Research on Curriculum Standards Establishment for Ideological and Political Theory Courses in Higher Vocational Colleges in the New Era
—A Case Analysis of Introduction to Mao Zedong Thought and the Theoretical System of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics

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Abstract: The development of curriculum standards for ideological and political theory courses in higher vocational education should be grounded in the distinctive characteristics and attributes of vocational education and the specialized talent training programs the institution offers to establish tailored curriculum standards. As an illustrative case, the course titled “Introduction to Mao Zedong Thought and the Theoretical System of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics” at Dalian Vocational Technical College serves as a compulsory course for students across all majors. Three-dimensional objectives have been delineated to align with professional ideological and political education demands. Emphasis is placed on the specific traits of higher vocational students, the unique features of their respective disciplines, and the contextual circumstances prevalent within the local environment. The objective is to investigate a comprehensive evaluation index system and an augmented assessment process that places student involvement at its core. This endeavor aims to foster a collaborative space for ideological and political education, integrating these principles into the curriculum while fully harnessing the potential of local and institutional environment and individual student circumstances, ultimately driving the innovative advancement of ideological and political theory courses in higher vocational education in the new era.

1. Preface

Curriculum standards play a crucial role within higher vocational institutions as an integral component of vocational education standards. They serve as a guiding framework for curriculum development, implementation, evaluation, and management [1]. These standards establish the essential criteria necessary to ensure the quality of talent cultivation and represent the concrete manifestation of how professionals should be trained and developed [2]. In 2006, the government initially proposed establishing curriculum standards that specifically emphasize cultivating vocational abilities, standardizing the fundamental requirements of curriculum instruction, and enhancing the overall quality of teaching and learning experiences [3]. Furthermore, the National Vocational Education Reform Implementation Plan of 2019 emphasizes the foundational role of standards in enhancing the quality of vocational education. The plan calls for a continuous process of updating and advancing professional catalogs, professional teaching standards, curriculum standards, on-the-job internships, and standards for developing training facilities. It also emphasizes the importance of effectively implementing these standards within vocational institutions [4].

In recent years, there has been a notable emphasis on developing curriculum standards within higher vocational institutions, recognizing it as a pivotal aspect of curriculum reform. These institutions have dedicated considerable time to exploring, conducting research, and undertaking developmental initiatives in curriculum standardization. Their primary objective has been to enhance the quality of curriculum instruction and advance comprehensive reforms in education, teaching, and management, known as the reform in “trilingual education”. This endeavor aims to establish vocational education as a domain characterized by substantial and meaningful content. Undoubtedly, curriculum standards play a critical role in facilitating the functionality of curricula and achieving tangible outcomes. By adhering to curriculum standards during the processes of teaching implementation, evaluation, and quality assurance, educational institutions can ensure smooth and effective advancements. Only through alignment with curriculum standards can teaching objectives and desired educational outcomes genuinely be realized [5].

Based on the newly revised 2023 edition of the textbook for ideological and political theory courses in
higher education institutions, the primary emphasis in constructing ideological and political theory courses in higher vocational education lies in developing their curriculum standards. This process necessitates an initial consideration of vocational education’s unique characteristics and attributes, followed by their integration with the specialized talent training programs offered by the institution to establish customized curriculum standards. The present study analyzes the research on the curriculum standard construction of the course “Introduction to Mao Zedong Thought and the Theoretical System of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics at Dalian Vocational Technical College.

2. Functional Orientation: Clarifying the Nature and Tasks of the Course

The ideological and political theory course possesses an inherent ideological nature. It fulfills a unique function in guiding students to develop a sense of service to the people, a role that cannot be substituted by any other course[6]. As a fundamental component of ideological and political theory in higher education institutions, the course “Introduction to Mao Zedong Thought and the Theoretical System of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics” holds a central position. It is designed as a compulsory course offered to students across all majors, with a primary focus on elucidating the process, core content, spiritual essence, historical position, and guiding significance of the adaption of Marxism to the Chinese context and the needs of our times. Its overarching objective is to enhance students’ comprehensive understanding of the historical trajectory, transformative processes, and remarkable achievements associated with the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party in revolution, construction, and reform. Additionally, the course aims to fortify students’ comprehension and grasp of the adaption of Marxism to the Chinese context and the needs of our times, along with its theoretical accomplishments. Through the course, students are expected to develop improved abilities to apply Marxist principles, perspectives, and analytical methodologies in comprehending, analyzing, and resolving complex issues, thereby actively engaging in “Marxist and socialist ideological and political education” [7].

3. Objective Orientation: Establishing A System of Target Requirements

3.1. Course Objectives

A comprehensive set of course objectives has been developed based on extensive research of the 2023 edition of the textbook and an examination of the characteristics and backgrounds of our current student source. These objectives have been designed with a three-dimensional approach, aligning them with the nine major professional categories’ talent training programs and objectives. The aim is to establish professional ideological and political goals that align with the requirements of specialized talent cultivation. These objectives seek to integrate personal ideals with professional demands, individual and social values, and personal growth with a sense of responsibility. They aim to provide the emerging generation with a leading spirit of the era and a correct value orientation to undertake the obligation of national rejuvenation[8].

3.1.1. Knowledge Objective

① Acquire a comprehensive understanding of the historical process and theoretical achievements of the adaption of Marxism to the Chinese context and the needs of our times.
② Gain a thorough knowledge of Mao Zedong Thought and its historical significance.
③ Develop a deep understanding of the New Democratic Revolution Theory.
④ Acquire knowledge and comprehension of the Socialist Transformation Theory.
⑤ Gain knowledge and understanding of the theoretical achievements of the preliminary exploration of the path of socialist construction.
⑥ Attain a comprehensive understanding of the formation and development of the Theoretical System of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics.
⑦ Develop a comprehensive understanding of Deng Xiaoping Theory and its historical significance.
⑧ Gain knowledge and understanding of the important thought of “Three Represents”
⑨ Gain knowledge and understanding of the main content of the Scientific Outlook on Development.

3.1.2. Skill Objectives

① Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the contemporary, theoretical, and global significance of the theoretical achievements of the adaption of Marxism to the Chinese context and the needs of our times.
② Acquire profound insights into the theoretical attributes of Sinicized Marxism, which exhibit both continuity and adaptability to the present era.
③ Systematically grasp the Marxist principles, perspectives, and methodologies embedded in the theoretical accomplishments of Sinicized Marxism.
④ Cultivate a genuine appreciation for the significant advantages of the Chinese Communist Party’s centralized and unified leadership and the socialist system.
⑤ Foster unwavering confidence in the path, theory, system, and culture of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, while strengthening political, ideological, and emotional identification.

3.1.3. Literacy Objectives

① Enhance theoretical thinking abilities by deriving inspiration from the ideas, strategies, and wisdom encapsulated in the theoretical achievements of Sinicized and Modernized Marxism, thus enlightening one’s life.
2. Maintain a strong connection between theory and practice by closely intertwining the history of the Communist Party, the history of New China, the history of reform and opening-up, the history of socialist development, and the history of the Chinese nation’s progress and applying wisdom from historical lessons to the present and future contexts.

3. Enhance practical development capabilities by engaging in reflective learning that leads to insightful realizations and tangible knowledge gains, thus fostering the capacity to identify, analyze, and resolve problems.

4. Emphasize the integration of knowledge and action by cultivating a solid knowledge foundation, acquiring practical skills, deducing youth to hard work, and embracing a sense of responsibility and mission. Actively participate in the great practice of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and make substantial contributions to society.

3.1.4 Objectives of Ideological and Political Curriculum

According to the characteristics of vocational education types and the requirements for ideological and political construction in ideological and political courses, we have divided specific ideological and political goals based on major categories, as shown in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Categories</th>
<th>Professional Objectives/Design</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equipment Manufacturing</td>
<td>Developing students’ understanding for the achievements of the Communist Party in the manufacture of major products and the development of the manufacturing sector during the revolutionary and construction periods, the theoretical significance of modernization in New China, and the evolution of productive forces and production relations during the reform and opening-up and the development of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Students will be guided to develop a stronger sense of self-confidence, self-improvement, and the pursuit of technological progress. They will be encouraged to apply their knowledge to bridge the gap between theory and practice. The objective is to form a sense of conformity and a solid work-in-quantity characterized by perseverance, hard work, excellence, and a continuous commitment to improvement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>Expanding upon the historical evolution of the Chinese Navy in modern times and the notable achievements of China’s civilian aviation industry, the Chinese railway system, and the transportation industry during the era of socialism and reform, students are required to learn about the achievements of past generations and the present. The primary objectives of this category are: students are guided to uphold the professional ideals and values, achieve a profound sense of national duty, and cultivate their skills to make valuable contributions towards building a modern nation and promoting the rise of a prosperous maritime nation. Moreover, it endeavors to enhance students’ understanding of sustainable development and environmental practices, fostering a transformative approach to development.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Electric Information</td>
<td>Through the transformative evolution of electronic information and communication technology, with specific attention to its pivotal role during revolutionary war, the curriculum underscores the profound concern that “science and technology constitute the primary productive forces.” By emphasizing the interplay between technical knowhow and critical thinking, a coherent understanding of the scientific-technical method is facilitated, including an in-depth understanding of the characteristics of the modern world, the role of scientific and technological development in the transformation of society, and the pursuit of excellence among students. Through inspiration from the innovative and scientifically rigorous efforts of renowned scientists, By merging into the essence of the scientific spirit, it is to instruct aspiring young students to embark on a quest for knowledge, continually refine their understanding, and embrace transformative learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Engineering</td>
<td>Drawing on historical events and visual figures from the periods of the New Democracy Revolution, socialist transformation, and the era of construction and reform, which manifest shifts in the economic, technological, policy requirements, and societal achievements, this curriculum is primarily oriented in the ideological and political education of the new generation of professional talents. The major objective is to foster an understanding of the historical development through a practical lens. It serves to enrich the development of students’ self-development, cultivating an innovative spirit, adherence to the goal of people’s livelihood and construction of cultural classics. Moreover, the curriculum strives to cultivate in students a comprehensive understanding of China’s ever-expanding development trajectory, encouraging them to continuously innovate themselves in terms of patriotism, commitment, pragmatism, inclusiveness, and global awareness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Finance and Economics | Teaching ideological and political theory courses has a defined value orientation, a distinctive value standpoint, and a profound ultimate concern[9]. Following the requirements outlined in the Construction Standards for Ideological and Political Theory Courses in Higher Education Institutions (2021 edition) and considering the structure of the 2023 textbook, this course is specifically tailored to meet the unique characteristics of higher vocational students, the specificities of their majors, and the local context. It adopts a specialized theoretical teaching approach that follows “learning, thinking, practicing, and understanding.” This approach incorporates problem orientation, professional focus, value guidance, and practical reinforcement. Moreover, it integrates a theme-based practical activity model that fosters collaboration between the university, enterprises, and society. The overarching objective is to assist students in developing a profound understanding of the “Four Consciousnesses,” fostering unwavering “Four
Matters of Confidence,” and cultivating a commitment to upholding the “Two Upholds.” The course aims to strengthen students’ belief in and dedication to socialism with Chinese characteristics, actively involving them in the transformative practice of socialist construction.

4.2. “Professional Synergy Model” of Course Content

Aligned with the abovementioned teaching objectives, the ideological and political theory courses in higher vocational education explore an innovative approach known as the “Professional Synergy Model.” This model is guided by ideological and political education principles, emphasizing the unique characteristics of students’ learning situations and highlighting the pivotal role of educational subjects. Employing a progressive and reinforcing methodology that encompasses problem orientation, professional focus, value guidance, and practical reinforcement, the model aims to comprehensively optimize students’ beliefs, professional competence, political awareness, and conscientious actions. The course is organized around nine distinct topics, consisting of 30 teaching tasks, two field teaching and practical activities, as well as additional activities integrated within the teaching tasks, as shown in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching Special Topics</th>
<th>Teaching Tasks</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special Topic One: Theoretical Achievement of Ideological Education</td>
<td>1. The Composition of Marxism</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. The Reform of Ideological and Intellectual Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. The Composition of the Socialist and Intellectual Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. The Historical Process of the Socialist and Intellectual Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Theoretical Achievements and Relationships of the Socialist and Intellectual Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Topic Two: Marxist Zegov's Thought and His Historical Significance</td>
<td>1. The Formation and Development of Marxist Zegov's Thought</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. The Marxist Zegov's Thought in Practice</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. The Living Soul of Marxist Zegov's Thought</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Easy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Topic Three: New Democratic Revolution</td>
<td>1. The Formation of the New Democratic Revolution</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Easy</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. The Main Currents of the New Democratic Revolution</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. The Specialization of the New Democratic Revolution</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Topic Four: Socialism with Chinese Characteristics</td>
<td>1. The Establishment of the Socialist System in China</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. The Historical Background of the Socialist Exploration of the Path of Socialism Construction</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Key Theoretical Achievements of the Socialist Exploration of the Path of Socialism Construction</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Other Theoretical Achievements of the Socialist Exploration of the Path of Socialism Construction</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical &amp; Practical Activities</td>
<td>Statistical Analysis of Popular Sociology</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. The Popular Sociology of the Socialist Exploration of the Path of Socialism Construction</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The course assessment aims to establish a comprehensive evaluation framework that puts students at the center[10]. It adheres to principles that combine qualitative and quantitative measures, integrates processes and outcomes, and incorporates self-assessment and peer assessment[11]. With a focus on six key dimensions—political awareness, ideological level, moral qualities, skill enhancement, theoretical thinking, and belief in ideals—the assessment covers the entire process of the 30 teaching tasks, two practical activities, as well as other arrangements and competitions. It actively serves its purpose in evaluating, regulating, and guiding students’ participation in the classroom. It provides valuable insights into the course’s teaching dynamics and facilitates timely improvements, ultimately fostering the attainment of educational objectives in ideological and political education. Student grades are recorded using the levels of “excellent,” “good,” “average,” “pass,” and “fail.”

V. Guaranteeing Conditions: Establishing An Ideological and Political Community

(1) Faculty Team

Establishing the “Grand Ideological and Political Course” requires active involvement and utilization of societal resources, which involves forming a large and diverse team for ideological and political education, comprising both full-time and part-time instructors, focusing on recruiting qualified full-time professionals [12]. The prominent lecturers responsible for theoretical teaching in this course should possess a strong sense of political responsibility, a solid foundation in their respective fields, a well-structured knowledge base, exemplary personal qualities, effective communication and coordination skills, as well as organizational and management abilities. They should also be adept at utilizing modern teaching methodologies. Furthermore, it is crucial to establish a teaching team with rich teaching experience, practical exposure, comprehensive qualities, and a balanced age structure. Additionally, proactive efforts should be made to build an “Ideological and Political Community” for education and teaching. This involves fostering collaboration and synergy among various stakeholders, including ideological and political education practitioners within the school, instructors from external internships and training centers, and relevant personnel from enterprises. Through this collective effort, students can be effectively nurtured and guided.

(2) Teaching Conditions

1. Teaching Facilities and Practical Conditions

The school provides comprehensive classroom facilities with WIFI coverage and carries out teaching activities in smart classrooms as a pilot project. The college collaborates with various professional training facilities on campus to establish “dual bases,” aiming to integrate ideological and political education into the curriculum. Moreover, practical education bases are established in diverse locations, including the Dalian
The course adopts the designated textbook *Introduction to Mao Zedong Thought and the Theoretical System of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics* (2023 edition), an essential publication for the Marxist theoretical research and construction project endorsed by the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China. In addition, reference books like *Learning and Practice of Mao Zedong Thought and the Theoretical System of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics* by Tang Hongjun and Xie Renfeng supplement the course material. Moreover, a wide range of digital resources is actively incorporated, including 30 original micro-courses created by teachers to demonstrate specific concepts, 10 virtual interactive resources, 10 recorded classroom sessions, and 78 works authored by college students who deliver ideological and political lectures. Furthermore, learning platforms such as “Learningpower,” “Superstar,” and the MOOCs are extensively employed to enhance the learning experience.

3. Teaching Methods

The course offers a range of teaching methods, including project-based learning, the goal-oriented approach, the task-driven approach, lecture-based instruction, discussion-based approaches, demonstrations, and guidance. Students are encouraged to employ diverse learning methods, such as independent learning, cooperative learning, transfer learning, observation, induction, practical application, and practice.

During the development of the curriculum standards for this course, precise specifications were established regarding the functional positioning, goal orientation, categorization considerations, evaluation and assessment, and organizational support of the course “Introduction to Mao Zedong Thought and the Theoretical System of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics.” Special attention was given to exploring the educational objectives, teaching content, and methods of ideological and political education within the specific professional categories of the institution. These aspects are crucial in constructing ideological and political theory courses in higher vocational colleges. Furthermore, the curriculum design of the ideological and political course considers the program’s nature and aligns with the school’s talent training schemes. It aims to fully integrate local and student-specific contexts, encouraging active student participation and introducing dynamic elements such as practical achievements, significant personalities, and noteworthy events into the class. This approach fosters the innovative development of ideological and political theory courses in higher vocational colleges in the contemporary era.

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**References**
