

The Construction of the Courses-based Ideological and Political Education for Postgraduate in Business Administration

-- Taking as an Example of AC University

Ying Zhang

School of Business and Management, Anhui Finance and Economics University, Bengbu, 233030, China

Abstract: The Ideological and political education (IPE) integrated into the curriculum serves as a vital approach for universities to fulfill the fundamental task of “fostering virtue through education”, making it indispensable for the training of graduate students in business administration. Based on interviews with faculty and students at University AC, this paper analyzes the current status of IPE construction in core business administration courses and identifies existing challenges regarding faculty competence, curriculum content, and pedagogical methods. In light of these findings, the paper proposes that graduate business education should: construct teaching content grounded in the Chinese context; implement pedagogical methods centered on critical inquiry; cultivate faculty with strong ideological and political literacy; and strengthen process management of IPE implementation. These measures are essential to truly realize the goal of “fostering virtue through education”.

Keywords: Graduate of Business Administration; Ideological and Political Education in Curriculum; Business Administration Professional Courses.

1. Introduction

Courses-based ideological and political education (IPE) serves as a crucial pathway and means for universities to foster virtue and cultivate talent. IPE education emphasizes the integration of value orientation into the transmission of professional knowledge and the cultivation of professional ethics, thereby strengthening students’ sense of national identity and social responsibility. Graduate education in business administration bears the important mission of cultivating high-level management talents and innovative business leaders for the country. Distinct from undergraduate education, graduate education is characterized by the cutting-edge nature of research subjects, the rigor of research methodologies, the diversity of student backgrounds, and the elite orientation of educational objectives (Long Haijun & Liu Geng, 2024). These distinctive features necessitate that the curriculum-based ideological and political education in graduate of Business Administration cannot simply replicate undergraduate models. Instead, it must be embedded within the deeper logic of academic innovation, professional ethics, critical thinking, and the construction of Chinese contexts. The essence of curriculum-based IPE lies in the organic integration of value shaping, knowledge imparting, and ability cultivation to achieve the fundamental task of fostering virtue and cultivating talent. However, in the current practice of graduate business administration education, the construction of curriculum-based IPE still faces many challenges that need to be addressed.

In recent years, academic research has continuously deepened theoretical and practical explorations of curriculum-based IPE. Existing studies, focusing on the extraction of ideological and political elements and implementation pathways in economics and management graduate programs, have proposed constructing systems of such elements from perspectives including traditional

Chinese culture, academic self-confidence, and academic ethics. However, specialized research on curriculum-based IPE specifically for graduate business administration remains limited. This study takes core graduate courses in business administration at AC University—such as Consumer Behavior, Strategic Management, and Brand Management—as its starting point. Based on interviews and surveys regarding curriculum-based IPE in the major courses of AC University’s Master of Business Administration program, this study identifies the main problems and key challenges in the current construction of such education and proposes corresponding measures, aiming to provide theoretical reference and practical insights for the development of curriculum-based IPE in business administration graduate programs.

2. Current State and Existing Foundations of Curriculum-Based IPE in Graduate of Business Administration at AC University

AC University is a regional university of finance and economics. Its graduate of business administration includes both academic-oriented and professional-oriented master’s degrees. The professional master’s program began enrolling students in 2010, while the academic master’s program has over 30 years of history in talent cultivation, with the development of core graduate courses being relatively mature. However, the construction of curriculum-based IPE for graduate programs only began in recent years. To understand the current state and existing foundations of curriculum-based IPE in the core graduate courses of business administration graduate programs at AC University, this study conducted interviews in September 2025 with one faculty member responsible for the teaching administration of graduate business administration and three faculty members teaching

professional courses. The interviews primarily addressed the implementation of measures adopted by the university and faculty in constructing curriculum-based IPE for graduate business administration, as well as the challenges encountered. The interview results indicate that, in recent years, the university has placed great emphasis on fostering virtue through education. The graduate teaching administration department has identified curriculum-based IPE as a key component of graduate course development and has strengthened faculty training in this area. Instructors teaching business administration graduate courses have begun to adopt the concept of curriculum-based IPE, have started to prioritize the development of such education in the core graduate courses of the discipline, and have begun collecting and organizing course cases that embed ideological and political elements. They have also started to emphasize and partially integrate these elements into their teaching. For example, in the Consumer Behavior course, when analyzing quality cues in consumer perception, instructors have used literature on national brands and time-honored traditional brand quality cues, achieving positive results. In addition, the teaching of business administration graduate courses employs a course-team approach to strengthen curriculum-based ideological and political education. Course teams require instructors to emphasize ideological and political content in syllabus design, enhance the development of course teaching teams, and conduct peer observations to continuously improve teaching quality. Leveraging the university's relevant research centers, the teaching of business administration professional courses is integrated with scientific research, incorporating cutting-edge disciplinary knowledge into instruction and involving graduate students in course-related experiments and practical activities. These constitute the existing foundations for curriculum-based IPE in business administration graduate programs at AC University. However, ideological and political practices in undergraduate professional courses are relatively extensive, while curriculum-based IPE in graduate courses remains limited. The degree of implementation of such education in core business administration graduate courses varies, and systematic research on curriculum-based IPE tailored to the characteristics of graduate programs is scarce. The ideological and political educational functions of professional courses have yet to be fully realized.

3. Main Issues in IPE in Graduate of Business Administration at AC University

From September to October 2025, this study conducted a separate round of interview surveys with 39 business administration graduate students and three faculty members, focusing on the current state of curriculum-based ideological and political education for graduate students, as well as the key challenges. Based on a synthesis of the interview results, the following issues were identified.

3.1. The disconnect between the transplantation of management theories and local contexts makes it difficult for graduate students to deeply understand the business logic behind China's path to modernization from theoretical perspective

The primary, deep-seated contradiction currently facing the IPE integration in graduate programs in business administration lies in the over-reliance of the discipline's core theoretical framework on classical theoretical models that have been developed over long periods of academic accumulation but are deeply rooted in the Western market economy context. From Porter's Five Forces model in strategic management to the brand equity theory in brand management, from Maslow's hierarchy of needs in consumer behavior to Timmons' model and the lean startup methodology in innovation and entrepreneurship—these theories carry underlying individualistic and utilitarian values that starkly contrast with the collectivist ethos and the pursuit of common prosperity advocated by the core socialist values. As a result, teachers must embed IPE elements into their theoretical analyses, encouraging graduate students to reflect on China's localized management theories and their profound implications—for instance, analyzing “cultural confidence behind ‘national tide’ consumption” or “the social value orientation of Chinese-style innovation and entrepreneurship.” By doing so, they aim to theoretically elucidate the commercial logic underpinning “Chinese-style modernization.” Taking the course “Brand Management” as an example, while teaching often highlights the Western luxury brands' theories of “scarcity” and “self-actualization,” it fails to delve deeply into the unique growth paths of Chinese brands. When discussing indigenous brands such as Huawei, BYD, and Li-Ning, instructors tend to focus solely on technical analyses of positioning strategies and marketing techniques, neglecting the profound impact of the brands' core values, such as “self-reliance and strength in science and technology,” “patriotic sentiment,” and “cultural confidence”—on consumers' minds. Similarly, the “integrity-based ethos” of China's time-honored brands, the cultural identity embodied by “national tide” brands, and the emotional connections forged by new domestic products have yet to be distilled into theoretical modules parallel to Western brand equity theories. Consequently, during their professional training, graduate students gradually develop a blind admiration for Western theories and a dismissive attitude toward China's own local practices. Moreover, consumer behavior textbooks predominantly feature Western consumer motivation models and decision-making theories; yet when addressing phenomena such as the rise of “national tide” consumption, and the upgrading of consumption in county-level regions, if teachers merely apply Western theories of “conspicuous consumption” or “identity formation” superficially, students will find it difficult to grasp the social structures and ideological shifts reflected in these consumption behaviors. However, if teachers approach these phenomena from the perspectives of “cultural confidence,” “patriotic sentiment,” and “common prosperity,” students will more easily develop a deep understanding of the indigenous cultural values, institutional advantages, and historical context shaping the behavior of China's younger generation

of consumers.

3.2. The lagging behind in teaching content and methods causes IPE to fail to keep pace with the pulse of the times and real-life contexts.

The construction of IPE in graduate of business administration still faces challenges such as delayed updates to teaching content and insufficient innovation in teaching methods. With the rapid development of the economy and society and the deepening digital transformation, new theories, technologies, and practices are constantly emerging in the field of business administration. However, the teaching content of some core business administration courses has failed to promptly incorporate emerging topics such as big data, artificial intelligence, ESG evaluation, new-quality productivity, green innovation, and social entrepreneurship. Moreover, current social hotspots—such as “false advertising in live streaming sales”, “corporate transformation under the dual-carbon goals”, “brand empowerment in rural revitalization”, and “innovation and entrepreneurship in the context of common prosperity”—have not been effectively translated into vivid ideological and political teaching materials. In terms of teaching methods, some classrooms still rely on the traditional lecture model centered on teachers’ one-way knowledge transmission. Even when case-based teaching methods are introduced, they often remain at the stage of analyzing established cases, with little use of participatory teaching approaches such as action learning, service learning, field investigations, or entrepreneurial practice to enable graduate students to truly immerse themselves in the frontline of state-owned enterprise reform, the innovative frontlines of the private economy, grassroots practices in rural revitalization, or the real-world settings of start-up enterprises. As a result, the IPE lacks the necessary practical foundation and emotional resonance. The case databases for brand management and strategic management courses are updated relatively slowly, failing to promptly transform timely hot topics—such as “the interplay between false advertising and regulation in live streaming sales”, “the projection of patriotic sentiments behind Hongxing Erke’s wild consumption”, “the crisis of trust in domestic brands and brand restoration in the Hua Xizi incident”—into teaching materials. Furthermore, students lack hands-on opportunities to manage a real brand firsthand—especially small and medium-sized local enterprises, time-honored brands, or brands involved in rural revitalization—thus making it difficult for them to connect brand theory with practical problem-solving and to experience firsthand the positive impact of brand building on social development.

3.3. The imbalance between value guidance and academic critique leads to lack of critical thinking in graduate courses.

Graduate education emphasizes “academic freedom” and “critical thinking,” which should naturally provide fertile ground for integrating ideological and political education into the curriculum. However, some teachers hold misconceptions about this relationship. To avoid touching on sensitive issues related to business ethics, they tend to sidestep controversial topics in their teaching and instead select only “safe” cases—such as those involving “big data price discrimination,” “algorithmic bias and information cocoons,” and “inducing

excessive consumption and debt traps.” Teachers worry that these topics might spark controversy, so they focus solely on the technical advantages of data mining and its marketing conversion effects, while deliberately avoiding discussions of the conflict between consumer rights protection and business ethics. As a result, students learn only how to use algorithms to “stimulate” consumption and boost conversion rates, yet they lack the ethical awareness and bottom-line thinking necessary to ensure that technology is used for the greater good. When analyzing opportunities for entrepreneurship, teachers often emphasize “how to exploit information asymmetry to reap excess profits,” “how to circumvent regulations through innovative business models,” and “how to achieve rapid cash-outs through capital operations,” but seldom guide students to reflect on the social value of entrepreneurship: Does the venture actually address real social problems? Does it promote employment and improve people’s livelihoods? Does it serve national strategic needs? Consequently, graduate courses lack sufficient “speculative depth”.

3.4. The ideological and political competence of the teaching staff varies considerably

The faculty members tasked with promoting IPE in curricula themselves face challenges stemming from differences in their underlying philosophies and competencies, which in turn affect the implementation and effectiveness of such education. Teachers hold varying interpretations of the essence of ideological and political education in courses, and there is also inconsistency in their understanding of the ideological elements embedded in core business administration courses. Moreover, the faculty in business administration often includes a high proportion of overseas-educated doctoral graduates; additionally, practitioners from the corporate sector are frequently appointed as practical mentors. Although these two groups of faculty members each bring unique strengths, they often lack systematic training in ideological and political theory. Some teachers have a deep understanding of Western strategic theories but may be less familiar with China’s industrial policies, state-owned enterprise reforms, and rural development initiatives. There is still a need for further strengthening in guiding students to understand how corporate strategies can synergize with national strategies, as their understanding of revitalization strategies and the dual-carbon goals remains insufficient. During lectures, corporate mentors sometimes emphasize so-called “business acumen” that focuses on “leveraging information asymmetry to gain an advantage,” while neglecting the importance of fostering “close yet clean government-business relationships”.

4. Measures for IPE in Graduate of Business Administration

4.1. Innovate Teaching Content—Integrate Ideological and Political Elements with Management Theory

The highest level of IPE integrated into curricula lies in transforming ideological and political elements into intrinsic variables within the disciplines themselves. This requires both deeply exploring the ideological and political educational elements embedded in each specialized course and establishing a shared, iteratively updated “map of ideological

and political elements,” as well as vigorously developing a localized case study database that reflects innovative practices in Chinese enterprise management in the new era (Long Haijun & Liu Geng, 2024). Vivid materials—such as Huawei’s arduous journey of pursuing independent innovation and overcoming “bottleneck” challenges amid technological blockades; the institutional innovations of state-owned enterprises, which seamlessly integrate economic, political, and social responsibilities in the process of Chinese-style modernization; the business models of private enterprises that combine commercial success with social good while participating in poverty alleviation and rural revitalization; and the inspiring stories of Chinese entrepreneurs who realize their personal value by serving national strategies—should be transformed into teaching content that combines theoretical depth with emotional resonance (Zhou Xianglin et al., 2024). For instance, we could introduce a special topic titled “Synergy between Corporate Strategy and National Strategy,” featuring core teaching modules such as “Corporate Innovation under the New National System,” “The Functional Positioning of State-Owned Enterprises in Chinese-style Modernization,” and “Industrial Chain Security and the Strategy for Self-Reliance and Controllability.” We could systematically develop localized, in-depth cases—including “Huawei’s Strategic Resilience in Responding to Sanctions,” “CATL’s Strategic Layout Under the Dual-Carbon Goals,” “COMAC’s Strategic Choices in Achieving Industrial Chain Self-Reliance and Controllability,” and “Innovative Practices in Integrating Party Building with Corporate Governance in State-Owned Enterprises”—to guide students in comprehending the profound implications of “the alignment between corporate destiny and national development”. By contrasting the Western “shareholder supremacy” model with China’s distinctive co-governance approach in strategic decision-making, we can help students establish a strategic analytical framework grounded in China’s national conditions and oriented toward the overall national interest. Throughout the entire process of strategic thinking training, ideological and political elements such as patriotism, a sense of the bigger picture, and a commitment to responsibility should be naturally integrated. In this way, we can gradually shift away from the long-standing knowledge production paradigm dominated by Western theories and lacking in Chinese practical insights, enabling graduate students, as they undergo professional training, to spontaneously develop a deep sense of identification with China path, Chinese theory, and Chinese culture.

4.2. Reform teaching methods and approaches

Given the characteristics of graduate students—high cognitive levels, rich practical experience, and relatively fixed value systems—the innovation of teaching methods should focus on breaking down both the physical and cognitive boundaries of traditional classrooms. It is essential to actively introduce and locally adapt advanced participatory teaching approaches such as ethical decision-making training, critical case discussions, action learning, service-learning, entrepreneurial practice, and academic ethics workshops (Shao Yunfei et al., 2022). By creating thought-provoking issues that involve value conflicts and tensions, we can guide students to clarify their value hierarchies and refine their ethical judgment skills through the clash of ideas. Furthermore, by organizing students to immerse themselves

in real-world business contexts and social problem sites, enabling them to apply their professional knowledge for analysis, diagnosis, and solution proposal, we can help them deepen their understanding and identification with the superiority of China’s socialist market economy system in practice, thus achieving an implicit integration of IPE akin to salt dissolving in water. For instance, in core courses of business administration, we could systematically introduce ethical decision-making training formats such as “algorithmic ethics” debate classes. In specific scenarios, students might be asked to make decisions within a simulated board of directors or ethics committee: A certain e-commerce platform uses user data profiling for targeted advertising, which can significantly enhance marketing efficiency and profits; however, this practice may also infringe upon personal privacy, create information cocoons, and encourage irrational consumption. By engaging students in such simulated decision-making processes, we not only foster their ability to weigh competing values but also equip them with the skills necessary to navigate complex ethical dilemmas in today’s rapidly evolving business environment. Through debates, we establish the bottom line of “technology for good” in the face of intellectual clashes and gain a deeper understanding of how the development philosophy of “people-centeredness” is concretely reflected in business practice. At the same time, we organize students to conduct field studies on consumer behavior in rural markets, urban communities, and elderly care institutions. Through in-depth interviews and participatory observation, students will gain insight into the real consumption needs and pain points of different groups. In the process of serving grassroots communities, students will experience the rich implications of “the people’s aspiration for a better life” in the realm of consumption, thereby enhancing their sense of responsibility to serve the people and society.

4.3. Strengthen the development of the faculty for courses-based IPE

It needs to build a graduate teaching team for Business Administration that integrates “specialization + IPE”, enhancing teachers’ ability to foster students’ moral and ideological development through interdisciplinary collaboration and immersive practical experiences. The construction of our faculty requires the design and implementation of a systematic “dual-enhancement” training program. Through comprehensive measures—including interdisciplinary collaborative lesson preparation, field studies on China’s national conditions, two-way exchanges between universities and enterprises, and institutional incentives and safeguards—we aim to develop a faculty that not only masters specialized knowledge in business administration but is also well-versed in ideological and political theories; that possesses an international perspective while deeply understanding China’s national context; and that can both impart professional skills and guide value formation. For example, we will establish a “university-enterprise dual-teacher” co-teaching mechanism, inviting outstanding private entrepreneurs, leaders in rural revitalization, and social entrepreneurs to join classes in “Strategic Management,” “Brand Management,” and “Innovation and Entrepreneurship Theory.” These guests will not only share technical and managerial insights but also discuss topics such as “how to seize development opportunities by aligning with national strategies,” and “how to uphold ethical principles throughout

the entrepreneurial journey.” By drawing on their vivid life experiences and practical wisdom, we will strengthen the persuasiveness and appeal of IPE. We will also organize and implement a study-and-training program for overseas-returnee faculty members, sending young teachers with overseas backgrounds to red revolutionary base areas, high-tech development zones, frontlines of state-owned enterprise reform, model sites for rural revitalization, and innovation and entrepreneurship incubation bases for on-site research. This will enable them to gain a deeper understanding of the unique logic of the Chinese market, the innovative practices of Chinese enterprises, and the inspiring stories of Chinese entrepreneurs, thereby addressing their knowledge gaps regarding local management practices in China and enhancing their ability to tell China’s story and articulate China’s path effectively.

4.4. Emphasize process management in IPE within the curriculum

To strengthen the process management of IPE integrated into curricula and enhance students’ awareness of its importance, we could consider revising the grading criteria for classroom discussions by incorporating as one of the assessment criteria such factors as “whether students can think about issues from the broader perspective of national development,” “whether they demonstrate an altruistic and cooperative spirit”, “whether they can rationally analyze the social and ethical implications behind commercial phenomena”, and “whether they pay attention to the social value of entrepreneurial ventures”. For instance, in the classroom discussion of “Consumer Behavior”, we could assess whether students display empathy and whether they can approach issues from the standpoint of consumer rights protection; in case analysis for “Strategic Management”, we could evaluate whether students exhibit a sense of overall situation and social responsibility; in project planning for “Brand Management”, we could examine whether students take into account the social value and cultural heritage of brands; and in entrepreneurial proposal design for “Innovation and Entrepreneurship Theory”, we could assess whether students focus on the social benefits of their entrepreneurial projects. In addition, teachers could establish “Curriculum-based IPE Portfolio” systems to systematically document students’ value-oriented performance in case analyses, group discussions, social practice activities, corporate research, and entrepreneurial experiences, thereby enabling dynamic tracking of students’ development in ideological and political qualities.

5. Conclusion

The underlying logic of IPE in graduate business administration curricula lies in transcending "instrumental rationality" and returning to "value rationality." It promotes an ontological shift in business education—moving away from the narrow perspective of overemphasizing professional

skills towards the organic unity of value shaping and knowledge transmission. In addressing the challenges of IPE construction in graduate business programs, core courses such as Strategic Management, Brand Management, Consumer Behavior, and Innovation and Entrepreneurship Theory must undergo a fundamental transformation. This goes beyond the superficial “addition of IPE elements”; rather, it requires a paradigm shift from the transplantation of management theories to indigenous construction, from value-neutrality to value leadership, and from indoctrination to critical inquiry. By developing teaching content grounded in the Chinese context, implementing pedagogical methods focused on critical inquiry, cultivating faculty with strong ideological and political literacy, and strengthening process management, graduate business administration programs can truly fulfill the fundamental task of “fostering virtue through education”. Ultimately, this aims to cultivate a new generation of talent that possesses international competitiveness, a deep understanding of China’s national conditions, and the capacity to shoulder the responsibility of national rejuvenation.

Acknowledgements

Project supported by Anhui Province Postgraduate Quality Improvement Project -Analysis of the Development and Implementation of Ideological and Political Education in the Graduate Course “Consumer Behavior” and Its Effectiveness (Grant No. 2023jy jxggjY134).

References

- [1] Long Haijun, Liu Geng. Course-based Ideological and Political Education for Postgraduate in Economics and Management Specialities: Elements and Practical Paths[J]. *Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation*, 2024(3): 128-131.
- [2] SHAO Yun-fei, LIU Lu-yao. Theoretical and Practical Exploration of Ideological and Political Education in Curriculum from the Perspective of Classroom Teaching[J]. *Journal of UESTC (Social Sciences Edition)*, 2022, 24(3): 99-105.
- [3] Zhou Xianglin, Zhang Mengyao. Materials, Elements, and Integration: How to develop Ideological and Political Education in Business and Management Courses? [J]. *Journal of Education*, Renmin University of China, 2024(1): 44-59.
- [4] Li Kankang, Tang Ying. Exploring Effective Approaches to Integrating Ideological and Political Education into Curricula at Agricultural and Forestry Universities Based on the O-LIS-E Framework [J]. *University*, 2025, 18(1): 101-104.
- [5] Sun Juan, Shou Hanxue. The Reform of Ideological and Political Education in Business Administration Curricula in Higher Education Institutions Based on the Development of First-Class Majors [J]. *University*, 2025, (24): 113-116.
- [6] Zhang Fan. Research Hot spots and Development Trends in the Evaluation of the Effectiveness of IPE in the New Era Curriculum: A Knowledge Map Analysis Based on CiteSpace Software[J]. *Xuehai*, 2023, (06): 83-91.