

Exploration of the Integration Paths between “Aesthetic Education” and “Ideological and Political Education” in Universities under the Background of New Liberal Arts Construction — A Case Study of Humanities and Social Sciences Majors

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Abstract: *Based on the background of new liberal arts construction, this paper takes humanities and social sciences majors as the research object and systematically explores the in-depth integration path of art education and ideological and political education. From the dual perspectives of theoretical logic and practical value, the paper first points out that the two are consistent in goals and complementary in content under the fundamental task of "strengthening moral education and cultivating people": art education provides an effective carrier for ideological and political education with its vividness and emotionality, while ideological and political education injects ideological connotation and value orientation into art education. Secondly, the paper analyzes the problems existing in the current integration practice, such as vague goals, disconnected content, single path and insufficient teaching staff. On this basis, it proposes to construct a "trinity curriculum + multi-dimensional linkage practice" system. This is achieved by excavating the "art-ideological and political" elements in professional courses, developing interdisciplinary courses, implementing joint teaching, and carrying out situational practice in combination with on-campus, off-campus and online platforms. At the same time, it emphasizes the need to build an interdisciplinary teaching team and establish a scientific and diversified evaluation mechanism to ensure the effectiveness of integration. This paper aims to provide theoretical reference and practical paths for enhancing the effectiveness of ideological and political education, enriching the connotation of art education, and realizing the comprehensive educational goals of "educating people with aesthetics, nurturing people with culture, and cultivating people with morality".*

Keywords: New Liberal Arts Construction; Art Education; Ideological and Political Education; Humanities and Social Sciences Majors; Integration Path; Strengthening Moral Education and Cultivating People.

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1. Introduction

In 2019, the Ministry of Education officially issued the "Several Opinions on Promoting the Construction of New Liberal Arts", which clearly stated that the construction of new liberal arts must "adhere to strengthening moral education and cultivating people as the fundamental, take Chinese characteristics as the guide, take social needs as the orientation, and take interdisciplinary integration as an important approach". This programmatic document marks the transformation of China's higher liberal arts education from the traditional model centered on the imparting of knowledge in a single discipline to a training model that emphasizes interdisciplinarity, comprehensiveness, and equal emphasis on ability and value. Against this grand background, how to organically

integrate value shaping, knowledge impartment and ability cultivation has become a core issue for colleges and universities.

With its unique advantage of "touching people with beauty and moving people with emotion", art education can transform abstract and profound ideological concepts and moral norms into vivid, concrete and perceptible aesthetic experiences, providing a highly appealing expression carrier and emotional bridge for ideological and political education. Conversely, ideological and political education points out the direction for art education, endows it with profound ideological connotation and the spirit of the times, and ensures that artistic creation and artistic practice do not deviate from the fundamental purpose of "serving the people and serving socialism". The relationship between the two is a dialectical unity of form and content, means and purpose.

Humanities and social sciences majors, which are committed to studying the laws of human social development, exploring the human spiritual world, and inheriting and innovating culture, inherently contain rich ideological resources, cultural spirits and value orientations in their curriculum content. For example, the classic literary works in the Chinese language and literature major are not only the crystallization of language art, but also a vivid record of the national spirit and the style of the times; the major historical events and historical figures studied in the history major provide a profound historical mirror for understanding the national destiny and national rejuvenation; the philosophy major guides students to question the origin of the world, the meaning of life and value norms, and is a key field for shaping the world outlook, outlook on life and values. These characteristics make humanities and social sciences majors a natural fertile ground for the integration of art education and ideological and political education.

However, it is undeniable that at present, in most colleges and universities' humanities and social sciences majors, the integration of art education and ideological and political education is still in the exploration stage, and there are phenomena of "operating independently" and "being seemingly united but actually divided". In many cases, art education is regarded as a supplement to public optional courses, and its teaching focus mostly stays on the training of artistic skills or the popularization of artistic knowledge, while the excavation of the ideological value contained in it is insufficient; ideological and political education still mainly adopts the method of theoretical teaching. Although the content is profound, the teaching form is relatively single, and there is a certain distance from students' professional learning and daily life, resulting in a sense of alienation among some students that "the theory has nothing to do with me". This situation is quite different from the concept of interdisciplinary integration and comprehensive education advocated by the construction of new liberal arts.

Therefore, systematically exploring the integration path of art education and ideological and political education in humanities and social sciences majors is not only an inherent requirement for improving the effectiveness of curriculum-based ideological and political education, but also an inevitable way to enrich the connotation of art education and realize the goal of "educating people with aesthetics". This is not only related to the innovation of teaching methods, but also a profound reform of the concept of talent cultivation.

2. Theoretical Logic and Practical Value of the Integration of Art Education and Ideological and Political Education

2.1 Theoretical Logic: Dual Alignment of Educational Goals and Content Carriers

From the perspective of the ultimate goal of education, art education and ideological and political education are fundamentally highly consistent. Both of them point to the core proposition of "the all-round development of people" and are unified under the fundamental task of "strengthening moral education and cultivating people". Marx pointed out in "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844" that "man also constructs in accordance with the laws of beauty". This assertion profoundly reveals that aesthetic creation is one of the essential characteristics of human practical activities. Art education cultivates students' aesthetic ability, imagination and creativity, and shapes a sound and harmonious personality by guiding students to perceive beauty, appreciate beauty and create beauty. Ideological and political education, on the other hand, focuses on helping students establish a correct world outlook, outlook on life and values, and cultivating their moral judgment and social responsibility through ideological guidance and theoretical arming. If art education is committed to shaping people's "emotions and souls", then ideological and political education focuses on forging people's "thoughts and

spirits". The two complement each other and are indispensable, jointly forming the two wings of the cultivation of a complete personality.

Schiller, a representative figure of German classical aesthetics, systematically expounded the important role of aesthetic education in realizing personality improvement and social harmony in his "Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man". He believed that aesthetic education can bridge the divide between sensibility and rationality, individual and society, and enable people to reach the ideal state of "aesthetic man", thus laying the foundation for the realization of "moral man". Schiller's theory provides an important enlightenment for us to understand the internal connection between art education and ideological and political education: the aesthetic ability cultivated by art education is a bridge to a higher moral realm. A person with profound aesthetic literacy is often better able to deeply understand the internal unity of truth, goodness and beauty, and more consciously pursue noble moral sentiments.

From the perspective of content carriers, art is a high condensation of human spiritual culture and a concrete expression of thoughts, emotions and values. Whether it is a painting, a piece of music, a drama or a literary work, it contains the creator's understanding of the world, perception of life and judgment of values. Therefore, the content of ideological and political education can be spread and deepened with the help of art as a carrier. For example, by appreciating a fine art work reflecting the history of the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, students can not only feel the visual impact of art, but also intuitively experience the indomitable struggle spirit of the Chinese nation; by listening to "The Yellow River Cantata", students can deeply understand the patriotic feelings and national cohesion contained in it while being shocked by its majestic momentum. This process of materializing and emotionalizing abstract theories greatly enhances the attractiveness and appeal of ideological and political education.

2.2 Practical Value: Two-way Empowerment of Improving the Effectiveness of Ideological and Political Education and Enriching the Connotation of Art Education

In practice, the integration of art education and ideological and political education provides an effective path to solve the practical difficulties faced by current ideological and political education. In 2020, the State Council issued the "Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving School Aesthetic Education in the New Era", which clearly stated that "strengthening the integration of aesthetic education with moral education, intellectual education, physical education and labor education". This policy orientation fully affirms the unique role of aesthetic education in the simultaneous development of the five educations. For a long time, ideological and political education in some colleges and universities has had the problems of "single form, abstract content and weak pertinence". Pure theoretical indoctrination is likely to make students feel tired and alienated. However, the vividness, emotionality and participation unique to art education can just make up for this deficiency.

Taking humanities and social sciences majors as an example, teachers of the Chinese language and literature major can guide students to adapt the moral conflicts in classic literary works into stage plays or campus situational dramas, allowing students to personally experience the emotional choices and value adherence of the characters through role-playing and stage presentation; the history major can organize students to carry out thematic artistic creation around major historical events, such as creating comic strips, documentaries or oil paintings on historical themes, so that students can actively consult historical materials and think about the in-depth logic behind history in the process of creation; the philosophy major can guide students to conduct philosophical thinking by analyzing philosophical propositions in classic works of art, such as the impermanence of life in "A Dream of Red Mansions" and the life-and-death choice in "Hamlet", combining aesthetic experience with value inquiry. This way of "educating through entertainment" and "moistening things silently" transforms ideological and political education from "passive indoctrination" to "active perception" and extends it from "in the classroom" to "in life", significantly improving the effectiveness and long-term effect of education.

At the same time, the integration of ideological and political education also injects a continuous stream of ideological motivation and the connotation of the times into art education, enabling it to get rid of the narrow vision of "discussing art only in terms of art". In 2022, the Ministry of Education issued the "Guidelines for Public Art Courses in Institutions of Higher Education", which clearly proposed to "rely on the advantageous resources of public art courses and organically integrate the content of ideological and political education". This requires art

education not only to impart artistic skills and knowledge, but also to guide students to think about the relationship between art and society, art and life, and art and the times. For example, teachers of the philosophy major can lead students to discuss the social functions and value orientations of contemporary art from the perspective of Marxist practical view; teachers of the sociology major can guide students to study the role of folk art in rural revitalization and community governance, enabling students to recognize that art is not only an elegant pursuit in the ivory tower, but also an important force for serving the society and promoting the progress of the times. This integration makes art education a comprehensive educational process that improves students' aesthetic literacy, cultivates their ideological character and enhances their sense of social responsibility, realizing the resonance of "educating people with aesthetics" and "cultivating people with morality".

3. Existing Problems in the Current Integration Practice

3.1 Integration Design Level: Vague Goals and Disconnected Content

Although many colleges and universities have realized the importance of the integration of art education and ideological and political education, there are still problems of unclear goals and unclear paths in the specific top-level design and curriculum planning. Some colleges and universities simply understand the integration of the two as "adding some ideological and political elements to art courses" or "adding some artistic forms to ideological and political courses", lacking systematic and overall planning. Zeng Yuming pointed out in his research that some colleges and universities regard the integration of curriculum-based ideological and political education and professional education as a "task-based addition", that is, simply "labeling" on the established curriculum framework, without fundamentally reconstructing the curriculum goals, teaching content and evaluation system. This superficial integration is difficult to form a synergistic effect.

In teaching practice, this "goal disconnection" is specifically manifested in two aspects: on the one hand, in ideological and political courses, although art works are sometimes introduced as cases, they often only stay at the surface introduction, lacking in-depth connection with the ideological connotation of the works, the background of the times and the theoretical knowledge points of the courses. As a result, artistic elements become "classroom decorations" and fail to truly realize the combination of value guidance and knowledge impartment; on the other hand, in art courses, teachers mostly focus on the explanation of artistic techniques and the aesthetic analysis of works, and the excavation of the ideological and political education value contained in the works is insufficient. Some even consciously avoid value judgment, worrying that "talking about politics" will affect the "purity" of art. This situation of "talking about their own things" leads to art education and ideological and political education "passing by each other" in the classroom, failing to form an organic and unified educational joint force.

In addition, the content disconnection is also reflected in the separation among art education, ideological and political education and professional education. For example, if the art appreciation course offered by the history major only introduces the art schools and styles of different periods, without closely combining them with specific historical stages, social backgrounds and historical events, students will feel that this course has little to do with their professional learning, thus losing interest in learning. Similarly, if the writing course of the Chinese language and literature major only emphasizes writing skills while ignoring the ideological depth and value stance of the works, the students trained may be "fluent in writing" but not necessarily "profound in thinking". This separation makes it difficult for students to form a coherent knowledge system and a complete value cognition.

3.2 Implementation Support Level: Single Path and Insufficient Teaching Staff

In terms of the choice of integration paths, most colleges and universities still take classroom teaching as the only or main channel, with a relatively single form. Although some colleges and universities have tried to carry out extracurricular art activities, such as art exhibitions, red film screenings and campus singer competitions, these activities often lack effective connection with curriculum teaching and fail to form a continuous educational chain of "integration of in-class and out-of-class, combination of theory and practice". For example, students may participate in a red-themed art exhibition, but due to the lack of pre-theoretical guidance and post-discussion reflection, this visit may only stay at the level of "watching the excitement", making it difficult to internalize into a profound ideological identity and emotional resonance.

The insufficient teaching staff is another key bottleneck restricting the in-depth integration of art education and ideological and political education. An Limei's research pointed out that the insufficient interdisciplinary literacy of the teaching staff is the core factor restricting the integration of cultural resources and ideological and political education. Specifically, the knowledge structure of the current college teaching staff is relatively single: teachers of ideological and political courses have a solid theoretical foundation, but generally lack systematic artistic literacy and art appreciation ability, making it difficult to deeply analyze the aesthetic value and ideological implication of art works; teachers of art majors are proficient in their own fields, but have insufficient knowledge reserves in Marxist theory and ideological and political education methods, and often feel powerless when conducting value guidance in teaching; teachers of humanities and social sciences majors may lack experience in artistic creation and teaching, and are not familiar with the latest ideological and political education concepts and discourse systems. This pattern of teachers "fighting alone" makes it difficult to effectively carry out interdisciplinary curriculum development, teaching design and collaborative teaching, and the quality and depth of integrated teaching are greatly reduced.

In addition, there is also the problem of a single evaluation mechanism. The existing teaching evaluation system, whether for teachers or students, focuses more on the mastery of knowledge and skill performance. However, there is a lack of scientific and effective evaluation standards and methods for the "hidden achievements" obtained by students in the course of learning, such as ideological enlightenment, value shaping and personality development. To a certain extent, this has also dampened the enthusiasm of teachers to explore integrated teaching, because their efforts are difficult to be properly recognized and reflected in the existing evaluation system.

4. Integration Paths of Art Education and Ideological and Political Education

4.1 Constructing a "Trinity Curriculum + Multi-dimensional Linkage Practice" System

To realize the in-depth integration of art education and ideological and political education, it is first necessary to break the curriculum barriers and construct a "trinity" curriculum system in which ideological and political courses, art courses and professional courses support each other and integrate organically. Yuan Xing proposed that the construction of an interdisciplinary curriculum system is the core path to realize the integration of aesthetic education and professional education. This view is also applicable to the integration of art education and ideological and political education.

In this system, ideological and political courses are the core of value guidance, responsible for imparting Marxist positions, viewpoints and methods, and clarifying the fundamental issues of "what kind of people to cultivate, for whom to cultivate people and how to cultivate people"; art courses are important methods and approaches, providing aesthetic experience, emotional expression and creative thinking training, and serving as the "emotional engine" and "vivid carrier" of ideological and political education; professional courses are the main battlefield of integration and the main position of knowledge impartment and ability cultivation, and their rich teaching content provides a broad range of materials and entry points for ideological and political education and art education. The three are not simply added together, but deeply integrated, jointly serving the overall goal of "strengthening moral education and cultivating people".

Specifically, we can proceed from the following aspects:

In-depth excavation of "art-ideological and political" elements in professional courses: This is the foundation of integration. Teachers need to systematically sort out the curriculum content of their own majors and find out the ideological value and artistic potential contained in it. For example, when teaching Du Fu's poems in the Chinese language and literature major, teachers can combine calligraphy art, allowing students to experience the poet's "concern for the country and the people" through copying the calligraphy works of Du Fu's poems; when teaching the history of the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression in the history major, teachers can introduce classic musical works such as "The Yellow River Cantata", guiding students to analyze its historical background, artistic characteristics and its great role in uniting the national spirit and inspiring the morale of the anti-Japanese soldiers.

Development of interdisciplinary integrated courses: On the basis of tapping the potential of existing courses,

teachers' teams should be encouraged to jointly develop brand-new interdisciplinary courses. Such courses should break disciplinary boundaries and organically integrate art, ideological and political education and professional knowledge. For example, courses such as "Thoughts and Values in Art" can be offered to analyze the value conflicts and ideological connotations in classic works of art from multiple perspectives such as philosophy, sociology and art; courses such as "Red Art and Cultural Inheritance" can be offered to systematically study the revolutionary literature and art under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, the artistic achievements during the period of socialist construction and the red-themed creations in the new era, enabling students to deepen their understanding of the history of the Communist Party of China and the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics while learning the history of art.

Implementation of interdisciplinary joint teaching by teachers: The success of an integrated course often requires the collaboration of teachers with different disciplinary backgrounds. We can try to form a teaching team composed of teachers of ideological and political courses, art teachers and professional teachers to jointly design the course syllabus and conduct teaching. For example, in the course "The Art and Philosophy of A Dream of Red Mansions", teachers of the literature major are responsible for explaining the literary achievements and character shaping of the novel, teachers of the philosophy major are responsible for analyzing the philosophy of life and values contained in it, and art teachers can guide students to appreciate the traditional operas, paintings or film and television works adapted from "A Dream of Red Mansions", realizing the unity of "historical cognition, artistic appreciation and ideological guidance".

In terms of the practice system, guided by the situational learning theory, we should break the boundaries of the classroom and construct a multi-dimensional linkage practice platform of "on-campus + off-campus + online", allowing students to deepen their understanding and temper their character in real or simulated situations.

On-campus platforms: Make full use of the school's cultural centers, art galleries, theaters, clubs and other resources to organize distinctive and diverse artistic practice activities with clear themes. For example, establish a club for the creation and interpretation of "red script killing", allowing students to review the revolutionary history through creation and role-playing; hold a "patriotic feelings" themed art exhibition to display students' calligraphy, painting and photography works created around social hot topics and contemporary themes; set up art workshops, inviting artists inside and outside the school to guide students in learning and creating intangible cultural heritage skills, and understanding the craftsmanship spirit and national wisdom behind traditional culture.

Off-campus platforms: Actively establish long-term cooperative relationships with local art galleries, museums, communities, old revolutionary base areas and rural areas to build stable off-campus practice bases. Organize students to work as volunteer docents in art galleries, digging out the ideological connotation of art works and sharing them with the audience while explaining the works; carry out public welfare services of "art enriches life" in communities, serving community residents in an artistic way and spreading advanced culture; go to red bases for field trips and creation, integrating the revolutionary spirit into art works; participate in rural revitalization projects, using the power of art design to help build beautiful villages, so that students can enhance their sense of social responsibility and historical mission in the process of serving the society.

Online platforms: Make full use of information technology to expand the breadth and depth of practice. VR/AR technology can be used to build virtual art galleries or virtual revolutionary memorial halls, allowing students to conduct immersive experience and learning; online art creation and exchange communities can be developed to encourage students to share their works and creative experiences, and have ideological exchanges with peers from different regions and schools; organize cross-school online art competitions or joint creation projects, and carry out collaborative creation around grand themes such as "the community with a shared future for mankind" and "science and technology and humanity", cultivating students' global vision and team cooperation ability.

4.2 Building an Interdisciplinary Teaching Team and a Scientific and Diversified Evaluation Mechanism

The teaching team is the key to integration. It is necessary to take the building of an interdisciplinary and compound teaching team with "artistic literacy + ideological and political theory + professional knowledge" as a strategic task.

Strengthening in-service teacher training and exchange: Regularly organize "art-ideological and political" thematic training courses, interdisciplinary teaching seminars and experience exchange meetings, and invite experts and scholars in the fields of art and ideological and political education to give lectures and guidance. Encourage teachers to attend classes, prepare lessons and carry out cooperative research across departments and majors, break disciplinary barriers and promote the optimization of knowledge structure. Special funds can be set up to support teachers to participate in academic conferences and art exhibitions in relevant fields at home and abroad, broaden their horizons and update their concepts.

Combining introduction and employment: In the introduction of talents, we should consciously introduce outstanding talents with interdisciplinary backgrounds, such as doctoral graduates who are familiar with both artistic creation and Marxist literary theory. At the same time, actively employ off-campus artists, theorists and social activists as part-time professors or visiting lecturers to bring students a variety of perspectives and vivid practical experience.

Establishing interdisciplinary teaching teams: Driven by projects, encourage teachers of ideological and political courses, art teachers and professional teachers to spontaneously form long-term and stable teaching teams, jointly undertake the teaching tasks of integrated courses, carry out teaching reform research and curriculum construction. A normalized communication mechanism, such as regular teaching salons and case analysis meetings, should be established within the team to jointly improve the teaching level.

A scientific and diversified evaluation mechanism is a "baton" to ensure the effectiveness of integration and stimulate the enthusiasm of teachers and students. It is necessary to reform the existing single evaluation model and establish a comprehensive evaluation system of "diversified subjects + multi-dimensional content + combination of process and result".

Diversification of evaluation subjects: Change the previous single model of only teachers evaluating students, and introduce multiple evaluation subjects such as student self-evaluation, student mutual evaluation, joint teacher evaluation and off-campus experts (such as instructors of cooperative units and industry experts) evaluation, so as to comprehensively reflect students' learning achievements and teachers' teaching effects from different perspectives.

Multi-dimensionalization of evaluation content: The evaluation content should go beyond the simple assessment of knowledge and skills, and comprehensively cover multiple dimensions of students in the learning process, such as artistic ability (aesthetic perception, artistic expression, creative practice), ideological and political literacy (ideals and beliefs, moral sentiment, social responsibility) and professional ability (knowledge mastery, critical thinking, problem-solving ability). For example, when evaluating a student's art work, we should not only look at whether its skills are proficient and its ideas are innovative, but also pay more attention to whether it contains positive value pursuit and whether it reflects concern for the country, society and people.

Combination of process-oriented and result-oriented evaluation methods: We should not only pay attention to the final results of students at the end of the course (such as works, papers, performances, etc.), but also attach importance to their performance and progress in the entire learning process. The method of learning portfolios can be adopted to record the entire process of students from the initial conception, data collection, intermediate revision to the final completion of the work, including sketches, notes, reflection logs, etc., so as to comprehensively reflect their learning trajectory and growth process. For the evaluation of teachers, their efforts and contributions in curriculum integration design, interdisciplinary cooperation and teaching innovation should also be included in the assessment system.

Through the above paths, art education and ideological and political education in humanities and social sciences majors are no longer two parallel lines, but an educational joint force that interweaves and empowers each other. This can not only enhance the affinity and appeal of ideological and political education, enrich the ideological depth and the connotation of the times of art education, but also ultimately point to the grand goal of "cultivating new-era talents who take on the responsibility of national rejuvenation" and contribute solid strength to the construction of new liberal arts.

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