Integrating Ideological-Political Education in Educational Psychology: A Psychological Education Perspective

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Abstract: Addressing the imperative to deeply integrate "cultivating virtue and nurturing talent" into higher education, this study investigates a teaching reform model for the Educational Psychology course. The reform is designed to overcome common pitfalls of superficial Ideological and Political Education (IPE) integration by utilizing the perspective of psychological education as its foundational conduit. Grounded in theories of Self-Determination and constructivist learning, the model proposes a synergistic integration where psychological education principles create the supportive conditions for the internalization of professional values and ethics. The implementation involves a four-pillar strategy: restructuring course content into thematic, value-integrated modules; adopting experiential and dialogic teaching methods; embedding praxis-oriented practical components; and instituting a multi-modal, process-oriented assessment system. A multi-dimensional evaluation of the reform's effectiveness, based on classroom observations, student reflections, and process assessments, indicates significant positive outcomes. These include a marked transformation in student engagement towards active, critical participation, enhanced psychological literacy and self-regulatory capacity, the construction of a values-informed professional identity, and improved competence in translating theory into ethically sound practice. The study concludes that psychological education provides a powerful and necessary framework for achieving authentic, student-centered IPE integration within professional curricula. It offers a replicable pedagogical model that contributes to the holistic development of future educators, equipping them with both professional expertise and a strong ethical foundation. Limitations concerning faculty development and practical scalability are noted, pointing to directions for future refinement and research.

Keywords: psychological education; ideological and political education in curriculum; educational psychology; teaching reform; practical research

I. Introduction

The central mission of higher education, "cultivating virtue and nurturing talent," has become a fundamental guiding principle, necessitating its deep integration into all aspects of the talent development process [1]. In this context, the educational innovation of Ideological and Political Education (IPE) in curricula has evolved from a policy-driven initiative to a comprehensive, systematic pedagogical practice. This approach moves beyond the simple addition of political content, seeking to organically embed value guidance, ethical cultivation, and a sense of social responsibility within the very fabric of professional knowledge transmission [2]. The ultimate aim is to use the imparting of knowledge as a vehicle to shape students' worldviews, methodologies, and values, thereby fostering well-rounded development. This task is particularly pressing as contemporary college students navigate a complex landscape of academic pressure, career uncertainty, interpersonal challenges, and questions of self-identity, all of which present significant challenges to their psychological well-being and value formation [3].

The field of educational psychology, which focuses on the scientific study of learning, development, motivation, and individual differences within educational settings, occupies a unique and strategic position in this reform. Its core subject matter—how people think, feel, and behave in learning environments—inherently involves values, motivation, and personal development, thus sharing a natural synergy with the goals of both psychological education and IPE [4]. This intrinsic connection provides a robust theoretical and practical foundation for a more systematic and effective integration. Rather than treating IPE as an external appendage, educational psychology courses can serve as an ideal vessel for a blended model where professional competency, psychological resilience, and moral character are cultivated simultaneously.

However, despite this favorable theoretical alignment, significant practical difficulties persist in current teaching paradigms. Often, IPE integration remains superficial, manifesting as disjointed political slogans rather than a cohesive element woven into psychological discourse [5]. Concurrently, the potential of psychological education to support holistic student development is frequently unrealized, with instruction remaining narrowly focused on theoretical knowledge for examination purposes [6]. Furthermore, a persistent gap exists between abstract psychological principles and their application in real educational contexts, limiting students' ability to translate theory into empathetic practice and sound professional judgment [7].

To address these challenges, this paper proposes and investigates a targeted teaching reform model for the Educational Psychology course. The reform is grounded in the perspective of psychological education, which emphasizes supporting students' psychological development, intrinsic motivation, and emotional well-being as a foundation for learning and

growth [8]. The central premise is that by leveraging this perspective, the integration of IPE can become more profound, authentic, and effective. Therefore, this research is guided by the following primary questions:

1. How can a teaching reform model for Educational Psychology be systematically designed to integrate Ideological and Political Education (IPE) effectively from the perspective of psychological education?
2. What are the practical pathways for implementing this model, specifically in terms of restructuring content, innovating pedagogical methods, enhancing practical components, and reforming assessment systems?
3. How effective is this integrated model in achieving synergistic outcomes, specifically in enhancing students' professional knowledge application, psychological literacy, and the construction of positive values and professional identity?

This study aims to contribute a structured framework and empirical insights for deepening curriculum reform, ultimately enhancing the educational psychology course's role in fostering virtuous, capable, and psychologically resilient future educators.

II. Literature Review

A. Curriculum Ideology and Politics (IPE) in Higher Education

The integration of Ideological and Political Education (IPE) into university curricula represents a central reform in Chinese higher education, evolving from a guiding principle to a mandated pedagogical practice [2]. Initially conceptualized as "making every course a vehicle for moral education," IPE aims to seamlessly embed core socialist values, professional ethics, and social responsibility into the fabric of disciplinary knowledge transmission [2], [10]. Scholarly discourse has moved beyond the necessity of IPE to focus on its methodology, emphasizing that effective integration must be organic and discipline-specific, avoiding mechanical "tagging-on" of political content [5], [10]. Research in fields such as physical education [11] and medical education [8], [9] demonstrates discipline-specific models for IPE integration. However, a critical gap identified in the literature is the tendency for implementation to remain superficial, especially in social science courses, where IPE can devolve into rhetorical exhortations disconnected from the core professional knowledge [5]. This gap highlights the need for deeper, more theoretically grounded integration strategies that resonate with a discipline's intrinsic logic.

B. Psychological Education and Holistic Student Development

Parallel to the IPE initiative, the role of psychological education in fostering holistic student development has gained prominence. Psychological education is defined as an educational philosophy and practice that applies scientific psychological principles to support students' mental health, emotional well-being, and positive personality development [8], [12]. Its goals align with broader educational aims of nurturing adaptable, resilient, and socially responsible individuals [3]. Theoretical foundations for this approach are robust, drawing from developmental psychology [14], self-determination theory which emphasizes intrinsic motivation and basic psychological needs [13], and positive psychology [12]. The literature confirms that students' academic performance, career readiness, and value formation are deeply intertwined with their psychological state, including factors like self-identity, emotional regulation, and interpersonal skills [3], [6]. While the value of supporting student mental health is widely acknowledged, critiques point to its frequent marginalization within traditional, content-heavy curriculum structures, where it is often siloed in specific counseling courses rather than infused across the curriculum [6], [9].

C. Teaching Educational Psychology: Challenges and Innovations

Educational psychology, as a core discipline for understanding learning and development, holds natural potential for both IPE and psychological education. However, research on its pedagogy points to persistent challenges. A significant body of work critiques the theory-practice divide, where students struggle to apply abstract psychological principles to real classroom situations [4], [7]. Furthermore, traditional teaching is often critiqued for being teacher-centered and assessment-driven, which can inhibit the deep engagement and critical reflection necessary for both professional and personal development [4], [6]. Recent innovations, such as case-based learning, scenario simulation, and reflective practice, have been shown to improve engagement and application [4], [7]. Some studies have begun to explore integrating specific value-laden topics (e.g., teacher ethics, educational equity) into the course [5]. However, the existing literature largely addresses IPE and psychological education as separate, parallel concerns within the course. There is a lack of comprehensive models that explicitly and systematically synthesizethe two, using the framework of psychological education (with its focus on internal processes, motivation, and well-being) as the primary vehiclefor achieving the value-guiding objectives of IPE.

D. Theoretical Synthesis and Identified Research Gap

The theoretical intersection of IPE, psychological education, and educational psychology provides the foundation for this study. IPE provides the value-oriented ends, while psychological education offers student-centered meansfocused on internalization and development [8], [11]. Educational psychology provides the core contentand context where this synthesis can logically occur. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is especially relevant, as it posits that environments supporting autonomy, competence, and relatedness foster higher-quality motivation and internalization of values [13]—directly linking the process of psychological support with the goal of value cultivation.

The literature review reveals a clear gap: while the importance of both IPE and student psychological development is well-established, and while educational psychology is recognized as a key site for both, there is a paucity of research proposing and evaluating a unified pedagogical model. This model would use the principles and methods of psychological education not merely as a complementary goal but as the integrative framework for deeply and authentically embedding IPE into the Educational Psychology course. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by designing, implementing,

and evaluating such a synthesized teaching reform model, investigating its construction, implementation pathways, and effectiveness on student outcomes.

III. Theoretical Foundation for Integration
The proposed teaching reform model, which integrates Ideological and Political Education (IPE) into the Educational Psychology curriculum from the perspective of psychological education, is supported by a convergence of established pedagogical and psychological theories. This multi-faceted theoretical foundation justifies the synergy between value guidance and psychological development, moving beyond superficial combination to a deep, principled integration.

3.1. Convergence of IPE and Psychological Education
The integration is first grounded in the shared philosophical commitment to holistic, student-centered education. Both IPE and psychological education aim to transcend the mere transmission of factual knowledge (the "what") to focus on the development of the whole person—encompassing cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains [2], [8]. IPE provides the normative framework of social values and professional ethics, answering the "for whom" and "for what purpose" of education [10]. Psychological education provides the developmental and motivational framework, addressing the "how" by focusing on the internal processes through which individuals grow, relate to others, and internalize values [12]. This complementary relationship establishes the foundational logic for their integration: psychological education creates the receptive conditions (e.g., secure attachment, self-esteem, cognitive openness) necessary for the effective internalization of the values promoted by IPE [9], [11].

3.2. Key Theoretical Frameworks
3.2.1. Self-Determination Theory (SDT)
SDT is a cornerstone theory for this integration [13]. It posits that high-quality motivation and internalization of values are fostered in environments that support three basic psychological needs: autonomy(feeling of volition and choice), competence(feeling effective), and relatedness(feeling connected to others). The teaching reform model applies SDT by designing activities that satisfy these needs. For instance, case discussions and scenario simulations support autonomyby encouraging student voice; well-structured tasks build competencein applying psychology; and collaborative, respectful dialogue fosters relatedness. When these needs are met, students are more likely to internalize the pro-social values and professional ethics embedded in the curriculum, transforming them from externally imposed rules into personally endorsed values [13], [16].

3.2.2. Constructivism and Experiential Learning
The model is heavily informed by constructivist learning theory, which asserts that learners actively construct knowledge and meaning through experience and reflection [4]. This aligns perfectly with the goals of both psychological education and IPE, which seek to foster personal meaning-making and value construction rather than passive reception. Kolb's experiential learning cycle (concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, active experimentation) is operationalized through the reformed teaching methods. Analyzing real-world educational cases provides the concrete experience; guided reflection in journals and discussions facilitates reflective observation; connecting these to theories like attribution or motivation represents abstract conceptualization; and role-playing or designing interventions embodies active experimentation. This process ensures that ideological and political concepts are explored, questioned, and understood within the authentic context of psychological principles and educational dilemmas.

3.2.3. Moral and Professional Identity Development
The integration draws on theories of moral and professional identity development. The curriculum aims to move students through stages of professional growth, from simply learning abouteducational psychology to thinking likean educational professional with ethical commitments [2], [5]. This involves engaging with dilemmas of educational equity, teacher-student relationships, and the ethics of assessment. This process echoes the "cognition-emotion-attitude" trinity model, where knowledge (cognition) interacts with empathetic understanding and case-based reflection (emotion) to ultimately shape professional beliefs and intentions (attitude) [11].

3.3. Synthesis: The Integrated Model Framework
Psychological education provides the foundational, student-centered processand climate, utilizing SDT and constructivist methods to create a safe, engaging, and need-supportive learning environment. Educational psychology provides the core contentand disciplinary context—the theories, cases, and problems that serve as the substantive material for learning. Ideological and Political Education provides the overarching value orientationand societal aims, framing the learning within the broader purpose of cultivating virtuous, socially responsible educators.

In this model, value guidance (IPE) does not sit atop the content but is mediated throughthe developmental and motivational principles of psychological education. For example, teaching about "learning motivation" (educational psychology content) involves exploring how to foster intrinsic motivation (psychological education/SDT principle) in order to develop lifelong learners who contribute to a learning society (IPE value goal). This theoretical synthesis ensures the reform is not an arbitrary combination but a principled, theory-driven pedagogy designed to achieve synergistic educational outcomes.

IV. Implementation Pathways for Teaching Reform
To translate the theoretical framework into actionable pedagogy, a comprehensive reform of the Educational Psychology course is proposed, encompassing four interconnected dimensions: content, methodology, practice, and assessment.
4.1. Reconstructing Course Content into Thematic, Value-Integrated Modules

Moving beyond a standard chronological or theory-centric structure, the course content is reorganized into thematic modules aligned with key phases of student psychological development and core challenges in future teaching careers. For example, a module on "Learning Motivation and Fostering a Growth Mindset"would integrate theory (e.g., Self-Determination Theory [13], attribution theory) with IPE elements focused on educational equity, perseverance, and cultivating students' potential. Similarly, a module on "Social-Emotional Learning and Classroom Climate"would combine psychological content on emotion regulation and peer relationships with discussions on teacher ethics, inclusive pedagogy, and building a respectful learning community. Content selection prioritizes authentic, dilemma-based cases (e.g., managing classroom conflict, supporting students with learning differences, teacher burnout) that necessitate both psychological analysis and ethical reasoning, thereby naturally weaving professional knowledge with value contemplation [5], [7].

4.2. Adopting Experiential and Dialogic Teaching Methods

The pedagogical approach shifts decisively from passive knowledge transmission to active, experiential learning. This is operationalized through a suite of student-centered methods:

- Case-Based Learning: Students analyze detailed, real-world scenarios, dissecting the psychological dynamics at play while debating the ethical and value-laden decisions a teacher must make.
- Role-Playing and Simulated Counseling: These activities allow students to embody different perspectives (teacher, student, parent), practicing empathy, active listening, and intervention strategies within a psychologically safe environment, thereby bridging theory and interpersonal skill development [12].
- Structured Group Discussions and Seminars: Facilitated debates on topics like "The Psychology of Fair Assessment" or "Technology Use and Adolescent Development" encourage critical thinking, perspective-taking, and the articulation of value-based professional stances.

The classroom environment is explicitly managed to foster psychological safety, open communication, and reflective dialogue, creating a "holding environment" where students can explore complex ideas and personal values without judgment [8].

4.3. Embedding Praxis-Oriented Practical Components

To address the theory-practice gap, practical application is not an add-on but a core thread. This involves:

- Observational Tasks: Students conduct guided observations in real or recorded classrooms, using psychological frameworks to analyze teacher-student interactions and learning behaviors, then reflecting on the observed pedagogical values.
- Applied Case Projects: Students work in groups to design intervention plans for case studies, requiring them to synthesize psychological principles, consider ethical implications, and propose actionable strategies that embody both efficacy and care.
- Reflective Practice Portfolios: Students maintain a portfolio linking theoretical concepts to their own lived educational experiences and evolving beliefs about teaching, fostering metacognition and professional identity development [4]. These tasks are designed not just as academic exercises but as rehearsals for professional practice that emphasizes the "person-oriented" mission of education.

4.4. Implementing a Multi-Modal, Process-Oriented Assessment System

Assessment is reformed to align with the integrated learning objectives, evaluating not only knowledge acquisition but also psychological insight and value integration. This diversified system includes:

- Process Evaluation (40%): Active participation in case discussions, role-plays, and group work, assessed for quality of psychological analysis and collaborative engagement.
- Applied Outputs (40%): Case analysis reports, intervention design projects, and reflective portfolio entries, graded on the depth of theoretical application, ethical consideration, and reflective insight.
- Integrated Reflection (20%): End-of-module or final learning reflections where students articulate their understanding of the interplay between psychological science, educational practice, and the values of the teaching profession.

This system prioritizes growth and integration over rote memorization, using assessment as a tool for learning and self-awareness, thereby reinforcing the course's dual focus on competence and character [13].

V Analysis of Teaching Reform Effectiveness

5.1. Overview of the Evaluation Approach

The implementation of the integrated teaching reform was evaluated through a multi-dimensional lens, focusing on the key outcomes of student engagement, psychological development, professional identity formation, and practical application. Data was gathered and cross-referenced from direct classroom observations, a thorough analysis of student-produced materials such as reflection journals and case reports, and the ongoing records from the process-based evaluation system. This comprehensive approach sought to measure the deeper, developmental impact of the curriculum beyond traditional testing.

5.2. Observed Transformation in Learning Engagement

A clear and positive transformation was observed in the learning atmosphere and student participation. The classroom dynamic shifted significantly from a passive, lecture-based model to an active, dialogic community of learners. The consistent use of case-based dilemmas and scenario simulations successfully fostered greater student involvement, stimulating debate and collaborative problem-solving. Student inquiries evolved in sophistication, moving from simple requests for factual definitions to complex questions that wove together psychological theory, teaching strategy, and

ethical consideration. This change indicates a deeper level of cognitive engagement where students are actively building connections between abstract knowledge, concrete practice, and the value-based dimensions of education.

5.3. Development of Psychological Literacy and Self-Regulation

A central finding was the marked development in students' psychological literacy and self-regulatory capacity. The analysis of personal reflection journals provided compelling evidence of this growth. A common theme was students' application of course concepts—such as cognitive load or emotion regulation strategies—to analyze and manage their own academic experiences and stress. For example, several students reframed challenges using attribution theory, consciously adopting a more adaptive and effort-oriented mindset. This move toward metacognitive application represents a core objective of psychological education, equipping individuals with practical tools for self-understanding and resilience. This foundational self-awareness is also crucial for developing the empathy necessary to understand future students and for genuinely internalizing the humanistic values emphasized in the curriculum.

5.4. Construction of a Values-Informed Professional Identity

Furthermore, the reform facilitated the gradual construction of a values-informed professional identity. Student feedback and project work revealed a substantive shift in how they perceived the teacher's role. In designing interventions for case studies, students consistently factored in student well-being, inclusive practices, and ethical duty alongside their theoretical recommendations. Classroom discussions increasingly reflected a dual concern for academic achievement and psychological safety. This integration suggests that the ideological and political dimensions of education were not seen as separate topics but became embedded in students' growing sense of professional purpose. They began to articulate an identity centered not just on delivering content but on fostering the holistic development of individuals.

5.5. Enhanced Competence in Theory-to-Practice Transfer

The practical components of the course served as critical evidence for assessing the transfer of theory into practice. Reviews of case analysis reports and role-play exercises demonstrated a substantial improvement in students' ability to diagnose educational-psychological issues and propose coherent, justified interventions. Early work tended to list theories descriptively, while later analyses synthesized multiple perspectives to create nuanced, context-sensitive plans that balanced efficacy with ethical considerations. This progression from theoretical recall to strategic, principled application is a vital outcome for authentic professional preparation.

5.6. The Catalytic Role of the Assessment System

The diversified, process-oriented assessment system itself played a catalytic role in shaping the learning culture. Student feedback indicated that the emphasis on reflection, participation, and applied projects reduced anxiety over high-stakes exams and redirected effort toward sustained engagement and deep understanding. The assessment framework legitimized these areas as essential components of professional learning, thereby structurally supporting the overarching goals of the reform.

5.7. Reflections on Limitations and Future Directions

Despite these encouraging results, the implementation process also highlighted areas for ongoing refinement. First, the deep integration of psychological and value-based instruction places heightened demands on instructor preparedness, necessitating sustained faculty development in facilitating sensitive discussions and modeling reflective practice. Second, while simulated exercises were valuable, practical training was sometimes constrained by time and logistical limits; forging partnerships with local schools for observational or guided practicum experiences could strengthen this component. Finally, to ensure consistency and rigor, the rubrics used to assess complex outcomes like ethical reasoning and professional identity development require further refinement and validation.

5.8. Concluding Synthesis of Outcomes

In summary, the multi-faceted analysis confirms that the reform model facilitated meaningful progress across its targeted domains. The effectiveness appears rooted in a synergistic design where the principles of psychological education created a supportive environment for engaging with professional knowledge, which in turn provided the authentic context for internalizing the values and responsibilities central to the teaching vocation.

VI. Conclusion

This study successfully designed and implemented a teaching reform model that integrates Ideological and Political Education (IPE) into the Educational Psychology curriculum through the framework of psychological education. By anchoring the reform in established theories like Self-Determination Theory and constructivism, it moves beyond superficial "add-ons" to create a synergistic pedagogy where psychological principles foster the internalization of professional values. The findings affirm that this approach effectively addresses the initial research questions, enhancing students' cognitive engagement, psychological literacy, and ability to apply theory to practice while guiding the development of an ethical, student-centered professional identity.

The reform's significance is both theoretical and practical. It contributes a "mediation model" to curriculum design, demonstrating that psychological education provides the essential student-centered processes—supporting autonomy, competence, and relatedness—that enable the deep internalization of the values promoted by IPE. On a practical level, the study offers a replicable blueprint involving thematic content modules, experiential methods, applied praxis, and process-oriented assessment. This provides a clear pathway for educators to transform a standard professional course into a powerful vehicle for holistic development, cultivating future professionals who are both competent and morally grounded.

Despite its promising outcomes, the study acknowledges limitations related to its specific context and the need for long-term evaluation of the reform's impact. Future work should focus on longitudinal studies tracking graduates into the profession, developing robust faculty training programs to support this demanding pedagogical shift, and exploring

technological tools like virtual simulations to enhance scalable, immersive practice. By addressing these areas, the integration of psychological education and IPE can be further refined, strengthening its vital role in nurturing virtuous, resilient, and socially responsible talent.

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