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Research on the Teaching Reform of Introduction to Communication under the Perspective of the New Liberal Arts: “One Core with Dual Wings, Three-Dimensional Synergy”

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of the New Liberal Arts initiative and the ongoing information technology revolution, the Introduction to Communication course in higher education faces new era-defining requirements for cultivating applied journalism and communication talents. The traditional teaching model suffers from several problems, such as a disconnection between theory and practice, insufficient localization of Western theories, and a separation of value guidance from knowledge impartation. This paper aims to explore a dual-driven, curriculum-based ideological and political teaching reform path, with "patriotic sentiment" as the core value and "information literacy" as the foundational capability. The research constructs a teaching reform framework of "One Core with Dual Wings, Three-Dimensional Synergy": the "One Core" refers to the reconstructed course knowledge system; the "Dual Wings" represent the value shaping of patriotic sentiment and the capability cultivation of information literacy, respectively; "Three-Dimensional Synergy" entails systematic reforms across three dimensions: teaching content, pedagogical models, and the evaluation system. Through a combination of top-level design and micro-level practice, the goal is to achieve an organic unity of knowledge impartation, capability cultivation, and value guidance, thereby providing practical solutions and theoretical references for cultivating communication talents in the new era who possess steadfast political stances, profound patriotic sentiments, and excellent information literacy.

Keywords

New Liberal Arts; Curriculum-based Ideological and Political Education; Introduction to Communication; Patriotic Sentiment; Information Literacy

1. Introduction

Higher education currently stands at a pivotal juncture of profound transformation. On one hand, China's "New Liberal Arts" initiative demands that traditional humanities disciplines break down their disciplinary barriers, align with national strategies and societal needs, and achieve interdisciplinary integration while upholding foundational principles and driving innovation with value-oriented guidance. On the other hand, the information technology revolution—represented by artificial intelligence, big data, and social media—

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is reshaping social structures and information ecosystems with unprecedented depth and breadth, posing significant challenges to the ideologies, cognitive patterns, and information discernment capabilities of contemporary university students. Against this backdrop, fully implementing the fundamental task of "fostering virtue through education"—which requires the integration of quality, ideology, and values—and weaving ideological and political education throughout the entire talent development process has become both the core mission and an inherent requirement of higher education in the new era [1].

As a prominent discipline deeply intertwined with social realities, the quality of talent cultivation in Communication Studies directly impacts a nation's media ecology, cultural security, and international discourse power. Serving as a foundational course, Introduction to Communication functions as the "first button" that guides students into the academic realm while shaping their professional cognition and value systems. However, current teaching practices face multiple challenges. Firstly, the theoretical framework—primarily Western in origin—often proves "maladaptive" when interpreting China's unique communication phenomena [2], revealing students' insufficient theoretical and cultural confidence. Secondly, some teaching approaches exhibit a "technique-over-humanities" tendency, overemphasizing communication skills while neglecting the underlying humanistic concerns and value adherence [3]. Thirdly, ideological and political elements are often mechanically incorporated through "label-sticking" didacticism rather than being organically integrated with professional knowledge [4], resulting in a disconnect between knowledge impartation and value guidance that fails to genuinely resonate with students.

Facing these challenges, this study focuses on a core research question: How can we construct a systematic and endogenous model for curriculum-based ideological and political education within the Introduction to Communication course? This model must not only effectively address the demands of the New Liberal Arts initiative but also, within a complex digital media environment, simultaneously cultivate students' patriotic sentiment while forging their exceptional information literacy, ultimately developing interdisciplinary, application-oriented communication talents who meet societal needs.

In response to this question, this study holds significant theoretical and practical value. At the theoretical level, by proposing a "dual-driven" paradigm that integrates "value shaping" and "capability cultivation," it enriches the conceptual construction of curriculum-based ideological and political education, offering new perspectives for teaching reform in the localization and modernization of communication theory. At the practical level, the study aims to provide frontline communication educators with actionable, replicable teaching reform pathways, methodological systems, and case study resources, thereby responding to the national strategic need to cultivate "high-quality, all-media, interdisciplinary, and expert-oriented journalism and communication talents who are politically steadfast, deeply patriotic, and globally visionary." The innovation of this study lies in explicitly identifying "patriotic sentiment" and "information literacy" as the dual core elements of curriculum-based ideological and political education in the Introduction to Communication course for the first time, constructing a systematic reform framework of "One Core, Dual Wings, Three-Dimensional Synergy," and fundamentally transforming this education from an external "task requirement" into an internal "growth logic."

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2. Theoretical Foundation and Internal Logic of the Reform

2.1 The Compatibility Between the New Liberal Arts Concept and Ideological-Political Education in Communication Courses

The "New Liberal Arts" is not simply "liberal arts + technology," but rather a profound reshaping of traditional educational philosophies, disciplinary paradigms, and talent cultivation models in the humanities. Its three core characteristics—interdisciplinarity, practical application, and distinct Chinese features—provide a solid theoretical foundation and clear value orientation for the ideological and political construction of communication studies courses.

First, the interdisciplinarity of the New Liberal Arts aligns closely with the attributes of communication studies. Communication studies itself emerged from the intersection of sociology, political science, psychology, information science, and other fields, making it highly compatible with the New Liberal Arts' vision of breaking down disciplinary barriers and fostering integration between the humanities and sciences. This provides a broad repository of material for ideological and political education in communication courses—ranging from using digital humanities technologies to analyze the evolution of public opinion to employing cognitive neuroscience to explore media effects, thereby grounding value guidance in the integration of multidisciplinary knowledge.

Second, the practical orientation of the New Liberal Arts emphasizes knowledge serving social realities and national development. This requires course design to transcend purely theoretical speculation and instead adopt a student-centered approach that cultivates problem-solving skills. The vitality of curriculum-based ideological and political education also lies in its connection to real-world issues. Guiding students to apply communication theories to interpret cultural phenomena, plan cultural activities, and link these efforts to major national strategies such as building a strong cultural nation not only enhances students' practical abilities but also directly fosters a sense of social responsibility and mission.

Finally, the Chinese characteristics of the New Liberal Arts demand that the development of the humanities be rooted in China's context, constructing disciplinary, academic, and discursive systems with Chinese features. This points to the fundamental direction for ideological and political education in communication studies—the localization of communication theories is itself an important ideological and political task. Guiding students to critically examine Western theories, analyze Chinese communication practices from a Marxist perspective, summarize China's experiences, and refine Chinese theories is the core pathway to cultivating students' confidence in their theory, path, and culture.

2.2 The Dual-Driven Logic of Patriotic Sentiment and Information Literacy

In the clamorous and information-saturated digital age, the cultivation of future communication talents must simultaneously grasp two core threads: value guidance and capability building. This study concretizes them as "patriotic sentiment" and "information literacy," between which exists a profound intrinsic connection, forming an interdependent and mutually reinforcing "dual-driven" relationship.

(1)Patriotic Sentiment as the "Compass" for Information Dissemination

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Patriotic sentiment embodies profound affection, responsibility, and commitment toward the nation and its people, serving as the core pillar of the Chinese national spirit. In the field of information dissemination, it functions both as a "moral compass" providing guidance and a "stabilizing cornerstone" offering foundational support. No matter how sophisticated a communicator's technical skills or how eloquent their rhetoric may be, without deep-rooted patriotic sentiment, their communication practices may deviate from the right course, potentially leading to negative consequences.

This profound sentiment establishes the ideological foundation for students to distinguish right from wrong and uphold correct public opinion guidance. Confronted with complex international discourse struggles and diverse domestic ideological trends, patriotic sentiment empowers students to maintain a people-centric standpoint, identify and resist erroneous ideological trends such as historical and cultural nihilism, and consciously safeguard national interests and cultural security. For instance, when teaching "agenda-setting theory," instructors can guide students to critically analyze framing differences in Western media's coverage of China-related environmental issues or varying portrayals of Chinese cultural phenomena across different media. By integrating patriotic sentiment into the dialectical understanding of theoretical frameworks, students not only enhance their analytical capabilities but also cultivate a stronger sense of national identity and social responsibility.

(2)Information Literacy as the "Amplifier" for Patriotic Sentiment

In the digital age, patriotic enthusiasm alone is insufficient. Superior information literacy is a critical competency that enables students to effectively fulfill their patriotic commitments and engage in constructive communication within complex information environments. It serves as the "capability amplifier" for patriotic sentiment.

First and foremost, superior information literacy manifests as robust critical thinking and information verification skills. Students must learn to trace information sources, identify biases, and debunk misinformation amidst the deluge of data. This capability not only functions as a personal "shield" against harmful information but also acts as a "purifier" that helps maintain a healthy cyberspace and strengthen social consensus. Secondly, superior information literacy entails responsible and ethical digital citizenship, including respecting others' privacy, complying with cyber laws and regulations, and understanding the societal impact of algorithms. Finally, superior information literacy encompasses efficient and integrated content creation and dissemination capabilities. Students must master the use of diverse media formats—text, images, audio, and video—to communicate effectively in ways that resonate with target audiences. Only then can grand national narratives be transformed into vivid, concrete, and relatable communication products that truly "reach the mind, ears, and heart."

In conclusion, patriotic sentiment and information literacy are mutually reinforcing and inseparable. The former provides value guidance to ensure capabilities are used for righteous purposes; the latter offers implementation pathways to effectively realize these sentiments. Together, they constitute the indispensable core competencies for applied communication professionals in the new era.

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3.The "One Core with Dual Wings, Three-Dimensional Synergy" Approach to Curriculum-Based Ideological and Political Education

Based on the aforementioned theoretical logic, this study constructs a "One Core with Dual Wings, Three-Dimensional Synergy" framework for ideological and political education reform in the Introduction to Communication curriculum (See Figure 1). This framework aims to deeply integrate the value cultivation of patriotic sentiment with the competency development of information literacy throughout the entire teaching process, through systematic top-level design and refined micro-level implementation.

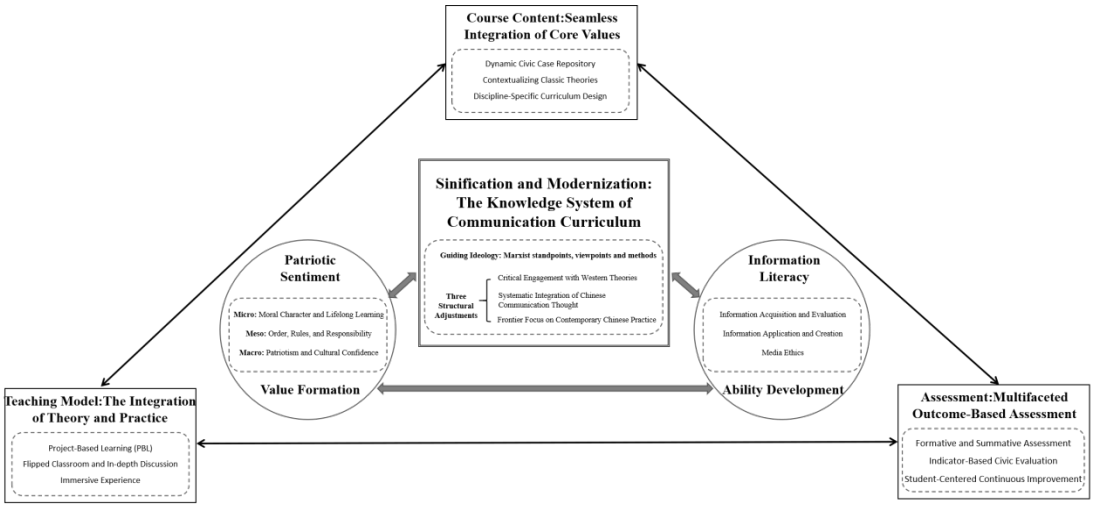


Figure 1 Diagram of the "One Core with Dual Wings, Three-Dimensional Synergy" Framework for Teaching Reform

3.1 Overall Design: The "One Core with Dual Wings" Top-Level Framework

(1) The "One Core": Reconstructing the Curriculum's Knowledge System through "Sinification" and "Modernization"

The "One Core" refers to a systematic reconstruction of the existing knowledge system for the Introduction to Communication course. This reconstruction involves moving beyond the mere recitation and transplantation of Western theories and, guided fundamentally by the Marxist view of journalism, re-engineering the curriculum through "Sinification" (adapting to the Chinese context) and "Modernization" (adapting to the contemporary era).

In terms of guiding philosophy, the course is consistently permeated by Marxist standpoints, viewpoints, and methods. It emphasizes the social, class, and ideological attributes of communication activities and guides students to recognize the unity of the Party spirit and the people-centric principle in the work of news and public opinion.

In terms of content structure, three major adjustments are made. First, it involves a critical adoption of classic Western theories. The curriculum not only teaches their core ideas but also analyzes the social contexts in which they arose, their historical limitations, and their ideological imprints. Second, it systematically integrates Chinese communication thought and practice. Ancient Chinese wisdom on communication, pro-

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paganda experience from revolutionary periods, and major communication campaigns since the founding of the PRC are included as essential teaching content. Third, it maintains a cutting-edge focus on contemporary innovations in China's communication field. Vibrant Chinese practices, such as deep media integration and the online audio-visual industry, are incorporated into the course, guiding students to distill patterns and formulate theories from these cases. By reconstructing the knowledge system, the course itself becomes a vehicle for ideological and political education that embodies a Chinese standpoint, Chinese wisdom, and Chinese solutions, providing a fertile intellectual foundation for the "Dual Wings."

(2) The Dual Wings: The Dual Drivers of Patriotic Sentiment and Information Literacy

Extending from the reconstructed knowledge system are the "Dual Wings," which give equal weight to values and competencies, ensuring that the impartation of knowledge simultaneously contributes to value cultivation and capability development.

The wing of values is dedicated to the profound cultivation of "patriotic sentiment." This requires transforming ideological and political education elements from being a mere "add-on" to being "organically embedded." Within each course unit, educational elements related to patriotic sentiment are deeply integrated. For example, in the teaching unit on "Communication Types and Developmental Changes," case studies like China in the Classics and Tang Palace Night Banquet are used to analyze how outstanding traditional Chinese culture achieves creative transformation and innovative development through modern media. In the unit on "International Communication," the focus is on how China safeguards its national image and disseminates its voice in the global public opinion arena.

The wing of competencies is dedicated to the systematic forging of "information literacy." The cultivation of information literacy is broken down into five specific, trainable competency points: information acquisition, information evaluation, information application, information creation, and media ethics awareness. Competency training is integrated throughout all teaching sessions using various methods, such as case study discussions, project planning, and the visual presentation of complex information, while also promoting inter-course collaboration.

3.2 Implementation Pathway: A "Three-Dimensional Synergy" Strategy for Practice

To effectively implement the "One Core with Dual Wings" top-level design, synergistic reforms must be carried out across three dimensions: teaching content, pedagogical models, and assessment methods. This creates an interlocking and mutually supportive set of practical strategies.

(1)First Dimension: Seamless Integration of Ideological Elements in Teaching Content

Teaching content serves as the direct vehicle for curriculum-based ideological education, with the key lying in the organic incorporation of ideological elements to avoid rigid indoctrination.

On one hand, it is essential to establish a dynamically updated repository of case studies that closely align with the course's knowledge points. Centered on the dual pillars of "patriotic sentiment" and "information literacy," vibrant and relevant cases are systematically collected and organized. For example, in the introductory unit on "Perspectives of Communication," three national image promotional films are used as a thread to

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progressively explore the transmission, ritual (sharing), and power perspectives of communication, thereby inspiring cultural confidence and national pride. In the unit on "Group Communication," the course analyzes the dissemination pathways and social harm of rumors during public emergencies, guiding students to discuss effective methods for debunking misinformation. Through the comparison and combination of cases related to these dual pillars, students naturally cultivate values and train their competencies while mastering professional theories.

On the other hand, it is crucial to achieve the localized reinterpretation of classic theories. For instance, when teaching classic Western theories like the "Spiral of Silence" or "Cultivation Theory," students are guided through a process of "localized reinterpretation": first, explaining the core assumptions and logic of the theory; second, organizing discussions on whether the theory is fully applicable to China's collectivist social and cultural context; and finally, guiding students to apply and reflect upon the theory critically by analyzing reversals of public opinion in domestic online trending events. This process not only deepens students' understanding of the theories but, more importantly, subtly and organically cultivates their confidence in our own theories and culture, making them realize that all theories have applicable boundaries and that building China's autonomous knowledge system is a mission bestowed by our era.

(2)Second Dimension: Practice-Oriented Pedagogical Models for the "Unity of Knowledge, Belief, and Action"

The adoption of diversified, interactive, and practice-oriented pedagogical models is crucial for stimulating students' learning initiative and achieving the "unity of knowledge, belief, and action."

Project-Based Learning (PBL) modularizes parts of the curriculum into comprehensive and challenging practical projects. Examples include creating a digital communication plan for a book fair or producing an international communication short video on "My Hometown's City Image." Working in groups, students complete the entire process of preliminary research, theme planning, and content production, applying communication theories comprehensively to facilitate the internalization of knowledge.

Flipped classrooms and in-depth discussions are established for significant, thought-provoking topics. For issues such as "technological ethics," "platform responsibility," or "filter bubbles and social polarization," students engage in autonomous learning before class by watching designated videos and reading literature. Classroom time is then dedicated to deep discussions, debates, and intellectual exchange, where the teacher transitions from a transmitter of knowledge to a facilitator and catalyst for discussion, thereby honing students' critical thinking and independent reasoning skills.

Immersive and experiential learning breaks the physical boundaries of the classroom. Students are organized to visit relevant sites and organizations, introducing real-world scenarios and actively promoting "open-door education" to build a "school-society" collaborative education community. Modern educational technology is fully leveraged to empower ideological and political education. Relying on the laboratory's virtual simulation teaching platform, technologies like VR/AR are used to simulate press conferences and crisis communication scenes, enhancing students' sense of real-world presence and response capabilities.

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(3)Third Dimension: Outcome-Oriented, Multidimensional Assessment

Assessment and evaluation act as the "guiding baton" of teaching, directing students' learning behavior. Establishing a diverse, process-oriented, and outcomes-based evaluation system is the guarantee for ensuring the successful implementation of the curriculum's ideological and political education goals.

A comprehensive evaluation system that combines process-based (formative) assessment with outcomes-based (summative) assessment is established. Formative assessment includes class participation, contributions to group discussions, and completion of online learning tasks. Summative assessment includes project reports, practical works, and critical review essays. By adjusting the weighting of these assessments, students are encouraged to focus their energy on active inquiry and innovative practice.

Furthermore, ideological and political evaluation criteria are embedded into the grading standards for all assignments, including "correctness of value orientation," "demonstration of social responsibility," and "depth of critical thinking." By making these requirements concrete and explicit, students are guided to internalize this value orientation as a conscious pursuit from the very beginning of their learning and creative processes, thus realizing the educational function of assessment.

A feedback and iteration mechanism is implemented. Methods such as surveys and in-depth interviews are used to understand students' course experiences, takeaways, and suggestions. Students' work is subjected to content analysis and data-driven presentation, focusing on changes in their value orientation, depth of thought, and innovative ability. This feedback loop allows for the dynamic adjustment of teaching strategies, ensuring the continuous iteration and refinement of pedagogical reform.

4. Conclusion

Grounded in the contemporary context of the New Liberal Arts initiative and addressing the practical challenges of integrating ideological and political education into the Introduction to Communication course, this study proposes and systematically elaborates on a dual-driven pedagogical reform pathway centered on "patriotic sentiment" and "information literacy." It constructs a "One Core, Two Wings, Three-Dimensional Synergy" framework. Through the reconstruction of the course's knowledge system, as well as through synergistic innovations across the three dimensions of teaching content, pedagogical models, and assessment methods, this framework aims to transform value guidance and competency development from an external "addition" into an internal "fusion," thereby achieving an organic unity of knowledge impartation, value cultivation, and capability development.

This model not only offers a concrete practical plan for curriculum-based ideological and political education in Introduction to Communication but also provides a transferable framework for similar reforms in other liberal arts courses.

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