

Exploring the Superficialization of Inquiry-Based Activities in High School Ideological and Political Education: In-Depth Inquiry and Countermeasures

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Abstract: Inquiry-based activities in high school ideological and political education have problem of superficialization, which limits effectiveness of curriculum and also affects comprehensive development of students. This article first defines concept and connotation of superficialization, and systematically outlines its specific manifestations and multi-dimensional impact on teaching quality, while in-depth analysis shows that root cause of problem lies in lagging development of educational concepts, limitations of teaching methods, and disconnection between curriculum content and social reality. Article proposes corresponding countermeasures, including updating educational concepts to enhance deep thinking, reforming teaching methods and focusing on cultivating critical thinking, and integrating timely and practical curriculum content, thereby promoting fundamental transformation of ideological and political education, from simply imparting knowledge to guiding values and cultivating core competencies.

Keywords: High School Ideological and Political Education; Inquiry-Based Activities; Superficialization; Deep Teaching

1. Introduction

Superficialization of inquiry-based activities in high school ideological and political education manifests in classrooms still being limited to surface presentation of knowledge points and rote memorization. This neglects deep understanding of political theory, while also limiting potential of critical inquiry, thereby making curriculum difficult to achieve fundamental goal of 'moral education and character development', which is reflected in teachers' excessive reliance on step-by-step textbook explanations, superficialization of classroom interaction, and teaching questions lacking intellectual depth, thus students cannot

participate in critical discussions and analysis of social issues. Superficialization of inquiry-based activities not only weakens ideological and practical relevance of IPE, but also hinders development of students' higher-order thinking abilities and cultivation of their long-term civic literacy, which urgently needs a systematic and profound approach to address these problems.

2. Definition and Manifestations of Superficialization

2.1 Concept and Connotation of Superficialization

Superficialization phenomenon in high school ideological and political education usually manifests as a teaching environment, in which classroom teaching still remains limited to surface presentation of knowledge points and mechanical memorization, while lacking deep understanding of political theory, with theoretical exploration also being insufficient. In this situation, education workers often excessively rely on explicit content of textbooks, thereby neglecting to deeply excavate core values and deeper logical structures contained in curriculum, and therefore students at cognitive level find it difficult to construct systematic theoretical framework. This superficialization phenomenon makes students have only shallow understanding of political theory, which unable to truly penetrate its deeper layers, and additionally classrooms often have problems of ineffective interaction and lack of problem-consciousness discussion, with convergence of these problems intensifying erosion of curriculum's ideological depth, thus unable to promote students' deep understanding and absorption of content. Therefore, critical thinking and problem consciousness fail to be developed, thereby weakening realization of curriculum's fundamental goal of cultivating morality and nurturing people, which leads to a teaching model that prioritizes knowledge

transmission rather than cultivation of thinking abilities.

2.2 Specific Manifestations of Superficialization in High School IPE

In high school IPE classes, superficialization is most obviously manifested in over-reliance on textbook content for step-by-step interpretation, coupled with lack of targeted question guidance and in-depth discussion. Teachers often mainly focus on transmission of knowledge points, while neglecting deep analysis of theories and training of students' critical thinking, which leads to students merely memorizing facts in course, yet failing to construct coherent knowledge structure. Additionally, classroom interaction often remains at superficial level, mainly limited to basic responses, thereby weakening students' engagement and depth of reflective thinking, with teaching questions often lacking readability and inspiration, failing to stimulate students' deeper-level thinking or further questioning. Therefore, students cannot meaningfully participate in analysis of social issues and critical discussion, and this shallow teaching approach not only weakens ideological nature and practical relevance of course, but also limits development of students' higher-order thinking abilities. It hinders their ability to effectively conduct critical analysis of complex social phenomena, thus ultimately affecting their sense of social responsibility and long-term civic literacy.

2.3 Impact of Superficialization on Teaching Quality

Superficialization problem has produced profound impact on teaching quality of high school ideological and political education, which manifests in lack of depth in teaching content, and limited cognitive participation in classroom. On one hand, superficialized teaching mode has weakened core role of ideological and political education in guiding values, while also weakening core role in cultivating political identity, thereby simplifying classroom experience to merely knowledge transmission process, which ignores providing necessary ideological guidance for students, and also ignores providing cognitive stimulation, with lack of in-depth exploration and failure to stimulate independent thinking meaning that students' ideological awareness and value judgment and social participation remain

underdeveloped. This teaching method has not effectively encouraged students to critically evaluate social problems, thus failing to enhance their practical participation in social activities, and on other hand, widespread existence of superficialization in teaching has intensified phenomenon that students cannot use critical thinking to analyze problems, while also intensifying phenomenon of being unable to judge complexity of social issues, which not only hinders their understanding of current affairs, but also produces negative impact on their long-term civic literacy. Therefore it can be seen that superficialization not only directly damages effectiveness of ideological and political education teaching, but also produces lasting adverse impact on students' personal development, thereby ultimately hindering realization of course's primary goal of moral education and character development..

3. Analysis of the Causes of Superficialization

3.1 The Obsolescence and Bias of Educational Philosophy

High school ideological and political education appears superficialized, and one of fundamental reasons is that educational concept is outdated and biased. Currently, many schools and educational workers still regard ideological and political education merely as tool of knowledge transmission, thereby neglecting its inner purpose of cultivating character development and core literacy. As clearly pointed out in General High School Ideological and Political Curriculum Standards (2017 Edition), ideological and political education should play key role in moral education and character development, thus enhancing students' ability to understand and participate in society, however in reality, many classrooms are still dominated by teacher-centered approach, with students passively absorbing information, which weakens value-driven function of curriculum. In addition, lack of understanding of Great Ideological and Political framework, coupled with failure to integrate ideological and political education throughout entire educational process, has exacerbated this problem, and therefore, comprehensively implementing core values in classroom becomes extremely difficult, thereby hindering development of critical thinking ability. This misalignment of educational concept directly limits depth and effectiveness of

ideological and political education.

3.2 The Limitations of Teaching Methods

Another important practical reason for superficialization of high school IPE is inherent limitations of traditional teaching methods, where in many classrooms, teachers continue to rely primarily on traditional lectures, with classroom interaction being limited and student participation being low. This one-way information transmission mode cannot allow students to engage in meaningful reflection, or stimulate their critical thinking abilities, while effective teaching not only needs to impart theoretical content, but also needs to use case studies and situational simulations as well as inquiry-based learning to help students connect theory with real-world problems. However, some teachers lack awareness of diversified teaching methods and innovation, coupled with insufficient emphasis on cultivating student subjectivity, thus causing classroom discussions to often remain at surface level, thereby making students unable to deeply understand essence of ideological and political theory. Ultimately, teaching process falls into formalism and superficialization, which is unable to effectively achieve deeper learning outcomes.

3.3 The Disconnection Between Curriculum Content and Societal Reality

Disconnection between course content and students' lives as well as society's actual reality has occurred, which is another key factor leading to superficialization phenomenon, as if IPE content is too abstract and theoretical, having almost no connection with real world, students will find it difficult to perceive its relevance, thereby reducing their learning interest and depth of thinking. Current curriculum design often focuses mainly on fixed textbook content, failing to integrate contemporary social issues, students' life experiences and real-life cases, and this leads to obvious disconnection between classroom content and social reality, although society is highly dynamic, but pace of teaching content updates often lags behind, thus resulting in IPE lacking ability to address timely social issues or encourage students to critically analyze social phenomena. Therefore, students find it very difficult to truly understand how to apply theoretical knowledge to understand and solve real-world problems.

4. Countermeasures and Recommendations for Addressing the Superficialization Problem

4.1 Updating Educational Philosophy to Strengthen Deep Thinking in Ideological and Political Education

Problem to be solved is superficialization of high school ideological and political education, and basic steps lie in updating educational concepts, firming commitment to moral education and character cultivation, as well as cultivation of core competencies, which requires profound reflection on ideological and political education, as it should be recognized that it is not merely space for knowledge transmission, but field of value guidance and cognitive development, just as General High School Ideological and Political Curriculum Standards emphasizes, with this curriculum possessing characteristics of integration and activeness. First, it is necessary to promote teachers' deep understanding of intrinsic purpose of ideological and political education, and this can be achieved through on-campus seminars and research activities, thereby enhancing their awareness of broader vision of curriculum, while encouraging lesson preparation and design of inquiry-based questions, focusing on exploration of values rather than simplified narration. Second, student-centered methods should be prioritized, and through incorporating thematic inquiry and group discussions, we can stimulate students' deeper reflection, thus cultivating problem awareness in classroom. Third, integrating current social issues such as social security and environmental protection into curriculum can help students apply political theories to real-world problems, thereby transforming ideological and political education classroom into dynamic space of depth and critical thinking.

4.2 Reforming Teaching Methods to Focus on Developing Students' Thinking Abilities

Reforming methods of teaching is key means to promote deep learning of IPE, which transitions from traditional lectures toward more interactive teaching methods. Widespread adoption of case studies and situational simulations can link theoretical knowledge with real-world cases, thereby making abstract concepts more concrete and enhancing students' understanding and analytical abilities. First, guided questioning should be systematically integrated into classroom experience, where carefully designed

question chains can stimulate students to analyze, compare and even question viewpoints, thereby improving quality of classroom participation. Second, adopting interactive methods such as group discussions and debates can encourage students to engage in intellectual exchange, thus enabling them to deconstruct course content from different perspectives and deepen thinking process. Third, integrating multimedia and digital platforms into classroom environment will enrich presentation and expression of ideas, which enables students to construct knowledge framework through exploratory learning. This approach breaks away from passive 'listening-centered' learning model that prevails in traditional classrooms^[4].

4.3 Strengthening the Integration of Contemporary and Practical Elements in Course Content

A key strategy for enhancing depth of IPE is to integrate curriculum content more closely with reality of student life and context of broader society. By incorporating contemporary issues and practical cases that resonate with students—such as social policy and global challenges—curriculum content can become both timely and relevant, guiding students to apply theoretical perspectives to real-world problems. First, current political information and social development trends should be used as teaching materials, thereby bridging gap between classroom and reality of social dynamics, which ensures that learning extends beyond boundaries of textbooks. Second, engaging students in social practice activities and voluntary service enables them to witness firsthand how ideology and political theory are applied in real contexts, thus promoting unity of knowledge and action. Third, a multi-level resource repository should be established—including school-specific materials and local cultural cases—ensuring that curriculum content reflects both theoretical depth at macro level and social practice experience at micro level. This will make IPE possess both intellectual rigor and practical foundation, with the curriculum maintaining 'theoretical soundness' while achieving 'social relevance'^[5].

5. Conclusion

Solving superficialization problem of inquiry-based activities in high school IPE is core of realizing full educational potential of this course,

by updating educational philosophy, while cultivating core literacy prioritizing 'moral education and character development' at same time, which can guide classroom toward deep, reflective thinking. Through reform of teaching methods—such as introducing case-based teaching, question chains and interactive exploration—we can effectively stimulate students' thinking, thereby cultivating them to become active learners, and moreover, by enhancing relevance of curriculum content to contemporary social issues and real-world topics, we can ensure theoretical knowledge is both timely and practical, thus cultivating deeper understanding of interconnection between theory and reality. Only by coordinating these three dimensions—philosophy, methods and content—together, can we effectively reverse superficialization trend, and make IPE become space for value guidance, intellectual stimulation and basic skill development, thereby enhancing its educational impact.

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