The Symbolic Performance of "Ideological and Political Education in Courses" in Colleges and Universities and Its Application in the Path of Demystification

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Abstract:"Curriculum-based ideological and political education" has been widely promoted in China's higher education system as an important path for colleges and universities in the new era to implement the fundamental task of fostering virtue and nurturing talent. However, as the policy was fully advanced, the phenomenon of "symbolic performance" gradually emerged in its implementation process. That is, the curriculum schedule incorporates ideological and political elements on the surface, but in reality, it lacks the organic integration of value guidance and professional education. This article is based on the theories of educational sociology and political semiotics, and constructs a multi-dimensional analysis framework. Systematically explore the typical manifestations, generation mechanisms and deep logic of the "symbolic performance" in ideological and political education courses. Research findings indicate that the current "curriculum-based ideological and political education" is characterized by labeling, templating, and utilitarianism, which are rooted in the mechanized understanding of policy implementation, the one-sided cognitive structure of teachers, and the insufficiency of the institutional support system. In response to the above issues, this paper proposes a practical path of "de-mystification", advocating for systematic optimization at multiple levels such as teaching concepts, teaching methods, evaluation mechanisms, and teacher development: This includes the shift from "label embedding" to "value symbiosis", from "indoctrination teaching" to "experiential learning", from "material assessment" to "effect tracking", as well as the establishment of a dual-mentor support system of "professional + ideological and political". This research aims to promote the return of "curriculum-based ideological and political education" to its essence of nurturing people, and enhance its educational effectiveness and institutional vitality. And it provides theoretical support and practical reference for deepening ideological and political reform in colleges and universities.

Keywords: Curriculum Ideology and Politics, Symbolic Representation, Higher Education, Demystification Path, Ideological and Political Education

1. Introduction

In recent years, the construction of "ideological and political education in courses" in colleges and universities has been widely promoted across the country as an important measure to implement the fundamental task of cultivating morality and cultivating people. However, in the process of practice, the understanding of ideological and political education in courses by some colleges and universities and teachers still remains superficial. The specific phenomenon is the emergence of the phenomenon of "symbolic performance" - that is, the policy requirements are met in form. But in essence, it fails to truly achieve the organic integration of value guidance and professional education. This phenomenon not only weakens the educational effectiveness of ideological and political education in courses, but may also cause cognitive fatigue among teachers and students. Going further, it may even lead to resistance to ideological and political education. Therefore, it is necessary to deeply analyze the manifestation form and generation mechanism of symbolic performance of ideological and political education in courses, and explore a practical and feasible "de-shielding" path to make ideological and political education in courses truly return to its essence of educating people.

As a crucial path for universities in the new era to fulfill their fundamental mission of cultivating morality and cultivating talent, "Ideological and political education in courses" has become a strategic priority in deepening reform of my country's higher education system. Since the Ministry of Education issued relevant guidance, universities across the country have responded by actively promoting the integration of ideological and political education into all disciplines, attempting to achieve an organic integration of "knowledge transfer" and "value guidance." However, in the process of widespread implementation, the educational concept of "Ideological and political education in courses" has gradually degenerated into a phenomenon of "symbolic performance" in some universities. Problems such as formalistic instructional design, hollow, symbolic teaching content, and utilitarian teaching processes have gradually emerged. This symbolic phenomenon not only deviates from the "student-centered" educational principle but also weakens the educational effectiveness of ideological and political education in courses. It can even lead to cognitive fatigue among students and teaching burnout among teachers, hindering the effective implementation of educational policies. The "symbolic performance" of ideological and political education in courses is rooted in the confluence of multiple factors. On the one hand, some universities have a tendency to implement ideological and political education with a "one-size-fits-all" and "quantitative indoctrination" approach, leading teachers to view ideological and political education as an additional burden rather than a natural part of the curriculum. On the other hand, due to real-world challenges such as teacher cognitive biases, a lack of teaching methods, and unbalanced institutional incentives, ideological and political education in

practice has become superficial and lacks its essence. Current research has largely focused on top-level design, teaching cases, and the integration of ideological and political elements into curriculum. However, there is a lack of research on the mechanisms of its "symbolization" and its demystification. Theoretical exploration and practical intervention on this issue have become critical issues that require urgent attention in higher education.

This study aims to examine the characteristics of the "symbolic performance" of ideological and political education in curriculum, delve into its causal mechanisms, and propose practical strategies for constructing "demystification" pathways to help ideological and political education return to its core educational purpose. On a theoretical level, this article draws on relevant theories from educational sociology and political semiotics to systematically analyze the operational logic of "value symbols" in curriculum. On a practical level, it focuses on the current problems of "labeling, template-based, and utilitarian" teaching practices among university teachers, attempting to propose a systematic optimization path for instructional design, evaluation mechanisms, and teacher development. The innovations of this study are primarily reflected in the following three aspects: First, it constructs a multidimensional analytical framework for the "symbolization" phenomenon of curriculum ideological and political education, systematically analyzing its generation logic from the perspectives of educational policy implementation, teacher cognitive structure, and institutional environment. Second, it introduces the concept of "unveiling path," emphasizing the need to break through formalistic ideological and political expression and restore the essential connection between curriculum and education through the resonance of teaching values, methodological innovation, and institutional coordination. Third, by combining the characteristics of different disciplines, it explores the integration of "professional knowledge + value guidance" and proposes a practical strategy for embedding ideological and political education in curriculum, providing theoretical support and practical reference for comprehensively improving the quality of curriculum ideological and political education in universities.

2. The Proposed Methodology

2.1 The main manifestations of the symbolic performance of ideological and political education in courses

The symbolic manifestation of ideological and political education in courses refers to the mechanical insertion of ideological and political elements into teaching, turning them into quantifiable and verifiable "labels", without naturally integrating them into the value orientation of professional education. This is mainly reflected in the following three typical patterns:

Formalized labels: Rough grafting, lacking organic integration

Some teachers, in order to meet the assessment requirements, forcibly insert ideological and political terms such as "Core socialist values" and "The Four Confidences" into professional courses. However, these expressions lack logical connection with professional knowledge, resulting in a "duality" phenomenon. For instance, in computer programming courses, the phrase "serving the country through science and technology" is forcibly inserted without explaining its meaning through actual industry cases. In geography teaching, the concept of "ecological civilization" is

mechanically inserted without delving deeply into its connection with professional knowledge. This kind of label-based teaching approach has turned ideological and political education into a pretentious work, failing to touch students' hearts and cognition.

Formal expression: The template is rigid and lacks innovative vitality

Due to the lack of in-depth teaching design, some teachers adopt a fixed model of "ideological and political guidance - knowledge explanation - ideological and political summary", and even use the same ideological and political cases in multiple subjects. For instance, in liberal arts courses, "red classics" are often used as ideological and political materials, while in science and engineering courses, the stories of scientists like Qian Xuesen returning to China are commonly quoted. This leads to a high degree of homogeneity in the ideological and political content of different courses. This stereotyped presentation method not only reduces the novelty of teaching but also easily causes students to experience aesthetic fatigue, making it difficult for them to deeply understand its value.

Manifestations of utilitarianism: emphasizing materials over practical results, and focusing on performance-based teaching

Under the pressure of policy assessment, some universities have simplified ideological and political education in courses to merely "material development", requiring teachers to submit a large amount of written materials such as lesson plans, courseware, and case libraries, while neglecting the actual effectiveness of the classroom. For instance, some teachers deliberately emphasize ideological and political content in open classes or teaching competitions to meet the assessment standards, but in their daily teaching, they return to pure professional lectures, resulting in "performance-based teaching". This utilitarian tendency has turned ideological and political education into a tool to pass the test rather than a true educational practice

2.2 The The generative mechanism of symbolic performance: Why does it become formalized?

The symbolic representation of ideological and political content in courses is not accidental but the result of the combined effect of multiple factors, mainly including:

Policy implementation deviation: Understanding mechanically, lacking flexibility

Some universities adopt a "one-size-fits-all" approach to the implementation of ideological and political content policies, requiring all courses to include a certain proportion of ideological and political content, and even setting quantitative goals such as "at least 5 minutes of ideological and political content per class". This mechanical model forces teachers to view ideological and political content as an "extra task" rather than a natural component of teaching content, ultimately leading to the formalization of ideological and political content.

Teachers' cognitive limitations: The disconnection between professional learning and ideological and political education

Some teachers' understanding of ideological and political content in courses still remains at the binary opposition between "ideological and political courses" and "specialized courses", believing that ideological and political courses are the responsibility of teachers in the School of Marxism and

have nothing to do with their own discipline. This cognitive bias makes it difficult for teachers to balance professional learning and ideological and political education in their teaching design, forcing them to adopt a "labeled" teaching approach to deal with inspections.

Insufficient support: Lack of effective teaching methods

Although many teachers have integrated the concepts of ideological and political education into their courses, they lack the ability to transform professional knowledge into value orientation. For instance, medical teachers may be good at explaining clinical skills, but they lack the professional ethics that reflect the benevolence of medical practitioners. Engineering teachers may be proficient in technical principles, but it is difficult for them to connect with national strategic demands. Due to the lack of systematic training and case studies, teachers' ideological and political education often remains superficial.

2.3 The path to clearing the obstruction: How to make ideological and political education in courses return to its essence of educating people?

To break through the symbolic predicament of ideological and political education in courses, it is necessary to make concerted efforts from multiple dimensions such as concepts, methods, evaluations and systems, and build an educational system that deeply integrates "values, knowledge and methods".

From "Labeling" to "Value Symbiosis" : Deepening the Connotation of Ideological and Political Education in Disciplines

The core of ideological and political education in courses lies in finding the "symbiotic point" between professional knowledge and value guidance. For example:

In law courses, classic cases can be utilized to explore the legal concept of "fairness and justice".

In environmental engineering courses, the social responsibility of technological innovation can be analyzed in combination with the "carbon neutrality" policy.

In literature courses, classic texts can be utilized to interpret the relationship between humanistic spirit and a country's cultural soft power.

Only by allowing ideological and political elements to grow naturally within the discipline can forced integration be avoided.

Innovative Teaching Methods: From "Preaching" to "Experience"

The traditional "indoctrination-style" ideological and political education is prone to triggering resistance. More interactive teaching models can be adopted, such as:

Problem-based teaching: Utilizing real-world social issues (such as artificial intelligence ethics, gene editing controversies, etc.) to guide students in contemplating the balance between science and the humanities;

Narrative teaching: Utilizing the real experiences of scientists and engineers (such as Nan Rendong and China's Five-hundred-meter Aperture Spherical Telescope) to inspire students' sense of professional mission;

Scenario simulation: Design a "Corporate Social Responsibility Decision-making" simulation experiment in business courses to cultivate students' ethical judgment ability.

Optimize the evaluation system: From "Material Assessment" to "Effect Tracking"

Change the current evaluation method that emphasizes materials over effects and establish a more scientific evaluation mechanism, for example:

Observation of hidden classrooms: The supervision team randomly observes classrooms to monitor whether ideological and political elements are naturally integrated into teaching.

Student growth File: Long-term tracking of students' improvement in values, social responsibility awareness, etc.

Peer review mechanism: Organize cross-disciplinary teacher peer reviews to promote the sharing of ideological and political education experiences.

Strengthening Teacher Training: From "Passive Execution" to "Active Exploration"

Through the "subject + ideological and political education" dual-mentor system and case studies, help teachers enhance their ability to transform ideological and political education. For example:

Provide training for science and engineering teachers in the history of science and technology and engineering ethics;

Provide training courses on Marxist theory for teachers of humanities and social sciences;

Establish an inter-school ideological and political education alliance to share outstanding teaching cases.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The symbolic performance of "ideological and political education in courses" in colleges and universities and its application in the path of demystification is studied in this paper. The phenomenon of "symbolic performance" of ideological and political education in courses reflects the current tension between institutional responsiveness and practical implementation in universities. Its root cause is not a single variable. Rather, it is the result of a complex interplay of factors. First, the rigid quantification and unified standards for ideological and political education at the policy level have reduced the space for teachers to naturally integrate value guidance into their professional courses. Second, teachers' limited understanding of ideological and political education and a lack of teaching methods have led to the formalization and hollowing of ideological and political elements. Third, the evaluation mechanism overly relies on material output while neglecting educational effectiveness. This has led to utilitarian and performative teaching practices, further weakening the educational function of ideological and political education in courses. To achieve the transformation of ideological and political education from "formal existence" to "substantial education," this article proposes a "demystification" reform path. It emphasizes that ideological and political elements should shift from being institutionally attached to being inherent to teaching. The core lies in reconstructing the intrinsic connection between value guidance and professional teaching. This shift requires not only an emphasis on the symbiosis of values and knowledge in teaching concepts but also the introduction of more immersive and interactive experiential models in teaching methods. Furthermore, it requires the construction of an evaluation system oriented

towards learning outcomes and the establishment of a support mechanism centered on teacher development

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