

# *The Role of Teachers in the Construction of “Curriculum Ideological and Political Education” for Foreign Language Programs*

Lian Zhang<sup>1</sup>, Shuying Chen<sup>2</sup>, Qian Zhao<sup>3,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Discipline Examination and Supervision Department, Zhejiang University of Finance and Economics, Hangzhou, China*

<sup>2</sup>*School of Foreign Languages, Zhejiang University of Finance and Economics, Hangzhou, China*

<sup>3</sup>*School of International Education & Studies, Zhejiang University of Finance and Economics, Hangzhou, China*

*\*corresponding author*

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**Abstract:** “Curriculum ideological and political education” is trending in the current educational reform of colleges and universities, which is especially urgent for foreign language programs due to their disciplinary particularities. The core of the construction of ideological and political education lies in professional teachers. Therefore, the primary concern that should be solved is how to promote the reconstruction of teachers' role. There are three demands for the reconstruction of teachers' role in curriculum ideological and political education for foreign language programs: innovation of educational philosophy in the new era, implementation of Marxist theory of comprehensive development, and upgrading of foreign language talents cultivation standards, and accordingly three directions of reconstruction are derived: teachers as promoters of the Party and nation's line and principles, learners of Marxist theory, and researchers of traditional Chinese culture. To implement the role reconstruction, it is necessary to start from three perspectives: identifying the role, cultivating role awareness, and satisfying role expectations.

## 1. Introduction

In December 2016, General Secretary delivered an important speech at the National Conference on Ideological and Political Work in Higher Education, calling for “running ideological and political work through the whole process of education and teaching”, which is the prelude to the reform of curriculum ideological and political education in colleges and universities nationwide. As far as foreign language programs are concerned, the need to strengthen and promote ideological and political education is more urgent. It is fundamental to address the question of “what kind of people our programs are to cultivate, how to cultivate and for whom to cultivate.” This is mainly because since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, China has been approaching the center of the world stage. With the increasing exchanges and cooperation at all levels between

China and foreign countries, the demand for foreign language graduates in society has also been increasing. In the education system of colleges and universities, foreign language programs are at the forefront of the collision and integration of Chinese and foreign ideas. Apart from professional knowledge, students need to have a deeper understanding of foreign ideas and cultures, and an international vision, thus embracing diversified ideas and concepts. Problems such as deficiency of cultural beliefs, blind worship of western culture may occur if there is a lack of timely and proper guidance. In the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics and the critical period of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, the construction of curriculum ideological and political education among foreign language programs in higher education will witness tougher problems and tasks.

Compared with the traditional independent and modularized development form of ideological and political education in colleges and universities, the concept of curriculum ideological and political education emphasizes the comprehensive connection between ideological and political education and professional learning, and the integration of Marxist ideological and political theories with professional course teaching, so that it can go in the same direction with the ideological and political theory courses, thus building a whole-person, whole-process, and all-round education, and realizing the fundamental task of “moral education”<sup>[1]</sup>. In other words, ideological and political education in higher education will no longer be a single battle for teachers of ideological and political theories, but a united front that requires the collaboration of all teachers. Teachers of professional courses, as designers and practitioners of the main teaching activities in colleges and universities, are surely the main force to implement the construction of curriculum ideological and political education. Therefore, the core of the construction of curriculum ideology for foreign language programs is professional teachers of foreign languages, so as to educate students with socialist ideas with Chinese characteristics in the new era, and subtly cultivate foreign language professionals who are to meet the needs of the times. This not only requires teachers to have profound professional and political literacy, and the ability of discovering the potential combination of ideological and political content and professional teaching, achieve a harmonious resonance between the two, but more importantly, to encourage teachers to re-examine their roles, transiting from being a flat “knowledge imparter” in the past to being a multifaceted teacher and educator.

## **2. The Reconstruction Motivations of Teachers’ Role in Curriculum Ideological and Political Education for Foreign Language Programs**

Although the role of teachers is a modern educational concept, that is, “the sum of the behavioral norms and patterns that teachers exhibit in order to realize the rights and obligations corresponding to their identity and status, in harmony with social expectations”<sup>[2]</sup>, it can be dated back to the Tang Dynasty (618-907) in ancient China when it comes to human’s consideration of the teachers’ role. For example, Han Yu (768-824), the Chinese literary scholar, stated clearly in his *Teacher’s Discourse* (802) that “a teacher is the one who teaches, and resolves doubts.” The ancient Greek philosopher Socrates (469BC-399BC) also used the word “midwife” to illustrate teachers’ guiding and assisting role in the teaching process. Due to the co-variant relationship between the role of teachers and social expectations, with the continuous development of human society, the role of teachers has also been repeatedly reconstructed in accordance with the needs of the economy, culture and education in different periods of time.

For the current reform of curriculum ideological and political education, the essence is “to integrate ideological and political education in colleges and universities into the all links and aspects of curriculum teaching reform, to achieve the moral education of people subconsciously, and focus on the combination of knowledge transfer and value guidance, thus strengthening explicit

ideological and political education, while refining implicit ideological and political education”<sup>[3]</sup>. It is not only a new goal and task proposed by the Party and the state for ideological and political education in colleges and universities in the new era, but also a new standard and direction for re-positioning the role of teachers in the context of building an “overall ideological and political pattern”, especially the role of professional teachers. Based on foreign language programs, the construction of curriculum ideological and political education guides professional teachers to ponder and reconstruct their own roles, reflecting the appeal in the innovation of educational philosophy in the new era, the implementation of Marxist theory of comprehensive development, and the upgrading of foreign language talent cultivation standards.

## 2.1 Innovation of Educational Philosophy in the New Era

General Secretary emphasized that education is “the great plan of the country” and “the great plan of the Party”, and clearly proposed in the report of the 19th National Congress that “building a strong education country is the fundamental project for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation”. To realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, we should rely on the Chinese spirit and strength. The former includes the national spirit with patriotism as the core, and the spirit of the times with reform and innovation as the core, while the latter refers to the unity of Chinese people of all nationalities. The two outline the basic educational philosophy of the new era from the three dimensions: patriotism, reform and innovation, and national unity.

First of all, in terms of patriotism, the Chinese national spirit is dynamic and inclusive. While constantly advancing with the times, it also extensively absorbs outstanding foreign cultural achievements. On the one hand, it enhances its height and on the other hand enriches its connotation, but no matter how it develops, the core of its patriotism has never changed, and as the ultimate sense of belonging and honor of the Chinese nation, it has been passed on from generation to generation by every Chinese. Therefore, in order to awaken the young generation to realize the ideals of the Chinese Dream, higher education in the new era must put the inculcation of patriotic thoughts and patriotic feelings in the first place.

Secondly, in the dimension of reform and innovation, the new era is an era of full recovery of Chinese discourse. Facing the long-standing Western suppression in the international context, it is destined to be an extremely difficult road. To let the world hear the voice of China, we need first come up with Chinese solutions and Chinese wisdom that can lead the world in different fields, and transform from “Made in China” to independent “Created in China”. Therefore, the implementation of the spirit of reform and innovation in higher education is not only to meet the needs of technology, but at a deeper level, cultural self-confidence of college students in the process of Chinese and foreign discourse game.

Thirdly, at the level of national unity, the Chinese Dream embodies the yearning of the Chinese people nationwide for a better life. Ultimately, it is the dream of the people. The people of all ethnic groups are not only the people who enjoy the fruits of rejuvenation, but also the chasers of a shared dream to the road of rejuvenation. The realization of the Chinese dream needs to unite all the forces to the greatest extent, so that everyone can become a part to promote social development, especially college students with rich knowledge. Therefore, enhancing national cohesion and inspiring contemporary college students’ sense of responsibility for national rejuvenation will be an indispensable part of higher education in the new era. These educational philosophies reflect the society’s expectations of “who to cultivate” in higher education. In the context of curriculum ideological and political education reform, every college teacher needs to take the responsibility of ideological and political education, and the prerequisite for the implementation of the above-mentioned educational philosophies is that teachers of professional courses can reconstruct

their roles in time so that they can keep pace with the social expectations of the new era.

## 2.2 Implementation of Marxist Theory of Comprehensive Development

The Communist Party of China has always been a loyal believer and firm practitioner of Marxism. Fundamentally speaking, Marxism originated from the scientific understanding of human beings, and how to achieve the comprehensive human development has always been its core idea and theoretical destination. This is mainly because the all-round development of people covers the three aspects of labor ability, social relations and personality, and is the fundamental driving force and source of all other developments<sup>[4]</sup>. Only by achieving comprehensive development can people develop all their abilities and give full play to their abilities and strengths.

At present, China's socialism with its unique characteristics has entered a new era, and the combination of Marxist theory and China's reality has also shown a new trend in all aspects. Specific to the field of higher education, General Secretary clearly pointed out at the National Education Conference that we must comprehensively strengthen and improve aesthetic education, insist on educating people with aesthetics and liberal arts in higher education. To improve students' aesthetic and humanistic literacy, we must cultivate socialist builders and successors with all-round development of morality, intellect, physique, aesthetics and labor. However, the overall development of students has shown varying degrees of deficiencies at all levels of our country's higher education. Taking "Aesthetic Education" as an example, in September 2015, the General Office of the State Council issued "Opinions on overall Strengthening and Improving Aesthetic Education in Schools", pointing out that aesthetic education is a weak link in education, and local authorities and schools do not have a good understanding of the function of aesthetic education.

In today's society, the frequent disharmonious phenomena of college students' worshipping everything foreign and being a NEET, are on the surface of distorted personal value and moral decline, but they also reflect on colleges and universities' ineffectiveness in "moral education". It is urgent for the higher education system to reflect on and adjust the existing educational practice. To cultivate new talents that meet the needs of the new era, it is necessary to construct a five-in-one talents cultivation mode of all-round development. Among them, "moral education" is not only literally in the first place, but also should be the top priority in the overall development of education in practice.

Back to education itself, the implementation of all-round development theory and the formation of an all-round development education pattern need a team of teachers who are excellent in all aspects and can meet the needs of all-round development teaching. Therefore, while improving the training system for new teachers, colleges and universities should pay more attention to the role adjustment of veteran teachers in order to drive the role transformation of the whole team.

## 2.3 Upgrading of Foreign Language Talents Cultivation Standards

In January 2008, the Ministry of Education promulgated the *National Standards for Teaching Quality in Foreign Languages and Literature*, which specifies the training specifications for foreign language talents in three aspects: quality, knowledge and ability. Among them, at the level of quality requirements, foreign language students should have a correct world view, outlook on life and values, good moral character, Chinese sentiment and international vision, social responsibility, humanistic and scientific literacy, cooperative spirit, innovative spirit and basic discipline literacy. It is not difficult to see that the "new national standards" not only puts the quality requirements before the knowledge and ability requirements, but also equates the ideological and political literacy such as moral quality, national sentiment with the basic discipline literacy within the quality requirements, which requires professional teachers to be able to properly take into account the

proportion between the content of ideological and political science and subject knowledge in the teaching process.

The widespread of “research work first and teaching second” in foreign language programs is like putting the cart before the horse. The teacher-student relationship relies heavily on classroom teaching alone, so that professional teachers cannot give full play to their role as teachers and role models. In the teaching process, as the enrollment of undergraduate and postgraduate students continues to expand, the variety of courses and the large amount of class hours also make professional teachers confine themselves to imparting subject knowledge and have no time for other content, resulting in quality requirements reduced to formality or even a slogan. Thus, in order to fully achieve the “new national standards” of education, on the one hand, it is necessary to strengthen teachers’ awareness of their own duties, attach importance to the most basic teaching work, feed teaching with research work, improve teaching quality, and at the same time instill humanistic care, synchronize the role of teacher and models, and teaching and education as well, to increase the communication and interaction between teachers and students in various aspects such as emotions and values. On the other hand, it’s also necessary to urge teachers to reflect on their own roles and strike a dynamic balance in their diverse roles, breaking away from the traditional “teacher” persona and deepening their understanding of the “new national standards” talents cultivation standard.

### **3. The Reconstruction of Teachers’ Role in Curriculum Ideological and Political Education for Foreign Language Programs**

From the previous analysis, it can be seen that the reconstruction of the role of foreign language teachers in the construction of curriculum ideological and political education not only reflects the universal law of education in the new era, but also special demands within the discipline. Following the above-mentioned three motivations for role reconstruction, three corresponding reconstruction directions are thereby put forward for the role of foreign language professional teachers, namely, promoters of the Party and the nation’s line and principles, learners of Marxist theory, and researchers of traditional Chinese culture.

#### **3.1 Promoters of the Party and Nation’s Line and Principles**

As is known, the existence and development of any regime or country cannot be separated from the guidance and support of a specific ideology. In today’s world, with the increasingly fierce competition in comprehensive national power among countries, Western developed capitalist countries are constantly “using economic hegemony, their political hegemony in the United Nations and international organizations to export Western values into other countries under the guise of cultural exchange, while exporting cultural products, so that people unconsciously recognize and accept capitalist ideology through the delicious taste of McDonald’s, the visual feast of American blockbusters, the madness and illusion of rock and roll”<sup>[5]</sup>. As an important place for ideological and cultural exchanges, Chinese colleges and universities have long become the main battlefield for fierce confrontations between ideologies. Foreign language programs are at the forefront of this ideological battle due to their disciplinary characteristics.

Students of foreign languages will be responsible for exporting and importing information of economy, culture, science and technology in the future. Therefore, spreading and defending the socialist ideology guided by Marxism in China, and enhancing their understanding of socialism with Chinese characteristics among students of foreign languages are not only related to the comprehensive achievement of the educational goals of colleges and universities, but to a certain extent also affect the sustainability of the society and the long-term stability of the country. To win



this battle without gunpowder in the foreign language programs, we cannot rely solely on teachers of ideological and political theory and ideological and political education, professional teachers also need to take up the responsibility of propagating the Party and nation's line and principles in the construction of curriculum ideological and political education, acting as potential promoters, and implicitly carrying out the promotion and education of socialist core value system to college students. In addition to professional knowledge, they should arm the students' minds with the socialist core value system to make them loyal defenders to the Party and the nation's line and principles.

### 3.2 Learners of Marxist Theory

Semantically, teachers and students are a symbiotic pair of mutually predicated concepts, and teachers are also students in a sense. To be a successful educator, one needs to first become a learner who excels in constant self-renewal and self-enrichment. "Anyone who cannot develop, nurture and educate oneself likewise cannot develop and educate others<sup>[6]</sup>".

In the context of the construction of curriculum ideological and political education, for foreign language programs, teachers of professional courses need not only continuously acquire the most cutting-edge professional knowledge and teaching achievements, but also play the role of good learners of Marxist theory. This is mainly because Marxist theory has always been the orientation of ideological and political education<sup>[7]</sup>. And ideological and political education itself, like other professional education, has professional and academic attributes, and is a systematic discipline. Therefore, compared with teachers of ideological and political theory courses, teachers of foreign languages lack of professional knowledge. In order to improve the construction of curriculum ideological and political education in the professional field and carry out ideological and political education, they must first learn Marxist theory systematically.

Just like the great leader Chairman Mao Zedong said, "To be a good teacher, one must first be a good student<sup>[8]</sup>". Only by studying Marxist theory, understanding Marxist theory, and believing in Marxist theory can foreign language teachers find the right combination of ideology and politics in their professional teaching, and only then can the reform of curriculum ideological and political education be implemented. It is important to note that Marxist theory is a developing theory, and advancing with the times is the source of its vitality. In reality, every important meeting and policy of the Party and the state indicates that the Party Central Committee has taken a new step in its knowledge of Marxist theory. Thus, teachers of foreign languages shall never stop learning Marxist theory, not only to improve their ideological and political literacy, but also to project this spirit of exploration and innovation into the teaching process of the curriculum ideology through their own learning.

### 3.3 Researchers of Chinese Traditional Culture

General Secretary pointed out in the report of the 19th CPC National Congress: "Without a high degree of cultural self-confidence and without the prosperity of culture, there will be no great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation." As the trend of globalization continues to advance, cultural exports from various countries have become more frequent. As people receive various foreign cultures, the inequality between cultures in the process of export has become increasingly obvious. Among them, European and American cultures have swept the world with overwhelming advantages by virtue of their diverse carriers and strong comprehensive national power, becoming the mainstream foreign culture and flooding into China from various levels. Many college students even blindly believe that Western capitalist culture is the world's advanced culture, while the corresponding Chinese traditional culture is synonymous with backwardness. They have not yet

established cultural self-confidence, but have already developed a strong cultural inferiority complex.

Compared with other programs, students of foreign languages are more likely to be affected by world values, ideologies, cultural trends of foreign cultures. Without firm confidence in Chinese culture, they are more likely to deviate from the original track without realizing it. Therefore, in the process of constructing curriculum ideological and political education, foreign language teachers also need to act as researchers of traditional Chinese culture. Unlike learners, the researcher role requires teachers not only to master the basic theory, but also to be able to provide theoretical explanations of actual phenomenon. This is due to the constant and enormous input of foreign culture and the long-term immersion of the young generation in it, coupled with the particularity of the subject content. It is impossible for foreign language teachers to make direct conclusive indoctrination at the level of traditional Chinese culture. The empty and didactic, promotion of traditional Chinese culture not only lacks attractiveness and appeal, but can even lead to students' resistance, which is counterproductive in the end. Only when foreign language teachers use their ideas and logic to reason and discuss the characteristics and differences between Chinese and Western cultures, can they fundamentally motivate students to understand Chinese traditional culture spontaneously and consciously, raise their own cultural awareness, and eventually form a sense of cultural belonging and identity, thus enhancing their sense of national honor and mission.

#### **4. Ways to Reconstruct the Role of Teachers in Curriculum Ideological and Political Education for Foreign Language Programs**

In essence, the three general directions mentioned above for foreign language teachers to reconstruct their roles actually require them to have a strong sense of humanism. At present, under the double pressure of profession and life, it is an indisputable fact that college teachers are indifferent to humanism<sup>[9]</sup>. Therefore, on the basis of a clear direction, we need to find appropriate ways to motivate foreign language teachers to reconstruct their roles, which can be done from three perspectives: identifying with their roles, cultivating role awareness, and meeting role expectations.

##### **4.1 Identifying their Roles**

In the construction of curriculum ideological and political education, foreign language teachers must first identify with these roles in order to realize the diverse roles. As the direct builders of curriculum ideological and political education, the long-running large-scale project, teachers of professional courses, have different purposes for participating it. Some are trying to achieve the nurturing function of professional learning, while others are forced to participate just to cope with the tasks of their superiors, which is inevitable due to the contradiction of imbalanced number of teachers and class hours in Chinese universities and colleges. This not only makes ideological and political education a formality, and difficult to achieve the desired effect, but also reduces teachers' happiness, sense of accomplishment and achievement in their teaching career, and reduces work enthusiasm, and even affects their physical and mental health. To enhance the role identity of professional teachers, on the one hand, it is necessary to reach a reasonable expectation of teachers at the social level, and not to impose all responsibilities of education on teachers, which will bring about teachers' professional frustration. On the other hand, it is also necessary to actively improve the working environment of teachers at the school level, improve the working conditions, and to adjust curriculum and reduce unnecessary teaching tasks while focusing on the construction of curriculum ideological and political education.

## 4.2 Cultivating Role Awareness

Role awareness of college teachers refers to college teachers' awareness, recognition, understanding and experience of their role status, role behavior norms and role play<sup>[10]</sup>. The level of role awareness directly governs the direction, motivation and outcome of teachers' own behavior. Nowadays, with the coexistence of cultural pluralism and ideological hegemony, college students have various ideas and beliefs, in the context of curriculum ideological and political education reform, it is necessary to rely on professional teachers to carry out ideological and political education, who should be strongly aware of their own responsibilities and mission. Only by cultivating a stable role consciousness can teachers of professional courses seriously fulfill their due roles and obligations in the construction of curriculum ideological and political education in accordance with social expectations. The cultivation of role awareness needs to start from both internal and external aspects: externally, in addition to political and disciplinary requirements, the school administration should return teaching and professional issues to teachers, fully trust professional teachers, and encourage teachers to take the initiative in the process of curriculum ideological and political education, rather than passively obey the arrangement; internally, teachers should have a sense of subjectivity. They should not just take teaching as a means of making a living, but be aware of their great mission as "engineers of the human soul", constantly improving their own image and enhancing their status.

## 4.3 Meeting Role Expectations

As mentioned earlier, there is a co-variant relationship between the role of teachers and social expectations. Social expectations for the teachers' role will vary from time to time. Whether it can meet social expectations is an important criterion for measuring the success of the role of teachers. In addition, role expectations will also have a certain incentive effect, prompting teachers to improve themselves and their abilities in accordance with social expectations, so as to better meet the expectations of the society and realize their roles. In the process of curriculum ideological and political education construction, the society requires professional teachers to fulfill multiple roles apart from imparting professional knowledge. Therefore, teachers of professional courses should not only fulfill general moral obligations, serve effectively as teachers and make themselves moral role models, but also fulfill their professional moral obligations, face up to the construction of curriculum ideological and political education, continuously improve their ideological and political literacy, and implement it into their teaching, so as to enhance the attractiveness and appeal of ideological and political education.

## 5. Conclusion

In the new era, it has been the fundamental question to be answered in Chinese higher education as for what kind of talents to cultivate, how to cultivate them, and for whom. It is generally accepted that parents are the first teachers of their children. If we think about it the other way around, teachers can be said to be the second parents of children. Therefore, while shouldering the basic responsibility of teaching, teachers in colleges and universities also need to think about their role of educating, especially teachers of foreign languages who are at the forefront of cultural exchanges between China and the West. The invisible education of curriculum ideological and political education is a cumulative process, and it should run through the entire college life of students. How to instill love for the Party and the nation, impart professional knowledge while shaping ideology, and cultivate foreign language talents in the new era who can input and output knowledge and culture properly, will become the dominant issue that foreign language teachers have to consider in



the process of reconstructing their roles.

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