

Exploration and Practice of "Problem-oriented + Discussion-based" Classroom Teaching Reform: A Case Study of the Ideological and Political Theory Course *Basic Principles of Marxism*

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Abstract: Today's society is undergoing rapid transformation, leading to a significant shift in the demand for talent. Modern society requires not only individuals with specialized knowledge and skills but also those who possess an innovative spirit, teamwork capabilities, and the ability to solve complex problems. However, traditional teacher-centered teaching methods often result in passive learning, limiting students' opportunities for active participation and critical thinking, which hinders the development of essential competencies. In response to these challenges, the "problem-oriented + discussion-based" classroom reform has emerged. This approach emphasizes problem-solving orientation, aiming to stimulate students' innovative thinking and practical abilities through guided discussions and collaborative communication. It shifts the focus of the classroom from teacher-led instruction to student-centered learning, empowering students to take ownership of their education. Ideological and political courses, in particular, prioritize the cultivation of critical and independent thinking, encouraging students to question, analyze, and solve problems. The integration of the "problem-oriented + discussion-based" method into ideological and political classes can foster students' curiosity and thirst for knowledge, promote active thinking and exploration, and provide a platform for exchanging ideas and sparking intellectual debates. This approach enhances the relevance and effectiveness of ideological and political education, cultivates students' critical thinking and innovation capabilities, and ultimately improves overall teaching quality.

Keywords: Problem-based learning; Discussion-oriented classroom; Student-centered approach

1. Introduction

In recent years, the state has placed significant emphasis on the development of ideological and political courses. Focusing on the core issues of who to cultivate, how to cultivate them, and for whom they are cultivated, the government has introduced a series of policies, including the *Several Opinions on Deepening the Reform and Innovation of Ideological and Political Courses in Schools in the New Era*, the *Implementation Plan for the Reform and Innovation of Ideological and Political Courses in Schools in the New Era*, and the *Regulations on the Construction of Ideological and Political Teachers in Colleges and Universities in the New Era*. These policies clearly address key educational reform challenges such as what kind of courses to build and how to build them, aiming to enhance the ideological depth, theoretical rigor, appeal, and relevance of ideological and political courses. This ultimately improves the quality of teaching and promotes the comprehensive development of students. On March 18, 2019, at the *school's ideological and political science teacher symposium*, Chinese President Xi Jinping emphasized that we should adopt a problem-oriented approach. The issues that students are concerned about and have doubts about can be categorized into several types. We need to dissect these problems thoroughly, conduct in-depth research, and provide clear explanations of both facts and principles^[1]. Only by accurately identifying, analyzing, and addressing students' concerns can we enhance the relevance and appeal of ideological and political courses, making them more engaging and persuasive. Additionally, it is crucial to highlight the central role of students, encouraging their active participation in learning so that they truly understand, genuinely believe, and effectively apply what they have learned. By examining the connotation, implementation strategy, and practical outcomes of the "problem-based thematic" teaching model, Zhang Dongxian(2024) seeks to enhance

the relevance, effectiveness, and appeal of ideological and political course instruction. This approach aims to improve students' sense of learning achievement and satisfaction while promoting their comprehensive development in ideological and political qualities as well as overall abilities^[2]. Qin Shushen and Lv Enbo(2024) believed that teaching ideological and political theory courses was fundamentally a process of addressing doubts, with problems serving as the central thread throughout. To implement teaching activities guided by problem-solving, it is essential to uphold the principles of integrating theoretical indoctrination with problem inspiration, balancing teacher leadership with student-centeredness, and unifying value guidance with practical effectiveness.^[3]

2. Adhere to the Value and Significance of “Problem-Oriented and Discussion-Based” Classroom Teaching Reform

2.1 Implement the Core Requirements That Ideological and Political Education Serves as the Pivotal Course for Fulfilling the Fundamental Task of Moral Education

Ideological and political courses serve as the cornerstone for nurturing individuals with a well-rounded character, integrating faith development, moral education, intellectual growth, and personality cultivation. These courses hold a unique and pivotal role in fostering individuals with strong political integrity and noble ideological qualities. Among the various ideological and political courses offered in colleges and universities, the course on *the Basic Principles of Marxism*^[4] stands out as the most rational, speculative, and abstract, encompassing fundamental principles, viewpoints, and methods. The primary objective of this course is to transform Marxist worldviews and methodologies into analytical skills for addressing significant historical and contemporary issues, as well as resolving ideological confusion. Gradually, it aims to assist young college students in establishing a correct worldview, outlook on life, and values, ensuring they fasten the first button of life correctly and find the right direction. Ultimately, this course seeks to instill a firm belief in Marxism, encouraging students to unwaveringly follow the Party's guidance and strive to become qualified builders and reliable successors of socialism. Therefore, this course effectively fulfills the fundamental task of cultivating morality and nurturing individuals.

2.2 There Is an Urgent Imperative to Reform Ideological and Political Education in Institutions of Higher Learning

First, it is necessary to transform the educational philosophy of ideological and political courses by shifting the focus from teacher-centered teaching to student-centered learning. Historically, in the teaching process of *the Basic Principles of Marxism*, there has been a tendency to prioritize teaching, with teachers at the center, emphasizing knowledge transmission while neglecting the development of students' autonomous learning and independent inquiry skills. By implementing a "problem-oriented + discussion" classroom reform, we can promote changes and innovations in educational philosophy, establishing a student-centered approach. This ensures that teachers play a guiding role while fostering students' initiative, awareness, and creativity. Efforts should be made to encourage active student participation, promoting effective learning and striving to achieve a harmonious balance between teaching and learning, thereby continuously improving the overall effectiveness of the course. Second, reforming the teaching methods of ideological and political courses can elevate the status of classroom instruction and enhance teaching quality. A distinctive feature of Marxism is its focus on problem-solving, with detection, analysis, and resolution of problems serving as both the starting point and goal. In teaching *the Basic Principles of Marxism*, we should adopt a problem-oriented approach, strengthen students' awareness of issues, and study theoretical and practical concerns that capture their attention. By employing a teaching method centered on questioning as guidance, critical thinking, and focused analysis, we can guide students to observe, analyze, and solve problems effectively. This allows them to gain genuine knowledge through problem-solving, achieve emotional satisfaction and rational analysis, and improve their theoretical inquiry skills, political judgment, and acumen. Simultaneously, this approach will continuously enhance the ideological depth, theoretical rigor, relevance, and appeal of *the Basic Principles of Marxism* course, significantly improving teaching outcomes and fostering a love for learning among contemporary college students.

3. Adhere to the Overall Goals and Principles of “Problem-Oriented + Discussion-Type” Classroom Teaching Reform

3.1 The Overall Goal of “Problem-Oriented + Discussion-Based” Classroom Teaching Reform

To enhance the ideological, theoretical, and practical aspects of political courses, thereby improving the teaching quality of *the Basic Principles of Marxism* course. This approach aims to ensure that students not only master key knowledge points but also apply Marxist perspectives, theories, and methods to observe, analyze, and solve real-world problems. Through this process, students will deepen their understanding of the laws governing the Communist Party's governance, socialist construction, and human societal development, ultimately enhancing their proficiency in Marxist theory. Specifically: First, it is essential to transform the concept of education and teaching. We should shift from the traditional teacher-centered approach to a modern student-centered educational paradigm. In this new framework, teachers serve as facilitators and guides for students' learning. It is crucial to thoroughly understand the characteristics of student-centered teaching, grasp students' psychological traits, and master the principles of student-centered instruction in order to effectively develop appropriate teaching strategies. In the implementation of *the Basic Principles of Marxism* course, we prioritize students' learning as the core focus, respect their individuality, and pay attention to personal differences. By immersing ourselves in students' lives and understanding their practical confusions from various perspectives, we aim to create an educational environment that encourages active participation and stimulates students' enthusiasm for learning. This approach aims to cultivate students' attitudes and abilities in mastering and applying knowledge, ensuring comprehensive development for each student and moving away from the traditional teacher-led classroom model. Second, transform the current learning paradigm for students. Shift from an overemphasis on rote memorization and mechanical training to a more balanced approach that promotes independent, inquiry-based, cooperative, and discussion-oriented learning. This transformation aims to cultivate students' independence and autonomy, encouraging them to question, investigate, and engage in dialogue. By actively gathering information and acquiring new knowledge, students can enhance their analytical and problem-solving skills. Ultimately, this shift will help students transition from passive recipients of political theory courses to active learners who develop a genuine interest in the subject. Third, enhance the quality of classroom instruction. By optimizing classroom teaching processes with a problem-oriented approach, questions are posed, analyzed, and thought through as logical threads. The content of the textbook is presented in the form of inquiries, guiding students to apply Marxist principles, methods, and perspectives to real-life scenarios and to solve specific problems encountered during their studies. This approach aims to improve students' problem awareness and dialectical thinking abilities while increasing their participation and engagement in classroom learning.

3.2 The Core Principles of "Problem-Oriented and Discussion-Based" Classroom Teaching Reform

First, the intellectual and ideological unity of *the Basic Principles of Marxism* course is crucial. This course serves not only as a knowledge-based curriculum but also as an ideological and political education platform. It aims to impart fundamental Marxist concepts, principles, and theories while simultaneously providing ideological and political guidance to students. Therefore, in teaching, the course should use knowledge transmission as the foundation and ideological education as the core, achieving an organic integration of both aspects. Second, the integration of theory and practice is essential. In the teaching process, all aspects of instruction should be closely linked to students' thinking, learning, and real-life experiences. This includes connecting with the realities of socialist modernization in our country, as well as global changes. Classroom settings should be designed to enable students to apply theoretical knowledge to analyze and solve practical problems.

4. The Basic Components of the “Problem-Oriented + Discussion-Based” Classroom Teaching Reform

Raising, analyzing, and solving problems constitute the core of the discussion-based classroom teaching method centered on the problem-oriented approach in *the Basic Principles of Marxism*. Scientifically formulating questions and designing a teaching content system and process that revolves around these problems are crucial for the effective implementation of this teaching method.

4.1 Asking Questions is Fundamental to the Entire Teaching Process

Socrates once stated, "The role of the midwife is to facilitate the birth of new ideas." Similarly, Einstein emphasized, "Asking questions is more important than solving them." Questions serve as a guiding force in education. In the teaching process of *the Basic Principles of Marxism*, it is crucial to pose genuine and thought-provoking questions. Specifically, we should: First, design problem-based scenarios to stimulate students' problem-solving abilities. The teacher should meticulously plan the teaching process by integrating the textbook's knowledge system with students' real-life experiences and cognitive practices. This involves creating subject-relevant and as authentic scenarios as possible, enabling students to relate these situations to their everyday lives. Such immersive experiences aim to stimulate students' associative thinking and knowledge transfer ability, enable them to use previously learned knowledge and prior experience, make connections between old and new knowledge, and solve problems independently or collaboratively. Second, it is essential to guide and stimulate students' critical thinking. In today's era of rapid dissemination of network information, college students are exposed to a multitude of information sources, leading to active yet sometimes conflicting thought processes. This influx of diverse information can cause confusion among students. To address this, educators should encourage students to ask more questions and engage with their concerns. By focusing on students' ideological confusions and their concerns about national and social realities, teachers can use the fundamental principles, viewpoints, and methods of Marxism to guide students in analyzing and solving problems. This approach allows students to experience and understand the development process of knowledge. Through this inquiry-based learning, students develop their abilities to analyze, explore, and summarize laws. Additionally, teachers transform their roles from problem solvers to problem identifiers and guides for problem-solving. This not only helps teachers accurately grasp students' thought dynamics but also enhances students' ability to apply theoretical analysis to solve practical problems, enabling them to gain true knowledge through the joy and satisfaction of guidance and assistance.

4.2 Identify Key Points, Formulate Concise Questions, and Develop Specialized Teaching Content Based on These Questions

Reasonable setting and selection of problems is the foundational premise for implementing problem-based discussion teaching. How can thematic questions be set effectively? Based on years of teaching experience, and considering the relative independence and integrity of the textbook system and its various components, the content of *the Basic Principles of Marxism* is divided into four main parts: Marxism, Marxist philosophy, capitalism, and socialism and communism. This forms the overall structure of the textbook's content system. Within this framework, key content is further selected to highlight problem guidance, leading to the determination of nine major thematic areas: the essence of Marxism, dialectical materialism, practice and epistemology, historical materialism, the nature of capitalism, recent developments in capitalism, the evolution of socialism, and the realization of communism. After establishing these topics, sub-problems are created and refined for each theme, striving to identify specific issues closely related to students' growth and contemporary social development that students are particularly concerned about.

4.3 Two Critical Aspects to Consider

First, the pertinence and rationality of the problem setting. The formulation of problems is a critical component in organizing discussions for classroom teaching reform. Well-crafted problem settings can capture students' attention, stimulate their thinking, enhance emotional exchanges between teachers and students, and improve classroom teaching efficiency. However, in actual teaching of *the Basic Principles of Marxism*, many instructors pose fewer questions or pay insufficient attention to the scientific nature of these questions. Some questions are overly simplistic, superficial, or beyond students' knowledge scope, making them too difficult to answer, which inhibits students' enthusiasm for learning. Moreover, *the Basic Principles of Marxism* course at our institution is typically taught in large classes that include students from liberal arts, science, and engineering backgrounds. These students have varying levels of knowledge and different degrees of mastery over the subject matter. Given this diversity, how should questions be set? What types of questions should be posed? Are the formulated questions scientifically sound and reasonable? Do they align with teaching principles, the curriculum, student needs, and real-world contexts? These are issues that require careful consideration. Therefore, problem settings need to be meticulously designed and thoughtfully prepared, combining situational elements to encourage active thinking and exploration among students, thereby facilitating knowledge

acquisition. Second, the transformation from the textbook system to the teaching system. A comprehensive understanding of the textbook serves as the foundation. The content of *the Basic Principles of Marxism* is extensive, encompassing Marxist philosophy, political economy, and scientific socialism. Given the limited classroom teaching time of 54 hours over 3 credits, it is impossible to cover all textbook material. Therefore, instructors must thoroughly study the textbook, grasp its overall structure, identify its central theme and main thread, and comprehend its core spirit and theoretical essence. By familiarizing themselves with the textbook and pinpointing key and challenging points, instructors can maintain the integrity and logical coherence of Marxist theory throughout the semester. This approach enables them to focus on the core content of each chapter, design pivotal questions, link related issues, and connect different topics, thereby constructing a coherent framework for all theories and achieving effective teaching objectives.

5. Implementation Process of the “Problem-Oriented + Discussion-Based” Classroom Teaching

5.1 The Basic Idea of the Teaching Implementation Process

Adhering to the principle of student-centeredness, with teachers playing a guiding role and students as the main subjects, we integrate problem-oriented approaches into the classroom teaching and practical instruction of *the Basic Principles of Marxism* course. This method ensures a systematic and step-by-step completion of the course's teaching objectives.

5.2 Content Design of the Teaching Implementation Process

Guided by the problem-oriented approach, the fundamental content of the textbook is systematically organized to establish the teaching objectives for *the Basic Principles of Marxism*. The textbook system of *the Basic Principles of Marxism* is transformed into a structured teaching framework. Key points and challenges in each chapter are identified and prioritized, ensuring focused selection of relevant teaching materials and the development of a comprehensive teaching plan. In conjunction with the specific context of the teaching materials and student needs, the problem domains described in the textbooks are explored, leading to the creation of targeted teaching courseware for *the Basic Principles of Marxism*.

5.3 Teaching Behavior in the Process of Teaching Implementation

Pre-class Preparation: Prior to class, instructors disseminate learning resources such as classroom guides, reference books, videos, and discipline frontiers, along with chapter-specific questions, to students via platforms like QQ groups and WeChat groups. This allows students to engage in pre-class study and preparation. **Classroom Teaching:** During class, students engage in independent problem-solving, answer questions, develop theoretical understanding, collaborate in groups, and participate in real-time communication and feedback. **After-class Practice:** Following class, students work in groups to complete projects designed during classroom teaching activities, conducting project practice under teacher guidance. For detailed information.

5.4 Methods and Means of Teaching Implementation Process

First, theoretical learning. We systematically reviewed the theory and case studies of problem-oriented discussion-based classroom teaching, summarizing its theoretical foundations, implementation procedures, and specific manifestations. By extensively collecting materials, carefully studying relevant literature, and participating in academic conferences and specialized training sessions, we ensured a comprehensive understanding of the current research trends and the latest advancements in teaching reform. Second, exchange and discussion. We organized learning exchange meetings and teaching reform seminars to facilitate in-depth thinking and study of curriculum-related issues among teachers and students. Through collective lesson planning and focused discussions on specific teaching problems, we clarified the core objectives of teaching reform, ensuring its smooth implementation. In the event of significant challenges during the course of teaching reform, we promptly sought advice from both internal and external experts. Third, methodological innovation. We will implement problem-based discussion, participatory, heuristic, and experiential teaching methods to promote the reform practice of these approaches. Additionally, we will advance the integration of online and offline hybrid teaching models. Fourth, quality control. We will proactively engage leaders from relevant functional departments, college administrators, and teaching supervisors in the course to monitor its

implementation quality and facilitate continuous improvement. Finally, reflective summary. Through student evaluations of learning outcomes and expert assessments of teaching effectiveness, this study gathers and analyzes feedback on the instruction of *the Basic Principles of Marxism*. By synthesizing experiences accumulated during the teaching process, we will earnestly summarize and systematically reflect on the findings to formulate a comprehensive teaching reform plan and produce a results report.

6. Emphasize the Implementation of “Problem-Oriented + Discussion-Based” Classroom Teaching Reform

6.1 The Transformation of Teachers' Educational Philosophies and Teaching Methodologies Has Led to an Enhancement in Their Instructional Capabilities

Adhere to a problem-oriented discussion approach, transforming the single teaching method into a diversified one. Embrace a student-centered modern educational philosophy in the implementation of *the Basic Principles of Marxism* and other ideological and political courses. Respect students' subject status, acknowledge individual differences, engage with students, and understand their lives and sources of confusion from multiple perspectives. Create an educational environment that encourages active student participation, stimulates learning enthusiasm, and cultivates attitudes and abilities for mastering and applying knowledge. This ensures comprehensive development for each student, moving away from teacher-dominated instruction.

6.2 Students' Learning Style Has Changed and Their Self-Learning Ability Has Been Improved

In the concrete implementation process of the course of *the Basic Principles of Marxism*, it advocates the learning methods of autonomous learning, inquiry learning, cooperative learning and discussion learning, pays attention to cultivating students' independence and autonomy, guides students to question, investigate, explore and dialogue, and cultivates students' ability to actively collect information and obtain new knowledge, analyze and solve problems. So that students passive learning of political theory to active learning, do not like political theory to change to like, students passive learning to active learning, I learn change to I want to learn the habit began to form.

6.3 The Quality of Classroom Teaching Has Been Enhanced, and Student Participation Rates Have Steadily Increased

In the implementation of *the Basic Principles of Marxism* course, classroom teaching has been optimized by adopting a problem-oriented approach. Questions are posed, analyzed, and thought-provoking inquiries serve as logical threads to present textbook content. This method guides students not only to understand what is being taught but also to question why, encouraging deeper thinking, active participation in discussions, and more frequent engagement in answering questions.

7. Conclusions

The exploration and practice of "problem-oriented + discussion-based" classroom teaching reform aims to align with the laws of students' growth and cognition. By adhering to a student-centered approach, this method allows students to experience an autonomous, cooperative, and inquiry-driven learning process in the classroom. It not only cultivate students' ability to find problems, refine problems and solve problems. Critical thinking ability and collaborative communication ability, but also to stimulate students' endogenous motivation, active learning, in the process of participating in solving problems, develop good learning habits, cultivate good personality quality, improve students' ideological and political literacy and comprehensive quality.

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