

Exploration and Practice of Integrating Ideological and Political Education into Economics Curriculum

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Abstract: *In the context of rapid globalization and informatization, the teaching of Western Economics and its ideological and political development face unprecedented challenges and opportunities. To better integrate Socialist Core Values with economics education, this paper analyzes existing issues in the ideological and political education of the Western Economics. It further proposes a series of innovative approaches to optimize this educational integration, including enhancing teaching content, innovating pedagogical methods, improving the course assessment system and strengthening faculty development.*

Keywords: *Western Economics, Ideological and Political Education, Existing Issues, Innovative Approaches*

1. Introduction

The Western Economics curriculum is characterized by a large volume of knowledge and information, strong policy orientation, and close relevance to economic development. It focuses on the study of market mechanisms. Since the establishment of its disciplinary system, it has continuously innovated and developed, and is now widely offered in related majors, holding a fundamental position in professional learning. However, through analyzing the course's features, interviewing students, and organizing discussions among instructors, the course team has found that in terms of teaching, the theoretical system of Western Economics emphasizes the promotion of free economic ideas, making it difficult for students to effectively integrate theoretical knowledge with China's actual conditions during the learning process^[1]. Additionally, the traditional teaching methods are relatively monotonous, typically involving theoretical lectures in multimedia classrooms. In terms of ideological and political education (course-based), the Western Economics has issues such as insufficiently in-depth exploration of ideological and political elements, lack of systematic organization, unreasonable design of entry points, and stiff integration, lacking pre-class guidance and post-class reflection. This results in superficial ideological and political education that fails to touch students' hearts, creating a dull classroom atmosphere and insufficient innovative elevation of the "two qualities and one degree", making it difficult for students to internalize the knowledge and apply it in practice. Moreover, there is a lack of collaboration between schools and enterprises in talent cultivation, failing to create a mutually reinforcing and supportive situation, which has led to the ineffective teaching outcomes^[2].

Western Economics is the so-called "mainstream economics" in capitalist countries, summarizing the experience of market economy operation in capitalist countries and bearing distinct bourgeois ideology. Therefore, it is necessary to view this course dialectically. Under the background of the new era, the teaching of Western Economics must start from the actual socialist market economy, give full play to the guiding role of ideological and political education in the course, extract new connotations from China's experience of reform and opening up and development, enrich economic concepts with "Chinese experience", and make the course content more in line with the laws of the development of the socialist market economy and the needs of building socialism with Chinese characteristics.

2. The Importance of Integrating Ideological Education into Western Economics Curriculum under the New Context

The Western Economics curriculum possesses inherent advantages for ideological education due to its distinctive content and characteristics. This course primarily examines the operational principles of Western capitalist market economies, aiming to elucidate the rationality of capitalist economic

systems—which exhibit fundamental differences from China's socialist economic structure^[3]. Consequently, instructors must transcend mere knowledge dissemination by incorporating critical comparative perspectives to help students understand the features and applicability of diverse economic systems. Implementing ideological education through appropriate pedagogical methods enables students to cultivate intrinsic identification with and pride in national development while acquiring specialized knowledge. As the quality of China's higher education advances, universities must increasingly emphasize the integration of ideological education with disciplinary instruction. The ideological development within the Western Economics curriculum not only guides students in establishing sound values and outlooks on life but also deepens their comprehensive understanding of China's market economy operations. This approach aims to nurture practically-oriented talents who possess both professional competence and social responsibility, thereby empowering them to make meaningful contributions to building a modern socialist country.

3. Course Introduction

Western Economics is a fundamental course for students majoring in economics and management, playing a significant role in enhancing their learning quality and fostering their abilities. This course attracts a large number of students and has a high utilization rate of teaching resources. However, due to the teacher-centered approach in the classroom, there is insufficient guidance and attention given to students' active learning, resulting in a lack of interaction between teachers and students and low student participation, which greatly reduces the teaching effectiveness.

Although the teaching reform of the Western Economics course is flourishing, and many universities have explored and attempted various teaching models for this course, the existing research mainly focuses on specific approaches and practical significance, as well as strategies for promoting the cultivation of applied talents. Most of these studies are limited to the theoretical level, with relatively weak practical research, especially in the aspect of organically integrating the content of the socialist economy with Chinese characteristics into the course's teaching materials^[4]. Therefore, this article aims to innovate teaching methods and models by integrating ideological and political elements into professional knowledge, with the expectation of improving the teaching effectiveness of the course.

4. Problems in the Construction of Ideological and Political Education in Western Economics Courses

4.1 Emphasis on Theoretical Teaching with Insufficient Integration of Ideological and Political Education

In the teaching process of Western economics courses, there is usually an emphasis on theoretical instruction. While this teaching model helps students understand economic principles and the basic operation of the market economy, it often falls short in integrating ideological and political education. The content of theoretical teaching mainly focuses on explaining and analyzing the structure and functions of the Western capitalist economy, such as market mechanisms, price formation, and supply and demand relationships, making it difficult to directly relate to the teaching goals of socialist economic concepts and policies. The theoretical framework and models of Western economics are typically based on idealized assumptions, such as "perfect competition markets" or "rational economic agents." Although these assumptions help simplify complex economic phenomena for easier analysis and teaching, they lack consideration of political and social factors in the real economic environment. Therefore, when these theories are directly applied in teaching without appropriate localization and integration of ideological and political education, it may lead students to have an overly abstract understanding of economic knowledge, making it difficult to directly relate it to China's economic reality and socialist economic construction. The lack of integration between economic theories and socialist economic practices in the teaching process may result in students, after mastering Western economic theories, being unable to fully understand their applicability and limitations in China's economic development. For instance, if the concept of "market failure" in the theory is not explained in the context of the actual interaction between the market and the government in China, students may not fully grasp the crucial role of the government in regulating the market and promoting social justice.

4.2 Traditional Teaching Methods Limit Students' Subjectivity

The traditional teaching approach mainly involves delivering knowledge through lectures and standard textbooks, with teachers dominating the classroom and students passively receiving information. While this teaching model has its advantages in terms of knowledge transmission efficiency, it largely restricts students' subjectivity, that is, their ability to participate and explore topics. In the teaching of Western economics, traditional teaching methods have not fully utilized more dynamic teaching methods such as case analysis, group discussions, or project-based learning. These strategies can encourage students to actively learn and think critically, deepening their understanding of economic theories through the resolution of practical problems. For example, case analysis can help students see the application of economic theories in actual business and policy decisions, while group discussions prompt students to propose and debate different viewpoints in interaction, thereby deepening their understanding of complex economic phenomena. In economics education, innovative thinking and initiative are extremely important because economics is a constantly evolving and changing social science that requires students to challenge and update traditional views. When teaching methods fail to stimulate students' inquisitive spirit and critical thinking, students may merely learn how to apply economic models rather than understanding the economic logic behind them and their impact on the real world.

4.3 Single Assessment Method, Incomplete Evaluation Results

The singularity of assessment methods in Western economics courses often leads to incomplete evaluation of students' abilities. Traditional course assessments tend to use closed-book exams as the main evaluation tool, which emphasizes the memorization and reproduction of theoretical knowledge but often neglects students' abilities to analyze, criticize, and apply this knowledge to solve practical problems. Although closed-book exams are effective in testing students' mastery of specific economic models and theories, they are difficult to comprehensively assess students' comprehensive abilities, such as innovative thinking, critical analysis, and the ability to solve complex problems. Economics is not only a theoretical discipline but also an applied one, requiring students to apply theoretical knowledge to analyze and handle real-world issues. The economic problems of the world. A single assessment method may also lead students' learning motivation to be biased towards exam-oriented learning rather than genuine knowledge exploration and skill development, which is not conducive to students forming the habit of independent exploration and continuous learning during the learning process, and also limits their potential for innovation and independent thinking in the field of economics.

5. Innovative Approaches to Ideological and Political Education in Western Economics Courses under the New Situation

5.1 Optimize Teaching Content and Highlight Ideological and Political Elements

To optimize the teaching content of Western Economics courses and effectively highlight ideological and political elements, it is necessary to conduct a thorough review and reorganization of the course content^[5]. Teachers should carefully analyze the core knowledge points of each chapter, identify elements related to ideological and political education, and naturally integrate them into teaching to achieve an organic combination of knowledge, ability, and values. For instance, when discussing consumer choice theory, one can analyze phenomena such as impulse consumption and conspicuous consumption, and introduce specific cases like online lending and campus lending to help students understand economic theories and guide them to reflect on the rationality and social impact of their consumption behaviors, thereby fostering a scientific consumption concept and enhancing their sense of social responsibility and rational consumption awareness. When explaining production and cost theory, the case of Procter & Gamble donating to Hope Primary Schools can be introduced to illustrate that enterprises should undertake social responsibilities while pursuing profit maximization, helping students understand the positive impact of corporate behavior on society. Such cases can effectively convey the importance of corporate social responsibility and encourage students to attach importance to the social role of enterprises in their future careers. In the study of market failure, teachers can use real social events to help students deeply understand the limitations of the market in effectively allocating resources in certain situations. At the same time, by using cases related to epidemic prevention and control, students' recognition of the advantages of the socialist system with

Chinese characteristics can be strengthened, and their patriotic feelings and sense of responsibility can be stimulated. By showcasing the achievements of China's economic construction, students' understanding of theories can be deepened, and their sense of national pride and confidence can be enhanced^[6].

5.2 Improve the course assessment system to promote teaching

A multi-dimensional assessment approach helps to form a more comprehensive and in-depth learning evaluation system, ensuring that students achieve balanced development in knowledge acquisition, ability enhancement, and value shaping^[7]. First, adopt process-based assessment, evaluating students' daily learning attitudes and behaviors, which generally accounts for 20% of the total score. Among them, 10% comes from students' attendance and classroom discipline, reflecting their basic learning qualities. Another 10% comes from classroom interaction, including students' responses to questions and participation. Teachers should assess students' understanding through in-class questions or quizzes after each economic theory or ideological and political content is taught, thereby enhancing students' sense of participation in class and helping teachers adjust teaching strategies in a timely manner to improve teaching effectiveness. Second, formative assessment accounts for 10% of the total score and is divided into regular assignments and ideological and political assignments. Regular assignments account for 5% and are mainly used to test students' mastery of the basic theories of the course. The assignments should include some open-ended questions to encourage students to apply their knowledge to solve problems based on the current economic development situation in China. Ideological and political assignments account for 5% and require students to work in groups around specific economic knowledge points, select real-life cases, analyze the ideological and political elements in the cases, and present their findings in the form of group reports or papers. This method not only deepens students' understanding of the course content but also enhances their teamwork and practical application abilities. Third, comprehensive assessment is usually conducted in the form of a final closed-book exam, accounting for 70% of the total score. The examination content should not only test students' theoretical knowledge of economics but also incorporate analysis questions and case discussion questions related to ideological and political education. The design of the questions should be open-ended to enable students to demonstrate their independent thinking and critical analysis skills in response to economic phenomena.

5.3 Strengthening Teacher Training to Enhance Ideological and Political Teaching Competence

To enhance teachers' ideological and political teaching competence, schools should establish specialized training courses and workshops, and regularly provide training on ideological and political education and teaching methods for teachers^[8]. The training content should include the latest teaching technologies, understanding of student psychology, and how to effectively integrate ideological and political elements into economics teaching. For instance, regular seminars can be organized, inviting experienced teachers and experts to share cases of integrating socialist core values into the teaching of economic theories, as well as how to handle students' doubts and disputes on ideological and political issues. Schools can provide teachers with research funds and time support to encourage them to try new teaching methods, such as case teaching and problem-based learning, and apply these innovative achievements to ideological and political education. Teachers can incorporate more economic cases that combine with socialism with Chinese characteristics into their teaching to enhance the practicality and ideological nature of the courses. Establish teacher mutual assistance groups and experience sharing platforms to promote the exchange of experiences and mutual learning among teachers. The platform can be an online forum or regular offline meetings, allowing teachers to share their successful cases and challenges in ideological and political education, thereby jointly improving teaching quality and educational effectiveness. Higher education institutions can collaborate with research institutions to set up special research projects, supporting teachers to participate in in-depth research on the combination of economic theories and socialist practices, enhancing teachers' theoretical depth and teaching breadth.

6. Practical Application Cases of Ideological and Political Education in Western Economics Courses

This article takes the "perfectly competitive market" in microeconomics and "gross domestic product" in macroeconomics as examples to introduce the ideological and political education teaching cases in Western economics courses.

6.1 Perfectly Competitive Market

6.1.1 Group Discussion and Interaction, Incorporating Ideological and Political Elements

Taking homestays as an example, the teacher introduces theoretical knowledge such as cost theory, economic profit, and the equilibrium conditions of producers in the classroom through various teaching methods and means such as mathematical derivation, chart analysis, and case analysis. The teacher organizes students to collect, analyze, and present cases, increasing communication and learning between teachers and students.

The ideological and political education in this section mainly has two aspects: First, it guides students to establish correct business ethics and legal operation awareness, and understand the spirit of entrepreneurship. Second, it guides students to understand the market-oriented reform driving forces behind the rapid development of China's tourism industry, including the homestay industry, and understand that the market is the most efficient way to allocate resources. The government can also play a better role. The specific teaching design is as follows.

First, two groups are arranged to collect data on the development of China's tourism and homestay industries and make charts. The groups need to collect relevant market-oriented reform policy documents for the tourism and homestay industries, understand the institutional driving forces behind the prosperous development of China's tourism and homestay industries, and thereby understand the important statement in the report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China that "the market is the most efficient way to allocate resources, and the government can also play a better role", thereby enhancing the "Four Confidences".

Second, two groups are arranged to collect the growth stories of some well-known entrepreneurs and some typical cases of non-compliance and illegality in the homestay industry. Through case analysis, students are guided to establish correct business ethics and legal operation awareness.

6.1.2 Case Analysis to Enhance Decision-Making Ability

First, cultivate the ability to analyze and operate concepts. The concepts of the demand curve faced by perfectly competitive enterprises, the short-term and long-term equilibrium of perfectly competitive enterprises, etc., are effectively combined with the actual operation data of each homestay collected by students, enabling students to master relevant theoretical knowledge and improve their ability to think critically about abstract concepts.

Second, exercise the ability to analyze costs and benefits, and improve the scientific nature of business decisions. Based on the data collected by each group on the input costs, operating costs, and tourist consumption of the same homestay, analyze the production and operation status of the homestay, and determine whether the homestay should rest during the off-season, thereby improving students' ability to analyze business decisions.

Third, through case analysis, guide students to use economic theory knowledge to improve the efficiency of homestay operations and make business strategy choices based on the equilibrium conditions of profit maximization.

6.2 Gross Domestic Product

This article takes "gross domestic product" in macroeconomics as an example to introduce the ideological and political education teaching cases in Western economics courses. Gross domestic product (GDP) is one of the important indicators of macroeconomics. How to understand and grasp the concept, connotation, calculation, limitations, and development trends of GDP from the perspective of macroeconomics is the main content of this course. The key and difficult points of this course are to understand the concept, connotation, calculation, and limitations of GDP.

6.2.1 Group Discussion and Interaction, Incorporating Ideological and Political Elements

Group discussion is an important teaching method and means, and it is an important way to internalize and externalize ideological and political elements and the concept of innovation and entrepreneurship. This course involves two group discussion activities.

First, based on the dynamic trend charts of the total GDP of various countries and the dynamic trend charts of the GDP growth rates of various countries, present the visual impact of China's economic growth miracle, analyze the internal logic and driving forces behind China's economic growth miracle,

and guide students to firmly establish the "Four Confidences". Second, based on the limitations of the GDP indicator, group discussions will be held on the practical manifestations of the flaws of GDP, as well as the ideas and methods for improving the GDP indicator. A case analysis of the Chinese solution for optimizing the GDP indicator will also be conducted to showcase the "Chinese experience" and "institutional advantages", and cultivate students' patriotic feelings and political identity.

6.2.2 Introduce case analysis to stimulate critical thinking

Case analysis and critical thinking skills are important components of the comprehensive ability cultivation for students in this course. This course will introduce the green GDP case and encourage students to conduct case discussions based on the green ecological construction of their country and hometown. At the same time, by teaching the importance and limitations of GDP and other knowledge points, it will enhance students' ability to think and analyze problems from multiple perspectives, guide students to cultivate a deep sense of patriotism, and strengthen their critical thinking.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the ideological and political construction of Western economics courses helps cultivate students' critical thinking. Therefore, educators and course designers must keep up with the latest trends in education, actively explore the integration points of economic theories and socialist core values, and flexibly apply various innovative teaching methods. At the same time, continuous training and professional development of teachers should be emphasized to ensure the consistency and forward-looking nature of educational content and methods. Only in this way can students feel the profound significance of ideological and political education while learning Western economics, and cultivate compound talents who understand the market economy and uphold socialist core values, promoting higher education to a higher level.

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