

The Cultivation of Newly-recruited Ideological and Political Theory Teachers in Universities: Challenges and Solutions

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ABSTRACT

In accordance with the national task requirements for strengthening the construction of Ideological and Political Theory Courses (IPTCs), universities across the country have generally recruited a large number of teachers to undertake the teaching of these courses in recent years. This has undoubtedly provided a strong impetus for the healthy development of IPTCs. However, with the advancement of the teaching practice of these courses, newly-recruited IPTC teachers have gradually shown some common challenges, which are specifically manifested as follows: insufficient foundation in classical theories, low level of historical and cultural accomplishment, lack of social practice experience, unfamiliarity with teaching methods, inadequate analysis of students' learning situation, and low literacy in artificial intelligence. Therefore, it is necessary for universities to further enhance their understanding of the importance of IPTCs. On this basis, they should scientifically analyze the problems existing in their teaching practice and make great efforts to solve them earnestly, so as to effectively improve the educational effect of IPTCs.

Keywords: *Ideological and political theory courses in universities, Newly-recruited teachers, Challenges, Solutions.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, standing at the strategic height of building a great modern socialist country and realizing the Chinese Dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core has attached greater importance to the orientation and quality of talent cultivation in universities, and has put forward the fundamental task requirement of "fostering virtue through education" for colleges and universities. In particular, it has shown unprecedented high attention to the construction of IPTCs and teaching team. On March 18, 2019, General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized at the Symposium on Teachers of IPTCs in Schools: "Ideological and Political Theory Courses are the key courses for implementing the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education", and "The key to running Ideological and Political Theory Courses well lies

in teachers, and in giving play to the enthusiasm, initiative and creativity of teachers".^[1] At the same time, specific requirements for the literacy of IPTC teachers were put forward in six aspects, namely, strong political awareness, deep devotion, innovative thinking, broad vision, strict self-discipline, and upright character. General Secretary Xi Jinping's important speech not only further clarified the important position of IPTCs, but also pointed out the direction for the construction of the team of IPTC teachers and put forward new and higher requirements. Compared with the requirements of General Secretary Xi Jinping's speech, it can be seen that there is still much room for effort and improvement in the construction of the team of IPTC teachers in universities. In particular, newly-recruited teachers should further enhance their understanding of the importance of IPTCs, scientifically analyze the problems existing in their own teaching practice, and make great efforts to solve them earnestly, so as to effectively improve the educational effect of IPTCs.

2. NEWLY-RECRUITED IPTC TEACHERS MUST ENHANCE THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF THE IMPORTANCE OF COURSES

IPTCs are not only important courses directly related to the orientation and quality of talent cultivation in colleges and universities, but also basic courses undertaking the task of cultivating talents for the Party and the country. Therefore, IPTCs have special and important significance.

2.1 It Is the Need to Further Consolidate the Party's Leadership Position

The development practice of China's modern history has proved that the leadership position of the Communist Party of China is neither self-proclaimed nor bestowed by heaven, but a choice of history and the people. However, the fact that the Party's leadership was once diluted, weakened, voided and marginalized shows that the Party's leadership position is neither achieved overnight nor once and for all. This requires us to be prepared for danger in times of peace and keep alert on the fundamental and principled issue of upholding the Party's leadership. Based on this, IPTCs in universities must be committed to continuously consolidating the Party's leadership position, subordinating to and serving the theory and practice of the Party's governance of the country. Through teaching, teachers should help the majority of young students deeply understand that without the Communist Party of China, there would be no New China and no great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, and thus form a profound ideological identity, emotional identity and practical identity with unswervingly upholding the Party's leadership, so as to continuously consolidate the Party's leadership position.

2.2 It Is the Need to Further Consolidate and Develop the Cause of Socialism

Historical experience shows that China's path to socialism is an inevitable result of the victory of the new democratic revolution led by the Communist Party of China, shaped by the national conditions of modern China (1840-1949) as a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society and against the backdrop of the era marked by imperialism and the proletarian revolution. However, since China transitioned into a socialist society from a semi-colonial and semi-feudal foundation through a brief period of the New Democratic Society, there remains a certain gap in

terms of the level of productive forces development and per capita national income compared with developed capitalist countries. Consequently, some people in society hold various prejudices against the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and even fail to see the broader picture due to narrow-mindedness. Under such circumstances, IPTCs in colleges and universities must be committed to consolidating and developing the cause of socialism. Through teaching, students should deeply understand that only socialism can save China and only socialism can develop China. On this basis, they should gain a more profound awareness that socialism with Chinese characteristics is an unprecedented great cause and the only way to realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Therefore, they must firmly uphold the "Four Confidences" (confidence in the path, theory, system, and culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics) and aspire to make contributions to advancing this great cause.

2.3 It Is the Need to Further Address Challenges in the Internal and External Environments

Driven by the wave of economic globalization, seeking development through connectivity and pursuing survival through development has increasingly become a universal consensus in the international community. Based on this, Deng Xiaoping put forward the scientific judgments that "the world today is an open world"[2] and "China's development cannot be separated from the world"[3], and led the launch of China's great practice of reform and opening up. Reform and opening up have not only strongly promoted the establishment and continuous improvement of China's market economic system, but also vigorously driven the transformation of Chinese society and the rapid development of productive forces, playing a crucial role in enabling China to catch up with the times by leaps and bounds. At the same time, we must clearly recognize that with the advancement of reform and opening up and the development of the market economy, profound changes have taken place in China's internal and external development environments. From the perspective of the internal environment, the economic composition, organizational forms, employment methods, interest relationships, and distribution methods of Chinese society have become increasingly diversified. This has in turn led to profound changes in people's ideological understanding, values, ways of thinking, and

interpersonal relationships, which has implicitly put forward new and higher requirements for the leadership and governance capabilities of the Communist Party of China. From the perspective of the external environment, differences exist between China and Western countries in terms of social systems, ideological divides, and value pursuits. Despite the frequent exchanges and interactions between China and the West in politics, economy, culture, diplomacy, and military affairs since the reform and opening up, which on one hand have provided valuable opportunities for China to actively learn from the experiences of other countries, on the other hand, they have also created practical possibilities for Western hostile forces to infiltrate, subvert, and attack China. This has thus posed severe challenges to China's efforts to safeguard national sovereignty, security, and development interests. In light of this, ideological and political courses must focus on the internal and external environmental challenges we face. By strengthening ideological and political education, these courses should inspire college students' patriotic spirit, consolidate the foundation of their ideals and beliefs, enhance their ability to distinguish right from wrong, firm their political stance, and effectively safeguard national security.

3. NEWLY-RECRUITED TEACHERS OF IPTCS MUST MEET THE PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES IN THEIR TEACHING PRACTICE

Newly-recruited teachers of IPTCs are vibrant, energetic, and highly enthusiastic about their work. However, due to various reasons, most of them encounter some common problems in their teaching practice.

3.1 Insufficient Proficiency in Classic Theories

Most newly-recruited teachers of IPTCs only have a superficial understanding of Marxist theory, without in-depth and systematic comprehension, and fail to grasp the essence of this theory. As a result, when teaching Marxist theory, they cannot conduct in-depth and accurate explanations, and tend to teach mechanically from textbooks. This not only fails to fully demonstrate the truth charm of Marxist theory, but also cannot effectively guide students to understand and accept this scientific theory, leading to a lack of attractiveness in their teaching.

3.2 Low Level of Historical and Cultural Literacy

Most newly-recruited teachers of IPTCs have limited knowledge of basic cultural aspects such as history, geography, religion, literature, art, and customs of different countries. Some even lack a certain understanding of China's own history and culture. Therefore, on one hand, when it comes to the exchange and mutual learning of civilizations among different countries, they can only stay at a superficial level and are unable to conduct comparative analysis. On the other hand, they cannot fully and vividly present the originality, extensiveness, and richness of China's history and culture, which affects the cultivation of university students' historical consciousness and cultural confidence, resulting in a lack of expressiveness in their teaching.

3.3 Obvious Lack of Practical Experience

Most newly-recruited teachers of IPTCs have transitioned directly from being students to teachers, without extensive and in-depth exposure to social life. Moreover, there is a certain gap between the theories in textbooks and the practice of social production and life. As a result, they cannot integrate theory with practice: they are unable to use scientific theories to explain the rationality of practice, nor can they use vivid practical cases to support the scientificity of theories, leading to a lack of persuasiveness in their teaching.

3.4 Inadequate Mastery of Teaching Methods

To deliver high-quality courses, most newly-recruited IPTC teachers subjectively attempt to organize teaching activities using methods such as heuristic, case-based, and discussion-based teaching. However, their inadequate proficiency in these methods often leads to ineffective connection between teaching steps. Consequently, they fail to achieve both the rational and effective delivery of teaching content and the realization of teaching design objectives, resulting in a lack of coherence in teaching.

3.5 Insufficient Analysis on Students' Learning Situation

The design of teaching activities must be targeted and purposeful. Nevertheless, most newly-recruited teachers fail to conduct accurate analysis

on students' learning situation during teaching. As a result, the design of teaching activities overlooks differences in students' cognition, abilities, interests, and majors, leading to an overemphasis on generality rather than specificity in learning situation analysis and a lack of targeting.

3.6 Low Literacy in Artificial Intelligence (AI)

In recent years, the vigorous development of AI has exerted a certain impact on people's production, life, and thinking, and IPTCs are no exception. However, most newly-recruited teachers are preoccupied with completing teaching tasks, focusing first on "being able to teach" rather than addressing other needs. This leads to their low attention to the application of AI in teaching practice—a task that requires time and effort to study—resulting in a lack of urgency in improving AI literacy.

4. PATHWAYS AND SOLUTIONS TO SOLVE THE PROBLEMS OF NEWLY-RECRUITED IPTC TEACHERS IN UNIVERSITIES

To effectively improve the teaching competence and level of newly-recruited IPTC teachers and truly make courses beneficial for university students throughout their lives, it is essential to seriously address the aforementioned common problems.

4.1 Striving to Strengthen the Foundation of Classical Theories

As an ancient saying goes, "Humans are not born with knowledge; they acquire it through learning." Experience shows that there is no shortcut to strengthening the foundation of Marxist theories, as a result, teachers must make efforts to read original works, study original texts, and comprehend fundamental principles. First, teachers should formulate a detailed learning plan and implement it step by step, which can enhance the systematicness and continuity of learning. Second, they should integrate partial and overall learning, avoiding overemphasis on one aspect while ignoring others. In other words, teachers should learn philosophy, political economy, and scientific socialism in a connected manner, without separating their inherent unity. Third, they should combine internal and external perspectives, understanding both the original source of theories

and their development. Specifically, teachers should not only study the original works of Marxist classics but also learn the theoretical achievements of adapting Marxism to Chinese conditions and the times.

4.2 Further Expanding Knowledge Horizons

The vision of IPTCs is extremely broad: vertically, it connects history and reality; horizontally, it links China and the world; and hierarchically, it involves interactions between the central and local governments. Therefore, a one-dimensional knowledge structure makes it difficult to fulfill the teaching tasks of IPTCs.

Consequently, IPTC teachers must consciously and purposefully expand their knowledge horizons, particularly in terms of historical and cultural knowledge. In other words, they should extensively explore topics ranging from all corners of the globe to both ancient and modern times, striving not only to "know what it is" but also to "understand why it is so." First, teachers should make efforts to learn Chinese history and culture. This not only helps enhance their own sense of responsibility and mission but also contributes to boosting students' national pride and cultural confidence. Second, teachers should strive to study foreign history and culture. This not only broadens their global perspective but also helps students expand their life pattern from a "personal focus" to a "collective focus."

4.3 Continuously Strengthening Social Practice

Marx once pointed out: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it." [4] From this perspective, the purpose of learning theories is for application and solving practical problems. In fact, integrating theory with practice is an inherent requirement for the development of Marxist theory, and without human practice, its vitality ceases to exist. Based on this, IPTC teachers should deeply engage in social practice to continuously enhance their understanding of people's production and living conditions, form a correct view of national conditions, and further consolidate their confidence in the system. Then, they should bring vivid social practice knowledge into the classroom, using it to demonstrate the scientificity and truth of Marxist theory. This will help the scientificity and truth of

Marxist theory gain deeper recognition among students and further consolidate the foundation of students' ideals and beliefs.

4.4 Consciously Learning and Applying Various Teaching Methods

In the teaching process of IPTCs, it is essential to firmly adhere to the principle of "content first", which must be clarified first, as it directly relates to the direction of talent cultivation. However, this does not mean teaching methods are insignificant. Teaching methods directly affect the presentation and expression of teaching content, the connection and communication between teaching and learning, and the achievement of teaching objectives and effects. Therefore, IPTC teachers must continuously enrich their teaching methods. On one hand, teachers must learn various teaching methods. Before classes, they should study the composition, characteristics, and functions of different teaching methods, then design teaching plans in combination with course content. They should repeatedly compare the effectiveness of different teaching methods in presenting the content and decide on adoption or rejection accordingly. On the other hand, teachers must practically apply various teaching methods. During the application process, they should avoid the idea of "seeking quick success", which easily leads to frustration. Instead, they should adopt a mindset that proficiency comes with practice, continuously summarize and accumulate experience, and achieve small successes that eventually lead to mastery. Over time, they will inevitably reach a state of skillful application.

4.5 Conducting In-depth Analysis on Students' Learning Situation

The Party's educational policy and the fundamental task of "fostering virtue through education" undertaken by universities require that the teaching of IPTCs adhere to the principle of "teacher-led, student-centered". This constitutes the fundamental stance and starting point that IPTC teachers must first clarify. Given the student-centered approach, it is essential to understand students' actual learning conditions, which in turn necessitates systematic analysis of their learning situation. To conduct a learning situation analysis that truly reflects students' real learning status, the following steps should be implemented: the first is to develop a plan to collect student information through multiple methods, including questionnaires,

homework evaluation, personalized interviews, and classroom observation. And the second step is to execute the plan to systematically gather data on students' learning foundations, cognitive characteristics, psychological states, and environmental influences. In the end, it is necessary to conduct a thorough analysis of the collected information and data to assess students' knowledge bases, learning habits, and interest-driven motivations. Based on this assessment, teachers optimize teaching design and enhance teaching effectiveness to ensure targeted instruction and effectively improve the pertinence of IPTC teaching.

4.6 Improving Teaching Competence Characterized by AI Application

In the context of the booming development of AI, General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized: "China attaches great importance to the profound impact of AI on education, and actively promotes the in-depth integration of AI and education to advance educational reform and innovation".^[5] This indicates that in the AI era, it is imperative for universities to enhance the attractiveness, influence, and persuasiveness of IPTCs through technological innovation. To continuously improve teachers' competence in AI application, the following measures are proposed: first, it is vital to hold a sound attitude towards AI empowering IPTC teaching: regard learning and applying AI as a mandatory course rather than an optional one. Besides, it is necessary to earnestly acquire AI-related knowledge and explore interdisciplinary, cross-field, and cross-regional cooperation within and outside the university. Ultimately it is important to focus on the practical application of AI. In terms of educational objects, teachers should figure out how to obtain accurate data on learners to implement teaching tailored to individual needs; in terms of educational content, teachers need to explore the ways to customize precisely to achieve accurate alignment between supply and demand; and regarding teaching methods, teachers should consider how to develop and utilize diverse teaching platforms to enhance interactivity and affinity. It is evident that AI has broad application prospects in IPTC teaching practice and thus must be highly valued.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, newly-recruited IPTC teachers in universities must deepen their understanding of the

significance of IPTCs, face up to the various problems existing in their teaching practice, and make great efforts to solve these issues effectively, thereby substantially improving the educational effectiveness of IPTCs.

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