

# *Reformation and Innovation in Ideological and Political Education Courses at Private Higher Education Institutions under the Vision of the 'Grand Ideological and Political Education'*

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**Abstract:** This article explores the implementation of the "Great Ideological and Political Education" (GIPE) initiative in private higher education institutions. In response to the challenges and innovations faced by Zhenhua institutions, two case studies, Zhenhua University (A University) and Yuntai Global University (B University), were proposed to illustrate the successful path of ideological and political education. University A emphasizes experiential learning, integrating real-world experiences into its curriculum, while University B adopts a global local integration approach. These case studies highlight the adaptability and creativity of private institutions in complying with the GIPE directive. The research findings provide valuable insights for private higher education institutions in the field of modern education.

## 1. Introduction

The role of ideological and political education (IPE) in shaping the thinking of young people cannot be underestimated, especially in the context of China's higher education system. As the world's most populous country and a leader on the global stage, we face unique challenges and opportunities in shaping the next generation of thinkers, leaders, and innovators. As education plays a crucial role in national construction, the importance of instilling ideologies and political values that resonate with the country's cultural, historical, and political foundations has become crucial. However, the application of IPE is not without its complexity, especially in an era characterized by rapid globalization, technological progress, and changes in social and political patterns. The core of this discussion is the "Great Ideological and Political Education" initiative. This ambitious effort initiated by the Chinese government aims to enhance the importance and relevance of IPE at all levels of education. Traditional methods often distinguish ideological teaching from core disciplines, and this 'grand vision supports a more comprehensive and comprehensive approach that interweaves political ideology with disciplines ranging from science to humanities. Its goal is to ensure that ideological education is not just an independent module, but a universal lens through which every subject is understood and interpreted<sup>[1]</sup>.

Private higher education institutions, characterized by their operational independence and often

more market-oriented goals, face unique challenges in adapting to this new directive. These institutions often overcome the dual pressure of meeting market demand and adhering to a national oriented ideology. Therefore, how they manage, explain, and implement the "Great Ideological and Political Education" initiative is a fascinating study of adaptability, resilience, and innovation. In addition, the increasing prominence of private higher education institutions in the field of education in China makes this survey timely and crucial. As these institutions continue to grow in number and influence, understanding their role, challenges, and contributions in the IPE field has become crucial. It not only elucidates the practicality of implementing policies at a fundamental level, but also provides insights into the evolving dynamics between national directives and institutional autonomy.<sup>[2]</sup>

In this article, we aim to explore the subtle differences, challenges, and innovations brought by the "Great Ideological and Political Education" initiative in the context of private higher education institutions. Through multiple analyses, we will delve into the ongoing impact, adaptation, and innovation of these institutions, ultimately revealing the future trajectory of IPE in the rapidly developing educational environment.

### **1.1. Background of "grand ideological and political education"**

The education system has always been a channel for instilling values, morals, and ideological principles that are consistent with the broader goals of the country. However, with the unparalleled technological progress, economic changes, and constantly evolving social and political paradigms brought about by the 21st century, the need for a more comprehensive and adaptable ideological education method has become apparent. The 'Great Ideological and Political Education' (GIPE) initiative is a response to these constantly changing trends, representing the government's ambitious efforts to modernize and expand the scope of ideological education in its education system.

At its core, the GIPE vision is a departure from traditional pedagogical practices that often compartmentalized ideological education as a distinct domain, separate from mainstream academic disciplines. Instead, GIPE seeks to embed ideological and political principles within the very fabric of all academic subjects. Whether it's the study of literature, sciences, economics, or arts, GIPE endeavors to weave ideological narratives into the broader academic discourse.<sup>[3]</sup>

The rationale behind this integrated approach is multifaceted. Firstly, by intertwining ideological education with core academic disciplines, the initiative aims to make ideological teachings more relatable, accessible, and relevant to students. By drawing connections between abstract ideological principles and tangible academic content, the hope is to foster deeper engagement, understanding, and internalization of the ideological tenets.

Secondly, in an age characterized by information overload and diverse avenues of knowledge dissemination, the GIPE seeks to present a cohesive and consistent narrative. By embedding ideological content across subjects, it ensures that students encounter a unified ideological perspective, reinforcing the state's narrative and countering potential divergent viewpoints.

Moreover, the universality of the GIPE initiative underscores its significance. The mandate is clear: all universities, be it public or private, are expected to integrate the GIPE vision into their curricula. This universal application signifies the government's recognition of the growing influence and reach of private higher education institutions, as well as the imperative to ensure that these institutions, despite their diverse origins and objectives, align with the nation's broader ideological goals.

Essentially, the "Great Ideological and Political Education" initiative represents a readjustment of educational strategies, ensuring that ideological education is not only relevant but also core in a rapidly changing and globally interconnected era. It emphasizes the country's commitment to maintaining its ideological roots while adapting to the dynamics of modern world development.

## **2. Challenges Faced by Private Higher Education Institutions in Implementing Ideological and Political Education**

The propagation of the "Grand Ideological and Political Education" initiative across all higher education institutions underscores the government's ambition to synchronize ideological teachings throughout the nation. However, private higher education institutions, due to their inherent nature and structure, encounter distinct challenges in aligning with this directive. These challenges, while surmountable, necessitate nuanced strategies and accommodations to ensure effective integration of ideological content<sup>[4]</sup>.

### **2.1. Differing institutional nature and objectives**

One of the primary distinctions between public and private institutions lies in their foundational objectives. While public universities predominantly align with state-driven agendas, private institutions often prioritize market relevance, global competitiveness, and financial sustainability. This market-driven approach can sometimes diverge from or even conflict with state-prescribed ideological teachings. For instance, a private institution focusing on entrepreneurship and global business might prioritize content that emphasizes open markets, innovation, and international collaboration, which may not always seamlessly integrate with certain ideological narratives.

### **2.2. Variability in faculty qualifications and resources**

Faculty play a pivotal role in delivering and interpreting the IPE curriculum. However, the faculty profile in private institutions can be notably diverse, ranging from industry experts with limited pedagogical experience to seasoned academicians. Additionally, the financial models of private institutions can lead to disparities in resources allocated for faculty development, especially in the realm of ideological education. Some institutions might prioritize investments in areas deemed more directly lucrative, such as technology labs or global partnerships, potentially sidelining the enhancement of ideological education capabilities.

### **2.3. Diversity of student demographics and backgrounds**

Private higher education institutions, especially those with important international orientations, have different racial and cultural backgrounds. Although this diversity enriches the academic environment, it also poses challenges to conveying unified ideological information. For example, international students or students from different ethnic groups in China may have different interpretations or understandings of ideological content compared to their peers. This heterogeneity requires a more tailored approach to ensure that the content resonates while maintaining its core essence.

### **2.4. Balancing globalization with domestic ideologies**

As global interconnectedness intensifies, private institutions often prioritize curricula that foster global competencies. This might include collaborations with foreign universities, student exchange programs, or content that emphasizes global perspectives. Balancing this global orientation with domestic ideologies becomes a delicate act. For example, a course on the global political system may explore different governance models, some of which may contrast sharply with the system. Ensuring that these contents are consistent with the 'big ideological and political education' and do not stifle critical thinking and global consciousness is a major challenge.

### **3. Results**

The "Grand Ideological and Political Education" initiative's introduction has prompted private higher education institutions to engage in a period of reflection, adaptation, and innovation. Recognizing the inherent challenges, these institutions have embarked on a journey to devise methods that align with the directive while preserving their unique identities, strengths, and objectives. This section delves into the notable reforms and innovations instituted by private higher education establishments in response to the GIPE directive<sup>[5]</sup>.

#### **3.1. Curriculum redesign and localization**

Central to the reforms has been the reconceptualization of the curriculum. Recognizing that a one-size-fits-all approach may not resonate with their diverse student demographic, private institutions have localized the IPE content. This means adapting ideological teachings to cater to local nuances, historical contexts, and cultural references, making the content more relatable and impactful. Furthermore, to balance their global orientation, some institutions have infused the curriculum with international case studies, comparative analyses, and global perspectives, offering students a more holistic understanding of ideologies in both domestic and international contexts.

#### **3.2. Integration of technology and online platforms**

The digital age offers an array of tools and platforms that can transform the educational experience. Private institutions, often more agile and receptive to technological innovations, have harnessed online platforms to deliver the IPE curriculum. Interactive modules, gamified lessons, and digital forums have been employed to make ideological teachings more engaging. For instance, a lesson on socialist values could be conveyed through an interactive online game, making the learning process more immersive. Furthermore, digital platforms facilitate a blended learning approach, combining face-to-face sessions with online resources, enabling students to explore content at their own pace and deepen their understanding.

#### **3.3. Enhanced faculty training and development**

Recognizing the pivotal role of faculty in shaping the ideological education experience, private institutions have intensified efforts in faculty development. Tailored training programs, workshops, and seminars focusing on the IPE curriculum have been initiated. Collaborations with experts in ideological education, both domestic and international, have provided faculty with fresh perspectives, teaching techniques, and content insights. Such training ensures that faculty are not only well-versed in the content but also equipped with the pedagogical tools to deliver it effectively, fostering a dynamic and enriching classroom environment.

#### **3.4. Fostering a culture of critical thinking and open dialogue**

While aligning with the GIPE directive, private institutions have also recognized the importance of nurturing critical thinking skills. Creating spaces where students can question, debate, and discuss ideological content has been prioritized. Classroom discussions, debate clubs, and open forums have been organized, allowing students to engage with the content critically. Such platforms also facilitate the cross-fertilization of ideas, enabling students to appreciate diverse viewpoints and develop a well-rounded perspective. This approach not only deepens students' understanding of ideological tenets but also equips them with the critical thinking skills essential for the 21st-century world.

In summary, private higher education institutions, in their quest to align with the "Grand Ideological and Political Education" initiative, have showcased adaptability and innovation. Through a combination of curriculum reforms, technological integration, faculty development, and an emphasis on critical thinking, these institutions are charting a path that harmonizes national ideological directives with their unique institutional ethos and objectives. The journey, though challenging, has unlocked a plethora of opportunities, setting the stage for a vibrant and holistic ideological education landscape in China<sup>[6]</sup>.

## **4. Case Studies: Successful Implementation of Ideological and Political Education in Select Private Higher Education Institutions**

### **4.1 University A: emphasizing experiential learning - Zhenhua University**

Situated in the bustling metropolis of Shanghai, Zhenhua University (often referred to as University A) has long been recognized for its forward-thinking educational approaches. When faced with the task of integrating the GIPE directive, the institution turned to one of its core strengths: experiential learning.

Rather than confining ideological teachings to textbooks and lectures, Zhenhua University incorporated real-world experiences into its IPE curriculum. For instance, students embarked on community service projects that aligned with socialist values, working in local communities to address societal challenges. Through these projects, concepts such as community solidarity, collective welfare, and socialist ethos were brought to life, as students witnessed firsthand the practical implications of these ideologies.

Additionally, the university initiated partnerships with local industries, allowing students to intern in sectors that closely align with national development goals. These internships, while offering practical skills, also provided a platform for students to appreciate the interplay of industry, economy, and national ideologies. By witnessing the application of ideological principles in real-world settings, students at Zhenhua University gained a profound understanding of their relevance and importance<sup>[7-8]</sup>.

Feedback from students and faculty alike suggests that this experiential learning approach has yielded significant dividends. Not only has there been a marked increase in student engagement and enthusiasm, but the depth of understanding and internalization of ideological principles has also witnessed a notable enhancement.

### **4.2 University B: Fusion of International and Domestic Ideologies - Yuntai Global University**

Nestled in the vibrant city of Guangzhou, Yuntai Global University (commonly known as University B) has carved a niche for itself with its emphasis on internationalization. When the GIPE directive was introduced, rather than seeing it as a challenge, the university viewed it as an opportunity to further its global-local fusion ethos.

Yuntai's unique approach was the amalgamation of international and domestic ideologies within its curriculum. Courses on global political thought, for instance, were designed to draw parallels between international ideologies and China's own political principles. Comparative studies enabled students to appreciate the strengths and nuances of China's ideological framework vis-à-vis global perspectives<sup>[9]</sup>.

Furthermore, the university leveraged its strong international ties, inviting guest lecturers and scholars from around the world. These sessions, often conducted in a debate format, allowed for vibrant exchanges between international and domestic ideological viewpoints. Such discussions, while rooted in mutual respect, provided students with a holistic understanding of political thought,



both from a domestic and global lens.

The success of Yuntai's fusion approach is evident in its student feedback and global rankings. The university has been lauded for providing a comprehensive, balanced view of political ideologies, equipping its students with the analytical tools to appreciate and navigate the complexities of global political landscapes<sup>[10]</sup>.

Zhenhua University and Yuntai Global University, through their innovative strategies, have showcased that the integration of the "Grand Ideological and Political Education" initiative in private settings is not just feasible but can also be a transformative experience. Their journeys serve as an inspiration for other private institutions, highlighting the potential of adaptability, innovation, and a deep commitment to holistic education.

## 5. Conclusion

The "Grand Ideological and Political Education" initiative, while ambitious, has spurred private higher education institutions in China to innovate, adapt, and evolve. As showcased by the success stories of Zhenhua University and Yuntai Global University, when approached with creativity and a commitment to holistic education, the challenges posed by this directive can transform into opportunities for enriched learning experiences. Their journeys underscore the potential of private institutions to harmoniously blend national ideological goals with their unique educational ethos, setting a benchmark for others to emulate.

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