

# Reflection on Strengthening Ideological and Political Education in Higher Education under the Credit System

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**Abstract:** *The credit system is one of the important measures for deepening teaching reforms in Chinese universities. It meets the needs of cultivating high-quality talents for society and adapting to the socialist market economy. In the context of global talent competition, the implementation of the credit system in higher education poses significant challenges to ideological and political education for university students. Therefore, ideological and political education in universities needs to adapt to the demands of social and era development. University teachers should not only comply with the management model of the credit system but also actively explore new approaches to ideological and political education for university students under the credit system conditions.*

**Keywords:** *credit system, connotation, ideological and political education in universities, challenges, approaches*

## 1. Introduction

The credit system was introduced from Western educational and teaching systems. It emerged against the backdrop of rapid scientific and technological development and increased social division of labor. Thus, the credit system is compatible with market economy and educational management. Since its introduction to China, the credit system has received increasing attention and research from the education sector. With the development and improvement of China's socialist market economy, favorable conditions and environment have been provided for the development of the credit system, enabling university teachers to grasp the requirements of the credit system fundamentally and carry out ideological and political education in universities effectively.

## 2. Overview of the Credit System

### 2.1 Connotation of the Credit System

The credit system, as opposed to the annual system, is a teaching management system in which course selection and credit units are used to measure students' learning workload and progress. It serves as a basis for determining graduation requirements. The main task of Chinese universities is to cultivate successors and builders of the socialist cause. Strengthening ideological and political education for university students under the credit system is of great significance and requires attention to the importance of the credit system in ideological and political education.

### 2.2 Key Features of the Credit System Elective system

Student course selection forms the foundation and essence of the credit system. Unlike the traditional annual system, the credit system can accommodate the diverse differences among college students. Under the guidance of a more personalized credit-based teaching plan, students have the freedom to choose suitable major courses, instructors, elective formats, class schedules, and the number of elective courses. After selecting appropriate elective courses, students can enjoy considerable learning freedom within the credit system. This greatly enhances students' motivation for learning and satisfies their thirst for knowledge, facilitating their overall development and enabling teachers to adopt tailored teaching methods<sup>[1]</sup>.

Emphasis on individual development. One of the enduring strengths of the credit system is its

emphasis on personalized education, which respects the diversity of students and focuses on their individual development. Research has shown that human intelligence varies due to factors such as genetics, environment, and education. College students represent a stage where individual personality development is crucial. Based on students' credit accumulation, the credit system eliminates traditional class structures, respects students' individual characteristics, forms classes based on their selected courses and credit combinations, and provides diverse course categories and study plans to facilitate their personal development<sup>[2]</sup>.

Flexible academic system. The credit system is a teaching management model that allows students to have greater flexibility in their learning. Students can flexibly plan their studies within a limited timeframe. They can graduate ahead of schedule if they complete the required credits within the designated study period. On the other hand, students who fail to complete the required credits on time can delay their graduation until they fulfill the requirements. This flexibility accommodates variations in students' study timelines resulting from economic factors, as the credit system requires students to pay tuition fees. Students with challenging financial situations can temporarily leave school to work and earn money to continue their studies until they can graduate. Therefore, a flexible academic system aligns with the development and principles of education.

### **3. Challenges Faced by Ideological and Political Education in Higher Education under the Credit System**

The introduction and implementation of the credit system have not only had a significant impact on traditional ideological and political education but have also brought profound changes to educators' ideologies and educational concepts, resulting in changes to the education management system.

#### ***3.1 Challenges to the traditional ideological and political education values***

Educational values refer to the determination of the value orientation of educational behavior based on the cognition of the value relationship between education and its subjects. Traditional ideological and political education in Chinese universities, influenced by traditional educational values, emphasizes nurturing students as successors to national and societal interests<sup>[3]</sup>. Although it emphasizes common education, it often neglects students' individual development and their understanding of self-worth. Under the prolonged influence of traditional values, the subjective position of students can be overlooked in ideological and political education. However, students' individual development is of great importance for their future<sup>[4]</sup>. The cultivation of individuality involves acknowledging the differences among students and focusing on their autonomy, ultimately leading them to become self-educators. Students' individual development is the most effective way to enhance their intelligence and autonomy, helping them continuously surpass their own self-worth.

In the credit system, emphasis is placed on students' personal development and skills cultivation. It provides not only the conditions and environment for individual development but also ensures the primacy of students' subjectivity. Students can freely choose courses and study plans based on their interests and life plans. The credit system satisfies the knowledge requirements within compulsory courses while allowing students to broaden their knowledge through elective courses. It provides students with more possibilities and directions for their future development and facilitates the realization of their diverse strengths in society. The credit system fully harnesses students' wisdom, enabling continuous breakthroughs in self-value<sup>[5]</sup>.

In modern society, rapid scientific and technological advancements and increasing competition have placed higher demands on individuals' abilities and qualities. Modern society requires independence, self-awareness, a rational approach to society and others, and an understanding of one's own relationship with society. Under the credit system, competition is ubiquitous. The credit system enhances students' independence and competitiveness. The freedom to choose courses in the credit system marks the beginning of competition. In order to ensure good teaching quality and to accommodate their preferred class schedules and required courses, students must face competition. Competition helps students complete their credits more effectively. The qualities cultivated under the credit system align with the requirements of ideological and political education in higher education and establish a new concept of coordinated development between society and individuals, emphasizing a "people-oriented" approach.

### ***3.2 Challenge to indoctrination-based education***

Indoctrination-based education has long been present in various educational practices in China due to the influence of traditional educational ideologies. The traditional methods of ideological and political education in universities predominantly rely on indoctrination, often neglecting the full consideration of students' subjectivity. If students' subjectivity is overlooked in ideological and political education, it becomes empty and akin to concept-oriented preaching. University students are a highly knowledgeable group with a strong desire for knowledge, and although their discernment and analytical abilities may still be immature compared to adults in society, their rebellious nature makes them resistant to being passively indoctrinated with knowledge. Many universities tend to render ideological and political education as empty political learning, which leads to student resistance and aversion. Indoctrination-based education does not yield the desired results in ideological and political education. Firstly, indoctrination-based education fails to fundamentally change people's mindsets. Secondly, it overlooks the hierarchical and diverse nature of ideological and political education subjects. Universities accommodate students from different ethnicities, ages, backgrounds, and habits, resulting in significant differences in their ideological awareness and educational levels. However, indoctrination-based education neglects these points, teaching all students with a uniform value system and imposing standardized requirements. Consequently, most students exhibit a negative attitude towards ideological and political education, which hinders the achievement of intended educational goals. Finally, indoctrination-based education can only help students understand what behaviors are considered correct but fails to provide a deep understanding of the essence of issues or how to solve them. Indoctrination-based ideological and political education lacks practicality, as all actions must withstand practical testing. If indoctrination-based education lacks practical application, its scientific feasibility is questionable, making it difficult to foster significant behavioral changes.

Indoctrination-based education has its limitations. While it also emphasizes teaching methods, it remains unidirectional in terms of ideological and political education practices. Under the annual system, education follows a fixed pattern, and students are accustomed to following predetermined arrangements, lacking initiative and selectivity. Indoctrination-based education may yield certain results in ideological and political education under the annual system, but under the credit system, it faces various challenges. For instance, it may result in poor classroom teaching outcomes since students have the freedom to select courses, and indoctrination-based and preachy courses and instructors may face a lack of student enrollment. Additionally, the avenues for indoctrination-based teaching have been weakened over time. With the gradual weakening of class structures under the credit system, ideological and political education within classes becomes difficult to implement using indoctrination-based methods. Furthermore, indoctrination-based education often requires students to engage in concentrated practice. However, as each student's courses and schedules may differ significantly, indoctrination-based teaching lacks time and spatial feasibility. Finally, as students' awareness of personal benefits under the credit system increases, indoctrination-based education directly affects their time, making it difficult to gain their acceptance and cooperation. Thus, indoctrination-based education proves to be ineffective under these circumstances.

## **4. Approaches to Ideological and Political Education in Higher Education under the Credit System**

After the implementation of the credit system, higher education institutions need to maintain a positive attitude and clear mindset to address the new problems and situations in ideological and political education. Effective measures should be taken to harness the advantages of the credit system and improve ideological and political education for college students.

### ***4.1 Innovative management model for ideological and political education***

Higher education institutions should strengthen the construction of counselor teams and enhance the role of teachers in educating and guiding students. It is essential to implement the class advisor system and mentorship system, where class advisors are assigned to lower-level students and mentors to higher-level students. This new management model allows teachers to play a role in education and management. In lower-level courses, experienced and responsible teachers can serve as class advisors, collaborating with counselors and student organizations to provide daily ideological and political education and help students develop good qualities. This helps students smoothly transition into university life and ensures the successful implementation of the credit system. In higher-level courses

within the same or related majors, mentors can assist students in course selection based on societal, teaching, and employment requirements. Mentors, along with other counselors, can understand students' academic, ideological, and personal situations, provide timely ideological education and psychological counseling to those in need, and offer necessary guidance in collective learning and communication activities.

#### ***4.2 Harnessing the educative function of campus culture and strengthening the moral and ethical construction of campus living areas***

Campus culture plays a significant role in shaping students' thinking and behavior. It provides an effective platform for ideological and political education. The educative function of campus culture influences students' thinking, moral cultivation, and emotional well-being, ultimately enhancing their moral character. Campus culture is vibrant and easily accepted by students, increasing their enthusiasm for ideological and political education.

As students spend a significant amount of time in campus living areas under the credit system, these areas have become platforms for ideological and political education. Higher education institutions should pay attention to and strengthen the moral and ethical construction in student living areas. They should combine education and management in these areas, provide full-time counselors, and establish student party and youth organizations within student dormitories. This strengthens the functions and innovative systems of youth group-building work. On one hand, attention should be given to political guidance in student living areas, while on the other hand, services that cater to students' needs should be provided. Various organizations and activities can meet students' diverse requirements, fostering a positive learning environment.

#### ***4.3 Establishing platforms for student ideological and political work***

Under the credit system, students' individual tendencies and competitiveness increase. The role of campus culture and student organizations in higher education institutions should be fully utilized. Efforts should be made to build campus network culture and dormitory culture, nurturing students' character and improving their taste. This helps students develop cooperative spirit and teamwork, ultimately enhancing their comprehensive qualities. Higher education institutions can establish educational platforms within campus culture, such as strengthening the development of student organizations and engaging in diverse and healthy activities. These activities should have specific purposes and consciousness, creating an educational platform that aligns with modern campus culture. Additionally, educational platforms can be created through network culture. With the advancement of network technology, campus networks can effectively deliver personalized ideological and political education. Higher education institutions should leverage this technology to provide abundant and high-quality information and educational resources for ideological and political education. The use of networking facilitates communication and exchanges between mentors and students, overcoming the limitations of traditional ideological and political education and better meeting the requirements of the credit system.

#### ***4.4 Reforming the content of student ideological and political work***

As education rapidly evolves, it is crucial to actively reform ideological and political education in higher education institutions to keep pace with the times and support the implementation of the credit system. Under the credit system, students' autonomy increases, expanding the scope of ideological and political work. Therefore, it is necessary to enrich the content of ideological and political education. Higher education institutions should prioritize ideological and political education, moral character education, and psychological health education. These should be tailored to different stages of students' growth in university life. For instance, during the transition period when students enter college from high school, advisors should focus on students' psychological health and career guidance, helping them adapt to the new learning environment, clarify their future goals, and ensure a smooth transition. For higher-level students who are about to enter the workforce, mentors should emphasize moral character education and ideological and political education necessary for their upcoming professional and social lives. Furthermore, it is important to analyze and understand students' individual development needs and characteristics at different stages and ensure the implementation of ideological and political education content within the framework of the credit system.

#### **4.5 Organizing social practice activities**

Social practice activities help students gain a real understanding of society and national conditions. By participating in these activities, students broaden their horizons, enhance their abilities to serve society, and develop a closer connection with the outside world. Social practice fosters a deeper understanding of society, party policies, and students' own social missions. It also enhances students' sense of social responsibility, patriotism, and motivation to learn. Furthermore, social practice provides opportunities for students to engage in communication and interaction with others, helping them identify their weaknesses in interpersonal relationships and learn how to effectively interact with others. This improves their interpersonal skills and adaptability to society.

By organizing various social practice activities, higher education institutions can help students develop their ideological consciousness and cognitive abilities through practical experiences. These activities should combine theoretical knowledge, integrate theory with practice, and promote the development of a correct worldview. Educational platforms within higher education institutions can focus on teaching practice, professional internships, social investigations, and research on significant economic development issues. Students can provide their opinions and suggestions during these activities. Additionally, promoting volunteer services enhances students' awareness of social service and responsibility. Both on-campus and off-campus practice activities, when combined with theoretical knowledge, can effectively enhance the effects of ideological and political education under the credit system.

#### **5. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the implementation of the credit system provides a new platform for ideological and political education in higher education institutions, reflecting the transformation and innovation of education and management systems. To adapt to the continuous advancement of the credit system, higher education institutions need to broaden and develop the content and functions of higher education substantially. Moreover, students must further enhance the level of ideological and political work. Under new conditions and forms, injecting new vitality into ideological and political education for college students is essential. However, it also presents new challenges, requiring active exploration of methods and approaches that align with students' ideological and political education.

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