

The Exploration and Practice of Integrating Ideological and Political Elements into Professional Skill Courses in Preschool Education

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Abstract

Professional skills are a crucial component of preschool education. In alignment with the strategic task of building a strong education system and addressing the contemporary challenge of low birth rates, there is an urgent need to enhance the applicability and appeal of professional skills in this field. This paper addresses key difficulties and challenges in the ideological and political education reform of professional skill courses by exploring ways to integrate ideological and political elements, constructing and implementing a "One Core, Two Wings, Three Dimensions, Four Priorities" reform model, and proposing strategies to enhance teachers' ideological and political competence. Adhering to the principle of fostering virtue and cultivating talents, guided by market demands, grounded in knowledge and skills, and centered on students, this study integrates ideological and political elements throughout the teaching process. The aim is to improve the quality of talent cultivation, enhance core competitiveness, and better adapt to industry needs. By nurturing high-quality preschool educators who embody both moral integrity and professional competence, students can stand out in a highly competitive job market. This mission is of great significance in the new era.

Keywords: preschool education, professional skills, ideological and political education in curriculum, industry demands

1. Introduction

Preschool education serves as the foundation of the national education system and is a critical period for the development of children's worldview, outlook on life, and values. Through the reform of ideological and political education in the curriculum, we can cultivate preschool teachers who "excel in both moral integrity and professional skills." This ensures that the strategic mission of "cultivating talents for the nation" is implemented from the very beginning. Furthermore, the "Qinzhou City '14th Five-Year' Preschool Education Development and Enhancement Action Plan" in Guangxi, China, emphasizes the need to base efforts on the new stage of development, implement new development concepts, accelerate the construction of an education hub in the Beibu Gulf coastal region under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, and fulfill the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education (Dauth W 2017). With the declining birth rate in recent years, graduates in preschool education face increasingly severe employment challenges. Guided by industry demands, the market requires us to place greater emphasis on the quality of talent cultivation in this major. Students must possess a noble character, an elegant image, strong professional skills, and an innovative spirit to stand out in the competitive job market (Mills 2021). How can we strengthen the leading role of ideological and political education in institutions to cultivate high-quality, application-oriented skilled talents with a sense of professional ethics? How to fully integrate ideological and political elements into professional skills courses in preschool education? How

can value shaping, knowledge impartation, ability cultivation, and industry adaptation be combined in this major? These are the main tasks explored and practiced in this paper.

2. Current Issues in Integrating Ideological and Political Education into Professional Skill Courses for Preschool Education Majors

Professional skills in preschool education encompass both explicit and implicit skills. Explicit skills can be trained in specific courses such as penmanship, storytelling, children's song accompaniment and singing, dance, painting, courseware creation, and teaching techniques. Implicit skills, on the other hand, involve observation, memory, thinking ability, language and communication skills, and educational research capabilities (Zhang Boya 2025). Professional skill courses are a combination of theory and practice. The cultivation of professional skills is not merely the "instillation of techniques" but also the "infiltration of the soul." During the reform of ideological and political education in professional skill courses for preschool education majors, we have conducted many beneficial explorations but have also encountered some challenges (Campbell F 2014). Currently, in the cultivation of professional skills in vocational colleges and universities within our region, there still exists a situation where "moral education and technical skills" are superficially connected yet fundamentally disconnected—a condition that presents urgent key issues, difficulties, and obstacles to be resolved.

● Overemphasis on Knowledge and Skill Acquisition, with Unclear Educational Goals and Value Shaping

With the continuous deepening reform of preschool education, current professional skill courses in this major focus on knowledge transmission and skill development. However, there is still insufficient effort to optimize teaching content around core values such as national spirit, cultural heritage, sense of responsibility, and professional ethics. This neglects the value-oriented function of the curriculum (Feucht F C 2017). There is a failure to ensure that classroom teaching and ideological cultivation advance together, that technical education and humanistic literacy are mutually integrated, and that the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education is achieved. This constitutes a key issue in the reform of ideological and political education within professional skill courses.

● Single Teaching Method and Incomplete Evaluation System

Current professional skill courses predominantly follow a "teacher demonstration + student practice" model, neglecting students' independent inquiry, learning initiative, and individualized development. It also overlooks students' capacity to explore and create based on core values. The teaching evaluation system remains stuck in the model of "final exam determines the grade," with a single evaluation dimension, failing to transition towards "whole-process evaluation." There is a lack of emphasis on both process and results, and the standards for evaluating courses do not adequately assess literacy, knowledge, skills, process, quality, and improvement. Furthermore, the system does not sufficiently reinforce the fostering of virtue or emphasize the cultivation of a craftsman spirit. This represents a difficulty in the reform of ideological and political education within professional skill courses.

● Teachers' Lack of Awareness and Weak Competence in Integrating Ideological and Political Education

Some teachers believe that ideological and political education is the responsibility of class advisors or counselors, failing to fully recognize the importance of integrating it into subject teaching. They "emphasize teaching over educating" and "prioritize skill transmission over value guidance," only "imparting knowledge" without "resolving doubts," reflecting a weak awareness of curriculum-based ideological and political education. Other teachers lack competence in ideological and political teaching. Limited by their own constraints, they insufficiently explore ideological and political elements, leading to "superficial" and "fragmented" integration. In classroom teaching, this easily results in "forced integration," where discussions are either too general, superficial, or consist of empty preaching with little merit, lacking specificity (Feucht F C 2017). These teachers struggle to find appropriate entry points and connections, which constitutes a major obstacle in the reform of ideological and political education within professional skill courses.

3. Reforming Ideological and Political Education in Professional Skill Courses for Preschool Education

Based on the identified issues in professional skill courses for preschool education majors, we have been continuously reforming and improving our approach in three key areas: the exploration and systematization of ideological and political elements, the construction and implementation of a teaching model that integrates these elements into the curriculum, and the enhancement of teachers' ideological and political competence (Wang Yuefei 2025). Aligning with the characteristics of the times and adhering to the fundamental tasks of fostering virtue through education and building a strong education system, we combine value guidance with the development of students' professional identity, knowledge acquisition, skill cultivation, and industry adaptation. Furthermore, we are progressively advancing from informatization to digital transformation in this process.

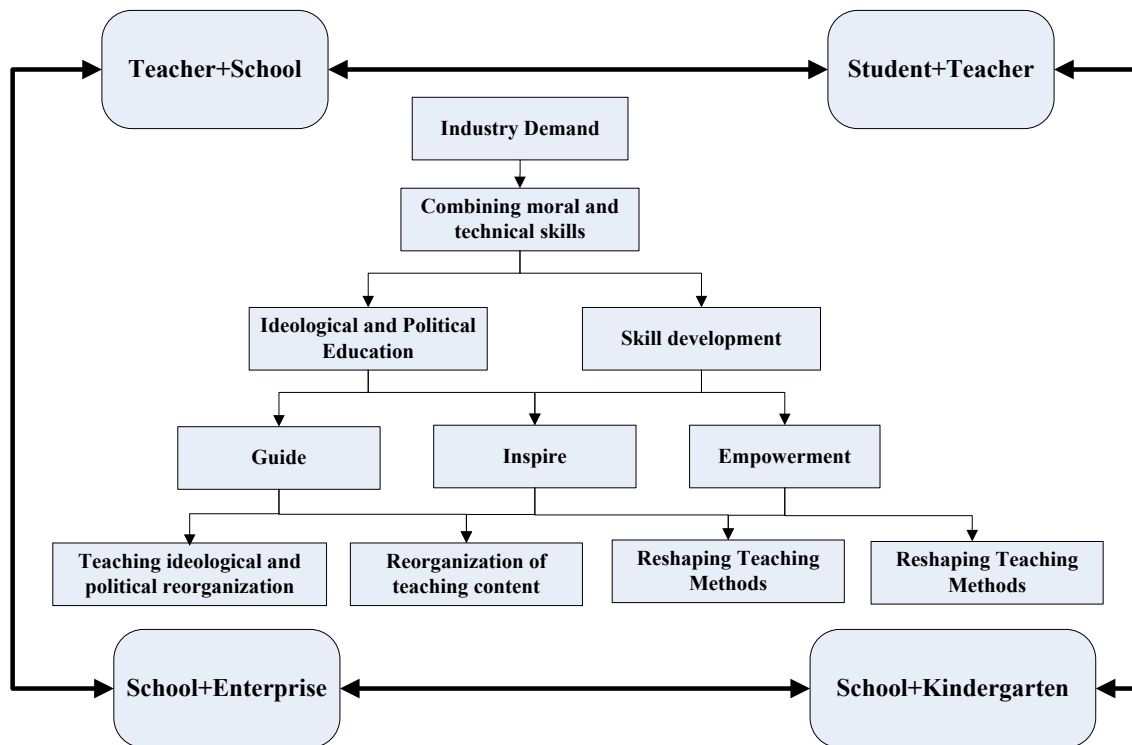


Figure 1. Framework for the Reform and Practice of Ideological and Political Education in Professional Skill Courses

3.1 Exploring Ideological and Political Elements in Professional Skill Courses for Preschool Education Majors

Adhering to the principle of fostering virtue through education and advancing the integration of ideological and political elements into the curriculum is a key direction of reform in vocational colleges and universities. This aims to establish high-quality preschool teacher training bases, cultivate outstanding early childhood education professionals, serve local and regional (Guangxi) needs, and achieve the integration of industry and education. Core socialist values should be consistently implemented throughout the "teacher → student → child" chain. We can explore ideological and political elements from the following aspects:

- Exploring Ideological and Political Elements from Policy Documents

With the promulgation of the "Building a Strong Education System" initiative and the outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China has integrated the cultivation and practice of core socialist values into the overall plan for national education. Aligning with national strategic directions and local specific requirements, both central and local governments have formulated relevant policy documents. We can deeply explore and synthesize the ideological and political elements within these documents, grasp the guiding principles of ideological and political education, and steer firmly towards the goal of fostering virtue through education and cultivating talents for the nation. This approach implements the national-level need for "national rejuvenation" and meets local demands to "base efforts on local conditions and innovate with distinctive features," thereby driving high-quality development in education.

- Exploring Ideological and Political Elements from Local Traditional Culture

Professional skill courses are highly practical and can be connected with local culture to discover distinctive ideological and political elements. Value guidance can be used to deepen the connotation of professional skill courses, while local traditional culture can drive their practical application. Through practice, the inheritance of excellent traditional culture is promoted, addressing the issue of "hollowness" in professional skill course content. This approach fully leverages the humanistic, advanced, innovative, and popular nature of excellent local traditional culture.

- Exploring Ideological and Political Elements from Competitions, Certifications, and Innovation

Job positions require graduates in preschool education to possess a child-oriented philosophy with moral education as the priority, professional knowledge and skills, a professional passion for loving children and enjoying teaching,

and the initiative for lifelong learning. Skills competitions are national contests designed based on professional standards and job competencies, assessing both professional and comprehensive abilities, and evaluating participants' professional identity and overall quality. The Kindergarten Teacher Qualification Certificate is a state-standardized credential for entering the profession, with examinations (both written and interview) comprehensively evaluating the candidate's knowledge of laws and regulations, ethical standards, moral character, professional identity, and capacity for assessment and reflection. The College Student Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition demands that students exhibit innovative thinking, teamwork skills, and awareness of professional development. By organically integrating these elements into the teaching of professional skill courses for preschool education majors, we can nurture virtue through heartfelt education and guide technical skills with ethical principles. The seamless integration of ethical integrity and technical skills advances the fundamental mission of nurturing virtue through education.

- Exploring Ideological and Political Elements from Current Affairs and Hot Topics

Combining political news and current events, explore ideological and political elements to enrich the curriculum and teaching resources of kindergartens and universities. It can not only integrate into kindergarten practical tasks, enrich the analysis of teaching cases in colleges and universities, provide inspiration for skill creation, but also inspire students to actively explore the ideological and political connotations behind hot topics. For example, the construction of the Pinglu Canal, the call to seek strength from the sea, the hub of the Belt and Road, the wave of "tourism craze", etc., guide students to deeply understand the construction and changes of their hometown, actively explore the local resources of their hometown, and extend the ideological points of "loving hometown", "cultural self-confidence", which not only enhance the sense of the times and innovation of the curriculum, but also stimulate students' sense of nationality and pride.

3.2 Constructing and Implementing the 'One Core, Two Wings, Three Dimensions, Four Priorities' Model for Ideological and Political Education Reform in Preschool Education Professional Skill Courses

The reform of ideological and political teaching must closely align with the fundamental goal of fostering virtue through education. Addressing the pathways for integrating ideological and political elements into professional skill courses for preschool education majors, we propose the "One Core, Two Wings, Three Dimensions, Four Priorities" teaching reform model. This model takes "moral integrity and professional competence" as its core, supported by the "two wings" of ideological and political education and skills training. It operates through the "three dimensions" of guidance, inspiration, and empowerment, working in synergy. Implementation involves the "four priorities"—a fourfold coupling of reconstructing teaching objectives, reorganizing teaching content, reshaping teaching methods, and reinventing teaching evaluation. The reform is jointly advanced through the precision of ideological and political elements, the modularization of teaching content, the digitalization of teaching methods (emphasizing collaboration and integration), and the diversification of teaching evaluation. It brings together the four parties—teachers, schools, kindergartens, and enterprises—in a collaborative effort to cultivate talent. Practical outcomes, both on and off campus—such as club activities, skills exhibitions, academic competitions, kindergarten internships, and community service—are used to assess whether the teaching reform objectives have been met. Together, these components leverage the ideological and political development of professional skill courses for preschool education majors.

4. Strategies for Enhancing the Ideological and Political Competence of Instructors in Professional Skill Courses for Preschool Education Majors

Preschool education marks the beginning of formal learning and represents a "critical period" in lifelong development. Compared to other educational stages, it demands higher ideological and political qualities from preschool education majors. Guided by the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) theory, it is an urgent priority for institutions to actively promote the integration of professional skill courses with ideological and political education, thereby enhancing the ideological and political competence of instructors. This is achieved through a virtuous cycle of "young children → teachers → students → young children," guiding students to respect, understand, and ultimately serve young children. To address the issues of teachers' weak awareness and limited teaching ability in integrating ideological and political education, institutions should adopt the following strategies:

- Organize training sessions on ideological and political education to enhance teachers' cognitive awareness, enabling them to recognize the contemporary value of curriculum-based ideological and political education from a broader perspective, thus elevating their professional realm and commitment.
- Regularly invite experts to conduct lectures and workshops, helping instructors learn how to organically integrate ideological and political elements with professional knowledge and skill development, as well as how to employ innovative methods to implement ideological and political education in the curriculum.

- Incorporate ideological and political elements into course objectives and evaluation systems, using this as a guide for conducting skill-based course teaching. This fosters a teaching organization model of "planning, implementing, practicing, and reflecting" to improve lesson preparation capabilities.
- Encourage teachers to participate in teaching practices and competitions, using competitions to drive teaching improvement. This deepens their understanding and mastery of educational principles, and promotes the use of new information technologies to enhance both teaching and ideological-political competence.
- Conduct regular case studies and reflective sessions, helping teachers understand the application and effectiveness of ideological and political education in actual teaching practice. Through reflection, they can identify shortcomings and thus refine their teaching methods and ideological-political abilities.
- Encourage teachers to engage in research projects related to their own specialties and teaching practices. Combining teaching with research allows teachers to gain a deeper understanding of the principles and characteristics of ideological and political teaching, exploring suitable teaching methods and strategies for enhancing their own competence.

5. Conclusion

Since the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the deepened reform of the vocational education system has required vocational colleges and secondary specialized schools to cultivate high-quality, application-oriented early childhood education professionals with teacher ethics and professional dedication, supplying society with vocational talent embodying the "craftsman spirit of excellence." The ideological and political education reform in the professional skill courses for preschool education majors contributes to achieving a parallel advancement of educational innovation and practical training for employment. It facilitates the imparting of knowledge, the cultivation of skills, and the shaping of core values, thereby fulfilling the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education. Through a series of explorations and practices within this reform, we have achieved certain results in the areas of post requirements, competitions, certifications, and innovation. We continuously engage in reflection and improvement to enhance the quality of student training and their core competitiveness in the job market, aiming to cultivate outstanding early childhood educators who are well-suited to the characteristics of the current era.

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