

Research on Enhancing the Competencies of Teachers of Ideological and Political Education Courses in Vocational Colleges in the New Era

ShuangXu, Heng Tang, Zeyu Qu

Hainan Vocational University of Science and Technology Hainan 571126

Abstract: Delivering effective ideological and political education courses is not an isolated endeavor but a systematic project involving multiple dimensions, among which enhancing the professional competence of instructors serves as a pivotal component throughout the process. As an indispensable force within China's teaching workforce, ideological and political education instructors at vocational colleges play an irreplaceable role in fulfilling the fundamental mission of fostering virtue through education and cultivating new generations suited to the contemporary era. This paper focuses on this specific group of instructors, taking competency enhancement as its central focus to thoroughly examine the core competencies required of them in the new era, and subsequently proposes actionable pathways for improvement.

Keywords: New Era; Enhancement of Competence in Ideological and Political Education at Vocational Colleges

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Currently, teachers of ideological and political courses in vocational colleges possess solid professional competencies. However, objectively speaking, their overall qualifications still fall short of the requirements set by the educational goal of fostering virtue and nurturing talents in the new era.

1. Issues in Enhancing the Competencies of Ideological and Political Education Teachers in Vocational Colleges in the New Era

1.1 A minority of ideological and political course instructors in vocational colleges lack firm Marxist ideals and beliefs

As instructors of such courses, "firm adherence to Marxist ideals and beliefs is a fundamental prerequisite. The steadfastness of an instructor's ideals and beliefs exerts an intangible yet profound influence on students during teaching, enhancing their engagement." The political literacy demonstrated through teachers' interactions—with their political convictions, stances, and identities—impacts students' understanding of the socialist system and path with Chinese characteristics. In this new era, where ideological oversight is highly prioritized, concerted efforts nationwide have shown that most vocational college instructors maintain firm convictions. However, some instructors, due to insufficient Marxist theoretical grounding or other factors, struggle to resist the influence of diverse ideologies and cultures, failing to uphold Marxist ideals and beliefs, questioning Marxism's scientific validity, and experiencing wavering in their political convictions and stances. Like a deficiency in "calcium," this leads to ideological "laxity" in ideological and political courses, manifested in a deliberate downplay of their political and ideological dimensions while emphasizing knowledge delivery. The teaching process often becomes "logically sound but emotionally weak," serving merely to help students memorize facts rather than fostering genuine political identification, thereby significantly undermining the effectiveness of these courses.

1.2 Some ideological and political education teachers in vocational colleges have exhibited violations of professional ethics

Teachers exert profound and lasting, subtle influences on students' growth and development. An educator's personal moral integrity and character qualities become magnified like through a magnifying glass within large student populations. Ideological and political education instructors at vocational colleges, given their distinct political identity, must strengthen ethical guidance in their conduct, consciously adhere to relevant regulations and political discipline, hold themselves to higher standards, and maintain a strong sense of responsibility toward both themselves and their students. In today's rapidly evolving society, where diverse values and cultures continuously permeate, teachers' mindsets have undergone significant transformations. Some vocational college educators exhibit

deficiencies in self-discipline, responsibility, teamwork spirit, sense of mission, and reverence for their profession. This manifests in practices such as failing to genuinely "respect students," clinging rigidly to the traditional notion of "teacher authority," failing to view students equally, prioritizing "respect for teachers" over "care for students," and preconceived notions about "problem students" hindering developmental perspectives—all of which contradict professional ethics standards. Tense teacher-student relationships undermine students' healthy development and hinder significant teaching effectiveness improvements. Furthermore, forward-looking educational innovations like classroom observation and topic-based teaching reforms in the new era cannot rely solely on individual efforts; they require systematic optimization and coordinated research across all details to achieve breakthrough progress. Through the collective efforts and collaborative work of the teaching staff, disciplinary development is advanced; however, certain inappropriate competitive dynamics not only hinder teaching and research activities but also undermine the cultivation of professional ethics and conduct among educators.

1.3 Learning and innovation capabilities require further enhancement

The updating of teachers' educational philosophies and disciplinary knowledge systems is closely linked to the enhancement of their new teaching skills and learning abilities. In the new era, ideological and political course instructors at vocational colleges are tasked with delivering such courses, yet the educational principles, disciplinary knowledge, and teaching skills acquired during their pre-service training at universities are no longer sufficient to meet teaching demands. The innovative concepts of basic education reform and the evolving requirements of disciplinary development can only genuinely improve the effectiveness of ideological and political course instruction through teachers' active learning, comprehension, and practical application in the classroom. The mission to cultivate new talents for the times compels these instructors to transform their traditional educational philosophies, shifting from a "knowledge-oriented" approach to a "competency-oriented" one. Currently, due to uneven progress in college entrance exam reforms and the incomplete adoption of new textbooks, many vocational colleges still adhere to conventional teaching models. Moreover, competency assessment methods are more challenging than previous paper-and-pencil tests, leaving instructors lacking the courage and motivation to make changes—a reflection that indicates new educational concepts remain superficial rather than fully implemented. The reorganization of vocational college ideological and political course materials, which emphasizes education on China's socialist characteristics and other national conditions, also demands updated knowledge reserves from instructors. However, beyond participating in relevant training programs, few teachers engage in acquiring new knowledge outside of class.

1.4 Some ideological and political education teachers in vocational colleges face health-related concerns affecting their physical and mental well-being

Currently, as educational reforms deepen, students' learning behaviors exhibit new characteristics distinct from previous patterns. Teachers of ideological and political courses in vocational colleges face significant challenges and high workloads, encountering considerable pressure in teaching and educational research. Some educators fail to adapt promptly, failing to fully recognize these pressures and challenges, which adversely affects their physical and mental well-being. On one hand, the prominent status of ideological and political courses offers teachers excellent development opportunities while demanding higher teaching standards. These courses aim to cultivate students' competencies rather than relying on outdated "cramming" methods. To deliver effective instruction, vocational college teachers must conduct thorough preparations. Many also shoulder additional responsibilities on campus, leaving little time for dedicated lesson planning—often requiring them to devote their after-work hours. Insufficient rest leads to physical fatigue, ultimately harming health over time. On the other hand, with rapid knowledge updates and continuous innovation in teaching methodologies, outdated approaches that fail to align with students' psychological development must be phased out. This necessitates that ideological and political course instructors in vocational colleges promptly adapt to contemporary demands and continuously enhance their comprehensive

capabilities. Therefore, some ideological and political education teachers in vocational colleges with weaker psychological resilience experience anxiety, tension, unease, and inferiority under the high demands of contemporary ideological and political education. Coupled with their inability to promptly regulate their mental state or effectively alleviate stress, this leads to negative attitudes and behaviors such as reluctance to teach or even abandoning teaching altogether, all of which adversely affect their educational work to varying degrees.

2.Exploration of Strategies for Enhancing the Competencies of Ideological and Political Education Teachers in Vocational Colleges in the New Era

2.1 The "Four-Have" Good Teacher

For an individual, encountering an exceptional teacher is a life blessing; for an institution, having outstanding educators is its greatest honor. A nation's prosperity and its people's rejuvenation depend on the thriving development of education that cultivates exceptional talents for society—a achievement made possible through the dedicated efforts of countless dedicated teachers. To be an exemplary educator, one must possess firm ideals and convictions, moral integrity, solid academic expertise, and a compassionate heart. This description outlines specific criteria for outstanding teachers: Ideals serve as guiding beacons, directing educators' professional growth; moral character and scholarly competence form indispensable pillars—both are essential. Beyond extensive knowledge, teachers must demonstrate strong ethical standards, embodying the principle that "great learning makes a teacher, and integrity sets an example." A compassionate heart acts as the driving force behind education. As Karl Jaspers noted, "The essence of education lies in one tree shaking another, one cloud moving another, and one soul awakening another." When engaging with each unique individual, compassionate teachers must nurture students with heartfelt care, fostering their continuous growth in an environment filled with warmth and support.

2.2 The Four "Guides" and the "Six Requirements" for Teachers of Ideological and Political Education Courses

Educators should serve as guides in shaping students' character, facilitating their acquisition of knowledge, nurturing their innovative thinking, and inspiring their dedication to the nation. These four roles as "guides" are inherently aligned with the concept of the "Four-Haves" exemplary teachers. The cultivation of students' character relies on educators' influence through steadfast ideals and noble moral integrity; the mastery of knowledge and development of innovative thinking depend on teachers' solid academic expertise; and guiding students toward national service requires educators to impart patriotism through compassion, helping students establish aspirations for national strength and translate these into practical actions. The term "guides" emphasizes the central role of both teachers and students as human beings, aligning with a people-centered educational philosophy and highlighting educators' pivotal role in student development. To help students navigate life's first critical decisions, educators must not only demonstrate initiative, proactivity, and creativity but also embody political conviction, profound compassion, innovative thinking, broad vision, strict self-discipline, and upright character—the "Six Requirements." These standards progressively build upon the principles of the "Four-Haves" teachers and "Four Guides," providing detailed disciplinary-specific guidelines. While the "Four-Haves" framework applies universally to all educators, the "Six Requirements" specifically address the unique demands of ideological and political education faculty, offering concrete, actionable recommendations for strengthening this professional community.

2.3 Achieving the Unity of Self and Teaching Through Self-Knowledge

Teachers can only truly understand their students and subjects by first understanding themselves. The primary principle is "know thyself." Even when using identical textbooks, syllabi, and teaching materials, different instructors can achieve distinct teaching outcomes—this stems from each educator's unique characteristics. An effective lesson should not be abstract; rather, it should create a tangible, immersive experience where teachers, curriculum, and students become one. Educators continually reflect on "how to deliver quality instruction," while schools and educational authorities regularly organize professional exchanges to address this challenge. Some

teachers hope to acquire practical teaching skills through such initiatives to enhance their effectiveness. However, mastering these techniques is only temporary. When confronting ever-changing students and materials, the optimal approach lies in maintaining a consistent, holistic professional identity to adapt to evolving teaching methodologies.

In the teaching process, ideological and political education instructors at vocational colleges continuously engage in self-reflection. When preparing lessons, they prioritize internal self-examination, interpreting teaching materials with genuine dedication rather than relying on teaching references or applying others' interpretations to their own instruction. This ongoing process of material interpretation is itself an act of self-discovery. Once true self-understanding is achieved, their classroom language ceases to be superficial and fleeting—like bubbles that burst in the air—and instead becomes resolute and impactful. Through this self-awareness, instructors seamlessly integrate their personal identity into teaching practice, transforming instruction from rigid and monotonous to vibrant, warm, and dynamic—a state where they truly achieve a sense of detachment.

2.4 Promoting Professional Development through Teacher-Student Interaction

Under the traditional lecture-based teaching model, the classroom resembles a stage dominated by teachers, leaving students with limited opportunities for active expression. A genuine classroom should function as a collaborative platform where both educators and learners engage in dialogue—where teachers serve not merely as speakers but also as attentive listeners who guide students, fostering a democratic and free educational atmosphere that embodies Martin Buber's concept of "I and you" dialogue, thereby maximizing the expression of students' inherent individuality. In contrast, activity-based disciplinary courses facilitate continuous interaction between teachers and students. Students actively explore knowledge through guided activities, while teachers listen attentively to students' perspectives to provide effective guidance. Teachers "understand students' thoughts, experience their feelings, and offer appropriate support accordingly." Within such activity-driven curricula, ideological and political education instructors and students jointly immerse themselves in scenarios designed by educators, allowing these contexts to unfold authentically. Thorough teacher listening enables students to experience an atmosphere of intellectual delight during activities, facilitating free expression of ideas. While lesson planners typically design thought-provoking questions and assess responses through inquiry-based teaching, student answers rarely align perfectly with expectations—since human minds, contrary to Locke's notion of a "blank slate," inherently contain pre-existing conceptual frameworks shaped by genetic and environmental influences. To enhance the professional competence of ideological and political course instructors in vocational colleges for the new era, it is essential to closely align with contemporary guiding principles, implement the strategic framework of top-level design, and leverage the collective efforts of all stakeholders. Educational institutions and society should ensure favorable external conditions and actively foster an environment conducive to faculty development. Individual instructors must fully demonstrate initiative, guided by the "Six Requirements" for ideological and political educators, and engage with greater enthusiasm and awareness in advancing curriculum reform. Through practical experience, they will continuously improve their expertise, exemplify the qualities expected of modern vocational college instructors, and lay a solid foundation for nurturing well-rounded individuals for the new era.

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