

# *The excavation and exploration of ideological and political elements in higher vocational mental health education courses*

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**Abstract:** The construction of ideological and political education in the curriculum has entered a comprehensive and ascendant stage. Psychological health education, as an indispensable part of the broader ideological and political education system, has the dual nature of educational and scientific disciplines. In the exploration of ideological and political elements, it is necessary to start from the perspective of the goals of vocational education while also considering curriculum standards, objectives, and content. The fundamental task of fostering virtue and nurturing talent should be integrated throughout the entire teaching process, blending character building, knowledge dissemination, and skill development into one.

The construction of ideological and political education in the curriculum has evolved from "each course should guard its own ideological territory and fulfill its own responsibilities" to "deeply explore ideological and political elements in the curriculum, organically integrate them into teaching, and achieve a subtle and silent educational effect." This consensus has been reached in higher education talent development. The exploration of all ideological and political elements in the curriculum should first adhere to the correct political direction, ensuring the leading position of mainstream consciousness in the curriculum. It should guide students to closely integrate their personal values with the historical mission of national rejuvenation, national strength, and people's happiness. While imparting knowledge and developing skills, it should provide correct guidance on students' values, achieving the goal of fostering virtue and nurturing talent.

## **1. The Importance of Exploring Ideological and Political Elements in Psychological Health Education Curriculum in Vocational Colleges**

Over the course of a century, education has been considered fundamental, and the guiding principle is to "provide education that satisfies the people." Curriculum ideological and political construction has entered a new stage of comprehensive development. It not only requires a precise and detailed realization of the fundamental task of fostering virtue and nurturing talent but also demands the accurate positioning of ideological and political resources in different courses. Therefore, in the exploration of ideological and political elements in the curriculum, especially in the context of

psychological health education in vocational colleges, it is essential to consider the nature and role of the curriculum, as well as align with curriculum standards, objectives, and content. This approach ensures the consistent integration of the task of fostering virtue and nurturing talent with the teaching process, combining values shaping, knowledge dissemination, and skill development into a unified endeavor.

Starting from July 2018, following the guidance provided by the Ministry of Education's "Guidelines for Psychological Health Education in Higher Education Institutions," universities and colleges have gradually transformed psychological health education courses from elective courses to mandatory ones. These courses utilize various formats, including online and offline methods, case studies, experiential activities, behavioral training, and psychological role-playing, to incorporate the ideological and value-based aspects inherent in psychology's knowledge system.

In May 2020, the Ministry of Education issued the "Guidelines for Ideological and Political Construction in Higher Education Curricula," which clearly stated that psychological health education is an indispensable component of ideological and political content in curriculum ideological and political construction. It is important to note that psychology belongs to the disciplines of education and natural sciences. Therefore, while exploring and integrating ideological and political elements into the curriculum, one must also consider the distinctive features of the knowledge system of psychology as a discipline.

## **2. The Necessity of Exploring Ideological and Political Elements in Psychological Health Education Curriculum in Vocational Colleges**

### **2.1. Adherence to Educational Laws and Meeting the Needs of the Era's Progress**

We must consistently adhere to the close integration of character education and moral education and firmly establish the perspective of "comprehensive ideological and political education" and "comprehensive psychological education" for nurturing students. At this stage, the fundamental task of fostering virtue and nurturing talent should be refined, and curriculum ideological and political construction should continue to reach new heights. The decomposition of ideological and political goals in curriculum thinking should be clear, with comprehensive coverage of the system and specific implementation at various stages. This creates an atmosphere of ideological and political education where everyone values education, every discipline integrates ideological and political elements, and every course has its unique features. In the exploration of ideological and political elements in the curriculum, considering the distinctive characteristics of the curriculum, the focus should be on extracting the ideological and political content. By aligning with the history and professional positioning of the school, it is essential to identify unique ideological and political elements, turning them into a treasure trove and a source of vitality for curriculum ideological and political materials, fully reflecting the uniqueness and liveliness of curriculum ideological and political content. To fully utilize the distinctive characteristics of curriculum thinking, teaching cases should be well-grounded, the teaching process should be proactive, and resource sharing should be extensive. Based on national major strategies and projects, it is important to extract the ideological and value-based elements inherent in industry development, creating curriculum ideological and political resources unique to the school.

### **2.2. Emphasizing Character Building and Meeting the Needs of Vocational Education**

Vocational education is distinct from general education and should be oriented toward promoting employment and meeting the needs of industrial development. This educational model should fully embody a high regard for cultivating skilled workers and promoting the spirit of craftsmanship. It

provides fundamental guidance for vocational colleges in conducting ideological and political education and cultivating the spirit of craftsmanship. The spirit of craftsmanship is an important content of Marxist labor theory. Marxist labor theory emphasizes that "labor creates man himself," profoundly explaining the spiritual connotation of practical work. Labor education is the foundation of vocational education. The "National Plan for Vocational Education Reform" points out that the goal of vocational education in China in the new era is to cultivate high-quality workers and technical and skilled talents for economic and social development. Following the rules of vocational education, the growth of technical and skilled talents, and the physical and mental development of students, the curriculum should always emphasize character education. When teaching psychological health themes in each major, the integration of ideological and political elements should be emphasized. For example, in teaching students majoring in unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) technology about stress management and coping with setbacks, the curriculum should not only cover stressors and stress responses but should also consider the employment direction and job requirements of UAV technology. Students who participate in competitions at various levels will face specific situations. Therefore, the ideological and political elements related to this theme should include not only psychological qualities and resilience but also the stability and flexibility of cognitive states.[1]

### **2.3. Keeping Pace with Industrial Development and Meeting the Needs of Professional Construction**

In the cultivation of professional talents, character education should always be a priority. The alignment of public courses and professional courses, and the exploration of ideological and political elements, should take into account the vocational training path. This includes the relationship between theoretical teaching and practical teaching in each major, the coverage of academic certificates and various professional training certificates, and the requirements of various levels of technical skills competitions for contestants. Adhering to standards as guidance, when teaching psychological health themes in each major, the integration of ideological and political elements should have a specific focus. For example, when teaching students majoring in UAV technology about stress management and coping with setbacks, it should not be limited to explaining stress sources and stress responses. It should also consider the employment direction and job positions in UAV technology. Furthermore, it should address the situations students may encounter during competition preparation. Therefore, the integration of ideological and political elements in this theme should include not only psychological qualities and stress resistance but also the stability and flexibility of cognitive states.[2]

## **3. Exploring the Multi-dimensionality of Ideological and Political Elements in Higher Vocational College Mental Health Education Curriculum**

### **3.1. Cultivating Hearts Based on the Nature and Content of the Curriculum**

The localization of the Chinese psychological knowledge system is an inevitable and necessary innovative path. In the teaching of mental health education courses in higher vocational colleges, it is not in line with the law of scientific development to simply copy or entirely reject the content of Western psychology, whether it involves theoretical knowledge teaching, measurement questionnaires, psychological training, and so on. Based on the special nature of the curriculum, the process of integrating teaching content is actually a process of exploring the psychological resources of Chinese culture. Chinese psychology has gone through a long period of introduction, imitation, following, and copying. It has been proven that to promote psychological services in our country, it is necessary to root them in our cultural soil to take root, sprout, bloom, and bear fruit. Chinese-element psychology research is gradually moving towards the center of psychology, and the study of

unique psychological phenomena in the context of Chinese culture has become an issue that contemporary psychology research cannot ignore. When popularizing knowledge about mental health education in higher vocational colleges, attention should be paid to the national conditions, the national psychological environment, social development needs, and so on. The teaching team should carefully select appropriate cases and themes.

For example, in the theme of interpersonal communication learning, interpreting it based on the values of Chinese humanism would be more in line with our social and cultural background and also a continuation and promotion of Confucian ethical spirit. As a manifestation of humanism, Confucius particularly emphasized how "benevolent people" should "love others" in social life and interpersonal communication. The emphasis on order in Confucius's concept of "ritual" actually implies that "loving others" must be carried out in an orderly manner. The values implied by "benevolent people love others" are conducive to cultivating a healthy moral life and sound social relationships. "Benevolent people love others" can provide enlightening ideas for explaining and addressing contemporary ethical issues such as ecological ethics. The "love" in "benevolent people love others" is a morally caring attitude that is consciously chosen, and this bias also exhibits characteristics that are clearly different from contemporary Western ethics.

### **3.2. Nurturing Hearts Based on Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture**

"Carry forward culture through education, cultivate people through culture." Chinese excellent traditional culture is the spiritual lifeline of the Chinese nation. When we mention ancient poetry, ancient philosophers' thoughts, ancient architectural art, and so on, the cultural genes engraved in our bodies create a seamless resonance across time and space. When using such emotionally resonant cases, there is no need for excessive cultural interpretation or connotation explanation. With students having pre-existing knowledge, when the teacher says one sentence, the students can immediately follow with the next sentence, creating a rich learning atmosphere and enhancing students' self-efficacy. Teachers should select appropriate cases and themes carefully.

For example, in the theme of the meaning of life, finding the strength of life in ancient poetry and discussing what life is for can be integrated. Introducing Su Shi's "Self-Portrait in Golden Mountain" with the question, "What are your life achievements?" We know that these three places are where he was exiled, and from a worldly perspective, these should have been the low points in his life. However, why did he say that these three places made him who he was? Teachers can guide students to think and discuss what they would say if their lives were to end tomorrow, and what the meaning of life is. In fact, just being alive is meaningful in itself. Su Dongpo's experiences represent the value of being alive, and the irreplaceable life experiences in places like Huangzhou, Huizhou, and Danzhou molded and completed Su Dongpo, and this is the meaning of his life.

Pay attention to cultural IP brands. Recently, the Chinese animated film "Chang'an Thirty Thousand Miles" has become popular. It uses visual and auditory language to present the charm of 48 Tang Dynasty poems, activating the cultural DNA of the Chinese people and demonstrating the "economic power" of excellent traditional culture. Regardless of the fluctuations of time, after experiencing the joys and sorrows of the poets, when Li Bai shouts, "The light boat has passed a thousand mountains," the poets and the audience both find spiritual healing, and the film uses Tang Dynasty poems to discuss life. We discuss life with students through this popular film. By using these cultural IP resources in audio and video, students' attention can be shifted from life experiences to cultural insights and self-emotions. The popularity of a movie will eventually fade away, but the cultural value in the movie will linger in the hearts of the viewers.

### 3.3. Nurturing Hearts Based on Regional Resources and School Characteristics

Based on serving local economic development in vocational education, integrating industry and education, and thinking about the characteristics of professions and the development paths of professional talents, the ideological and political elements should be incorporated into the curriculum to make full use of local resources and development paths. For example, paying attention to local intangible cultural heritage projects and inheritors in Wuhan, the Wuhan News and Comprehensive Channel has produced a special program called "Jiangcheng Intangible Cultural Heritage Workshop," which interviews various levels of intangible heritage projects and inheritors in Wuhan. In the process of curriculum teaching, cleverly link moral education, intellectual education, aesthetic education, labor education, and mental education closely. In the learning of the relationship between physical health and mental health, the demonstration and introduction of the skill of making fragrant sachets from *Acorus* can be used to provide students with a multi-dimensional immersive experience of the close connection and unity of body and mind through seeing, hearing, smelling, speaking, and hands-on operation.

For example, in the theme of self-awareness, inviting star alumni and outstanding senior students from inside and outside the school to talk about their own experiences, how they achieved their initial and advanced goals, and the transformation of self-awareness, etc., can enhance peer psychological resources, use peer strength, conduct peer education, let peers influence each other, improve peer support, and promote students' psychological development. After school, students can use their experiences in preparation and participation in competitions to reflect on their own growth and changes, including understanding of the competition format, experience in preparing and participating in the competition, insights gained from winning or not winning, and finding self through real experiences, thereby forming an objective and correct evaluation of themselves, breaking free from cognitive biases, and cultivating positive psychological qualities. This enhances individual development and lifelong development.

### 3.4. Nurturing Hearts Based on Red Culture Resources

In the century-long journey of national rejuvenation, the older generation of revolutionaries dared to wield their swords, shoulder responsibilities, and engage in struggles. They are shining examples that we should always learn from. Lessons on how to adapt to new environments, overcome setbacks, and face and solve problems can be found in the stories of revolutionary figures and the deeds of revolutionary martyrs. The older generation of revolutionaries not only created a hard-won life of happiness for us but also provided us with a continuous source of positive psychological resources. In the face of difficulties, they dared to step forward; in the face of crises, they dared to take the lead; in the face of mistakes, they dared to take responsibility. They never evaded or shifted blame and always engaged in self-reflection and daring actions in the face of heavy burdens. They are models we should emulate. There is also the youthful enthusiasm of young students. When learning themes such as the resilience of life and the passion, confusion, and enthusiasm of youth, the stories of students from the Southwest Associated University are most suitable. Looking back at the history of the Southwest Associated University and sharing precious photos from the memorial hall of Menglun Branch of the Southwest Associated University, we can see the challenges they faced and experiences such as sleeping on the floor, trekking through swamps, cooking outdoors, and resting in rudimentary tea houses. The students of the Department of Philosophy and Psychology, led by Liu Zhaoji, organized a folk song collection group and collected more than 2,000 folk songs. Later, under the guidance of Professor Wen Yiduo, they compiled "Southwest Folklore Collection." How to stimulate students' intrinsic motivation for learning? Individual learning goals must have the wings of dreams. When students have a sense of "the great cause of the nation," grasp the overall situation, dare to take



on responsibilities, and are good at taking action, their intrinsic motivation for learning becomes strong, and immersive learning and the state of flow in learning are more likely to occur.

### **3.5. Nurturing Hearts Based on the Spirit of Craftsmanship**

The spirit of craftsmanship has rich connotations: firstly, it is a spirit of labor; secondly, it is a spirit of dedication to vocational work; thirdly, it is a spirit of meticulousness and continuous improvement; and its core element is the spirit of innovation. The essence of the spirit of craftsmanship is the pursuit of excellence. Combining with the training objectives of vocational education, the spirit of craftsmanship should be integrated into the entire process of talent development. Young people are the most vibrant and dreamy, the future leaders and builders. How to guide students correctly and let the spirit of craftsmanship and youthful dreams ignite sparks? The mental health curriculum should help students explore interests, develop abilities, and explore their careers, stimulating their enthusiasm for professional work and creativity.

In fact, there is a kind of craftsmanship spirit called "starting young." When introducing and discussing the social phenomenon of the misuse and abuse of psychological tests, mentioning the overall environment of psychological test use in China, it has already entered many application fields such as psychology, education, medical and health, enterprises, personnel departments, judicial departments, and military departments and played an important role in these fields. For higher vocational students, how to correctly handle and use psychological tests, teachers can guide students to understand the development process of psychological tests in China, the efforts of generations of psychologists, and the active revision and recompilation of psychological tests suitable for Chinese culture and national conditions. Regardless of the coverage of content or the quantity of psychological tests, efforts are being made to reach the international advanced level. Even so, test developers always maintain a very cautious attitude when dealing with quantitative test results, especially when making inferences and predictions based on them. Through discussions and comparisons, students can understand that psychological tests must be prevented from misuse and abuse to enable them to play their application functions properly.

### **3.6. Nurturing Hearts Based on Legal Awareness**

The Minister of the Ministry of Health of China pointed out when explaining the draft of the Mental Health Law of the People's Republic of China to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress that mental health is not only a major global public health issue but also a relatively serious social issue. The seriousness of mental health problems is particularly prominent in China. Mental illnesses rank first in the overall burden of diseases in China, accounting for about 20% of the total burden of diseases, with approximately 16 million people suffering from severe mental disorders. Students learn about the relevant provisions of the Mental Health Law of the People's Republic of China, understand and abide by the law, consciously safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of individuals with mental disorders, and learn how to seek psychological help correctly and help others.

For example, in the teaching of psychological counseling, when addressing some social phenomena of bias against or so-called "stigma" of psychological counseling, teachers can lead students to learn about Article 23 of the Mental Health Law of the People's Republic of China, explaining the scope and range of service recipients for psychological counseling and psychological therapy. After students have a clear understanding of the service practice standards of psychological counseling, the differences between psychological counseling and psychotherapy, it helps them form a scientifically correct perception. This, in turn, assists students in seeking psychological help effectively when they or people around them encounter problems. Moreover, it can effectively prevent students from being deceived, falling into the trap of unqualified "quacks," and protect their rights

and interests using the legal weapon, thereby increasing their awareness of safety.

### 3.7. Nurturing Hearts through Practical Activities and Projects

For higher vocational students, practical learning is their advantage. In team collaboration, role division, goal achievement, and team competitions, the integration of theoretical knowledge and practical application is fully demonstrated. The preparation of psychological scenarios and the implementation of psychological training projects are not only tests for the team but also tests for individuals. "I feel like I have a problem, I don't fit in, especially in public places, I often don't know how to express myself." "I don't know how to face the future"... These doubts are incorporated into psychological scenarios by students. Students begin to rethink and sort out their inner thoughts and future goals in the process of understanding and participating in the creation and rehearsal of psychological scenarios. More and more students begin to "heal" themselves through participation in or watching psychological scenarios, engaging in psychological self-help. Through communication and assistance from teachers, they gradually embark on a "journey of awareness, mindfulness, and awakening" in searching for themselves. Additionally, activities such as "Do Not Move Forest" and "Water Flowing to Where It Should" provide students with real experiences of the importance of teamwork. In the process of participating in these activities, students gain a deep understanding of the importance of teamwork and the close connection and unity of body and mind.

In accordance with the "Special Action Plan for Strengthening and Improving Student Mental Health Work in the New Era (2023-2025)" jointly issued by the Ministry of Education and 17 other departments in May of this year, mental health education has already become an important mission of mental health education in the new era, adding new dynamics to the cultivation of moral character. The exploration and discovery of ideological and political elements in mental health education curriculum in higher vocational colleges should be emphasized, as it is essential for teaching design and implementation. This research is practical and urgent, continuous and important."

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