Research on Innovative Pathways for Integrating Ideological Education into Art and Design Programs in Higher Education in the New Era

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Abstract: In the context of higher education in the new era, the core objective is to achieve "moral development and talent cultivation," leading to the integration of ideological education into courses. It aims at the deep integration of specialized courses with ideological education. However, the practical and innovative nature of the art and design discipline presents numerous challenges in value integration, including an imperfect system, insufficient resources, and a singular evaluation model. These issues create a "disconnect" between the two. This study analyzes the challenges of integrating ideological education into art and design courses and develops a "Three-Level, Five-Element Collaborative Education Model." The model emphasizes value cognition, ability development, and innovative contributions as core objectives, relying on the collaborative advancement of course integration, content optimization, organizational innovation, resource sharing, and a multi-dimensional evaluation mechanism. The study explores an innovative pathway for integrating moral education into course design and teaching. The research shows that this model enriches the theoretical framework of ideological education and effectively enhances students' professional abilities, social responsibility, and cultural confidence through practical activities, providing valuable insights for promoting educational reform in higher education.

Keywords: Curriculum-Based Ideological Education; Art and Design Courses; Innovative Pathways; Higher Education in the New Era; Teaching Innovation

1. Introduction

In the context of the new era, the core goal of higher education reform is to cultivate well-rounded individuals who are fully developed in terms of ethics, intellect, physical fitness, aesthetics, and labor. As a key aspect of educational reform in higher education, the integration of ideological education into courses, proposed in 2014, has gradually become an inevitable trend. This educational philosophy emphasizes the integration of specialized courses with ideological education, achieving the unity of knowledge transfer and value guidance, thereby promoting the comprehensive development of students. However, in practice, the art and design profession, due to its highly practical nature and diverse course content, faces unique challenges in value integration.

Currently, the implementation of ideological education in art and design courses faces issues such as inadequate systematic development, insufficient alignment of course content with societal needs, and a single evaluation model, hindering the full realization of value integration in the curriculum. This situation not only limits the effectiveness of ideological education but also fails to meet the demands of the new era for design professionals who possess both moral integrity and professional competence. Therefore, researching effective pathways for integrating ideological education into art and design courses, as well as exploring its theoretical framework and practical models, is crucial for promoting the high-quality development of art and design education in higher education.

2. Analysis of the Current Situation of Civics Integration in Art and Design Courses in Colleges and Universities

Currently, although the integration of ideological education (IPR) into art and design

programs has been initiated, it remains in its early stages, facing challenges such as insufficient systematization, lack of resources, and a singular approach[1].The integration of ideological education lacks a clear top-level design, with vague educational objectives and fragmented course content, hindering the formation of a systematic educational mechanism. Furthermore, compared to ideological courses, the teaching of art and design programs lacks discipline-specific cases and high-quality teaching materials, which significantly restrict the implementation of IPR[2].

During course implementation, art and design programs also face the issue of "two separate tracks" between professional education and ideological education. Courses have long focused on skill training and creative expression, while the integration of ideological content lacks a natural entry point, resulting in a disconnection between ideological education and professional teaching[3]. Additionally, the teaching staff lacks sufficient understanding and capability in implementing IPR concepts, and the multi-disciplinary collaboration mechanism remains underdeveloped, hindering the achievement of collaborative educational goals. From the student perspective, there is a lack of interest and understanding of IPR, which results in low engagement and participation. Furthermore, the existing evaluation mechanism is singular and lacks the capacity to scientifically measure the effectiveness of IPR, hindering its further promotion.

The causes of these issues can be attributed to inadequate top-level course design, disconnection between teaching content and societal needs, delayed resource development, and weak multi-disciplinary collaboration. In course planning, ideological education has not been fully integrated with professional goals, resulting in a formalized approach to design and implementation. Moreover, the course content is not closely aligned with national strategic needs, thus failing to fully explore the educational potential of ideological elements. The lack of course cases and teaching materials tailored to the characteristics of art and design programs further restricts the enhancement of teaching effectiveness. To address these issues, efforts should be made at multiple levels, including course design, resource development, teacher training, and evaluation mechanisms, to establish a systematic IPR teaching framework and provide effective pathways for reforming art and design education in higher education in the new era.

3. Strategies for Integrating Ideological Education into Art and Design Courses in Higher Education

3.1 Top-Level Design: Constructing a Collaborative Educational System for Ideological Education in Art and Design Courses

The integration of ideological education into art and design programs should begin with top-level design, which involves constructing a systematic teaching framework grounded in the theory of collaborative education[4]. The core objective is to cultivate design professionals who possess social responsibility, cultural confidence, and innovation, with a focus on moral development and value guidance. Teaching content should deeply integrate core values into the curriculum, aligning them with national strategic needs, such as the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage, rural revitalization, and the health industry, thus imbuing ideological content with social significance and disciplinary characteristics. For example, design courses could introduce topics such as "Cultural Inheritance and Innovative Design," which would guide students in combining traditional Chinese cultural elements with modern design concepts to enhance cultural confidence[5]. Simultaneously, innovative teaching methods should be adopted, incorporating project-based learning and case teaching strategies to enhance student engagement and learning experiences by solving practical problems and analyzing real-world cases. In modular teaching design, emphasis should be placed on integrating theoretical learning with practical activities, such as conducting field research and design projects under the theme of "rural revitalization," allowing students to experience the value of ideological education in real-world contexts.

3.2 Teaching Implementation: Promoting The Deep Integration of Courses and Ideological Education

The deep integration of courses and ideological education requires comprehensive optimization of the curriculum system, resource development, and teacher capabilities during the implementation phase. First, the curriculum system must be reconstructed to form an interdisciplinary course group centered on "Art + Technology + Culture," with the introduction of modular courses such as "Cultural Confidence and Design Thinking" and "Healthy Living and Brand Design[6]." This approach ensures that the course content aligns with national strategic needs, while enhancing both its ideological depth and practical relevance. For instance, in the "Healthy Brand Design" course, students examine the "Healthy China 2030" strategy and develop branding solutions that address the nation's health needs. Second, resource integration and platform development are essential for creating a case repository that includes ideological education content. For example, teaching cases related to rural revitalization projects should be developed, offering reference materials for both teachers and students. Additionally, an online interactive teaching platform should be developed to facilitate cross-regional resource sharing and support online learning. Furthermore, improving teacher capabilities is key to the successful implementation of the course. Regularly organizing specialized training and teaching seminars on ideological education helps teachers gain a deeper understanding of its core principles, improving their ability to incorporate ideological content into professional courses. Building interdisciplinary teaching teams will provide students with a richer learning experience.

3.3 Personal Characteristics of Respondents

A scientifically comprehensive teaching evaluation system is a key component of the innovative path to integrating ideological education into courses. A diversified participation mechanism should be implemented for evaluation participants. This mechanism includes not only teacher assessments of students, but also student self-evaluations, peer evaluations, industry mentor evaluations, and societal feedback, ensuring a multidimensional and representative evaluation process. For instance, in the brand design course, industry mentors may be invited to assess students' work, offering an industry perspective to evaluate whether the designs hold practical application value.

With respect to evaluation methods, a combination of process-based and outcome-based evaluations is recommended. Dynamic data tracking should be employed to monitor students' ideological transformation, professional skill development, and the enhancement of their social responsibility throughout the learning process. Simultaneously, final project displays and practical reports will summarize students' overall capabilities[7]. Regarding evaluation criteria, the three core dimensions of comprehensive literacy, social responsibility, and practical ability should be emphasized. Comprehensive literacy encompasses students' innovative thinking and expressive abilities. Social responsibility is reflected in students' attention to and resolution of societal issues in their designs. Practical ability assesses students' hands-on skills and execution in real-world scenarios. This multidimensional evaluation system can scientifically reflect the effectiveness of ideological education in courses, providing a basis for course optimization and further promotion.

4. Integration of Ideological Education in the "Data Information Visualization" Course

4.1 Course Features and Reform Background

The "Data Information Visualization" course is a core component for design-related majors. Its objective is to visually and creatively present complex information, assisting students in acquiring skills in data analysis and visualization design[8]. However, traditional teaching models have led to a disconnection between professional education and ideological education, with each operating independently, lacking effective integration[9]. Consequently, students exhibit low acceptance of ideological education elements during the learning process, with some even showing resistance. Furthermore, the course content design often lacks deep integration with national development strategies and societal needs, resulting in superficial topics chosen by students and insufficient motivation to learn. To address these issues, the course reform

focuses on "moral cultivation and talent development" as its central task. By incorporating ideological elements and establishing a unique ideological project database, the reform aims to integrate the ideological education goal of "telling China's story well" with professional knowledge acquisition. The "dual integration and dual innovation" course model is proposed, which integrates ideological education, connects course content, fosters creative competitions, and encourages innovative projects, ultimately establishing a student-centered, comprehensive teaching system[10].

4.2 Practical Pathway for Integrating Ideological Education into the Course

4.2.1 Construction of A Project Database: Deep Integration of Ideology and Profession

To align ideological education with professional education, three distinctive ideological project databases have been developed within the course: "Data Telling China's Story," "Children's Science Popularization," and "Visualizing China's Cultural Heritage." In these projects, topics are selected, data is collected, information is analyzed, and charts are designed by the students. This process not only strengthens professional skills but also internalizes ideological content through practice. For example, in the "Visualizing China's Cultural Heritage" project, students are required to research the historical background, craft characteristics, and the current state of inheritance of Chinese cultural heritage. Data visualization is then used to showcase the charm and value of these cultural elements. Through this process, students not only deepen their understanding of professional knowledge but also cultivate cultural confidence and a sense of social responsibility. This "subtle and engaging" approach to integrating ideological education avoids resistance that may arise from the forced insertion of content, achieving a more natural and effective integration of ideological education.

4.2.2 Teaching Organization: Innovation in Teaching Formats and Multidimensional Interaction

A blended learning approach is adopted in the course, combining online resources with offline classroom practice to enhance students' initiative and participation. Various teaching activities, such as case analysis, group discussions, and project presentations, are employed to guide students in achieving their learning objectives. For instance, the "Tianmen Sugar Sculpture Information Visualization Design" case is used in the course to illustrate the advantages of information visualization in mass communication, helping students understand how design can promote exceptional Chinese traditional culture. The project runs throughout the course, with students being continuously assessed on their knowledge and skills through the entire process, from data collection to design presentation. Furthermore, the course aligns with high-level academic competitions, encouraging students to participate through team collaboration, which stimulates their enthusiasm for learning, creativity, competitive spirit, and teamwork. The course outcomes are further disseminated through public exhibitions, the course's official WeChat account, and students' social media platforms, thereby expanding their impact and increasing social recognition of students' achievements.

4.2.3 Interdisciplinary Collaboration: Enhancing Comprehensive Design Abilities

Data information visualization design requires students to possess a broad set of skills, including data processing, logical analysis, and graphical expression. However, under traditional teaching models, design students often lack the systematic capabilities required for processing and analyzing information. To address this issue, the course reform has introduced an interdisciplinary collaboration framework, which involves the formation of both interdisciplinary teaching and student teams[11]. The teaching team is composed of instructors from fields such as design, computer science, and management, who provide guidance to students in areas including data processing, cultural background analysis, and chart design. The student teams integrate members from various academic backgrounds, thus achieving complementary advantages. For instance, in the "Children's Science Popularization" design project, students from the School of Design collaborated with those from the School of Computer Science to develop a children's math game based on the Nine Chapters on the Mathematical Art, which won second place in a computer design competition. This interdisciplinary

collaboration model not only addresses gaps in students' knowledge structures but also significantly enhances their overall design and project management abilities.

4.3 Practical Outcomes and Reflections

The practical outcomes of the curriculum reform have been remarkable, yielding positive results from both professional education and ideological education perspectives. In the realm of professional education, students' design abilities, innovation capabilities, and competitive awareness have been comprehensively enhanced. Through their participation in national and provincial competitions, students have won over 80 awards, including honors such as the Challenge Cup and Internet+, with 6 national first prizes, 8 second prizes, and 16 provincial first prizes. The overall award rate for the course was 43%. These outcomes demonstrate the effectiveness of the curriculum reform in motivating students' learning and enhancing their practical skills.

In the realm of ideological education, the course subtly integrates ideological content through project-based teaching, significantly strengthening students' sense of value identification and social responsibility. In the "Visualizing Chinese Cultural Heritage" project, students showcased the contemporary relevance of Chinese cultural heritage through their designs, thereby enhancing their cultural confidence. Students generally reported a significant increase in interest in the course theme, with over 95% expressing satisfaction with both the course content and teaching methods. Furthermore, the course has gained wide societal recognition through public exhibitions and new media dissemination, offering valuable insights for the practical promotion of ideological education within higher education institutions.

Despite the notable success of the curriculum reform, there remains room for further optimization. For example, students' ability to deeply explore societal needs when selecting topics requires improvement, and future efforts should focus on enhancing guidance mechanisms to support students in choosing more challenging themes. Additionally, the evaluation system could be further diversified by incorporating more social practice assessments and feedback from industry mentors, which would further enhance the scientific rigor and comprehensiveness of ideological education. The course team will continue to refine teaching methods and deepen the "Double Integration, Double Innovation" model, providing additional innovative practice examples for ideological education within higher education design courses.

5. Three-Level, Five-Element Collaborative Education Model

Based on an analysis of the existing literature and summaries of course practices, the "Three-Level, Five-Element Collaborative Education Model" is proposed in this study. The model centers on the core educational goal of "moral development" and constructs a systematic framework for the integration of ideological education into curriculum practices across multiple levels and dimensions. The model progresses through three levels: value cognition, ability construction, and innovative contribution, guiding students from ideological inspiration to the cultivation of practical skills and social service. At the value cognition level, students are introduced to social and cultural topics, including core values, cultural heritage, and rural revitalization, enabling the development of a foundational understanding of content related to ideological education. At the ability construction level, students engage in project-based teaching activities that facilitate the translation of these values into practical abilities, acquiring specific skills for incorporating social responsibility into their design work. At the innovative contribution level, students address national strategies and societal needs by proposing innovative design solutions, thereby demonstrating the positive role of design in societal development and cultural dissemination.

The implementation of the model relies on the collaborative progression of five key elements, ensuring the deep integration of ideological education with professional

education. The integration of course objectives clarifies the educational focus of ideological education, embedding these goals within the design of professional courses. Teaching content is optimized through the creation of a specialized library of ideological projects, covering areas such as cultural heritage, health design, and rural product branding and promotion, ensuring alignment with national strategic needs. Innovative teaching methods, including project-based learning and case studies, are employed to engage students and stimulate their participation. The integration of internal and external teaching resources enhances the practical and societal relevance of the courses through case libraries, industry connections, and interdisciplinary collaboration. A multi-dimensional evaluation mechanism, involving teachers, students, industry mentors, and other social stakeholders, establishes a comprehensive assessment system that evaluates students from multiple perspectives: knowledge acquisition, skill application, and social value realization.

The model also emphasizes collaboration and continuous optimization. By fostering interaction among students, teachers, enterprises, and society, the course content and teaching methods are continuously adjusted based on practical needs. For example, feedback from enterprise mentors and social input ensures that students' design works are more effectively aligned with cultural preservation, social service, and industrial transformation. Teachers further refine course content through the assessment of students' learning outcomes. This theoretical model has demonstrated significant results in practice, facilitating the growth of students in professional skills, cultural confidence, and social responsibility. It also provides systematic theoretical guidance and actionable pathways for the implementation of ideological education in university art and design courses.

6. Conclusion

The integration of ideological education into art and design courses is essential for the reform of higher education in the new era and serves as a critical measure to achieve the fundamental goal of "moral development." The "Three-Level, Five-Element Collaborative Education Model" proposed in this study enables the systematic implementation of ideological education, transitioning from theory to practice through three levels of objectives: value cognition, ability construction, and innovative contribution, with the collaborative advancement of five core elements. The model emphasizes the organic integration of ideological education with professional teaching, which enhances not only students' professional skills and innovative thinking but also their cultural confidence and social responsibility. In practice, this model has facilitated the alignment of course content with national strategic needs, thereby creating a practical and scalable pathway for the implementation of ideological education. In the future, art and design courses in higher education should continue to deepen both the content and forms of ideological education, improve evaluation mechanisms, expand social participation, and further enhance the practical effectiveness and societal impact of ideological education, thereby contributing significantly to the reform and innovation of higher education in the new era.

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