

# *The Key Role of Teachers in Comprehensively Promoting Curriculum Values Education in Colleges and Universities*

Zhou Junju<sup>1,a,\*</sup>, Gou Anning<sup>1,b</sup>, Guo Lingrui<sup>1,c</sup>, Wu Yuze<sup>1,d</sup>

<sup>1</sup>College of Geography and Environmental Sciences, Northwest Normal University, Lanzhou, 730070, China

<sup>a</sup>yzh\_su@163.com, <sup>b</sup>1459153980@qq.com, <sup>c</sup>201975010305@nwnu.edu.cn, <sup>d</sup>741113565@qq.com

\*Corresponding author

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**Abstract:** The values education integrated into academic disciplines is a rational return to the essence of education, a correction of the long-existing phenomenon of "teaching without education". The foundation of the construction of values education is in "curriculum" and the key is in teachers. Teachers are the first responsible person for curriculum reform and teaching design, and they bear the important responsibility of educating people outside and inside the classroom. Good professionalism and unique charisma of teachers are the prerequisite and foundation for students to learn and believe in them, and their good moral cultivation and strong ideological and political ability are the guarantee to enhance the effectiveness of "Values Education Integrated into the Academic Disciplines" and to achieve moral education and cultivate the soul. However, at present, the quality of some teachers is not sufficiently matched with the requirements of values education, which has become an important problem and obstacle to the construction of Values Education Integrated into the Academic Disciplines. College teachers should continue to improve their ideological and political ability, effectively train new people for the country to achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

In 2014, Xi emphasized at the 23rd National Conference on Party Building in Higher Education Institutions that in order to establish and run socialist universities with Chinese characteristics, it is necessary to adhere to moral education and cultivate talents, integrating the cultivation and practice of socialist core values into the entire process of teaching and educating students. At the National Conference on Ideological and Political Work in Higher Education Institutions held in December 2016, Xi once again emphasized that besides "The course of ideological and political theory should persist in strengthening and improving, enhancing the affinity and pertinence of values education". it is necessary to "Other courses should also maintain a certain standard and fulfill their responsibilities, so that all courses can align with ideological and political theory courses and create synergy." The report of the 20th National Party Congress once again emphasized the need to educate people for the Party and cultivate talents for the country. General Secretary's important

discourse provides us with guidance and direction for implementing the fundamental task of cultivating students' moral character, and deepening the reform and innovation of values education in universities. It fully highlights the role of every course in fostering students' character, and works in tandem with values education courses. This is the true path to realize the goal of morals and character-building in universities<sup>[1]</sup>. The course of political and ideological education emphasizes the development of each course's educative function. In this process, the fundamental task of cultivating students' morality and character in universities is performed by teachers, who are the main body of various course teachings and responsible individuals in educational activities. Teachers inevitably play a key role in the "course of political and ideological education," and they are essential for promoting comprehensive construction of this course. Therefore, in the process of constructing "values education courses" in universities, it becomes crucial to develop a teaching staff that is fully capable of meeting the requirements of "values education courses" and practicing the educational philosophy of "values education courses"<sup>[2]</sup>.

## **1. The values education curriculum is a rational return to the essence of education**

### **1.1. The essence of education is to cultivate people**

Throughout the history of educational development in China, there have been significant moments such as the flourishing of various schools of thought during the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period, the emphasis on filial piety education during the Han dynasty, the decline and resurgence of traditional Confucian rituals during the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern dynasties, the strengthening of moral education during the Song and Yuan dynasties, and the promotion of the unity of knowledge and action during the Qing dynasty. Ancient Chinese educators always placed great importance on the concept of "passing on knowledge". Han Yu's "On the Teacher" states that "It takes a teacher to propagate the doctrine, impart professional knowledge, and resolve doubts." seemingly plain and unremarkable words, but they highly summarize the three responsibilities of teachers. In Han Yu's "On the Teacher", he further proposes that "Where there is the doctrine, there is my teacher", we should take teaching as the primary responsibility and fundamental duty of teachers.

As early as the 19th century, the German educationalist Herbart put forward the principle of "educational teaching". Its core essence is that any teaching should carry out value and moral education while imparting knowledge, rather than simply knowledge transfer and skill training. This principle means that teaching and educating are not only indispensable, but more importantly, inseparable. In this regard, Herbart pointed out, "Teaching, if not moral education, is only a means without an end; Moral education, if not taught, is only an end that loses the means"<sup>[3]</sup>. However, although "educational teaching" has long been proposed, and has always been highly recognized and strengthened, the implementation of this principle has been frustrated by the lack of education in the curriculum<sup>[4]</sup>. Einstein wrote in *On Education* that the goal of school should be to produce individuals who act independently and think independently, but they should regard service to society as the highest purpose in life. UNESCO proposes that education has three major functions, one is to teach people to understand (knowledge), the other is to teach people to do things (ability), and the third is to teach people to be people. The most important and difficult thing is to teach people to be human. In his book 'Questioning the Essence of Education', American educator Ke Ling wrote: Beauty is the essence of education, that is, cultivating a beautiful and noble mind is the essence of education<sup>[5]</sup>. Beauty in education is based on the cultivation of aesthetic appreciation and values education. Beauty in education forms moral and belief values through aesthetic values. Beauty in education cultivates a creative spirit, creative personality, and creative abilities in individuals. Therefore, the essence of education is character development - cultivating a beautiful

and noble mind.

## 1.2. The Ideological and Political Curriculum is a rational return to the essence of education

For a long time, there has been a prevalent phenomenon of "teaching without nurture" in educational practices. Although few people oppose teaching and education in their understanding, the division and disconnect between teaching and education has been a problem that has persisted but never been effectively resolved. The fundamental reason lies in the lack of the educational quality and logical coherence of the curriculum, and the core issue is the deficiency in the ideological and political construction of the curriculum. When the essence of education becomes problematic and the belief in education begins to waver, formalization of education arises, causing it to become unstable and fragmented due to the loss of fundamental goals. In the current educational sphere, utilitarianism prevails, and in the impatient and hasty atmosphere, the phenomenon of seeking quick success and instant benefits is common. The pursuit of "education for success" dominates, and it has even evolved to the point where any means necessary are employed for success, resulting in education that only values results and neglects the process, lacking the silent nurturing of spirit and soul. In higher education, for a long time, curriculum and teaching have focused solely on knowledge impartation and evaluation, leading students to demonstrate a clear tendency towards instrumental knowledge, resulting in the phenomenon of many educated individuals having knowledge but lacking culture. Continuation of this trend will cause universities to become advanced vocational training programs, thus losing the soul of a university. Therefore, it is an important mission for educators to rediscover the path of culture and humanities that are on the verge of being lost. "Ideological and Political Curriculum" is a correction to this one-sided and instrumental orientation, aimed at stimulating students' desire to explore knowledge with a more enriching and comprehensive sense of achievement.

After the National Conference on Ideological and Political Work in Chinese Universities in 2016, as a deepening and expansion of the concept of moral education in disciplines, the concept of "Ideological and Political Curriculum" was formally proposed and quickly promoted. It has important significance for universities to adhere to the direction of socialist education, ensure the entire process of education and teaching, and achieve the fundamental requirement of cultivating students' moral character<sup>[6]</sup>. The so-called "Ideological and Political Curriculum" means that all courses in universities should play a role in values education, make good use of the main channel of classroom teaching, fully understand the rich connotation of politics and ideology in the curriculum, and grasp the value and meaning of politics and ideology in the curriculum deeply. It involves systematically planning the path of generating politics and ideology in the curriculum, integrating values education into the educational activities of professional courses and general education courses, consolidating knowledge and nurturing values in value dissemination, emphasizing value guidance in knowledge dissemination, and achieving students' all-round development in morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics, and labor<sup>[7]</sup>. The core goal of "Ideological and Political Curriculum" is to make students the focus of education, to integrate the functions of different disciplines and courses, so that each discipline and course can truly participate in the work of cultivating students' morality in universities and reflect the value of cultivating students. The fundamental purpose of the construction of "Ideological and Political Curriculum" is to promote the integration of knowledge and education in curriculum, so that values education in schools can fundamentally break through the limitation of teaching only in ideological and political courses. As an important part of values education in universities, "Ideological and Political Curriculum" broadens the channels for teachers and students to receive values education, helps teachers and students better understand the inherent connection between professional knowledge and values and

ethics, understand the relationship between personal development and social progress, and stimulates teachers and students' strong motivation to explore the objective world and happy life. Based on the "comprehensive development of individuals," "Ideological and Political Curriculum" nourishes advanced values with rich knowledge achievements, inspires conscious cognition and internalization of knowledge with advanced values, constructs multiple goals such as expanding knowledge dimension, improving ability dimension, and leading value dimension, guides students from thinking about "what to learn" to "how to learn" and "why to learn," forms a comprehensive sense of inquiry and intrinsic learning motivation, enables students to gain more active, conscious, and comprehensive inner experience, and stimulates students to eventually realize the transformation towards self-education<sup>[8]</sup>. In this sense, "Ideological and Political Curriculum" is the true salvation of human nature and the true return to the educational value of human-centeredness<sup>[9]</sup>.

## **2. The key to the construction of "Ideological and Political Curriculum" lies in teachers**

Xi pointed out that 'Building a highly qualified teacher team with strong political qualities, excellent professional abilities, and exceptional educational levels is the fundamental task of university construction.' The key to promoting comprehensive ideology and political education lies in teachers, who not only undertake the task of imparting knowledge and improving skills, but also shoulder the mission of moral education<sup>[10]</sup>. The professional accomplishment, ideal belief, speech and conduct of teachers silently affect students. Only with high-quality teachers can high-quality education be achieved.

### **2.1. Teachers are the primary responsible individuals for curriculum reform and instructional design**

The construction of ideological and political curriculum is a systematic project. In this process, the school is the overall designer, the colleges and departments are important promoters, the heads of majors are direct organizers and implementers, and the teachers are concrete practitioners, serving as the first responsible parties for curriculum reform and instructional design. Therefore, fully mobilizing the enthusiasm of teachers, continuously improving the ideological and political consciousness and capabilities of teachers in charge, and carrying out innovative curriculum design and precise classroom teaching centered on the goal of cultivating students with moral integrity and character are the prerequisites and key factors for truly achieving the goal of education.

Any professional course contains rich elements of values education waiting to be developed, and it implies the presence of ideological elements that enlighten wisdom, ignite patriotism, possess a sense of social justice, bear social responsibilities, possess cultural confidence, and are filled with humanistic spirit. The value of "Ideological and Political Curriculum" lies in fully exploring the potential ideological and political elements in each course, which requires professional teachers to develop the educational function of values education in the process of imparting knowledge and solving doubts<sup>[11]</sup>. However, it is worth noting that the construction of "values education in the curriculum" is not achieved through a simple addition or mechanical segmentation of "knowledge" and "education". It is not "curriculum plus ideology and politics", nor is it a few simple "introductions", a few rigid "interjections", let alone a few forced "conclusions"<sup>[4]</sup>. Therefore, curriculum-based values education requires teachers to make comprehensive curriculum reforms, combining the knowledge characteristics, competency attributes, and educational functions of various courses to systematically explore ideological and political elements, develop a resource system for values education, and integrate values throughout the entire process of talent development by penetrating and integrating them into every aspect of curriculum and teaching, so that students can be subtly influenced and influenced by the socialist core values. Scientific and

precise instructional design is the key to ensure the orderly progress of classroom teaching and the high integration of knowledge imparting and value guidance.

## **2.2. Classroom is the main channel for imparting knowledge and educating individuals**

Xi emphasized: 'We must make good use of classroom teaching as the main channel and guard each subject's own channel and responsibility field well, so that all types of courses can work in the same direction and form a synergistic effect with ideological and political theory courses.' At present, we must have a high gaze and far-reaching insight, by doing a good job in top-level design of the subject system, teaching system, textbook system, and management system. At the same time, we should hold on to the green mountains and never let go, as well as making sure that every subject and every class is well-prepared<sup>[12]</sup>. Teaching every class well is not an easy task. It requires teachers to have profound professional knowledge and noble ethics and to carefully design the knowledge system, goal setting, method selection, and process arrangement, guiding students to exert their subjective initiative, achieving a high degree of integration of knowledge transmission and value guidance, and forming a perfect closed loop of teaching and educating. Every move and every word of the teacher in the classroom is silently influencing the students' values. As Xi said, in the eyes of students, teachers are always speaking with appropriate language and acting with proper demeanor. What kind of teacher will teach what kind of student. Outstanding people undoubtedly come from good teachers' words and deeds. Therefore, as the main channel of teaching and the main battlefield of educating people, whether teachers can effectively integrate ideological and political elements into classroom teaching and fully play the role of the main channel of teaching and educating people directly determines the effectiveness of the talent cultivation in universities.

The integration of ideological and political elements into curriculum teaching is not simply a superposition or adhesion. Teachers should combine the advantages of professional characteristics, deeply explore the cultural genes and value paradigms contained in them, and transform them into concrete and vivid carriers of socialist core values. They should subtly integrate spiritual guidance in the teaching of professional knowledge, such as ideal beliefs and moral rule of law. In this process, teachers need to find the connection and linkage between curriculum teaching and values education, constantly explore effective integration methods and channels, focus on inquiry-based and discussion-based teaching, stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning and spirit of exploration, fully play the leading role of teachers and the role of students as the main body, and let students resonate in their behavioral and emotional experiences. This will make the imparting of knowledge more warm and achieve the internal integration of professional knowledge with ideal beliefs, moral cultivation, cultural self-confidence, etc. In just fifty minutes, the teacher's good professional literacy and unique personal charm are the premise and foundation for students to enjoy learning and believe in their teachings. The teacher's good moral cultivation and strong ideological and political ability are the guarantee for enhancing the effectiveness of "Ideological and Political Curriculum" and achieving the goal of cultivating students' character and shaping their souls.

## **2.3. Teachers bear the heavy responsibility of synchronously educating students both inside and outside the classroom**

### **2.3.1. Stepping onto the three-foot podium to educate and nurture students, and stepping down from the podium to serve as a role model for others.**

To be an effective educator, one must possess not only a deep understanding of the subject matter but also a strong sense of integrity and ethical behavior. The classroom is the main channel for teaching and educating people, and plays a very important role in the process of integrating



ideology into the curriculum and cultivating students' character. Even after stepping down from the podium, teachers still bear the heavy responsibility of educating people. In the campus, teachers can be seen everywhere. The silent dedication of teachers in ordinary positions, the hard work of teachers in the office, a caring look, a warm greeting, a long conversation, patient guidance on the road of scientific research, and so on. These seemingly ordinary things all reflect the selfless dedication, noble professionalism, and broad-minded love of teachers, and everywhere contains ideological elements. Teachers themselves are a living ideological teaching material.

### **2.3.2. Teaching, learning and research are integrated, synchronous inside and outside of class.**

Based on classroom teaching, more attention should be paid to out-of-class teaching. We should strive to move from the teacher's emphasis on "teaching" in the classroom to the student's comprehensive "learning" outside the classroom. In 2019, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council put forward relevant requirements for the reform and innovation of ideological and political courses in the context of the new era, emphasizing that ideological and political courses in universities should expand their teaching extension and organically combine theoretical classes with social practice classes in a timely manner. This should also be the goal for other types of courses to achieve synchronous education both inside and outside the classroom. The guidance of socialist core values should not only be limited to the classroom teaching process, nor should it be limited to theory. It should be based on practice, learned and applied actively, and actively integrated into the practical process. Only by guiding and directing students to actively participate in extracurricular activities, undergraduate research projects, and entering research teams, can professional knowledge and socialist core values be transformed into material forces for understanding and transforming the world. This will further optimize students' knowledge and ability structures, stimulate students' exploration enthusiasm, enhance students' interest in scientific research, and contribute to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation with youthful wisdom and confidence. The role of the teacher in this process is very important.

## **3. Strengthen moral cultivation and become "good teachers" in the new era, who propagate the doctrine, impart professional knowledge, and resolve doubts**

Teachers play a crucial role in the construction of the ideological and political courses. Currently, there is a lack of alignment between the quality of teachers and the requirements of the ideological and political courses. Some teachers themselves have a significant gap in their comprehensive qualities compared to the requirements of the ideological and political courses, which has become an important challenge and obstacle in the construction of the ideological and political courses. University teachers should adhere to the principle of being educated before being educators, striving to become disseminators of advanced ideology and culture, staunch supporters of the ruling party, and better shouldering the responsibility of guiding students' healthy growth and leading them on the right path.

### **3.1. To forge strong iron, one must first strengthen oneself**

Educator Tao Xingzhi once said that 'Virtue is the soul of the teacher', and that in order to cultivate people, one must first establish moral character. Teachers must 'building character and nurturing talents', whose morality is not just words, but a manifestation of spirit, a deep knowledge and cultural taste reflected in action. Teachers must constantly improve their teaching skills, present themselves as good teachers to students, strive to win their respect with noble character, and set an

example for students with exemplary words and deeds.

### **3.1.1. Excellence in one's field is necessary in order to impart professional knowledge.**

Possessing outstanding professional competence is a prerequisite for a university teacher, profound knowledge serves as the foundation for delivering a compelling lecture, and it is also the best tool for captivating and inspiring students. For a teacher to offer a cup of water to students, they must first have a bucket of water themselves, and it must be a continuously replenished source. Therefore, as a university teacher, one must be rigorous and diligent, continuously study and research, keep abreast of the latest developments in the field, introduce cutting-edge and dynamic information, as well as the latest theoretical accomplishments into the classroom, enhance the depth and breadth of teaching, enrich the content of classroom instruction, and utilize one's profound professional knowledge and unique personal charisma to captivate and inspire students. Only then can students truly love learning and be enthusiastic about it.

### **3.1.2. Only when teachers have high moral integrity can they propagate the doctrine to others.**

Educator Tao Xingzhi once said, "Virtue is the soul of a teacher," and teachers must "cultivate virtue and educate people." As education workers, teachers must possess keen cultural judgement abilities. Outstanding teachers not only act as "knowledge transmitters," but strive for a higher realm as "role models." In the "Annals of Later Han" written by Yuan Hong, it is stated, "It is said that it is easy to find a knowledgeable teacher, but difficult to find a role model." Xi has mentioned that in the eyes of students, teachers are the ones who "speak words of wisdom and set examples with their behavior." The ideological and political condition of teachers is highly exemplary<sup>[7]</sup>. It is necessary to insist that educators receive education themselves, allowing teachers to better fulfill their responsibilities as guides and mentors in the healthy growth of students. By combining teaching and nurturing with personal cultivation, one can live with virtue, teach with virtue, and impart knowledge with virtue<sup>[13]</sup>. To fulfill the responsibility of "propagating the doctrine," teachers must adhere to the cultivation of moral character, establish a teacher's soul, stay true to their original aspirations, strengthen self-improvement and self-discipline, pursue moral perfection, and truly achieve rigorous learning, cultivation of character, exemplary behavior, and teaching others.

### **3.1.3. The ability to "resolve doubts" should be enhanced.**

With cherished wisdom and morality, teachers must guide students to understand complex theories by transforming them into simple and easy-to-understand principles. This helps to cultivate students' practical skills in observation, analysis, and problem-solving, while guiding them to establish correct ideals and beliefs, and learn proper thinking methods. More than just answering questions from textbooks, teachers must also pay attention to the current situation, analyze situations with reason, help students solve real-life problems, and clarify any ambiguous or uncertain knowledge, in order to truly touch the soul of the students. Through this, students can internalize and externalize the effects of education in their hearts and actions.

The integration of propagating the doctrine, imparting professional knowledge, and resolving doubts has always been given a decisive position. Propagating the doctrine comes first, imparting professional knowledge is crucial, and resolving doubts is essential. These three elements are indispensable and cannot be replaced<sup>[4]</sup>. Teaching is the ultimate goal of learning and resolving doubts, and learning and resolving doubts are prerequisites and foundations for teaching. Only when teachers possess extensive knowledge, broad vision, and a broad mind can they persuade and approach students. As the saying goes, to forge iron, one must be strong; to embroider with skill, one must strive for excellence. "Using the power of truth to inspire students, winning students with

a deep theoretical foundation, consciously setting an example as a learner and a person, and becoming a person students love," "A student will believe in teachings only when he gets close to his teacher."<sup>[14]</sup>.

### **3.2. Be an outstanding "great teacher" in the new era, propagating the doctrine, imparting professional knowledge, and resolving doubts**

In the past and present, teachers have always been the guiding figures and cultivators for students. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Xi has stood at the strategic height of passing on the torch of Party and national development and ensuring a succession of capable individuals, pointing the way forward for the construction of a new era teacher workforce. As teachers of ideological and political courses, we must enhance the depth of exploration of ideological and political elements in curriculum teaching. Based on understanding the cognitive laws, psychological characteristics, and developmental needs of students, we need to integrate teaching resources, innovate teaching methods, design teaching chapters, and enhance the ability to cultivate students' ideological and political awareness through the curriculum. We must adhere to the principles of strong political commitment, deep compassion, innovative thinking, broad vision, strict self-discipline, and personal integrity. We must uphold the unity of teaching and education, transmission of knowledge and role modeling, pursuit of knowledge and social concerns, and academic freedom and academic norms. We should consciously exert our enthusiasm, initiative, and creativity, inspiring students with the power of truth, winning them over with profound theoretical knowledge, and educating and guiding students to cultivate patriotism, establish lofty aspirations, and form correct worldviews, life philosophies, and values. Teachers need to embody the original intention and mission of education, confidently teach ideological and political courses, and helping them realize the students personal values under scientific guidance. With the premise of fully strengthening and upholding the Party's leadership, teachers should fully demonstrate their role as pioneers, examples, and models. They should serve as models in their vision and perspective, in their abilities and spirits, in their qualities and cultivation, dedicating their time and energy to the main task of teaching and education, and the mission of moral and character development. They should devote themselves to solving the fundamental questions of what kind of individuals to educate, how to educate them, and who they are being educated for, and shoulder the heavy responsibility of nurturing new generations for the great cause of national rejuvenation. The new era calls for new responsibilities, and new actions are needed in the new era. In this new era, teachers must become the 'great example' who 'propagate the doctrine, impart professional knowledge, and resolve doubts'.

## **4. Conclusion**

The foundation of 'values education' lies in the 'curriculum' itself. Without good curriculum construction, the function of values education in curriculum becomes like stagnant water, or a tree without roots. Therefore, respecting the laws of curriculum construction, and strengthening the management of curriculum construction, is the fundamental basis for building values education in curriculum<sup>[15]</sup>. Seizing the key role of teachers, fully utilizing the "main force" of the teaching team, the "main battlefield" of curriculum construction, and the "main channel" of classroom teaching, imbuing values into knowledge impartation and skill development, and aligning all types of curriculum with values education, will result in a synergy.

Teachers require not only experience and ability, but also ideals, beliefs, values, vision, and love. They must cultivate themselves first and then influence others. A qualified teacher of values education in curriculum must first be a morally qualified "great teacher," who can teach and impart



knowledge based on morality, infect students, and become a moral role model for students, just as Xi repeatedly stressed, "Teachers must become great examples, lead students to learn, to work, and to become good people, promoting their all-around development"<sup>[16]</sup>.

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