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Research on the Design Logic and Implementation Strategies of Topic-Based Teaching in University Ideological and Political Education Courses

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Abstract: Ideological and political theory courses in higher education institutions bear the crucial responsibility of cultivating a new generation capable of shouldering the mission of national rejuvenation. These courses significantly influence college students' ideological and political literacy as well as the formation of their value systems. The traditional teaching model faces challenges in stimulating learning interest and fostering deep critical thinking. This paper employs topic-based teaching as a framework to thoroughly analyze its instructional design logic in university ideological education, detailing implementation strategies including meticulous topic selection and design, creation of authentic and complex teaching scenarios, structured inquiry-based activities, integration of interdisciplinary and professional knowledge, and refinement of formative and developmental assessment systems. Topic-based teaching enhances student engagement and improves course effectiveness, while cultivating students' critical thinking and practical problem-solving skills.

Keywords: Topic-based teaching; College ideological and political education courses; Design logic; Implementation strategies

1. Introduction

Ideological and political education courses in higher education institutions serve as a pivotal component in fulfilling the fundamental mission of fostering virtue and nurturing talents, undertaking the crucial task of guiding college students to develop a correct worldview, outlook on life, and values. These courses are not merely classrooms for knowledge transmission but also primary platforms for value guidance, playing an irreplaceable role in cultivating students' sense of social responsibility, innovative spirit, and practical abilities. In the context of the new era, with diverse social ideologies and highly active student thinking, higher education institutions face heightened demands for ideological and political education. Institutions should innovate teaching methodologies to enhance the appeal and effectiveness of these courses. This paper explores teaching models for ideological and political education that align with contemporary characteristics and student needs, holding significant importance for improving their educational outcomes.

2. Analysis of the Teaching Objectives for Ideological and Political Courses in Higher Education Institutions

The core objective of ideological and political education courses in universities is to implement the principle of "cultivating virtue and nurturing talents." From a macro-value perspective, these courses bear the unique mission of shaping students' character and educating them, guiding them to establish correct worldviews, outlooks on life, and values, while fostering their political, ideological, theoretical, and emotional identification with socialism with Chinese characteristics. The teaching objectives of these courses

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encompass three levels: first, systematically explaining core content such as the fundamental principles of Marxism and the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics; second, enhancing students' theoretical thinking skills, value judgment abilities, social cognition capabilities, and practical participation skills; third, internalizing the core socialist values as students' 'spiritual pursuits and externalizing them into conscious actions, ultimately cultivating well-rounded socialist builders and successors who excel in moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education. The design of these teaching objectives must closely align with contemporary developments and student characteristics, adhering to the principles of course instruction while addressing major societal concerns, ensuring that ideological and political education truly "resonates with students' minds, hearts, and actions" [1].

3. Characteristics and Advantages of Topic-Based Teaching

Issue-based teaching is an instructional model that centers on a core topic, guiding students to conduct analysis, engage in discussions, and develop knowledge through structured exploration, thereby achieving the integration of knowledge acquisition, skill enhancement, and value cultivation. The entire teaching process revolves around a meticulously designed central theme, with all instructional activities serving to deepen understanding of the topic. By employing authentic, complex, and open-ended contexts, this approach contextualizes abstract theories within real-world social scenarios, enhancing learners' 'immersion. Emphasizing student-centered participation, issue-based teaching employs structured, sequenced activities to encourage critical thinking, argumentation, and decision-making. Compared to traditional methods, its advantages are evident: First, it fosters proactive learning through task-driven approaches and role-playing, transforming passive reception into active knowledge construction; Second, it cultivates higher-order thinking skills---students' critical analysis, logical reasoning, and problem-solving abilities are sharpened through examining complex issues; Third, it facilitates the seamless integration of knowledge, skills, and values, enabling students to naturally combine theoretical understanding, methodological application, and value judgments while addressing real-world social challenges, thereby realizing the educational goal of "internalizing values through cognition and externalizing them through action" in ideological and political education [2].

4. Principles for Applying Topic-Based Teaching in University Ideological and Political Education Courses

4.1. Uphold the Correct Political Direction and Value Orientation

Issue-based teaching must adhere to the correct political direction and value orientation. The selection of topics, the creation of contexts, the guidance of discussions, and the final conclusions must all be unequivocal, ensuring alignment with the Party's theories, lines, principles, and policies. When designing topics, teachers must exercise rigorous political scrutiny to ensure that both the topics themselves and the potential discussion directions do not deviate from the fundamental stance of Marxism or the basic direction of socialism with Chinese characteristics. For example, when exploring the topic of "Chinese-style modernization," students must be guided to understand its essential differences from Western modernization and its socialist attributes, rather than engaging in mere comparative analyses of models. Throughout the teaching process, teachers serve not only as organizers of discussions but also as facilitators of value clarification. When students exhibit value deviations or ambiguous viewpoints during discussions, teachers should promptly intervene, employing Marxist positions, perspectives, and methods to analyze and guide the discourse, steering it toward deepening theoretical understanding and reinforcing the correct path of the "Four Confidences."

4.2. Adhere to the Principles of "three Closenesses" and Authenticity

The "Three Closenesses" ---closeness to reality, closeness to daily life, and closeness to students---mean that topics should originate from genuine social contradictions,

authentic challenges students face during their growth, or real-life cases, avoiding fiction and speculation. Teachers must immerse themselves in students' learning and lives to understand their concerns, interests, and ideological trends, drawing instructional materials from familiar campus experiences, current social issues, and political news. For example, topics can be designed around students' academic backgrounds, employment concerns, campus phenomena, or major national strategies. Only when topics are authentic and closely relevant to students can they effectively stimulate their investigative interest and desire to express themselves, making them feel that the content of ideological and political education discussions "relates to them," thereby encouraging active participation in information gathering, idea exchange, and problem-solving [3].

4.3. Adhere to the Principles of Logical Coherence and Hierarchical Structure

Thematic instructional design should establish a clear logical framework, typically structured around the cognitive sequence of "what---it---is; why---it matters; and how to address it," ensuring discussions progress coherently and progressively. For instance, when focusing on a specific theory, one could develop a systematic approach: first understanding its core concepts, then analyzing its context and values, and finally exploring practical implementation pathways. In terms of hierarchy, the design of topics and activities must account for student diversity and cognitive development patterns, progressing from surface-level observations to deeper theoretical analysis and value assessments--- moving from simple to complex concepts and from intuitive understanding to rational reasoning. Instruction can begin with concrete, emotionally engaging scenarios to guide students in observing phenomena, gradually advancing to theoretical analysis and value evaluation. Tailored inquiry tasks or differentiated instructional resources should be provided for students at varying learning levels, ensuring all learners achieve meaningful growth.

5. Design and Implementation Strategies for Topic-Based Teaching in University Ideological and Political Education Courses

5.1. Carefully Selected and Designed Topics

Textbooks serve as the fundamental basis for teaching. Teachers should thoroughly explore core concepts, major theories, and key challenging topics within textbooks, transforming them into discussion-worthy and analytical subjects. For example, starting from the "Theory of Contradiction" in *Basic Principles of Marxism*, educators could design questions such as: "How can the perspective of unity of opposites be applied to examine the opportunities and challenges brought by artificial intelligence?" Ideological and political education courses possess distinct contemporary relevance; teachers should continuously monitor major policies formulated by the Party and the state, domestic and international current events, and cutting-edge developments in science and technology to identify topics with high educational value. For instance, leveraging the concept of "new-quality productive forces," one could pose questions like: "What does developing new-quality productive forces mean for college students' employment and entrepreneurship?" During instruction, teachers can also employ methods such as surveys, classroom discussions, and online platform analysis to understand students' concerns regarding academics, emotions, career development, and social engagement, thereby creating topics that resonate with real-world issues. For example, how do phenomena like "involution" and "lying flat" reflect contemporary youth mentalities and social structures? Additionally, topics should be selected by integrating interdisciplinary knowledge from fields such as economics, law, sociology, and ethics, tailored to students' specific academic backgrounds---for instance, designing questions like "Where exactly lies the boundary between algorithmic recommendations and personal information protection?" for law students [4].

5.2. Creating Authentic, Complex, and Open Teaching Scenarios

The context serves as the vehicle for addressing issues, acting as a crucial bridge connecting theory with reality and knowledge with application. In university ideological and political education courses, authentic, complex, and open teaching contexts should be constructed. These contexts must draw from the real world---such as news reports, policy documents, historical archives, film and television clips, or data from social surveys. For instance, when examining the topic of "ecological civilization construction," educators could present comparative ecological and economic data before and after the implementation of the Yangtze River fishing ban in a specific region, along with authentic stories of fishermen's career transitions, immersing students in real developmental dilemmas and choices. Context design should incorporate multidimensional information, diverse stakeholders, and potential conflicts, avoiding simplistic black-and-white judgments. When discussing rural revitalization, educators might illustrate the multiple challenges---a village faces when introducing tourism development with capital investment---including traditional cultural preservation, ecological sustainability, and benefit distribution among villagers---encouraging students to assume different roles in simulated negotiations. Contexts should not prescribe a single "correct" answer; instead, they should provide ample space for critical thinking, argumentation, and creative expression, fostering evidence-based diverse perspectives.

5.3. Design Structured and Sequential Inquiry Activities

Inquiry-based activities serve as the cornerstone for fostering student collaboration and stimulating critical thinking. Activity designs should avoid fragmented or arbitrary approaches, emphasizing structured and sequential frameworks to create a coherent, progressively advancing learning system. A complete inquiry cycle typically comprises four phases: individual research, collaborative exploration, outcome production, and public review. During the individual research phase, activities should guide students in targeted data collection and preliminary analysis---for example, providing a literature list containing diverse perspectives, requiring students to write reading notes, develop initial viewpoints, and identify supporting arguments and uncertainties. The collaborative exploration phase calls for group tasks that facilitate deep interaction, such as "role-playing debates" (simulating hearings or international negotiations), "cooperative problem-solving" (jointly drafting policy proposals), or "joint concept mapping." These activities demand teamwork and mutual refinement of ideas through intellectual exchange. The outcome production phase should encourage diverse expression formats beyond academic papers, including research reports, short videos, proposal drafts, public speeches, or theatrical productions, catering to students' varied intellectual strengths. Finally, the public review phase is pivotal, enabling teams to present their "private" achievements in broader "public" spaces through classroom presentations, mock press conferences, exhibition displays, or peer evaluations. This process not only enhances students' expressive abilities but also subjects their viewpoints to rigorous scrutiny, enabling them to make the leap from 'I know' to 'I can argue and defend my position'[5].

5.4. Promoting Interdisciplinary and Professional Integration

University ideological and political courses cater to students with diverse academic backgrounds, necessitating the promotion of interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary integration to enhance the relevance and appeal of topic-based teaching. Teachers should proactively familiarize themselves with the core knowledge, thinking frameworks, and cutting-edge issues of the institution's major disciplines, identifying convergence points between ideological and political education and various academic fields. For students in science and engineering disciplines, topics such as "Engineering Ethics and the Spirit of Master Craftsmanship," "Technological Innovation and National Strategic Security," and "The Scientific Basis and Policy Pathways for Ecological Civilization Construction" can be designed to guide them from a technical rationality perspective toward a value rationality framework. For economics and management students, discussions on "Fairness and Efficiency in the Socialist Market Economy," "Cultural Conflicts and Integration in China's Enterprises Going Global," and "Labor and Distribution in the Digital Economy Era" are

appropriate. For humanities and arts students, focus areas may include "Cultural Confidence and Civilizational Exchange," "Historical Perspectives and Values in Artistic Creation," and "Public Opinion Guidance and Ideological Security in the Social Media Era." During implementation, faculty members from relevant disciplines can be invited as guest speakers to participate in classroom discussions, offering professional insights; alternatively, students can be guided to apply case analysis tools and research methods from their own disciplines to address ideological and political theoretical issues and produce interdisciplinary analytical reports. Such integration helps students comprehend the social value and ethical dimensions of specialized knowledge, achieving a synergistic effect where knowledge-based education and value-based education reinforce each other.

5.5. Improving Process-Oriented and Developmental Teaching Evaluation

The evaluation system for thematic teaching must align with its inquiry-based and generative nature, shifting from singular summative knowledge assessments to multidimensional, continuous developmental competency evaluations. Process evaluation primarily focuses on students' performance throughout the thematic inquiry process, including observations of their participation, contributions, and collaborative spirit during group discussions; assessments of their information gathering, analysis, and application skills; and analyses of logical reasoning, argumentative depth, and value orientation demonstrated in written reports and oral presentations. Teachers can utilize tools such as rubrics, observation checklists, and learning portfolios for systematic documentation. Developmental evaluation emphasizes student growth as its core objective, prioritizing longitudinal comparisons to track progress in cognitive abilities and value judgment across multiple inquiry cycles rather than simplistic horizontal grading. Evaluation should involve diversified stakeholders---alongside teacher assessments, incorporate student self-evaluations, peer reviews, group evaluations, and even participation from external practice mentors. For instance, evaluating a community service project might cover dimensions such as theoretical rationale, practical feasibility, teamwork dynamics, and depth of reflection, with joint assessment by teachers and students. The evaluation should prioritize assessing students' cognitive quality and value orientations, including their ability to approach issues dialectically and demonstrate patriotism and social responsibility. Ultimately, the evaluation results should be compiled into a personalized "competency development report" and provided to the students, highlighting their strengths and areas for improvement, thereby fostering a virtuous cycle where assessment drives learning and growth.

6. Conclusion

Topic-based teaching is an innovative instructional model that has injected fresh vitality into the reform and development of ideological and political education courses in universities. It not only stimulates students' learning interest and enhances teaching quality, but also fosters their critical thinking, innovative spirit, and practical abilities. In response to the new demands of the contemporary era, universities should actively explore the application of topic-based teaching, continuously refine instructional design and implementation strategies, meet students' diverse learning needs, and improve the relevance and effectiveness of ideological and political education. Through sustained practice and exploration, topic-based teaching will undoubtedly play an increasingly vital role in university ideological and political education, contributing to the cultivation of young people capable of shouldering the significant responsibility of national rejuvenation.

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