

Research on the Reform of Practical Teaching Models in Ideological and Political Courses from the Student-Centric Perspective

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Keywords: Ideological and Political Courses; Practical Teaching; Student-Subject

Abstract: The practical teaching of ideological and political theory courses in colleges and universities plays a significant role that is unparalleled by theoretical classroom instruction. The current state of ideological and political theory course instruction, however, exhibits insufficient understanding of the essence of practical teaching, resulting in a lack of effectiveness in practical education. It is imperative for students to transition from passive reception to active participation during practical teaching. Only through the organic integration of student-centered instruction and evaluation can the true enhancement of the quality and benefits of practical teaching ideological and political courses be achieved, leading to a dual elevation in both the quality and effectiveness of practical education. This integration is essential for the attainment of the instructional objectives associated with practical teaching.

1. Introduction

The practical teaching of ideological and political theory courses in higher education institutions serves as a crucial component in cultivating the intellectual, political, ethical, and psychological qualities of college students, wielding a profound impact that is unparalleled by theoretical classroom instruction. Efforts must be directed towards the strengthening of practical teaching, with the establishment of a secondary classroom teaching system for ideological and political theory courses that mutually reinforces traditional classroom instruction[1]. Guiding documents pertinent to this domain have outlined standardized requirements for university ideological and political courses in terms of teaching plans, credit implementation, teaching content, instructional faculty, and specialized funding, among other aspects[2].

Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the current classroom instruction in ideological and political theory courses lacks a scientific understanding of the subject, object, teaching methods, and evaluation mechanisms associated with practical teaching in higher education ideological and political courses. The practical teaching often falls into a formalistic approach, necessitating a heightened focus on the effectiveness of practical education.

Within the realm of practical teaching, the role of instructors is primarily one of "guidance," "inspiration," and "evaluation." Students must undergo a transformation from passive receptivity to active participation during practical teaching. Only through the organic integration of

student-centered instruction and evaluation can the true enhancement of the quality and benefits of practical teaching in higher education ideological and political courses be achieved, resulting in a dual elevation of both the quality and effectiveness of practical education. This integration is essential for the attainment of the instructional objectives associated with practical teaching.

2. Reconsideration of Practical Teaching in Higher Education Ideological and Political Theory Courses

2.1 Dialectical Perspective on the Relationship between Practical Teaching and Classroom Instruction

Given the current practices and prevailing perceptions of practical teaching in higher education ideological and political theory courses, practical teaching refers to student-initiated social activities related to theoretical content outside the classroom. Regardless of the specific form it takes, practical teaching inherently belongs to the realm of instructional activities. When addressing the relationship between practical teaching and classroom instruction, it is essential to avoid two extremes. First, overstating the importance of practical teaching and attempting to replace classroom instruction with it. While practical teaching is undoubtedly significant, its primary function is to serve classroom instruction—a crucial means to achieve the effectiveness and objectives of classroom teaching. Second, focusing solely on "practice" without considering the "teaching" aspect and relying entirely on students to control the entire practical teaching process is an oversight. This approach not only neglects the role of teachers as guides and evaluators but also overestimates students' autonomy, initiative, self-control, and learning abilities.

Practical teaching is rooted in classroom instruction, yet it extends beyond traditional classrooms, allowing students to vividly experience and perceive societal realities with enthusiasm. By interpreting theoretical content through practical experiences, it achieves the amplification of teaching effects. Therefore, adopting a dialectical perspective on the relationship between these two classrooms is crucial for the continuous improvement of quality and effectiveness in practical teaching within higher education ideological and political theory courses[3].

2.2 The Ultimate Purpose of Practical Teaching to Achieve Rational Cognition

For a considerable period, the purpose of practical teaching has been limited to acquiring sensory cognition. The definition of practical teaching in the "Educational Dictionary (Revised and Compiled Edition)" emphasizes sensory knowledge, skills acquisition, cultivating a practical approach, and independent work capabilities[4]. However, defining the purpose of practical teaching solely in terms of acquiring sensory cognition is one-dimensional and fails to grasp its multifaceted functions.

Both practical and classroom teaching involve both sensory and rational cognition; both start with sensory perception, aiming ultimately for rational cognition. Even in theoretical instruction within the classroom, the initial stages involve sensory cognition. Equating the purpose of practical teaching solely with acquiring sensory cognition leads to a superficial, one-dimensional understanding, rendering practical teaching devoid of practical significance.

2.3 Organic Integration of Practical Teaching and Classroom Instruction

The organic integration and seamless connection between practical teaching and classroom instruction are imperative for achieving the goals of practical teaching. In reality, there exists a dichotomy between practical teaching and classroom instruction, where they seem connected

superficially but are often disjointed in practice.

Commonly, practical teaching in ideological and political theory courses is perceived as having two forms: "theoretical teaching within the class, focusing on rational knowledge, and image-based practical teaching outside the class, focusing on the external representation of theoretical knowledge and the reenactment of processes"[5]. Despite this understanding, there is often a disconnect between instructors attempting to link the intrinsic connection between practical teaching and classroom instruction. In reality, practical teaching is a holistic process that should be considered within the entire teaching framework. Emphasis should be placed on enhancing the overall effectiveness of course instruction, strategically selecting and incorporating various forms of practical teaching, such as base education, social practice, case-based teaching, reading practices, campus culture, and research practices. It is not merely about stepping out of the classroom[6]. rather, it involves considering the compatibility of practical teaching with course instruction from the perspective of instructional effectiveness.

2.4 Dynamic and Comprehensive Evaluation of Practical Teaching

The relationship between practical teaching and classroom instruction, along with the practical nature of practical teaching itself, determines the complexity of evaluating its effectiveness. In practical teaching, the role of teachers, the degree of involvement, and their control over the process differ from classroom instruction. Factors such as the continuity, openness of space, breadth of objectives, diversity of forms, and the non-quantifiable nature of practical teaching must be considered in evaluating its effectiveness. Practical teaching is process-oriented rather than results-oriented. Therefore, moderate monitoring and timely adjustments to the practical teaching process are essential, and process evaluation is necessary. Any process, including practical teaching, is dynamic and subject to change. Simultaneously, the diverse methods and content of practical teaching require a multi-dimensional assessment, considering qualitative and quantitative aspects, as well as long-term and short-term perspectives, to achieve an objective evaluation.

3. Research and Analysis of Current Practical Teaching of Ideological and Political Theory Courses in Higher Education

Based on surveys conducted with first and second-year university students, as well as students majoring in ideological and political education, the existing practical teaching in ideological and political theory courses (taking the example of "Ideology, Ethics, and Legal Studies" courses) is found to be unsatisfactory in terms of its form, content, and evaluation mechanisms.

3.1 Emphasis on Form Rather than Content in Practical Teaching

Currently, the most prominent demand in the reform of "Ideology, Ethics, and Legal Studies" courses is to enhance practical teaching. While practical teaching is an integral part of ideological and political education, most universities allocate a certain proportion of hours and credits to practical teaching, as required by the Ministry of Education. However, due to the predominantly large class sizes in these courses, practical teaching becomes challenging to implement, leading to low student engagement and limited effectiveness. Consequently, some universities prioritize theoretical instruction by teachers and neglect practical teaching, resulting in a prolonged formalistic approach to practical education. It is acknowledged that many universities are continuously exploring and advancing practical teaching. However, in the specific process of practical teaching, there is an overemphasis on superficial or even blind activities, such as extracurricular visits, surveys, simple Q&A, or debate discussions, which focus on external,

objective aspects of practice. Insufficient attention is given to purposeful, student-centric practices that address the transformation of students' subjective worlds. As such, the key to current practical teaching reform lies in exploring and elucidating the truth of these courses, internalizing them into students' beliefs and actions, and constructing activities that genuinely resonate with students' inner spiritual worlds.

3.2 Misalignment of Roles for Teachers and Students in Practical Teaching

In modern classroom teaching, the role of teachers should be positioned in three dimensions: knowledge instruction, emotional communication, and will cultivation. For knowledge instruction, teachers should act as factual presenters, connectors of "double structures," stimulators of knowledge interest, and guides to knowledge values. In emotional communication, teachers should be perceived as shared experiencers and growth facilitators. In will cultivation, teachers should embody the role of role models and trainers[7].

In the current practical teaching of ideological and political theory courses, the student-centered approach is not fully realized. Firstly, while the goal system of practical teaching in ideological and political theory courses includes individual student development, the formulation is too general, making it challenging to precisely implement in practice. Many teachers feel a lack of direction and find themselves reverting to traditional teacher-led methods. Secondly, there is a deficiency in teachers' service mindset. In practical teaching, ideological and political theory teachers should serve the moral growth, ideal formation, and knowledge structure of students through specific practical teaching processes. The lack of a service mindset is recognized among ideological and political theory teachers, stemming from an inadequate understanding of a student-centered approach. Thirdly, students lag in leading the practical teaching process. Due to inertia, students tend to approach practical teaching with the same mindset as classroom instruction, leading to slow transformation or resistance to change. Alternatively, students might initiate the practical teaching process, but intentional or unintentional interference, guidance, or requirements from teachers diminish their desire to lead, causing a return to the original model. Both scenarios result in students perceiving practical teaching as something that teachers should drive, leading to the degradation of their voluntary roles, positioning them as responders and passive implementers.

3.3 Monotony, Superficiality, and Formalism in Practical Teaching Models

Many teachers perceive practical teaching in ideological and political theory courses merely as a teaching method without truly understanding the "practice" essence of practical teaching. Some teachers confuse practical teaching in ideological and political theory courses with practical education in ideological and political education, resulting in the superficialization and formalization of practical teaching. Additionally, existing practical teaching practices in ideological and political theory courses cause a severe disconnect between theoretical knowledge and practical skills, lacking the organic integration necessary for mutual enhancement. Students consider practical teaching as part of classroom instruction, deviating from its original intent and causing a misalignment with expected outcomes.

Furthermore, the failure to keep pace with the times is a significant drawback in practical teaching models. Ideological and political theory courses should adapt dynamically to the era and respond to teaching requirements. However, current practical teaching models have lagged behind in terms of content, procedure settings, and forms, remaining unchanged for years. This rigidity results in a significant disconnection from the development of the times, diminishing student interest and participation, and hindering the achievement of practical teaching goals.

3.4 Inadequacies in Teaching Evaluation Mechanisms

The assessment and evaluation mechanism for practical teaching urgently requires improvement. The lack of a unified, quantifiable, and scientific evaluation index system or reference basis is evident in the assessment of practical teaching in ideological and political theory courses. The deficiency extends to the absence of a comprehensive and systematic evaluation system concerning assessment content, methods, and forms. Issues manifest in two aspects: the teaching subject and object. There is a prevalent misunderstanding among teaching subjects and objects regarding practical teaching, including misconceptions about teaching goals, methods, and evaluation mechanisms. Such misconceptions lead to deviations in the starting point and focus of teaching evaluation, making it challenging to genuinely measure teaching effectiveness. Additionally, limitations in objective conditions result in a simplified and detached evaluation method for practical teaching, exacerbating the disconnect between evaluation results and teaching effectiveness. Subjective and arbitrary evaluations are also prevalent, ultimately stemming from the lack of systematic, standardized, operational, and effective evaluation mechanisms for practical teaching in ideological and political theory courses. Furthermore, the dominance of teachers in the evaluation process, without reflecting the student's central position, objectively hinders student initiative.

4. Reforming and Innovating the Teaching Model and Evaluation Mechanism of Practical Courses with a Student-Centric Approach

Practical teaching is one of the instructional forms, and the educational philosophy of "teacher as guide, student as the subject" should be steadfastly upheld. "Teacher as guide" implies that teachers, as designers of instruction, should play a role in teaching content, instructional methods, and personality development. "Student as the subject" is crucial. Teachers should study the ideological and behavioral characteristics of university students, engage in equal dialogues with students, and design teaching based on student characteristics, aiming for a student-centric approach to achieve optimal teaching outcomes [8].

4.1 Innovative Models for Practical Teaching with a Student-Centric Approach

4.1.1 Implementing Three Stages of Student-Centric Focus

4.1.1.1 Paying regular attention to students

Ideological and political theory teachers should actively stay informed about the latest national policies and current events while also paying attention to hot topics, ideological trends, and behavioral changes related to university students, forming a comprehensive understanding of university students. Changes in the cognitive styles, psychological characteristics, and behavioral patterns of current university students involve an emphasis on sensory cognition, expansion of subjective consciousness, diversification of value orientations, and independent and informational thought processes [9]. Therefore, teachers of ideological and political theory courses need to adapt proactively to these changes, stay updated with the times, and transform traditional concepts to ensure effective teaching strategies.

4.1.1.2 Pre-class understanding of students

By conducting surveys and questionnaires to understand students' personal situations, ideological dynamics, family backgrounds, and community contexts, teachers can gain an overall impression of

students. Additionally, utilizing the first five minutes before class for brief communication with students facilitates equal dialogue, allowing teachers to real-time understand the specific characteristics of the students in the class, including their majors, thoughts, and prior knowledge of ideological and political theory courses. This approach allows teachers to grasp both the general characteristics of university students and the specific characteristics of the students in the class, achieving a balance between generality and specificity. This knowledge is beneficial for teachers to design teaching processes and provide targeted assistance.

4.1.1.3 Post-class summary of students

The post-class summary of students in practical teaching includes aspects such as feedback on the success or failure of the teacher's role in the practical teaching process, feedback on the success or failure of the design, content selection, and student participation in the practical teaching process, and the teacher's decisions based on the summary to continually enhance the teaching effectiveness of practical teaching. Ideological and political theory teachers can conduct post-class summaries through various means, such as email communication, face-to-face interactions, WeChat, special meetings, and summary sessions.

4.1.2 Innovative Design of Teaching Processes with a Student-Centric Approach

Designing practical teaching processes based on student objective conditions.

4.1.2.1 Designing the content and format of classroom teaching based on understanding students and the course material to stimulate students' enthusiasm for active participation

The active participation of students in practical teaching is a guarantee of success in subsequent practical processes. Students' initiative allows for creative completion of the practical process, leading to teaching outcomes not achievable through traditional teaching methods.

4.1.2.2 Designing teaching based on objective reality rather than the subjective understanding of educators

Reflecting on traditional practical teaching models based on the subjective understanding of teachers, teachers should innovate boldly based on students' objectivity, current events, and national policies. This innovation allows students to genuinely desire and relate to practice, gain valuable experiences, and benefit their future development. Achieving a transformation from a sense of uselessness to a "highly valuable" mentality is crucial for realizing the ultimate teaching goals of ideological and political theory courses.

4.1.2.3 Evaluation of teaching effectiveness should be connected to the objective reality of students, implemented flexibly, and avoid a one-size-fits-all approach

The purpose of practical teaching in ideological and political theory courses is for students to gain something through the practical process. The evaluation of "gains" should not be limited to practical outcomes but should also consider the students' practical processes. Different practical projects have varying requirements for the practical process, and the evaluation of the process should not be uniformly applied. Strict avoidance of formalism and an evaluation model that emphasizes "form" over "substance" should be ensured.

4.1.3 Innovative Implementation of Practical Teaching Processes with a Student-Centric Approach

4.1.3.1 Timely Determination of Practical Teaching Themes

The determination of practical teaching themes should not be confined to the progress of classroom teaching content. The practical nature of practical teaching requires it to align with the times. The development of the era and the changing landscape of current events mean that practical teaching for a specific teaching goal may not synchronize with the progress of theoretical course teaching. The optimal teaching time should coincide with the high alignment of social hot topics with the teaching content. Teachers should be sensitively aware of this and adjust the corresponding theoretical course content, capturing the best opportunity to advance the practical teaching of relevant thematic content. This approach maximizes the practicality and effectiveness of practical teaching.

4.1.3.2 Flexible Determination of Practical Teaching Implementation Modes

Practical teaching should adopt various modes, as this is a basic requirement. The selection of implementation modes for a specific practical theme should consider the characteristics of the theme and the difficulty level of student implementation. For a specific practical teaching theme, teachers can provide multiple implementation modes for students to choose from. Additionally, to stimulate student enthusiasm and increase participation, integrating the latest technological elements into the practical process and presenting the results in novel forms should be considered. The potential for secondary creation based on mature practical outcomes, creating high-quality results for presentation throughout the university or even society, should also be explored. Copyright sharing, or at least recognition of student authorship, greatly enhances students' sense of achievement and elevates practical teaching to a new level.

4.1.3.3 Timely and Moderately Controlling the Practical Teaching Process

Empowering students as the central figures does not mean teachers relinquish control entirely. Teachers should maintain full control, participate moderately, and provide key guidance throughout the process. Throughout the entire process, teachers need to understand and control it through various means

5. Conclusion

The instructional model of ideological and political theory courses should be grounded in practical experience, as theoretical instruction built upon practical foundations is essential for genuinely achieving the teaching objectives of these courses. Implementing practical teaching with students as the central focus is not only a practical requirement of such teaching but also an indispensable path to realizing the teaching objectives of practical education. The dynamism of current affairs and the shifting contexts of time and space necessitate that practical teaching keeps pace with the times. It requires a continuous enrichment and development of the means and methods of practical teaching. However, the underlying prerequisite is an unwavering commitment to placing students at the center. This commitment is inherent in the essence of education and serves as a fundamental principle that subsequent related research endeavors should uphold.

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