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Exploring the Pathways for Ideological and Political Education in the Course "Graphic Creative Design"

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Abstract: This paper explores the reform of ideological and political education in the course "Graphic Creative Design". Addressing issues such as insufficient integration of ideological and political education into traditional courses and rigid teaching models, this paper identifies the advantages of ideological and political education based on the characteristics of the course and proposes reform pathways and methods. By incorporating ideological and political education elements such as Chinese traditional culture, values, red culture, and professional ethics into course instruction; innovating teaching methods to establish a blended learning model; using "case studies + projects" to drive ideological and political education integration; leveraging "competition-driven learning" to strengthen professional ethics cultivation; and leveraging technological and conceptual innovations to expand the dimensions of ideological and political education. In teaching practice, modularized instruction is adopted to deeply integrate ideological and political education elements with the curriculum. Cases from outstanding designers are introduced, and real projects and competition topics are used to drive project-based training. Additionally, AIGC technology is utilized to enrich the carriers of ideological and political education, achieving the synergistic development of "professional skill enhancement" and "value concept shaping".

Keywords: Ideological and political education elements; Teaching model; Competition-driven learning; Application of AIGC technology; Cultivation of professional competence.

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1. Introduction

As society evolves, the demand for talent has become increasingly diverse and comprehensive. Individuals with solely specialized knowledge and skills are no longer sufficient to meet societal needs. Instead, the truly urgent requirement for the present and future development of society lies in the cultivation of well-rounded professionals who possess strong professional ethics, a sense of social responsibility, and an innovative spirit. These individuals represent the core driving force capable of propelling continuous progress and innovation across all fields.

In September 2024, President Xi Jinping emphasized at the National Education Conference that "we must persistently use the Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era to nurture the soul and educate the people, and implement the New Era Moral Education Project" ^[1]. This important directive has injected strong momentum into the reform of ideological and political education in higher education institutions, and has charted the course for continuing to advance the construction of ideological and political education in courses and building a comprehensive educational framework that involves everyone, throughout the entire process, and in all aspects.

2. Analysis of existing issues in ideological and political education in the graphic creative design course

The course "Graphic Creative Design" is a required core course for the Visual Communication Design major, playing a crucial role in cultivating students' creative thinking, design skills, and aesthetic literacy. However, the traditional "Graphic Creative Design" course has not sufficiently integrated ideological and political education, resulting in various issues in teaching. In terms of teaching objectives, the course emphasizes developing students' ability to create graphic imagery and foster creative thinking, while relatively neglecting the cultivation of students' ability to collaborate in groups to complete practical projects.

In terms of teaching content, there is a lack of guidance on socialist core values for students. Due to preconceptions about traditional ideological and political theory courses, students have low participation rates. Some students are influenced by negative information, resulting in their works reflecting negative or dark concepts. In terms of teaching methods, the teacher-centered offline lecture model tends to neglect the cultivation of students' collaborative abilities, leading to rigid thinking patterns among students. Their design works exhibit homogenized styles and expression techniques, lacking humanistic concern and in-depth cultural reflection.

3. Features of the graphic creative design course and its advantages in ideological and political education

3.1. Course features

Graphic Creative Design is a discipline that uses visual symbols as a primary medium of communication, integrating creative thinking techniques such as association and imagination, along with visual elements including form, color, composition, and layout, to convey complex information and emotional content effectively. As a form of visual language, graphic creative design is characterized by its intuitiveness, emotional resonance, and cross-cultural communicability, allowing it to transcend linguistic and cultural boundaries to reach diverse audiences. These features make it an essential tool in modern communication, branding, social advocacy, and digital media.

The course adopts a practice-oriented teaching approach, emphasizing experiential learning through case analysis, hands-on creative exercises, individual and group projects, and design workshops. This method is aimed at cultivating not only students' technical and practical skills, but also their creative problem-solving abilities, aesthetic judgment, and innovative thinking. Through analyzing real-world cases and engaging in project-based learning, students develop the ability to transform abstract ideas into compelling visual narratives.

In addition to technical training, the curriculum incorporates interdisciplinary knowledge drawn from aesthetics, psychology, communication studies, sociology, and cultural studies. This interdisciplinary foundation

enables students to gain a comprehensive understanding of how design operates within and responds to social, cultural, and economic contexts. By exploring the interplay between design and contemporary societal needs, such as cultural identity, public awareness, and digital transformation, and students are encouraged to reflect on the social responsibility of designers and the broader impact of visual communication on public perception and behavior.

3.2. Advantages of ideological and political education

Based on the above characteristics, integrating ideological and political education into the curriculum offers numerous advantages. First, the teaching process of graphic design serves as an ideal medium for conveying values. In the selection of themes such as case studies and project-based training, ideological and political education can be subtly integrated into the curriculum, avoiding rigid lecturing and making it more easily accepted by students.

When students engage in project-based training, teachers can incorporate themes such as national pride, cultural heritage, professional ethics education, or current social issues into real-world projects. This guides students to focus on national strategies and social issues, fostering a sense of citizenship, cultivating patriotism and cultural confidence, as well as a sense of responsibility to "use design to serve society".

In summary, the "Graphic Creative Design" course, with its visual communication power, practicality, and interdisciplinary nature, provides a natural pathway for the integration of ideological and political education. By identifying ideological and political elements within the course and combining case analysis, project-based teaching, and other methods, the course can achieve its threefold objectives of knowledge transmission, skill development, and value shaping [2].

4. Pathways and methods for ideological and political education reform in the graphic creative design course

4.1. Explore carriers of ideological and political elements to achieve a natural integration of professional education and ideological and political education

When integrating ideological and political elements into graphic design courses, it is important to avoid forced integration. Instead, these elements should be deeply embedded in the course content and professional characteristics to achieve a subtle educational effect. Ideological and political elements mainly cover the following three categories.

4.1.1. Elements of China's outstanding traditional culture

Chinese traditional culture is a valuable source of inspiration for graphic design. The primary objective of exploring elements of Chinese traditional culture is to enhance students' confidence in their cultural heritage and enable them to gain a deeper understanding of these cultural traditions. Chinese traditional cultural elements are rich and diverse, and those creative graphics are the crystallization of ancient wisdom.

Although these elements may seem somewhat "outdated" in the present day, through innovative visual design transformations, they can be infused with new vitality. Guiding students to apply these elements in graphic design within the curriculum can add a unique ethnic visual language characteristic to their works, enabling students to sense a sense of responsibility for cultural inheritance in their creations, and achieving a creative transformation of traditional aesthetics and modern design.

4.1.2. Values and elements of red culture

The integration of values and elements of red culture must be closely linked to contemporary themes and historical memory. Students should be guided to translate the core values of socialism into tangible visual language, enabling them to understand the spiritual essence of red culture and contemporary value concepts through graphic translation, and to appreciate the unique charm of graphic creative language.

Through red culture-themed practical training projects in teaching, students not only master the creative logic of conveying abstract ideas through graphic symbols, but also deepen their understanding of the connotations of patriotic sentiment in the process.

4.1.3. Professionalism and spiritual elements

The cultivation of professional ethics and spiritual elements must be combined with industry standards and ethical guidelines. In project-based teaching, real design processes can be simulated, and students can be organized into groups to complete projects.

This not only cultivates students' ability to collaborate, but also fosters a spirit of craftsmanship through encouraging students to repeatedly refine graphic details during the project implementation process. Analyzing cases of design plagiarism helps students develop an awareness of intellectual property protection and encourages them to maintain originality in their creative thinking. Introducing examples of industry role models, such as designers who voluntarily optimized visual systems for public welfare projects, helps students understand the social value of design and instill the professional belief that "design serves society", thereby achieving an organic unity between professional competence and social value.

4.2. Innovative teaching methods to enhance the effectiveness of ideological and political education in courses

In the practice of ideological and political education in graphic design courses, innovation in teaching methods is the core of enhancing educational effectiveness. By exploring diverse teaching models, stimulating students' motivation for active learning, and integrating emerging technological tools, we can break through the limitations of traditional teaching methods, allowing ideological and political elements to be naturally integrated into the teaching process.

This achieves an organic unity between the cultivation of professional skills and the shaping of value concepts, thereby effectively enhancing the practical effectiveness of ideological and political education in courses.

4.2.1. Building a blended teaching model

Before the course begins, establish a WeChat group for the class to generate interest in the course content, such as by sharing links to short videos about traditional culture in the group chat, to spark students' interest in learning and naturally introduce the theme of ideological and political education into the online course preview.

During the course, with the aim of cultivating virtue and fostering talent, fully utilize the smart teaching environment provided by the school. Employ diverse teaching methods such as smart learning, flipped classrooms, and MOOCs. Leverage the abundant audio-visual resources available online and the interactive teaching atmosphere between teachers and students offline to organically integrate ideological and political elements into the professional knowledge points of graphic design. This transforms students from passive recipients into active explorers and learners.

After class, we provide tutoring and Q&A sessions through a combination of online and offline methods. We also use interactive platforms to select some students to evaluate the teaching content. By holding meetings

and discussions with students, we understand their ideological feedback on course learning and summarize and reflect on the teaching outcomes.

4.2.2. Driving the integration of ideological and political education through "case studies + projects"

Typical case guidance: The course combines online and offline methods to exchange examples of outstanding ideological and political theme design works, analyze the graphic creative methods used, successfully introduce course knowledge points, and integrate ideological and political education into the entire assignment teaching process, achieving a unified effect of knowledge transmission and value guidance ^[3].

Project-based practice: The design practice of the real project practice in the course directly reflects whether theoretical learning has been effectively internalized, whether theory effectively guides practice, and whether practice can elevate theoretical understanding. This is the most critical component of the mechanism and model for integrating ideological and political elements into the curriculum ^[4]. In the course, corporate projects and public welfare projects are transformed into teaching tasks.

Students are required to complete project tasks with meticulous attention to detail according to design specifications. Simultaneously, students are guided to incorporate ideological and political elements such as cultural heritage and social responsibility into graphic creativity, enabling them to experience the social functions of design while addressing real-world problems and cultivating a sense of responsibility and commitment.

4.2.3. Strengthening the cultivation of professional skills through competition-based learning

Using design competitions as a platform for ideological and political education, students can select competition themes with ideological and political elements, such as intangible cultural heritage inheritance, rural revitalization, and red culture. Before the competition, guide students to deeply explore the ideological and political elements within the theme, promote collaboration through pre-class discussions, and advance project completion in groups.

During the competition, guide students to integrate the spirit of craftsmanship and innovative thinking into their work creation; after the competition, showcase the winning works to summarize students' experiences in applying ideological and political elements in project design. This forms a positive cycle of "participation-reflection-improvement".

4.2.4. Leveraging technological and conceptual innovation to expand the scope of ideological and political education

In the educational reform of ideological and political education in graphic design courses, the integration of new technologies and cutting-edge concepts is a key pathway to making ideological and political education more contemporary and practical.

Among these, Artificial Intelligence Generated Content (AIGC) serves as a significant innovative tool and driving force in the field of art and design, with its application value increasingly evident. AIGC, leveraging deep learning and massive databases, can automatically generate high-quality graphics, significantly improve graphic production efficiency while broaden creative horizons and sparking inspiration for design. Integrating AIGC into graphic design course instruction enables the organic fusion of technological tools with ideological and political education objectives, expanding the scope of ideological and political education to new dimensions.

Through the above approaches and methods, the Graphic Creative Design course can achieve the coordinated development of "professional skill enhancement" and "value concept shaping", cultivating high-

quality talent with both design capabilities and a sense of social responsibility.

5. Practical application of ideological and political education reform in the course "graphic creative design"

First, in the teaching practice of ideological and political education in the "Graphic Creative Design" course, clear objectives are established from four dimensions: ideological and political education, knowledge, ability, and quality. Traditional culture is deeply rooted, with a focus on cultivating students' artistic aesthetic sense and creative thinking abilities ^[5]. The teaching team adopts a modular teaching approach (see **Table 1**) to achieve the dual objectives of moral education and professional skill development.

Table 1. Course module design for ideological and political integration in graphic creative design

Course modules	Key knowledge points	Ideological and political elements	Teaching methods	Integration of ideological and political elements	Practical tasks
1. Basic graphic design concepts	1. Graphic concepts 2. The origin and development of graphics 3. Principles of modern graphic design [6]	Cultural confidence, design values	Theoretical explanation, case analysis, group discussion	1. When explaining the origins and development of graphics, traditional Chinese classic graphics can be cited. By analyzing their cultural connotations and artistic value, students' sense of identity with traditional culture and cultural confidence can be enhanced. 2. When explaining modern graphic design principles, classic cases of outstanding Chinese designers can be presented. By analyzing the cultural inheritance and innovative spirit in their design concepts, professional role models can be established to cultivate students' professional identity and sense of design responsibility.	Traditional Graphics vs. Modern Graphics: A Comparative Analysis Assignment
2. Graphic creative thinking	Graphic creative thinking process Starting point of graphic creativity association Core of graphic creativity imagination	Patriotic sentiment, cultural heritage awareness, and core socialist values	Lenovo training, imagination training, quick-draw practical exercises, group brainstorming, application of new AIGC technologies, interactive resource sharing	Through quick-response exercises related to traditional culture, such as "seasonal culture", "traditional festivals", and "intangible cultural heritage techniques", students are guided to explore cultural connotations in depth through association and imagination exercises, thereby cultivating cultural heritage awareness and innovative thinking.	Traditional Culture Theme Association / Imagination Quick- Drawing Training (Single Form / Multiple Forms)
3. Creative graphic expression	Diversity of expression Stylization of expression	Innovative spirit, pursuit of excellence, craftsmanship	Case Studies (Works by Chinese Designers), Application of New AIGC Technologies, One-on-One Guidance	Analyze the attention to detail in the works of outstanding designers to convey the craftsmanship spirit of "striving for perfection"; guide students to engage in secondary creation and proactive optimization of AI-generated materials to cultivate a rigorous and focused professional attitude.	Specialized exercises in stylized expression (combined with the theme of red culture)
4. Graphic creative applications	1.Applications in the field of graphic design 2.Applications expanding into multidimensional fields	Teamwork skills, sense of social responsibility	Project-based learning, application of new AIGC technologies, flipped classroom, group collaboration, and presentation of results.	culture, intangible cultural heritage preservation, and cultural conservation as a platform, organize students into groups	Complete a group project on the theme of red culture/ intangible cultural heritage inheritance for a competition or actual project proposal.

Secondly, traditional cultural elements should be deeply integrated into course content during teaching, achieving natural penetration rather than forced insertion. Traditional culture, as the root of national culture, plays a crucial role in the inheritance and promotion of course-based ideological and political education. The ancient wisdom embedded in traditional graphics shares many commonalities with modern graphic design theory, providing abundant materials and possibilities for such integration.

During the theoretical explanation of the course, traditional graphic design classics can be introduced in conjunction with specific knowledge points: when explaining "causal association", use the "horse trampling a swallow" graphic as an example. This graphic exaggerates the scene of a horse trampling a swallow to emphasize the horse's running speed, allowing students to intuitively understand the principle of "using an exaggerated result to evoke associations with the cause" in causal association; When explaining "symbiotic isomorphism", examples such as the "Three Rabbits Sharing One Ear" pattern from the Dunhuang, the traditional folk graphic "Harmony in Unity", and the "Three Abundance Patterns" can be cited. "Yi Tuan He Qi" fuses the images of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism into a single form sharing one head and one body, while "San Duo Wen" combines the three fruits symbolizing abundance, the Buddha's hand, peach, and pomegranate, into a single tree. Both examples demonstrate a creative mindset aligned with modern symbiotic isomorphism theory.

Through the analysis of these cases, students can gain a deeper understanding of the professional principles of graphic design, while also being guided to appreciate the artistic charm of traditional graphics. This fosters an appreciation and reverence for traditional culture, enabling them to grasp its profound depth and richness. This teaching approach helps enhance students' cultural confidence, encouraging them to actively explore, apply, and preserve traditional cultural elements in their future design practices. This approach achieves a synergistic effect between the acquisition of professional knowledge and the cultivation of cultural literacy.

Thirdly, in graphic design courses, the practical cases of outstanding designers serve as important role models to inspire students' motivation to learn. Therefore, it is advisable to incorporate more classic design cases from outstanding Chinese designers into the curriculum. Among these, the works of designer Huang Hai are particularly inspiring examples. As a representative of the deep integration of Chinese traditional cultural spirit and modern design language, Huang Hai's work adheres to the philosophy of "rooted in culture, winged by creativity", both deeply rooted in local culture, drawing inspiration from traditional aesthetics, and reinterpreting visual expression with an international perspective. His works feature a wealth of highly innovative graphic design techniques, providing students with tangible and learnable models. For example, the "If National Treasures Could Speak" series employs the "heterogeneous structuralism" technique to project the intact original form of damaged artifacts through mirrors, using the fantastical transformation of shadows to depict a dialogue across time. In the poster for the Wuzhen Theatre Festival, six lampshades emit beams of light that, through the "morphological structuralism" technique, transform into sprouting bamboo shoots, using minimalist graphics to symbolize the vitality of theater. Explaining these cases to students not only deepens their understanding of core concepts such as association and imaginative isomorphy but also allows them to deeply appreciate the design pathways of cultural inheritance and innovation. Taking outstanding designers as role models can guide students to cultivate cultural confidence in their studies, ignite their enthusiasm for exploring local culture, and help them grow into design talents who combine cultural depth with innovative spirit, thereby transforming the power of role models into their own creative motivation.

Fourth, the project training phase closely follows contemporary themes and value orientations, adopting a

model that combines real-world projects with competition-based challenges. This approach not only enhances students' practical innovation capabilities but also drives classroom reform and improves teachers' instructional competencies, fostering a virtuous cycle of "competition-driven teaching, competition-driven reform, mutual promotion between competition and teaching". This has consistently elevated both teaching quality and the quality of talent cultivation [7].

In the fall semester of 2023, the course incorporated a practical project organized by the school's publicity department titled "Designing Posters to Promote the Spirit of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China". The project centered on promoting the spirit of the 20th National Congress, with a series of posters created around themes such as Chinese-style modernization, ecological civilization, rural revitalization, and sustainable development. The aim was to deepen students' understanding of the spirit of the 20th National Congress, strengthen their sense of national pride and historical mission, and provide practical training in creative ability and visual expression techniques for thematic design. At the beginning of the project, the head of the school's publicity department was invited to interpret the core concepts of the 20th National Congress for Then, students were organized into groups to conduct research. Through the collection of the students. materials, each group deepened their understanding of the spirit of the 20th National Congress and formed personalized insights and experiences. With this foundation, the project moved into the flipped classroom phase. Students presented the results of their group research in class, covering their insights into the spirit of the 20th National Congress, the extraction of core keywords, the organization of key concepts, and the conception of visual symbols to express these contents. The classroom discussion atmosphere was very lively, with students showing high enthusiasm. This interactive learning approach subtly promoted the development of ideological and political education and achieved deep integration with the course content. Once students entered the design phase, teachers could provide targeted guidance on the visual symbols they had extracted, focusing on aspects such as graphic composition methods and visual expression techniques. This guided students to present graphics in more creative forms, helping them transform their understanding of the spirit of the 20th National Congress into expressive design works. The project received a positive response, with several student-created posters selected by the Propaganda Department and exhibited in the poster display area of the Liu Zhan'en Former Residence Red Culture Theme Museum on campus.

In terms of using competitions to enhance teaching and practice, the course aligns with national-level competitions such as the Milan Design Week and Future Designers, focusing on themes related to intangible cultural heritage. This guides students to conduct research, analysis, and creative design around intangible cultural heritage topics that interest them. For example, students designed the main visual graphics for the Jiangyong Women's Script Culture of Hunan Province using a graphic language based on the principle of "like shapes forming the same structure", combining Women's Script characters to form a lotus flower shape, interpreting the concept of "a pure heart, every step fragrant", arranging the characters into a flame shape to convey the independent spirit of women, "the fire in my heart will never fade". This not only demonstrates the modern rebirth of intangible cultural heritage but is also visually appealing. This "real-world projects integrated into course training and combined with competitions" model has effectively stimulated students' enthusiasm for learning ideological and political education, allowing it to naturally permeate the curriculum. Additionally, through practical application, it has significantly enhanced students' innovative design and practical application capabilities in graphic creativity, achieving synergistic development between ideological and political education and professional skill cultivation.

Finally, by integrating new technologies and cutting-edge concepts, ideological and political education can

be made more contemporary and practical. In specific teaching implementations, students can be guided to use various AI tools in stages. At the creative thinking stage, students can be encouraged to utilize tools like Kimi and Wenxin Yiyuan, which excel in text processing, to draw inspiration from the vast databases of artificial intelligence; simultaneously helping students organize scattered ideas into a creative framework aligned with the course's ideological and political education objectives. For example, in red culture-themed designs, a logical integration of "extraction of red culture symbols, interpretation of revolutionary spirit's core values, conversion into graphic visual language" can be established, making the creative expression of red culture more systematic and intellectually profound. Crucially, such tools can convert vague creative descriptions into precise keywords. For example, "graphic interpretation of the Yan'an Spirit" can be refined into "geometric abstraction of cave dwelling contours + simplified lines of spinning wheel elements + symbolic color combinations representing the spirit of hard work and struggle", laying a precise foundation for subsequent image generation.

After systematically learning methods for form imagination in graphic design, students utilize text-to-image tools such as Midjourney and JiMeng to generate conceptual sketches based on keywords. While these sketches may not directly align with design expectations, they serve as a vehicle for divergent thinking, providing students with diverse reference materials. Building on the sketches, teachers should emphasize students' active optimization of AI-generated content, making optimization a mandatory component of assignment assessments. Using professional design software such as Photoshop and Procreate, combined with the graphic design theories taught in class, students should engage in secondary creation of AI-generated materials, correcting deviations and incorporating personalized expressions, ultimately achieving the deepening of creativity and the precise transmission of graphic semantics. This approach fully leverages the technical advantages of AIGC in material supply and idea expansion while ensuring the central role of students' creative abilities and design thinking through theoretical guidance and manual creation.

6. Summary and reflection on educational reform

This study focuses on the ideological and political education reform of the "Graphic Creative Design" course. Through path exploration and practical verification, a set of ideological and political education systems suitable for the basic courses of visual communication design majors has been preliminarily established. As a core basic course, "Graphic Creative Design" combines practicality with cultural communication attributes. Its integration with ideological and political education is not only a requirement for implementing the task of "cultivating virtue and educating people", but also an important exploration in response to the era's demand for composite design talents.

From the perspective of educational reform outcomes, the practical value is primarily reflected in the following three aspects. First, by analyzing the existing issues in course-based ideological and political education, the reform objective of "knowledge transmission, skill development, value cultivation" has been clarified, providing a reference framework for ideological and political education in similar art design courses. Second, based on the course's characteristics of directness, practicality, and interdisciplinarity, three core ideological and political education elements, including Chinese excellent traditional culture, red culture, and professional ethics, have been identified as carriers. This has formed a reform pathway of "element extraction, content integration and its method innovation", addressing the challenge of integrating ideological and political education into the curriculum. Third, through practical explorations such as modular teaching, "case + project" driven learning, "competition-driven learning", and AI-driven content generation (AIGC) technology

empowerment, the feasibility of synergistic development between ideological and political education and professional teaching has been validated. The cultural confidence, patriotic sentiments, and professional spirit demonstrated in students' works in the course serve as affirmation of the effectiveness of this educational reform.

Due to limitations such as the research cycle and teaching conditions, this educational reform practice also has certain limitations. In terms of exploring ideological and political elements, although topics such as traditional culture and socialist values have been covered, the depth of integration is still insufficient. The application of AIGC technology in course teaching has been explored preliminarily, and in the future, more detailed teaching designs are needed to avoid technological dependence and strengthen students' original thinking. These shortcomings have clarified the direction for subsequent research.

In the next phase, we will continue to explore pathways for integrating course-based ideological and political education with professional teaching in curriculum development. On one hand, we will align with national strategies and industry trends to expand the contemporary significance of ideological and political elements, building a dynamic repository of ideological and political resources. Simultaneously, we will keep pace with the times, actively exploring the application boundaries of AI-generated content (AIGC) in the generation of graphic design themes with ideological and political themes. We aim to achieve synergistic education by continuously optimizing the content system and practical methods of graphic design courses with ideological and political education, thereby fostering both professional skill development and ideological and political literacy. This effort will contribute design expertise to cultural heritage innovation and societal development.

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