

Real-World Challenges and Multidimensional Pathways for Advancing Curriculum-Based Ideological and Political Education in Vocal Music Courses at Teacher-Training Universities in the New Era

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Abstract: *The comprehensive advancement of curriculum-based ideological and political education constitutes a strategic measure for fulfilling the fundamental educational task of fostering virtue through education in China and an essential requirement for the high-quality development of higher education in the new era. As institutions responsible for preparing future teachers for basic education, teacher-training universities are expected, through vocal music instruction, not only to cultivate students' professional competencies but also to shape their professional ethics and transmit cultural values. Yet current implementation still faces a range of challenges, including incomplete understandings of the concept, overly narrow entry points, and underdeveloped evaluation systems. Against the backdrop of emerging trends and new developments in educational research both in China and internationally, this paper examines the positioning and objectives of vocal music courses at teacher-training universities, analyzes the major difficulties confronting current practice, and systematically explores strategies for further advancing curriculum-based ideological and political education from the perspectives of conceptual renewal, pedagogical innovation, evaluation reform, and the construction of collaborative mechanisms. The study seeks to provide both theoretical support and practical pathways for building an educational framework that engages all personnel, spans the entire educational process, and operates across multiple dimensions.*

Keywords: Vocal music teaching at teacher-training universities, Curriculum-based ideological and political education, Fostering virtue through education, Pre-service teachers, Collaborative education.

1. Introduction: A Strategic Imperative in the Educational Context of the New Era

As an integrated educational philosophy, curriculum-based ideological and political education aims to build a holistic educational framework involving all staff, the entire educational process, and all courses, so that all courses move in the same direction as ideological and political theory courses and generate a synergistic effect, with fostering virtue through education as the fundamental mission of education. The Guidelines for the Development of Curriculum-Based Ideological and Political Education in Higher Education Institutions, issued by China's Ministry of Education in 2020, explicitly state that "comprehensively advancing curriculum-based ideological and political education is a strategic measure for implementing the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education in China's educational enterprise." This initiative bears not only on the quality of talent cultivation in higher education, but also on long-term national development, national rejuvenation, and the cultivation of future generations capable of contributing to socialist modernization.

From a global perspective, higher education is undergoing profound transformation. UNESCO's Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education stresses that education should be understood as a public endeavor that not only transmits knowledge but also cultivates citizens with global competence, social responsibility, and moral character. Although Western higher education systems do not use the term "curriculum-based ideological and

political education," they commonly emphasize the hidden curriculum and values education. Examples include service-learning in the United States and character education in the United Kingdom, both of which seek to incorporate civic responsibility and ethical formation into disciplinary teaching. In China, by contrast, research has gradually shifted from theoretical exposition toward practical implementation, with growing attention to how ideological and political elements can be integrated into disciplinary courses in subtle, organic, and pedagogically effective ways.

As institutions that prepare future teachers for primary and secondary education, teacher-training universities occupy a distinctive position. Their students have a dual identity: they are learners during their university studies, but they later become educators and transmitters of values. In this sense, the development of curriculum-based ideological and political education in vocal music courses is not merely a matter of disciplinary reform; it is also a key link in transmitting sound values to primary and secondary school classrooms through pre-service teachers.

2. The Positioning and Objectives of Vocal Music Courses at Teacher-Training Universities and the Contemporary Significance of Curriculum-Based Ideological and Political Education

2.1 The Distinctive Positioning of Vocal Music Courses at Teacher-Training Universities

The central aim of music programs at teacher-training universities is to cultivate primary and secondary school music teachers equipped with modern educational philosophies, strong professional ethics, solid theoretical grounding, and robust practical competence. As a core practice-based course within the curriculum, vocal music occupies a position markedly different from that of vocal performance programs in professional conservatories. The latter are oriented toward training stage performers and therefore prioritize the refinement of singing technique and the cultivation of artistic individuality. By contrast, vocal music courses at teacher-training universities foreground their teacher-education orientation and aim to develop students' integrated ability to sing, teach, and educate. Students are therefore expected not only to master the scientific principles of vocal production and singing technique, but also to understand the characteristics of voice development among school-age learners, demonstrate the capacity to appreciate and analyze vocal works, and translate vocal knowledge and skills into pedagogical resources. Put simply, conservatories train performers, whereas teacher-training universities prepare teachers. Teachers are the foundation of educational practice and the decisive force in advancing curriculum-based ideological and political education. Accordingly, the vocal music classroom at teacher-training universities should be understood not merely as a site for technical instruction, but also as a space for cultivating teachers' professional ethics.

2.2 The Core Value of Curriculum-Based Ideological and Political Education in Vocal Music Teaching

Moral formation and the consolidation of teacher ethics. Vocal works often embody rich historical contexts, humanistic values, and emotional meanings. By identifying and drawing out the ideological and political elements embedded in such works, teachers can guide students toward sound understandings of history, ethnicity, and the nation, helping them internalize patriotic commitment and lay a solid ethical foundation for future teaching practice.

Cultural confidence and the transmission of Chinese cultural heritage. Chinese vocal repertoire is vast and diverse. From art songs based on classical poetry to modern revolutionary classics and contemporary original works, such repertoire carries the legacy of China's fine traditional culture and revolutionary culture. Vocal music teaching at teacher-training universities should therefore serve as an important site for transmitting Chinese cultural heritage and strengthening students' cultural confidence and sense of national identity.

Synergy and the formation of an educational continuum. Students at teacher-training universities will eventually become school teachers. The values they develop during their university studies will, through their future teaching, exert an indirect influence on large numbers of primary and secondary school students. In this regard, curriculum-based ideological and political education in vocal music courses at teacher-training universities has strategic significance as an upstream source of value formation and constitutes an important component of the integrated development of ideological and political education across universities, secondary schools, and primary schools.

3. Major Problems in the Current Development of Curriculum-Based Ideological and Political Education in Vocal Music Teaching at Teacher-Training Universities

Although curriculum-based ideological and political education has achieved initial results, its implementation in vocal music teaching at teacher-training universities still faces a number of challenges that constrain its educational effectiveness.

3.1 Incomplete Understanding of the Concept and a Tendency Toward Tokenistic Labeling

Some teachers still understand curriculum-based ideological and political education in relatively superficial terms, treating it simply as the addition of political content to professional courses. In practice, this often takes the form of mechanically inserting patriotic themes into teaching—for example, by assigning a few revolutionary songs or offering brief policy-oriented remarks before class—while leaving the core teaching process focused exclusively on technical matters such as vocal production or resonance placement. This separation between disciplinary instruction and value education results in a fragmented two-track approach that fails to achieve the subtle and organic integration expected of curriculum-based ideological and political education. In some cases, it may even generate student resistance, reducing such efforts to little more than symbolic labels attached to professional courses.

3.2 Narrow Points of Entry, Rigid Pedagogical Forms, and Superficial Content

Vocal music is a comprehensive art form that brings together ideology, artistry, and technique, and is therefore particularly well suited to curriculum-based ideological and political education. However, many teachers currently adopt overly limited entry points, focusing mainly on the interpretation of lyrics while paying insufficient attention to the historical background of works, the biographies of composers, or the cultural meanings embedded in musical style. Instruction is often confined to one-to-one verbal explanation, with limited interactivity or experiential engagement.

At the same time, teaching content tends to remain concentrated on conventional revolutionary classics, while insufficient attention is paid to outstanding contemporary works that reflect the spirit of the new era, advances in science and technology, or the idea of a global community with a shared future. As a consequence, the ideological and political content presented in class often lacks breadth, contemporary relevance, and resonance with university students born after 2000.

3.3 Underdeveloped Evaluation Systems and Weak Incentive Mechanisms

Current evaluation systems in vocal music teaching continue to rely predominantly on the assessment of professional skills, with final examinations—typically stage performances—

carrying overwhelming weight. This mode of assessment primarily measures technical indicators such as intonation, rhythm, and timbre, while offering little systematic or effective means of evaluating students' learning attitudes, professional ethics, cultural understanding, or growth in ideological and political literacy over the course of learning.

Because explicit evaluation criteria and incentive mechanisms for curriculum-based ideological and political education remain underdeveloped, teachers often lack sufficient motivation to invest time and effort in identifying relevant educational elements or innovating pedagogical approaches. As a result, curriculum-based ideological and political education is difficult to sustain throughout the teaching process and is often treated as a secondary or peripheral task.

4. Strategies and Pathways for Further Advancing Curriculum-Based Ideological and Political Education in Vocal Music Courses at Teacher-Training Universities

In response to new conditions and emerging challenges, vocal music teaching at teacher-training universities should adhere to an outcomes-based education (OBE) orientation, take the principles of curriculum-based ideological and political education as a guide, deepen reform, innovate pedagogical models, and establish a comprehensive collaborative educational mechanism.

4.1 Conceptual Renewal: Deepening Understanding of Ideological and Political Education Through an Outcomes-Based Orientation

The training objectives of music programs at teacher-training universities determine the particular character of curriculum-based ideological and political education in this context. It is therefore necessary to return to the fundamental question of what kind of person education seeks to cultivate and to recognize that curriculum-based ideological and political education in vocal music courses is not a supplementary component of disciplinary teaching, but an integral part of talent cultivation. First, a broader conception of vocal music teaching is needed. It is important to move beyond the narrow view of vocal training as merely technical instruction and to situate vocal music within a wider cultural and social context. From this perspective, each vocal exercise and each interpretation of a work also constitutes a process of shaping values. Second, the teacher-education orientation of the course must be strengthened. The ultimate outcome of vocal music teaching at teacher-training universities is not simply competent singers, but qualified and outstanding future teachers. Accordingly, teaching should address not only how to sing, but also why one sings, for whom one sings, and how one can guide others to sing with meaning and integrity. Education in teacher ethics should therefore be brought to the forefront so that students develop, during their university years, a sense of professional responsibility, vocation, and commitment.

4.2 Pathway Innovation: Deepening Teaching Reform Through Multidimensional Integration

4.2.1 Broadening Horizons and Expanding the Entry Points for Ideological and Political Education

At the heart of curriculum-based ideological and political education is synergy: all stages and aspects of teaching should move in the same direction and contribute to shared educational goals. Teachers should move beyond the textbook itself and identify ideological and political resources throughout the entire teaching process and across all instructional dimensions.

Integrating craftsmanship and a sense of discipline into skills training. Vocal training is often repetitive and demanding, requiring patience, perseverance, and self-discipline. Teachers can use this process to cultivate in students a spirit of excellence and resilience. At the same time, by emphasizing classroom norms and structured practice routines, particularly in blended online and offline teaching contexts, teachers can strengthen students' awareness of rules, responsibility, and professional conduct.

Cultivating patriotism and cultural confidence through repertoire analysis. In addition to revolutionary classics, teachers should include more works that reflect China's achievements in the new era, such as songs related to poverty alleviation, the space program, or ecological progress, as well as outstanding traditional folk songs and art songs based on classical poetry. Through comparison between Chinese and Western vocal aesthetics, students can be guided toward a deeper appreciation of the distinctive expressive qualities of Chinese music, thereby strengthening their cultural identification.

Strengthening responsibility and commitment through theoretical instruction. In teaching about the vocal development of children and adolescents, teachers should guide students to understand that protecting young people's vocal health is a central responsibility of school music teachers. In doing so, they can reinforce students' professional responsibility and service orientation.

4.2.2 Innovating Practical Teaching Forms and Enriching the Educational Meaning of Ideological and Political Education

The traditional one-to-one studio teaching model is no longer sufficient to meet the broader educational demands of the new era. Practical teaching therefore needs to become more diversified and innovative in both form and approach.

Promoting the second classroom and social engagement. Students should be encouraged to move beyond the campus and participate in community music service, rural school support programs, vocal instruction, and choir rehearsal guidance. Through such forms of social engagement, students can gain firsthand insight into the realities of grassroots education and experience the social and emotional power of music, thereby deepening their understanding of teacher ethics and strengthening their commitment to educational practice.

Empowering ideological and political teaching through digital technologies. Technologies such as VR and AR can be used to reconstruct historical settings and help students more vividly

engage with the contexts in which works were created. At the same time, learning analytics can be used to examine students' practice patterns and expressive development, providing more individualized educational guidance. For instance, by analyzing students' emotional responses when performing works of different styles, teachers can guide reflection on the relationship between music and social emotion.

Developing thematic workshops and performances. Workshops and performance projects can be organized around themes such as red memory, rural revitalization, and national development through science and technology. By engaging students in the full process of topic selection, adaptation, rehearsal, and performance, these activities can encourage them to identify ideological and political dimensions actively rather than receiving them passively.

4.2.3 Reforming Evaluation Systems and Embedding Ideological and Political Education Throughout the Entire Process

A sound evaluation system is essential for assessing the effectiveness of curriculum-based ideological and political education.

Establishing multidimensional evaluation indicators. The prevailing emphasis on technique alone should be replaced with a multidimensional framework that includes professional competence, ideological and political literacy, teaching ability, and practical engagement. Students' learning attitudes, teamwork, attention to social issues, and ability to interpret the cultural meanings of repertoire should all be incorporated into assessment.

Strengthening process-oriented evaluation. Greater attention should be paid to students' everyday learning and participation in practical activities. Growth portfolios can be established to document changes in students' thinking and development over time. A combination of self-assessment, peer assessment, and teacher assessment can be used to provide more comprehensive feedback on students' overall development.

Developing incentive and feedback mechanisms. Teachers and students who demonstrate strong performance in curriculum-based ideological and political education should be appropriately recognized and rewarded. The effectiveness of such work should also be included as an important consideration in faculty promotion, professional evaluation, and awards, thereby creating stronger institutional incentives.

4.3 Mechanism Building: A Three-Way Collaborative Framework Among Universities, Teachers, and Courses

Advancing curriculum-based ideological and political education in vocal music courses at teacher-training universities is a systematic undertaking that requires coordinated effort at multiple levels.

At the institutional level, universities should provide top-level design by formulating detailed implementation plans, offering dedicated funding and professional development opportunities, and strengthening collaboration between

Schools of Marxism and Colleges of Music. Interdisciplinary teaching and research teams should be established to jointly develop model cases for curriculum-based ideological and political education in vocal music courses.

At the faculty level, teachers are the principal agents of implementation. It is therefore necessary to strengthen the cultivation of teacher ethics and professional conduct, while also enhancing teachers' grounding in political theory and their ability to identify and integrate ideological and political elements in discipline-specific teaching. Teachers should be encouraged to undertake pedagogical research and explore approaches suited to the specific characteristics of vocal music as a field, serving as role models for students in learning, professional conduct, and personal integrity.

At the curriculum level, courses themselves must become the primary arena for implementation. Vocal music syllabi should be revised to specify ideological and political objectives and points of integration for each unit or module. At the same time, a number of high-quality golden courses in vocal music should be developed—courses characterized by depth, innovation, and appropriate challenge—so that disciplinary knowledge transmission and value guidance can be organically combined within a comprehensive educational framework.

5. Conclusion

The development of curriculum-based ideological and political education in vocal music teaching at teacher-training universities is a long-term and demanding undertaking that requires both macro-level policy guidance and micro-level pedagogical exploration. In the educational context of the new era, it is essential to accurately understand the positioning of vocal music courses at teacher-training universities, confront existing problems directly, and take fostering virtue through education as the guiding principle of reform and innovation. Through conceptual renewal, pathway innovation, evaluation reform, and mechanism building, ideological and political elements can be integrated more fully into the fabric of vocal music teaching. Only when the vocal music classroom at teacher-training universities truly becomes a space in which technical training and moral formation are meaningfully united can the future music teachers it produces possess not only strong performance skills, but also deep commitment to society and high standards of professional ethics. Such teachers will become transmitters of truth, goodness, and beauty, sowing the seeds of value education in the hearts of younger generations and contributing meaningfully to the cultivation of a new generation capable of shouldering the mission of national rejuvenation and to the development of a strong socialist cultural nation. Looking ahead, as digital transformation in education deepens and international exchange continues to expand, curriculum-based ideological and political education in vocal music courses at teacher-training universities is likely to develop in ways that are more dynamic, diverse, and effective.

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