

Innovation and Practice of Ideological and Political Theory Courses in Digital Distance Learning

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Abstract—As digital education and distance learning advance globally, ideological and political theory courses, a distinctive compulsory curriculum in mainland Chinese higher education tasked with fostering virtue and nurturing talent, face both opportunities and challenges in teaching reform. This paper takes such courses as the research subject, analyzes the current status and practical dilemmas of their distance teaching, and constructs an online-offline hybrid teaching framework covering curriculum design, resource development, interactive experience and teaching effect evaluation. This study conducted a randomized controlled trial with 426 undergraduates, who were evenly divided into an experimental group and a control group (213 students in each group). Data were collected at the mid-term (8th teaching week) and final stage (16th teaching week), and quantitative comparative analysis was adopted for data processing. The results demonstrate that digital distance teaching remarkably enhances the contemporaneity, appeal and effectiveness of ideological and political theory courses, and boosts students' learning initiative, in-class participation and overall course satisfaction. This research provides implementable strategies and practical references for the innovative development of ideological and political education in the digital age, as well as relevant experience for international teaching research on similar value-oriented courses.

Keywords—ideological and political theory courses, distance learning, hybrid teaching, digital education

I. INTRODUCTION

Driven by information technology, digital transformation and distance learning have become mainstream trends in global higher education. Ideological and political theory courses are distinctive compulsory core courses offered at universities in mainland China. Established shortly after the founding of the People's Republic of China and continuously revised and improved alongside national education policies, these courses are universally required for all college students. Rooted in China's social context and educational philosophy, they undertake the core mission of value

guidance and ideological cultivation, namely the fundamental task of establishing morality and cultivating people. Unlike general academic courses worldwide, these courses combine theoretical knowledge instruction with value shaping, representing a distinctive component of China's higher education system [1].

Against the backdrop of educational digitalization, it is imperative to integrate ideological and political theory courses with digital technologies and distance education models, to cater to the learning characteristics of contemporary college students and improve educational quality.

Currently, numerous universities in mainland China have explored digital teaching for ideological and political theory courses. Nevertheless, prominent problems remain, including monotonous teaching modes, inadequate teacher-student interaction, uneven quality and fragmentation of digital teaching resources, and unscientific teaching effect evaluation systems [2].

This paper systematically explores the development status and practical predicaments of ideological and political theory courses in distance education scenarios, constructs a targeted digital distance teaching system, and verifies its effectiveness through empirical research. The findings enrich the theoretical system of ideological and political education reform and offer practical experience for the digital transformation of such distinctive courses in mainland China, while also providing references for international value-oriented curriculum innovation [3].

II. CURRENT SITUATION AND DILEMMAS OF IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL COURSES IN DISTANCE LEARNING

A. Development Status

Ideological and political theory courses have formed standardized and systematic curriculum systems across universities in mainland China. With the advancement of education informatization, online teaching platforms, recorded live courses, digital courseware and open educational resources have been widely applied, and hybrid teaching modes have been gradually explored and promoted [4]. These practices have laid a solid foundation for the development of distance learning for ideological and political theory courses.

Compared with mature distance education practices around the world, however, ideological and political theory courses still show deficiencies in teaching model innovation, scenario design, and international academic communication [5]. Most existing teaching practices merely transplant traditional offline classroom content to online platforms, failing to fully leverage the strengths of digital technology and distance education.

B. Main Dilemmas

The teaching mode lacks diversity. Most distance-based ideological and political theory courses rely solely on recorded videos and live streaming sessions, without immersive scenario design or diversified interactive links. This issue hinders the stimulation of students' in-depth learning motivation [2].

Teacher-student interaction is insufficient. Online communication is mainly limited to text messages and simple question-and-answer sessions, lacking in-depth emotional communication and ideological exchanges. Teachers are unable to capture students' ideological trends in a timely manner, which weakens the effect of value guidance [6].

Digital resources are fragmented. Existing teaching resources are mostly scattered courseware, videos, and reading materials, without systematic, themed, and scenario-based integration. Such resources cannot support high-quality distance teaching [7].

Teaching evaluation is incomplete. Current evaluation systems focus excessively on summative outcomes such as examinations and assignments, while ignoring process indicators including learning participation, interactive performance, and practical outcomes. Thus, these systems cannot fully reflect overall teaching effects and the realization of value guidance goals [6].

III. THEORETICAL BASIS FOR INTEGRATION OF IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL COURSES AND DISTANCE LEARNING

The deep integration of ideological and political theory courses and digital distance learning is not merely a technical upgrade of teaching forms, but also a theoretical restructuring and practical optimization of educational concepts, teaching logic and value transmission pathways. Supported by multiple well-established educational theories and consistent with the development rules of modern higher education, this integration provides a solid theoretical foundation for the reform and practice of distance teaching for ideological and political theory courses.

First, hybrid teaching theory establishes the core structural framework for the integration. This theory advocates the organic combination of online independent learning and offline collaborative discussion, breaking the temporal and spatial constraints of traditional classrooms and realizing complementary advantages between digital resources and face-to-face tutoring [4]. For ideological and political theory courses featuring strong theoretical attributes and prominent value guidance functions, online sessions can deliver basic theoretical knowledge, present

abundant learning resources, and record the whole learning process; offline sessions focus on in-depth discussions, ideological exchanges, and emotional interaction, which avoids the superficiality of pure online teaching. This theoretical logic matches the inherent teaching rules of ideological and political theory courses, and clarifies the overall framework for designing digital distance teaching modes [8].

Second, student-centered education theory defines the core orientation of digital distance teaching for these courses. This theory emphasizes respect for learners' individual differences and learning autonomy, and promotes a shift from teacher-centered indoctrination to student-oriented exploratory learning [4]. In digital distance learning environments, students can adjust their learning pace according to personal cognitive levels and time schedules, and use intelligent platforms to pause, replay, and expand learning content, effectively solving the problem of inconsistent learning acceptance rates in traditional classrooms. Meanwhile, student-centered education theory requires teachers to pay attention to students' emotional needs and ideological status, which aligns with the value guidance objectives of ideological and political theory courses. Digital tools assist teachers in tracking learning behaviors, identifying emotional changes, and conducting targeted guidance, so as to achieve personalized and precise education [9].

Third, modern distance education theory clarifies the technical logic and application principles for digital teaching practice. This theory holds that distance teaching is not a simple replication of offline classrooms, but requires information technology to reconstruct resource supply modes, interactive mechanisms, and teaching management systems [5]. It highlights the openness, flexibility and inclusiveness of distance learning, which can break regional and conditional restrictions and expand the coverage of high-quality educational resources. For ideological and political theory courses, digital technologies can present theoretical knowledge, current affairs hot topics, red cultural resources and social practice cases in diversified forms, enhancing the contemporaneity and affinity of the curriculum [10]. Additionally, modern distance education theory attaches importance to interactive design and whole-process learning monitoring, offering theoretical support to address insufficient interaction and single evaluation modes in existing distance teaching [11].

Furthermore, national policy guidelines for the digital transformation of ideological and political education also guide this integration. Relevant documents issued by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China clearly require ideological and political theory courses to accelerate digital reform, innovate teaching methods and resource construction, and improve curriculum attractiveness and influence [12]. This macro policy orientation ensures that the integration practice conforms to national educational strategies and talent cultivation objectives.

Driven by the above theories, the integration of ideological and political theory courses and digital

distance learning has evolved from simple technical superposition to systematic innovation in educational philosophy, curriculum structure and implementation pathways, laying a comprehensive and operable theoretical foundation for constructing digital distance teaching modes [13].

IV. CONSTRUCTION OF DIGITAL DISTANCE TEACHING MODE FOR IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL COURSES

A. Overall Design Concept and Research Methodology

This study combines the inherent characteristics of ideological and political theory courses and the practical requirements of distance learning, and constructs a four-in-one digital distance teaching mode with curriculum design as the core, resource construction as the support, interactive experience as the key, and effect evaluation as the guarantee. Adhering to the student-centered philosophy, this mode prioritizes value guidance and knowledge imparting, and integrates digital tools, platform resources and multiple teaching links to form a closed-loop system of “design-implementation-interaction-evaluation-optimization”. It balances the flexibility of distance learning and the ideological, theoretical and targeted attributes of ideological and political theory courses, realizing the organic combination of efficient online learning and humanistic offline communication. Multiple types of data were collected in this research:

- Objective behavioral data: Including learning duration, resource browsing records, live attendance, task completion rate and interactive frequency. These data are interval variables, analyzed via descriptive statistics.
- Likert scale data: A five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) was adopted for course satisfaction and ideological identity assessment. In this study, Likert data were treated as interval data to support parametric statistical analysis [14].
- Academic test scores: Objective examination scores, defined as interval data.

To examine whether statistically significant differences existed between the experimental group and the control group, an independent-samples t-test was selected as the core statistical method. All significance tests were set at the level of $P < 0.05$. All statistical analyses were performed using professional statistical software [15].

B. Specific Implementation Path

1) Online-offline hybrid curriculum design

The curriculum is divided into three progressive modules: online autonomous learning, online centralized interaction and offline practical deepening. The online section provides micro-lecture videos, key knowledge interpretation, extended reading materials and intelligent Q&A functions to support fragmented and autonomous learning. Online live sessions focus on explaining difficult knowledge points, answering real-time questions and organizing thematic discussions to unify teaching

progress and core teaching content. Offline sessions mainly include thematic seminars, on-site practical experience, group work reports and one-on-one targeted tutoring, making up for the lack of emotional communication in pure online learning environments. The overall design follows the principle of “knowledge input online, thinking and practice output offline”, guiding students to realize the transformation from knowledge comprehension to ideological recognition and practical application.

2) Systematic and scenario-based resource construction

Resource construction follows the goals of systematic support, scenario-based presentation and intelligent push. First, a themed resource library covering core curriculum chapters, current affairs hotspots, classic teaching cases, red cultural resources and policy documents is established to form a complete resource chain. Second, diversified scenario-based digital resources are developed, including virtual simulation content, short video stories and situational case analyses, to restore real-life scenarios and strengthen students’ immersive learning experience. Third, big data technology is used to record individual learning behaviors and realize personalized resource push for different students. Meanwhile, resources are updated dynamically according to national policies, social hot topics and teaching schedules to ensure timeliness and attractiveness, providing stable support for daily distance teaching [7].

3) Diversified interactive mechanism

Interactive design is carried out from three dimensions: real-time interaction, collaborative interaction and emotional interaction. Real-time interaction adopts live streaming tools to launch Q&A, online voting and group brainstorming activities to improve classroom participation. Collaborative interaction sets up online learning groups to assign cooperative tasks, organize thematic research and share learning achievements, cultivating students’ team spirit and critical thinking ability. Emotional interaction strengthens teachers’ one-on-one online tutoring, ideological counseling and learning encouragement, narrowing the psychological distance between teachers and students and enhancing students’ sense of belonging. Multi-dimensional interaction transforms the one-way knowledge output of traditional distance teaching into two-way communication and multi-party ideological exchanges, improving the practical effect of value guidance [11].

4) Three-dimensional comprehensive effect evaluation

A three-dimensional evaluation system integrating process assessment, outcome assessment and feedback assessment is constructed. Process assessment collects platform data such as learning duration, resource browsing volume, task completion status, interactive frequency and discussion quality to quantify students’ learning participation. Outcome assessment includes unit tests, final examinations, practical reports and thematic papers to evaluate students’ knowledge mastery and ideological cognition level. Feedback assessment incorporates student course evaluation, peer evaluation

and teachers' teaching reflection, forming a continuous teaching optimization mechanism. This evaluation system abandons the single examination-oriented assessment mode, focuses on the whole learning process and students' ideological and moral growth, and provides reliable evidence for the iterative optimization of the teaching mode [6].

V. PRACTICAL EFFECT VERIFICATION

A. Experimental Index Design Ethical Considerations for Human Subjects

This research strictly complied with ethical norms for human subject research. Prior to the experiment, written informed consent was obtained from all participating students. All participants were fully informed of the research purpose, experimental arrangements, data collection methods and research duration. Students enjoyed the right to voluntarily participate in or withdraw from the experiment at any time without any negative impact on their course grades and academic assessment. All collected personal information and learning data were processed anonymously, and relevant data were kept strictly confidential. No private information was disclosed in the subsequent data analysis and research publication [16].

A controlled experiment was conducted at a university in Henan Province to verify the practical effect of the proposed digital distance teaching mode, covering two compulsory ideological and political theory courses in the spring semester of 2026. A total of 426 students from 8 regular classes were randomly divided into the experimental group and the control group, with 213 students in each group. The experimental group adopted the four-in-one digital distance hybrid teaching mode proposed in this paper, while the control group used the traditional distance teaching mode dominated by recorded videos, simple online Q&A and final examinations. The two groups were taught by the same teachers, with

consistent class hours, syllabi and assessment scope, eliminating interference from teacher differences and curriculum distinctions. The experiment lasted for 16 teaching weeks, and data collection and analysis were conducted at the 8th week (mid-term) and the 16th week (final stage), respectively.

B. Experimental Index Design

The teaching effect was evaluated from four dimensions: learning initiative, course participation, course satisfaction and comprehensive teaching effectiveness (including knowledge mastery and ideological identity). Learning initiative was measured by pre-class preview rate, active questioning frequency and independent extended learning frequency. Course participation was reflected by online resource browsing duration, live class attendance rate, discussion interaction volume and group task completion quality. Course satisfaction was measured via a five-point Likert scale questionnaire. Comprehensive teaching effectiveness was assessed through objective test scores and a subjective ideological identity scale.

C. Comparative Analysis of Experimental Data

As shown in Table 1, in terms of learning initiative, the average pre-class preview rate of the experimental group reached $89.2\% \pm 4.1\%$, while the control group was only $56.4\% \pm 6.3\%$ ($t = 42.36$, $P < 0.001$). The average number of active questions per student in the experimental group was 3.7 ± 1.2 , compared with 1.2 ± 0.8 in the control group ($t = 24.18$, $P < 0.001$). The proportion of students taking the initiative to carry out extended learning in the experimental group was $76.5\% \pm 5.2\%$, far higher than $23.1 \pm 7.1\%$ in the control group ($t = 39.72$, $P < 0.001$). The above results prove that the hybrid teaching mode with abundant resources and diversified interactions effectively stimulates students' internal learning motivation and changes the passive learning state in traditional distance teaching [4].

TABLE I. COMPARISON OF CORE INDICATORS BETWEEN EXPERIMENTAL GROUP AND CONTROL GROUP (MEAN $\pm$ SD)

Indicators	Experimental Group ($n = 213$)	Control Group ($n = 213$)	t-value	P-value
Pre-class preview rate (%)	89.2 ± 4.1	56.4 ± 6.3	42.36	<0.001
Average active questions per person	3.7 ± 1.2	1.2 ± 0.8	24.18	<0.001
Proportion of extended learning (%)	76.5 ± 5.2	23.1 ± 7.1	39.72	<0.001
Weekly online learning hours	5.2 ± 1.5	2.4 ± 0.9	22.95	<0.001
Average interactive posts per person	12.3 ± 3.4	3.6 ± 1.1	34.61	<0.001
Live class attendance rate (%)	95.6 ± 2.8	72.1 ± 5.7	30.27	<0.001
Course satisfaction score (5-point scale)	4.68 ± 0.29	3.12 ± 0.45	41.03	<0.001
Final exam score	85.3 ± 5.6	72.7 ± 7.2	20.88	<0.001
Ideological identity score (5-point scale)	4.52 ± 0.33	3.36 ± 0.51	28.74	<0.001

In terms of course participation, the average weekly online learning duration of the experimental group was 5.2 ± 1.5 h, which was 2.1 times that of the control group (2.4 ± 0.9 h; $t = 22.95$, $P < 0.001$). The average number of interactive posts per student in the discussion area of the experimental group was 12.3 ± 3.4 , while the control group had only 3.6 ± 1.1 ($t = 34.61$, $P < 0.001$). The live class attendance rate of the experimental group remained at $95.6\% \pm 2.8\%$, while that of the control group was $72.1\% \pm 5.7\%$ ($t = 30.27$, $P < 0.001$). As shown in Table

I, the independent-samples t-test confirmed significant differences between the two groups for all indicators ($P < 0.05$), indicating that scenario-based resources and diversified interactive mechanisms greatly improve students' participation in distance learning [15].

In terms of course satisfaction, the experimental group had an average score of 4.68 ± 0.29 (full score = 5), with 92.5% of students selecting "very satisfied" or "satisfied". The control group scored 3.12 ± 0.45 on average, and only 47.8% of students expressed

satisfaction ($t = 41.03$, $P < 0.001$). In open-ended feedback, students in the experimental group stated that digital distance teaching makes ideological and political theory courses closer to real life, with more interesting and convenient interactions and more flexible and efficient learning schedules, which directly reflects the improvement of curriculum appeal and affinity.

In terms of comprehensive teaching effectiveness, the average final exam score of the experimental group was 85.3 ± 5.6 points, 12.6 points higher than the control group (72.7 ± 7.2 points; $t = 20.88$, $P < 0.001$). The average ideological identity score of the experimental group was 4.52 ± 0.33 points, which was significantly superior to 3.36 ± 0.51 points in the control group ($t = 28.74$, $P < 0.001$). Statistical results in Table I verify significant inter-group differences for all indicators ($P < 0.05$). It is demonstrated that the digital distance teaching mode not only improves students' mastery of theoretical knowledge, but also strengthens the value guidance and ideological leadership functions of ideological and political theory courses, thereby realizing the integration of knowledge teaching and value shaping.

D. Validity and Feasibility of the Model

Data analysis fully verifies the effectiveness of the proposed digital distance teaching mode. This mode addresses four core problems of traditional distance teaching for ideological and political theory courses: monotonous teaching modes, insufficient interaction, fragmented resources and unreasonable evaluation systems. It optimizes students' learning experience and enhances the contemporaneity and effectiveness of the curriculum, proving its practical value and advancement [7]. Moreover, the model features clear operational procedures and standardized resource construction, which can be replicated and promoted in other universities, providing practical references for the digital reform of ideological and political theory courses.

VI. CONCLUSION

The integration of ideological and political theory courses and digital distance learning is an inevitable trend of teaching reform and development for distinctive value-oriented courses in the new era. The four-in-one hybrid teaching mode constructed in this paper effectively solves practical problems in distance teaching, optimizes the teaching system of ideological and political theory courses, improves overall teaching quality, and consolidates the effect of value guidance and ideological leadership. This empirical practice proves that digital technology can empower ideological and political education in an effective way, making the curriculum more contemporary, attractive and targeted.

In the future, with the continuous iteration of digital technology and deepening of international educational exchanges, ideological and political theory courses will develop towards intellectualization, personalization and internationalization. On the one hand, technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data and virtual reality will further enrich teaching scenarios and resource forms, and

realize more refined and intelligent teaching management. On the other hand, cross-border educational exchanges will bring new opportunities for the international communication of value-oriented educational concepts and teaching experience. This study puts forward feasible paths and practical experience for the reform of ideological and political education under the background of digital distance learning, and also provides references for the digital and hybrid teaching reform of other university courses.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Jiang Momo conducted the research; Duan Shudi analyzed the data; Jiang Momo and Duan Shudi wrote the paper; all authors had approved the final version.

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