principles of the New Liberal Arts Initiative

The new liberal arts represents a transformative approach to education, aiming to transcend traditional boundaries within humanities and social sciences. It advocates for interdisciplinary integration, which involves merging diverse fields of knowledge and methodologies to address multifaceted societal challenges. This approach encourages the development of cross-departmental curricula and collaborative research projects, fostering a holistic understanding of complex issues. Furthermore, the initiative emphasizes the balance between preserving cultural heritage and fostering innovation. By valuing the essence of human civilization and Chinese traditional culture, it seeks to create a dynamic synergy between historical wisdom and modern advancements in knowledge creation and pedagogy. Another fundamental principle is its alignment with national and societal priorities. The initiative is designed to direct academic efforts and talent cultivation toward addressing pressing domestic challenges and contributing to strategic national objectives. Additionally, the integration of modern technologies, such as big data and artificial intelligence, is a cornerstone of this initiative [6]. These technologies are leveraged to revolutionize teaching methodologies and research paradigms, enabling more efficient and impactful educational practices. By embracing these principles, the new liberal arts aims to establish a forward-looking educational framework that is deeply rooted in cultural heritage while remaining adaptable to global trends and technological advancements.

At its core, the new liberal arts initiative is a government-driven, strategically designed project that seeks to construct a modern educational system tailored to Chinese characteristics [7]. This system is envisioned to harmonize the richness of national heritage with a global perspective, ensuring that the education provided is both culturally grounded and internationally relevant. By fostering innovation in teaching and research, the initiative aims to cultivate talent capable of addressing contemporary challenges while contributing to the broader goals of societal development. The emphasis on integrating advanced technologies further underscores its commitment to modernizing education, making it more responsive to the demands of a rapidly evolving world. Ultimately, this initiative aspires to redefine liberal arts education, positioning it as a vital component of national progress and global engagement.

2.2. Enduring Significance and Strategic Role of Marxist Political Economy

In the Chinese context, Marxist political economy holds a unique and enduring significance as the guiding ideology for economic construction and reform. Unlike other economic theories, it serves as the foundational framework for addressing the nation's economic challenges and shaping its development trajectory. The study of Marxist political economy is considered essential for cultivating a scientific worldview and methodology, enabling scholars and policymakers to navigate complex economic issues effectively. To reinforce its academic and educational importance, many universities in China have established specialized schools of Marxism. These institutions aim to integrate Marxist political economy into the broader framework of new liberal arts, ensuring its relevance in contemporary academic discourse and practical applications. Furthermore, Marxist political economy plays a pivotal role in three key areas: it provides the theoretical basis for China's socialist market economy, acts as an ideological anchor for the nation's development path, and serves as a core element of civic moral and political education. By emphasizing these aspects, the discipline contributes to the cultivation of a cohesive societal understanding of economic principles and fosters a collective commitment to the nation's goals. Its strategic role underscores the importance of aligning economic theories with the broader objectives of social and political development in China.

2.3. Necessity of Integration

Under the core framework of new liberal arts focusing on interdisciplinary integration, real-world problem response, and innovative talent cultivation, promoting the in-depth integration of Marxist political economy and new liberal arts is an essential step to adapt to the evolving demands of the era. This integration is not merely a

superficial combination of disciplines but represents a transformative approach to academic development. The new liberal arts offer a structured pathway for Marxist political economy to transcend traditional analytical boundaries, thereby invigorating its theoretical and practical relevance. As a theoretical system that uncovers economic laws and social dynamics, Marxist political economy can serve as the ideological and theoretical backbone for the new liberal arts. This ensures the avoidance of excessive reliance on technological instrumentalism while fostering a deeper sense of humanistic care and social responsibility. The synergy between these two fields is pivotal for revitalizing Marxist political economy and fortifying the ideological underpinnings of the new liberal arts. Ultimately, this integration aims to cultivate interdisciplinary talents equipped with profound theoretical insights and practical capabilities, enabling them to address complex societal challenges effectively.

Therefore, constructing the Marxist political economy curriculum system from the perspective of new liberal arts is not solely about reforming teaching methodologies but also about establishing it as a discipline with robust theoretical foundations, innovative approaches, and strong relevance to China's contemporary objectives. This curriculum system should be designed to align with the nation's developmental goals, ensuring that it nurtures a generation of talents who possess both theoretical depth and practical problem-solving skills. Furthermore, it should instill a firm understanding of and connection to national conditions, fostering a sense of identity and responsibility among students. By integrating theoretical rigor with practical application, this approach can address the pressing need for interdisciplinary talents capable of navigating the complexities of modern society while contributing to the nation's progress and global academic discourse [8].

3. Core Challenges of the Traditional Marxist Political Economy Curriculum System

3.1. Disciplinary Isolation and Theoretical Dogmatism

A significant challenge confronting the traditional Marxist political economy curriculum system is its tendency toward disciplinary isolation. These courses are predominantly confined to economics or Marxist studies departments, with minimal interaction with other fields such as philosophy, history, sociology, law, or cultural studies. This lack of interdisciplinary engagement runs counter to the principles of the new liberal arts initiative, which emphasizes integration across academic disciplines to foster a more holistic understanding of complex societal issues. The isolation of these courses can result in theoretical dogmatism, where foundational principles are treated as rigid, abstract doctrines rather than as dynamic, evolving frameworks capable of adapting to the complexities of the modern world. This issue is particularly concerning given that Marx's original work exemplified interdisciplinary synthesis, drawing from German philosophy, British political economy, and French socialism. Without such integration, the curriculum risks becoming stagnant, failing to equip students with the analytical tools necessary to address contemporary challenges. Encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration and curriculum reform could help revitalize the study of Marxist political economy, ensuring its relevance in a rapidly changing academic and social landscape [9, 10].

3.2. Disconnection from Contemporary Economic Reality

The new liberal arts place significant importance on applying theoretical knowledge to address practical challenges in the modern world. Despite this, many Marxist political economy courses face difficulties in effectively connecting foundational 19th-century theories with the intricate dynamics of China's 21st-century socialist market economy. For instance, critical areas such as the digital platform economy, global value chains, green development strategies, and the unique macroeconomic regulation mechanisms characteristic of China are often underrepresented or insufficiently integrated into the curriculum. This disconnect can lead students to perceive these courses as outdated or irrelevant, thereby undermining their ability to develop the analytical skills necessary for

understanding and influencing their immediate economic environment. To bridge this gap, it is essential to incorporate contemporary economic phenomena into the curriculum, ensuring that students are equipped to critically analyze and contribute to the evolving landscape of China's economy in a meaningful and impactful manner.

3.3. Outdated Teaching and Evaluation Methodologies

The teaching of Marxist political economy often adheres to a traditional, teacher-centered, lecture-based approach, which is increasingly seen as inadequate in addressing the evolving demands of the new liberal arts framework. This conventional method tends to limit student engagement, as learners are primarily passive recipients of information rather than active participants in the educational process. Opportunities for interactive learning, such as debates, case studies, and project-based activities, are notably scarce. This lack of engagement hinders the development of critical thinking, creativity, and practical skills, which are essential for fostering interdisciplinary competencies. Furthermore, the reliance on outdated assessment practices exacerbates these challenges. A predominant focus on high-stakes final examinations encourages rote memorization rather than fostering a deep understanding of the subject matter [11–13]. Such assessments fail to evaluate complex skills, including critical analysis, innovative problem-solving, and the ability to synthesize knowledge across disciplines. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive overhaul of both teaching methodologies and evaluation systems to align with the goals of modern liberal arts education.

4. Paths to Constructing the Marxist Political Economy Curriculum System under the New Liberal Arts Framework

4.1. Promote In-Depth Interdisciplinary Integration in Curriculum Design

The future development of the Marxist political economy curriculum system requires overcoming disciplinary isolation to foster a more integrated and comprehensive academic framework. To achieve this, universities should prioritize the establishment of cross-departmental curriculum clusters. These clusters can be designed with the collaboration of departments such as economics, philosophy, history, sociology, law, and cultural studies, centering on Marxist political economy. For instance, a module titled "Capital in the 21st Century" could integrate Marxist critiques of capital, philosophical discussions on alienation, sociological analyses of labor relations in the gig economy, and legal studies on anti-monopoly regulations targeting technology giants. Such interdisciplinary approaches would provide students with a holistic understanding of complex socio-economic phenomena. Furthermore, thematic interdisciplinary modules should be developed to address contemporary issues. Instead of adhering to traditional chronological or text-based syllabi, courses can be structured around pressing themes. For example, the contradictions of capital, as analyzed by Marxist political economy, could be examined alongside environmental science and policy research to explore sustainable development. Similarly, platform monopolies and algorithmic labor could be studied through the combined lenses of Marxist political economy, information science, and media studies. Additionally, the principles of distribution and social justice inherent in Marxist political economy can be connected with modern public policy, sociology, and ethics, offering students practical insights into addressing real-world challenges. This approach ensures that the curriculum remains relevant and impactful in addressing contemporary societal needs.

4.2. Innovate Content and Emphasize Contemporary Relevance

Bridging the gap between theoretical frameworks and practical applications necessitates a dynamic approach to curriculum development, ensuring alignment with China's rapidly transforming economic landscape. This involves integrating the latest advancements in the localization of Marxist principles within the Chinese context, particularly focusing on economic strategies and philosophies that underpin the nation's development trajectory. Emphasis should be placed on applied analysis, moving beyond

abstract theoretical discussions to create a robust case library. This library should encompass detailed studies of Chinese enterprises, industrial policies, regional development initiatives, and China's strategic role in global economic governance [14, 15]. Such resources would provide students with concrete examples of how theoretical principles are operationalized in real-world scenarios. Furthermore, while maintaining a strong foundation in China's unique economic context, it is essential to foster a global perspective. This includes engaging with international economic issues and exploring alternative theoretical frameworks, such as comparative analyses of various capitalist models and critical examinations of contemporary Western Marxist and post-Keynesian perspectives. By adopting this comprehensive approach, the curriculum can equip students with the analytical tools necessary to address complex economic challenges, both domestically and globally, while fostering a nuanced understanding of diverse economic paradigms.

4.3. Reform Teaching Methods and Utilize Technology

The new liberal arts emphasizes a transformative shift from traditional, passive knowledge transmission to a more dynamic, student-centered learning approach. This involves replacing portions of conventional lectures with project-based activities that encourage students to apply Marxist political economy concepts to practical, real-world scenarios. For instance, students could engage in field research to examine labor conditions within local industries, investigate the ownership structures of publicly listed companies, or draft policy briefs addressing pressing economic issues. Such hands-on, practice-oriented learning lies at the heart of the new liberal arts framework. Additionally, the integration of technology can significantly enhance this educational model. Students may utilize digital archives to explore historical economic texts, employ data analysis tools to assess economic inequality within national statistics, or leverage simulation software to model complex economic processes. These activities not only deepen their understanding of economic theories but also equip them with essential digital literacy skills. Furthermore, fostering critical thinking is paramount. Structured debates on contentious economic topics, such as formal debates, Socratic seminars, and online discussion forums, can provide students with opportunities to analyze diverse perspectives and articulate well-reasoned arguments [16, 17]. This comprehensive approach ensures that students are prepared to navigate and contribute meaningfully to the evolving economic landscape.

4.4. Develop a Diversified Assessment and Evaluation System

Reformed curricula necessitate the development of innovative assessment systems designed to evaluate higher-order thinking and practical skills, moving beyond the traditional focus on simple recall. A diversified assessment portfolio should be implemented to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of student performance. This portfolio can integrate formative assessments, such as analytical papers, case study reports, group presentations, and classroom debates, alongside summative assessments, including final research papers, policy analysis projects, or creative applications of Marxist political economy theory to contemporary challenges. By reducing the emphasis on final exams, this approach promotes continuous learning and critical engagement. Furthermore, competency-based grading criteria should be established to assess not only content knowledge but also critical analysis, interdisciplinary integration, argumentation, and research capabilities. To ensure the effectiveness of the curriculum at the program level, the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) model can be employed. This model provides a holistic framework for evaluating curriculum design, implementation, and outcomes, enabling educators to identify areas for improvement and ensure alignment with educational objectives [15]. Such reforms aim to cultivate well-rounded, analytically skilled individuals prepared to address complex societal issues.

5. Conclusion

The new liberal arts initiative represents a transformative opportunity to rejuvenate Marxist Political Economy courses, evolving them from a traditional and compartmentalized academic discipline into a vibrant, interdisciplinary, and highly applicable field of study. This evolution does not imply a departure from the foundational principles of Marxist political economy; rather, it emphasizes their revitalization within an educational framework that champions critical analysis, practical relevance, and a nuanced understanding of contemporary socio-economic realities. By integrating diverse perspectives and fostering intellectual curiosity, this initiative aims to bridge the gap between theoretical constructs and real-world applications, ensuring that students are equipped to address complex challenges with innovative solutions. Furthermore, this paradigm shift underscores the importance of aligning academic pursuits with broader societal needs, thereby enhancing the relevance and impact of Marxist political economy in the modern era.

The strategies proposed in this paper—focused on interdisciplinary integration, content innovation, pedagogical reform, and diversified assessment methodologies—offer a robust framework for curriculum development. By dismantling rigid disciplinary boundaries, connecting classical theories to pressing contemporary issues, and fostering an environment of active inquiry and collaborative learning, universities can create a Marxist political economy curriculum that is both forward-looking and deeply rooted in foundational principles. Additionally, the emphasis on diversified assessment methods ensures that students are evaluated not only on their theoretical knowledge but also on their ability to apply critical thinking and problem-solving skills in practical contexts. This comprehensive approach to curriculum design has the potential to cultivate a generation of scholars who are adept at synthesizing knowledge across disciplines, thereby contributing to the advancement of academic research and societal progress. The integration of innovative teaching methods, such as case studies, simulations, and interactive discussions, further enhances the learning experience, making it more engaging and impactful for students.

Promoting the development of a Marxist political economy curriculum system through the lens of the new liberal arts initiative is a strategic imperative with far-reaching implications. This endeavor serves as the cornerstone for nurturing a new generation of talent equipped with a profound understanding of the principles underlying the socialist market economy and the analytical skills necessary to navigate the complexities of the future. Such individuals will play a pivotal role in addressing critical socio-economic challenges and proposing innovative solutions tailored to the unique context of their environment. By fostering integrated thinking and encouraging the application of theoretical insights to practical scenarios, this curriculum aims to empower students to contribute meaningfully to the nation's strategic development. Moreover, this initiative aligns with the broader goal of cultivating cultural confidence and intellectual independence, ensuring that academic advancements are not only relevant but also deeply resonant with societal aspirations. The ultimate vision of this effort is to establish a dynamic academic ecosystem that bridges the gap between tradition and innovation, thereby laying the groundwork for sustainable progress and enduring cultural enrichment.

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