

A study on the Curriculum-based Ideological and Political Education in Colleges and Universities from the Perspective of Social System

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Abstract: *In this paper, the social system theory of Marxism is applied to analyze the six elements of the curriculum-based ideological and political education system in colleges and universities: educators, objects, content, methods, goals and context of the education and their relationship with each other. Besides, the structure and the functions of the system will also be examined, so as to reveal the internal connection and laws governing the development of the system. On this basis, the four fundamental principles of the social system, namely openness, dynamics, wholeness and hierarchy, are analyzed to promote the building of a new, effective and entirely shaped curriculum-based ideological and political education system with a solid foundation.*

Keywords: *Social System, Curriculum-Based Ideological and Political Education System, Curriculum Education*

1. Introduction

Since 2016, the National Conference on Ideological and Political Work in Colleges and Universities and the National Education Conference have been convened in succession. General Secretary Xi Jinping has personally talked with ideological and political theory teachers and made a series of significant instructions. He emphasized the necessity to continuously strengthen ideological and political education (hereinafter referred to as IAPE) in colleges and universities, charting the course and providing a fundamental guideline for universities to promote the construction of the curriculum-based IAPE system. In order to advance the implementation of President Xi's essential remarks and to reinforce the quality of cultivation of human capital, in June 2020, the Ministry of Education issued the *Guideline of the Construction of Curriculum-based Ideological and Political Education in Colleges and Universities*, providing the roadmap for the construction of the curriculum-based IAPE system and clarifying the issues of "what", "how" and "who" of the construction. Obviously, the construction of the curriculum-based system has become a significant strategy for the IAPE to consolidate and innovate, as well as achieve higher quality and efficiency of the education.

As a subsystem of the comprehensive IAPE system in higher education, the full mobilization of functions of the curriculum-based IAPE system is mainly restricted by its internal structure and external environment. In terms of factor analysis, structure identifying, function positioning and path construction of the system, there are still many difficult problems that are urgent to be solved, which calls for further exploration with the help of the research method of social system theory.

2. Social system theory and college curriculum-based IAPE system

2.1 Social system theory

A system is an indivisible whole composed of several elements linked with specific functions in a particular structural form ^[1]. When the social system theory of Marxism is adopted as a research method, based on the practice of social production, the relationships between social systems, each social system and their elements, each element within the social system, and between each element and the external environment is systematically analyzed through an overall identification of society's composition, structural optimization, functioning and morphological evolution. This will provide direction for the study of social systems and their development patterns, and ultimately achieve the

purpose of controlling and transforming the system. The analysis of the structure and function of curriculum-based IAPE as a whole system and the mastering of its change rules are conducive to finding the methods and paths for the construction of the system. Social system theory is one of the major component of Marxist methodology, reflecting the distinctive dialectical unity, and is the latest development of dialectical thinking method in contemporary times.

2.2 College curriculum-based IAPE system

Although studies on the integration of values education and patriotic education into general courses, professional courses and other courses can be found in some of the research literature of China's academics before 2017, the research with "curriculum-based ideological and political education" as a keyword or subject term in the CNKI (Chinese National Knowledge Infrastructure) database should emerge in 2017. At present, the curriculum-based IAPE is mainly defined from the perspective of curriculum theory, educational philosophy, methodology, culture, values, etc. The introduction of these concepts provides the definition from different levels, which is feasible to some extent. However, as the "main force", "main battlefield" and "main channel" of the IAPE, it is of great significance to define curriculum-based IAPE from the perspective of ideological and political education. In the author's opinion, curriculum-based IAPE in colleges and universities is an educational activity that integrates a trinity of objectives to shape college students' values, imparts knowledge to them, and develops their abilities. In the process, educators in colleges and universities will tap and sort out the IAPE resources contained in various courses, and combine the explicit and implicit teaching methods by attaching the educational goals and content to certain carriers, so as to achieve the goals of IAPE.

3. Analysis of college curriculum-based IAPE system

Curriculum-based IAPE in colleges and universities is an innovative education practice of ideological and political curricula. To investigate the relevant problems using the research method of social system theory, we first need to specify the definition, structure, and function of the curriculum-based IAPE as a whole system. Combining the theory of six elements of IAPE and the social system theory, the curriculum-based IAPE system mainly refers to an indivisible whole that consists of six elements of ideological and political educators, educational objects, educational content, educational methods, educational goals and educational context and that serves to achieve the purpose of IAPE. At the same time, the six elements interact with each other and are connected with the external environment, thus playing the unique role of the curriculum-based IAPE system.

3.1 Elements of the curriculum-based IAPE system

3.1.1 Educators

Numerous differences exist between educators of the curriculum-based IAPE system and initiators, organizers and implementers of traditional IAPE activities. First, from the viewpoint of the scope, educators encompassed by the curriculum-based system are defined in a broader sense. The teachers who have undertaken the education and teaching of diverse courses in colleges and universities are the educators of the system. Second, from the perspective of their roles, educators of the curriculum-based system are not only the ones who dedicate to the knowledge transmission and ability training for the educational objects, but also the values shapers. Third, from the standpoint of responsibilities and functions, educators of the system initially featured a single function, which is gradually transformed into comprehensive functions. In addition to functions of education and management, the educators are required to have the functions of guidance and motivation, control and analysis, integration and reference provision. Fourth, from a quality standpoint, the teachers of the curriculum-based system are required to maintain excellent ideological and political quality, outstanding physical and psychological quality, as well as to possess expertise and competence.

3.1.2 Educational objects

Broadly speaking, objects of the college curriculum-based IAPE comprise teachers and students under the curriculum-based IAPE system. In a narrow sense, the objects are just college students under the system. According to statistics, college students spend 80% of their study time on professional learning, and 80% of them think that professional courses and teachers exert the greatest influence on them^[2]. Through teachers' classroom teaching and practical lessons, students are affected by the educational content directly or indirectly in absorbing the knowledge carried by the courses, which

contributes to the completion of values shaping in an invisible way. The educational objects of the college curriculum-based IAPE are generally young people between 18 and 30 years old, with strong flexibility, thus highlighting the importance of positive guidance of values. Moreover, colleges and universities make it possible to carry out IAPE in a relatively fixed place (classroom), and the course education lasts for an extended period, ensuring the effective implementation of the curriculum-based IAPE. All of these mentioned earlier are the intrinsic basis for college teachers to employ the curriculum-based IAPE system.

3.1.3 Educational content

The content of the curriculum-based IAPE is the fundamental element of the system and the specific element for the implementer to educate the educational objects. Pursuant to the Guidelines on the Construction of Curriculum-based Ideological and Political Education in Colleges and Universities issued by the Ministry of Education, the macroscopic content of the IAPE system must concentrate on firming up students' ideals and convictions, with its focus on the love for the Communist Party of China, the country, socialism, the people and the collective. Furthermore, the supply of IAPE content should be optimized by emphasizing political identity, national sentiment, cultural literacy, awareness of the Constitution and the rule of law, moral cultivation, etc., so as to systematically provide education on socialism with Chinese characteristics and the Chinese dream, core socialist values, the rule of law, fine traditional Chinese culture, as well as labor education, mental health education, etc. Teachers should combine course features and student needs, and scientifically integrate the educational content into the personnel training program and the whole process of curriculum setting, syllabus approval and the evaluation of teaching plan. What is more, it should also be reflected in the design of course objectives, revision of syllabus, selection of teaching materials, preparation of teaching plans and courseware, and be incorporated into classroom lectures, teaching seminars, experiments, practical training, homework and research papers.

3.1.4 Educational methods

Educators adopt various ways and means to achieve specific educational purposes in curriculum-based IAPE activities. The primary method in the process of implementing the curriculum-based system is tapping and integrating. Educators are expected to continuously strengthen the in-depth understanding of the connotation of the curriculum, fully expand and study the extension of the course, as well as explore and analyze the teaching characteristics, including the teaching objectives, logical structure, key points and presentation. Meanwhile, the educators should actively tap into the IAPE elements included in the curriculum, subtly convey values through answering questions, comparing and analyzing, stating opinions and illustrating stories, and integrate values shaping into classroom teaching and extracurricular practice. Secondly, to set up models. The exemplary models applied to the curriculum-based IAPE system can be elaborated from two levels. On the one hand, the teaching content should consistently provide guidance to the students in multiple ways by comparing advanced figures and backward people and events. On the other hand, both the teachers and the schools have to enhance communication. Specifically, the schools should strengthen the exchange of experience in the demonstration and construction of the model course of the IAPE, so that the "golden course" can play its exemplary and leading role. Thirdly, to cultivate and inspire in terms of culture and sentiment. As for the cultural cultivation and inspiration, the culture of a course can stimulate the vitality of the course and become an essential source of values guidance; therefore, teachers should take the initiative to master the cultural connotation of the curriculum. Moreover, sentimental cultivation and inspiration refer to the fact that the correct viewpoint of understanding things and phenomena will be conveyed through the communication of thoughts and emotions between teachers and students in the teaching practice. Fourthly, to compare to enlighten recognition. Teachers in higher education can make a heterogeneous or homogeneous comparison, and analyze objective things and laws with the help of new media tools, so that the educated can obtain a more comprehensive and objective recognition and enhance the consciousness of their moral self-cultivation. Fifthly, to counsel and to guide. In instructing the students in their studies, teachers can solve students' professional problems while helping them make the right choices in the complex social life by relieving their confusion about their thoughts, psychology, and options. Sixthly, to conduct internalization through practice. Course practice is an indispensable part of the teaching in colleges and universities, which is conducive to internalizing moral norms for students, improving their ideological awareness and cognitive ability, and consolidating good ideology and behavior habits. To be specific, the practice involves social investigation, visits, volunteer services, field experiments, science and technology competitions, etc.

3.1.5 Educational goals

The fundamental goal of China's college curriculum-based IAPE is consistent with the underlying task of ideological and political education, i.e., to foster virtue and nurture a new generation of capable young people with the moral grounding, promote well-rounded human development, and inspire people to strive for the construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics and the ultimate realization of communism^[3]. The educational goal is determined by the objective requirements to advance society and its development level at the present stage, and also by the development needs of the mental world of educational objects and their ideological reality. Today's society is characterized by a knowledge-based economy and intelligent information technology. Against this background, college students perceive professional courses as a guarantee for their livelihood in society. However, with the development of society, students who are "multi-skilled" are definitely preferred. The implementation of the curriculum-based IAPE system, on the one hand, can reinforce the teaching effectiveness of professional courses and offer broader and deeper educational content full of emotions. This is how students can enhance their ideological and moral quality in the process of gaining scientific and technological knowledge and become the new generation who are "knowledgeable, competent and conscious". On the other hand, the curriculum-based system always respects and attempts to understand the needs of the educational objects, thereby constantly meeting their spiritual needs at multiple levels and from various perspectives. Besides, the system aims to guide the students' inner world in a positive orientation in the process where they acquire the expertise, and allow them to internalize the content of the IAPE as a personal goal and guideline for actions.

3.1.6 Educational context

The educational context of the college curriculum-based IAPE is the sum of external factors that impact the educational activities and objects. To be specific, macro-contextual factors and micro-contextual factors are involved. The former mainly covers the social, school, cultural, and mass communication contexts. In addition, the latter includes classroom climate, learning culture, and cognitive context. These two categories of factors interact with each other, and the full use of the positive features of both can create favorable conditions for the effective implementation of the curriculum-based system.

3.2 Structure of the curriculum-based IAPE system

The elements in the social system structure are composed in a relatively stable way. Based on the fundamental task of the curriculum-based IAPE, colleges and universities should determine the educational goals and requirements, develop the teaching system scientifically combining with the features of specialities, and enhance teachers' ability to explore the ideological and political resources in the specialized courses. Additionally, they should adopt the educational methods as elaborated in the previous section to make good use of the educational context of the curriculum-based IAPE system to transform the IAPE into a driving force for virtue fostering. During the construction and implementation of the system, the external environment will produce an effect through information collection, application of technological tools, dissemination of course culture and creation of a learning climate, and directly influence students. Teachers will constantly adjust the teaching mode through evaluation of the teaching effect, so as to grasp the teaching content and methods that can produce better teaching results and to build a desirable teaching context. The system works centered around the educational goals, with the educator as the leader, educational object as the core, educational content and methods as the carrier, and educational context as the guarantee. Hence, the college curriculum-based IAPE system is a hierarchical and holistic system, in which the six elements of educators, educational objects, educational content, educational methods, educational goals and educational context interact with each other as subsystems and with the external environment of the whole system, presenting dynamics and openness.

3.3 Functions of the curriculum-based IAPE system

From the perspective of the social system theory, the college curriculum-based IAPE system has the following three dimensions of functions and presents the specific characteristics.

3.3.1 Integrating and creating

With the function of integrating and creating, the college curriculum-based IAPE system is featured by incorporating and adaptability. The system can be regarded as a subsystem of the comprehensive

system of IAPE in colleges, and also as a subsystem of college curriculum. In this way, the curriculum-based IAPE system can draw available resources from the two main systems and integrate them to complement each other and create new course content provision, which invariably expands the depth and width of the professional courses and contributes to sentimental education. At the same time, through integration, the methods of IAPE can be innovated. And the educational context can raise the possibility for creation and development for the curriculum-based IAPE system. As to the educators, the need to actively tap into available resources is growing affected by the system's integration function, and their capacity in this area will increase accordingly. Besides, the education objects also desperately need to obtain more profound insight into their professional knowledge and skills and a new experience of classroom teaching from the system.

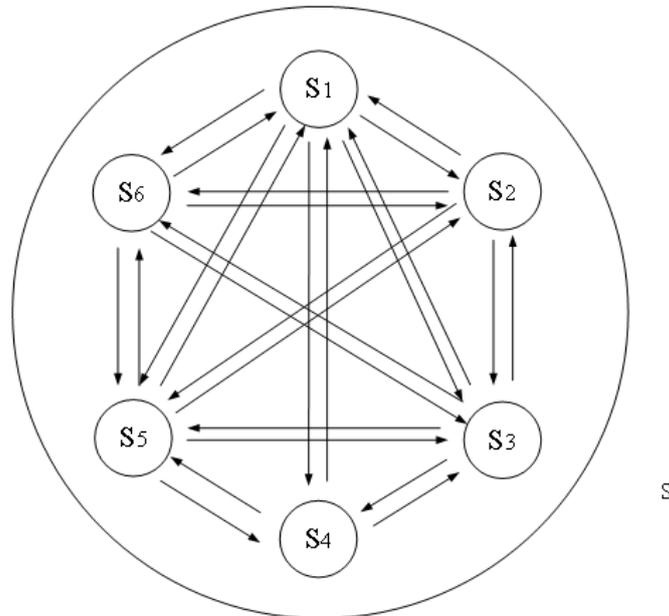


Figure 1: Curriculum-based IAPE Structure Diagram

Note: S is the external system, and S1-S6 are the six elements: educators, educational objects, educational content, educational methods, educational goals and educational context.

3.3.2 Adjusting and guiding

The function of adjusting and guiding of the system gives it a goal-oriented nature. The curriculum-based IAPE system adjusts the spiritual production of the educated through innovative educational content and methods in other courses than IAPE classes, guiding them to pursue lofty ideals and improve their spiritual quality. Meanwhile, the curriculum-based IAPE system can have interaction with the external system while maintaining its original nature. Thus, the curriculum-based system can adjust and guide other types of curricula to stick to the socialist orientation and play an important role in moral education, assuming responsibilities of the times. Furthermore, it is also conducive to enabling the integration of ideological and political resources into specialized curricula in an appropriate and timely manner.

3.3.3 Contributing and promoting

The curriculum-based IAPE system contributes to and promotes the development of the individual student and the course, which makes the system more stable. The implementation of a curriculum-based system cannot be achieved without the mutual constraints and influences among the six elements of IAPE and the external environment. Therefore, on the one hand, the implementation of the system can enable educational objects to master expertise and skills while realizing more spiritual needs and aspirations, from which they can experience satisfaction, joy and happiness. In the process, they can gain spiritual enjoyment and all-round personal development of themselves. On the other hand, the system can indicate to educators the fundamental tasks to be undertaken, thus motivating them to constantly update and improve the educational content and methods, to take the initiative to create appropriate educational context and to provide better quality services for the construction of the curriculum; and then the development of the curriculum will be promoted.

4. Suggestions for comprehensively advancing the construction of college curriculum-based IAPE system

The college curriculum-based IAPE system is interdependent with other relevant systems and the six elements within the IAPE system. They will adapt to the changes of external environment, and then continuously optimize the active and steady system. Therefore, colleges and universities should attach more importance to four characteristics of the system in the process of comprehensively promoting its construction.

4.1 To pay attention to the openness of the curriculum-based IAPE system and bring forth the new in promoting the construction

The implementation of the system requires the implementer to freely exchange material, energy and information with the external environment. First of all, it is imperative to accurately capture the changes in the external environment and conduct analysis and summaries to adjust the understanding of the educators in the system and enhance their ability. In the meantime, the available resources from the outside should be absorbed and employed to optimize the elements of the curriculum-based IAPE system. Moreover, the material, energy and information generated by the system should be transferred to the external environment to test the implementation effect of the system in the external environment. The interaction between internal elements of the curriculum-based system and the external environment is also the process of the innovation of curriculum education.

4.2 To grasp the dynamic nature makes the construction of the curriculum-based IAPE system more effective

The dynamic character is reflected in the movement, development and change of the elements of the system as influenced by the external environment. The movement of the elements requires educators to familiarize themselves with the laws of growth of educational objects and the ideological and political resources contained in the curriculum, and flexibly control the timing of integration of the resources into the curriculum. The development of the elements demands that educators and educational objects possess the perspective of development and respond positively to external circumstances. As an educator, he or she should appropriately adjust the content and methods of education, utilize the educational context, and proactively produce effective educational results. For another, the object of education should abandon the learning mode of receiving a single category of knowledge and skills and cultivate a variety of learning interests. They should simultaneously expand the breadth and depth of learning, and not only acquire more knowledge, but also enhance their ideological awareness. The movement and development of the elements in the curriculum-based system are bound to bring about changes. The system will change with the movement and development of external environment and internal elements; but the implementation of the system is subject to specific laws that can be followed. Hence, the implementer must figure out the laws and prepare a targeted plan in order to respond to all changes.

4.3 To shape the curriculum-based IAPE system in consideration of its wholeness

Each element of the system constitutes a steady and indivisible whole in a particular way, and the system is an organized collection of elements rather than a simple accumulation of them. The overall advancement of the system makes each element perform its own function, resulting in a unique form of the curriculum-based IAPE system. This form features new properties, functions and laws, which are not found in any single element. Elements in the new system are orderly assembled in a specific proportion, and are linked to the external environment. Then after the system implementer's verification, adjustment and optimization, the curriculum-based system that maximizes the effect of moral education will be shaped. In this process, the implementer should stress the system's wholeness and mobilize each element's initiative and motivation to build a system where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

4.4 To lay a solid foundation for the curriculum-based IAPE system, it is necessary to focus on its hierarchical nature

The system is multi-dimensional and hierarchical. Clarifying its hierarchical order can help enrich and improve the curriculum-based IAPE system and achieve the fundamental goal of curriculum

education. From the macroscopic point of view, the college curriculum-based IAPE system is related to the curriculum teaching system and comprehensive IAPE system, and also interrelated with the school, family, political and cultural system and other social systems. The systems are connected vertically and horizontally, forming a picture of stereoscopic network structure. As a result, the curriculum-based IAPE system is advantageous to utilize the beneficial resources of other systems. In this case, on the one hand, it is convenient to combine the explicit and implicit content and methods of IAPE in colleges and universities; and on the other hand, the teaching methods suitable for the curriculum itself can be applied smoothly, which provides a solid guarantee to strengthen the effectiveness of IAPE in virtue fostering. From a microscopic perspective, the six elements in the curriculum-based IAPE system are organized and complementary, which jointly promote the overall efficient operation of the system. To conclude, implementers of the college curriculum-based IAPE system must deeply understand and grasp the structure and hierarchy of the system, optimize the hierarchical order based on the goal of curriculum education, and promote the construction and development of the system.

5. Conclusion

By adopting the social system research method of Marxism, the article analyzes the main characteristics of such six elements of college curriculum-based IAPE system as educators, educational objects, educational content, educational methods, educational goals and educational context. It also elucidates the interrelationship among the six elements, clarifies the basic structure of the curriculum-based IAPE system, demonstrates the system's functions, and reveals the internal connection and development law of the system. Accordingly, the article proposes that the implementation of the system in colleges and universities should be conducted in accordance with the principles of the system: openness, dynamics, wholeness and hierarchy, to establish a new, effective, fully shaped system with a firm foundation. All this lays the basis for future research on the theory and practice of the college curriculum-based IAPE.

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