

Integrating Ideological and Political Elements into Innovative Teaching Models in Costume History Courses

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Received: 15 December 2024 | Accepted: 13 January 2025 | Published: 15 February 2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55057/ajress.2025.7.1.5>

Abstract: *Curriculum-based ideological and political education is a cornerstone in the reform of higher education in China, emphasizing the role of courses for the transmission of culture and moral values. In the structure of university training for fashion design talent, Chinese and Western Costume History has an important position, giving students an intense understanding of historical costume culture. Incorporating ideological and political education into costume history courses can be an attempt at dealing with this problem. It increases the students' cultural self-confidence, social responsibility, and creative design ability. This study mainly researched how to embed ideological and political education into costume history education in the context of the new era, focusing on project-based, experiential, and blended teaching models. Through historical analysis and practical activities, students are able to understand more about the ethical and cultural aspects in the process of costume design and reinforce their cultural appreciation of traditional costume, as well as their role as socially responsible designers. This will provide theoretical and practical guidance for the integration of ideological and political education in teaching Chinese and Western Costume History, ultimately contributing to the development of moral education in each degree level of higher education in China's art and design majors.*

Keywords: costume history, ideological and political education, cultural confidence, teaching innovation

1. Introduction

In recent years, Chinese President Xi Jinping has repeatedly emphasized cultural confidence, with the thinking that culture is the soul of a nation; a prospering country relies on a strong culture, and a mighty country must be based on a great culture. This cultural confidence provides not only the foundation of national development and rejuvenation but also one of the core undertakings in contemporary education (Xi, 2017). Within the context of higher education in the new era, curriculum-based ideological and political education (IPE) has emerged as one of the indispensable fundamental practice for integrating professional knowledge with social responsibility and cultural identity (Shi et al., 2023). This approach aligns with the Ministry of Education's objective to develop in students a strong cultural foundation, sound ethical standards, and a deep sense of social responsibility. IPE based on curriculum and inter-discipline implementation allows students to combine academic learning

with cultural understanding hence developing a strong sense of cultural pride and a sense of moral responsibility (Liu, 2024).

The course on Chinese and Western Costume History opens the eyes to perceive how fashion has evolved in historical and cultural contexts, reflecting and shaping societies in their times and at their respective locations. As one of the fundamental courses in university fashion design education, it constitutes the indispensable curriculum that significantly contributes to widening aesthetic appreciation, broadening design perspectives, and fostering comprehensive design in students. This curriculum, divided into Chinese and Western sections, is interdisciplinary and involves the use of sociology, history, aesthetics, design, and cultural studies. It allows students to see how clothing has possessed special attributes and has changed over a multitude of historical times in order to understand what social and cultural values fashion has expressed both in Eastern and Western traditions (Davis, 1994). In learning to analyze such cultural expressions, they also learn to thoughtfully apply traditional design elements in modern creations.

By addition of the course of ideological and political education (IPE) to this course, the students will enrich their understanding in developing their cultural literacy, a sense of social responsibility, and the ability for creative innovation. IPE integration allows the curriculum to reach beyond technical training and urges students to see costume design with its moral and societal dimensions. This research aims to find ways to embed IPE effectively into the course of Chinese and Western Costume History and proposes corresponding teaching models in accordance with the goals of IPE. The course shall guide students toward a more structured appreciation and contemplation of deeper meanings behind costume history, hence helping them become designers who are not only skillful but also culturally aware and socially conscious, capable of making a valuable contribution toward contemporary design.

2. Literature Review

2.1 IPE in Higher Education

In recent years, IPE has gained much attention across various disciplines in Chinese higher education, due to its importance in building cultural values, social responsibility, and ethical awareness among students from different disciplines (Zhao & Zhang, 2024). IPE is conducted not only to impart knowledge to the students but also to enable them to gain better insights into professional skills application in cultural and social perspectives. Guo (2024) conducted a study on the psychological impact of IPE on university students indicates that IPE helps enhance students' spiritual cultivation and overall quality. Courses that integrate IPE elements help students connect academic learning with cultural identity and social responsibility, enhancing national pride and moral commitment (Hong, 2024). Thus, embedding ideological and political education in professional courses not only strengthens students' connection to cultural roots but also cultivates a sense of responsibility, encouraging them to incorporate cultural and ethical perspectives into their future careers.

Higher education institutions have explored various methods for integrating IPE, especially in disciplines that naturally lend themselves to cultural education, such as literature (Han & Zhang, 2024), history (Song, 2022), and art (Zhao, 2023). Su et al. (2019) suggests that traditional cultural elements are particularly effective in integrating IPE because they inherently involve elements of historical and moral instruction. In the context of fashion design, costume history stands out as an ideal vehicle for embedding IPE, as it allows students to explore not only artistic techniques but also the cultural values and ethical considerations

associated with historical garments. By exploring the constituent elements of traditional costume in various times and places, students acquire a sense of the cultural and moral dimensions of fashion that make their learning consonant with wider social values fostered through IPE.

2.2 Cultural Confidence in Chinese Costume History

Incorporating the concept of cultural confidence into the Chinese costume history curriculum functions to further entrench the students with these traditional values and aesthetics. Chinese traditional costume, such as Hanfu and Qipao, reflects the cultural values, social structures, and aesthetic ideals of different periods in history. For example, Hanfu is a representation of Confucian ideals of propriety and restraint-moral and social codes fully articulated in its design (Fang, 2021). On the other hand, Qipao shows both Chinese and Western influences, representing a period of cultural exchange and modernization (Cheng, 2021). Research underlines that studying this type of traditional costume will make the student reinforce his ties with cultural history and be proud, further on living with a past. 中国古代传统服饰

Moreover, Chinese historical costumes express ethical concepts, especially the hierarchy of clothes that builds on and represents the hierarchy of society and Confucian principles. The dress of officials in the Ming and Qing Dynasties reflects strict stratification in social ranks with correspondingly strict demands in accordance with Confucian ideas of hierarchy, respect, and moral integrity (Lin, 2024). It is in these aspects of culture that students learn to look deeper than the aesthetic appeal of the historical garments and further into the moral values those garments come to represent. Such cultural exploration strengthens the students' sense of cultural identity and responsibility to serve as a base for ethical decisions in their future careers.

2.3 Social Responsibility and Cultural Transmission in Western Costume History

In sharp contrast, Western costume history reflects social changes and developments related to individualism. It is illustrative that, in the West, during the Renaissance-when a social transformation was going on-there had been an accentuation of such values as freedom, creativity, and self-expression. The fashion designs of this period highlighted the identity of the individual, personal freedom, and the pursuit of humanistic ideals (Chira, 2023). Students are taught on what grounds these styles found their development and, respectively, the ideological base of Western culture, which is determined by the greatness of personal self-expression, autonomy, and individual rights.

The Industrial Revolution introduced new dimensions of social responsibility in Western fashion, as mass production raised ethical concerns regarding labor practices, environmental impact, and consumerism (Thorisdottir & Johannsdottir, 2020). The shift from artisanal production to industrial manufacturing led to rollicking debate about workers' rights (Mohajan, 2019), fair wages (Crafts & Mills, 2022), as well as balanced nature (Ahuti, 2015) issues. These shifts also show the ethical dilemmas involved in costume design and production, which are phenomena students must be aware of and gradually feel a social responsibility for in this day and age of fashion. We also attempt to integrate IPE into the curriculum to make students aware of these historical changes. Because fashion design is often an artistic effort, but sometimes it is also a carrier of social change. This is consistent with IPE's broader goal of promoting ethical and social awareness.

After learning about the costume histories of both China and the West, students can appreciate cultural sophistication, moral standards, and design ideology on an equal basis. The comparative approach provides them with a unique insight into how culture and ethics impact

their choices as costume designers which prepares them to enter their respective careers in a more informed and responsible manner.

3. Research Methods

3.1 Project-Based Learning (PBL) Approach

The project-based learning (PBL) is one of the major ways used in this study to implement IPE goals in costume history classes. PBL focuses on practical projects that require in-depth research, critical thinking, and application (Malik & Zhu, 2023), rather than traditional lecture based methods. Classroom projects that center on costume reproduction help provide students with a structured approach to historical analysis, technical skills, and cultural appreciation. For example, students were asked to recreate Tang Dynasty costumes as part of this course. It required them to trace primary sources, engage with the materials of craft tradition, and appreciate the cultural and social value systems at play during a moment in history. Projects like this would help students connect their academic knowledge to practical experiences while building both technical skills and cultural understanding.

The PBL approach also allows students to participate in research, design costume, and showcase their collaborative research findings as a team. Collaboration enhances critical thinking and problem-solving skills since the students will go through challenges related to historical accuracy, selection of materials, and aesthetic representation (Silva et al., 2023). Data on student engagement, learning outcome, and feedback have been collected through surveys and classroom observation. Students from the PBL group showed heightened motivation towards learning, with more consideration toward cultural transmission and personal investments in learning, compared to the traditionally instructed group of students. Again, reflective notes and presentation of projects provided further insights into the issue of including cultural values and ethical considerations in their project work.

3.2 Experiential Learning and Virtual Reality (VR)

Experiential learning, made possible through VR technology, will provide the student with an immersive experience in costume history through the emulation of historical backgrounds and cultural contexts. Regarding this, VR enables students to experience scenes that are difficult for them to replicate, such as a living, breathing historical event or environment, which can go a long way in helping students understand costume design in its authentic context. The students participating in the course experienced Virtual reality to virtually represent the display of Pre-Qin Dynasty clothes and enabled them to observe hierarchical function and symbolic significance of ceremonial costume. This immersive experience can help students design and experience the feel of historical outfits in the context, and it will facilitate cultural understanding (Jin et al., 2022).

Observations and focus group interviews were conducted to see how effective the VR-based experiential learning had been. According to the students, VR simulations made historical costumes and cultural contexts more accessible and interactive, hence better retaining the cultural knowledge. Many students mentioned that experiencing scenes in VR helped them appreciate how costumes reinforce social values, an important aspect of the IPE objectives on cultural awareness and social responsibility.

3.3 Blended Learning Model

This course module integrates online resources into in-class activities and also allows students flexibility in learning styles that meet both self-study and interactive classroom sessions

(Capone et al., 2017). Online resources include video lectures, 3D simulations, and digital archives that let students work on costume history at their own pace (Saluky & Bahiyah, 2023). These in-class sessions utilize a great deal of hands-on tasks, discussions, and collaborative activities that try to get students applying their knowledge in practical ways. This dual approach enables students to engage with the course material from various perspectives, enhancing their total comprehension and retention.

Evidence has shown that the blended learning model produces significant benefits in enhancing students' comprehension and engagement (Serrano et al., 2019). The model allows students not only to work on consolidating knowledge through activities that online resources can facilitate but also to apply knowledge, particularly in collaborative learning settings (Levin, 2024). This has led students to feel that online resources independently allow them to come to a deeper understanding of the core concepts, while classroom activities give them the ability to apply this knowledge in life, making it more practical and interactive. Besides, the blended approach tends to promote comprehensive development in the field of fashion history, giving effective support in developing professional competencies of the students. This model of integrated learning further creates supportive conditions to embed ideological and political education within the curriculum and supports the infusion of cultural values, social responsibility, and ethical awareness into the teaching process.

4. Discussion

The integration of IPE within the Course of Chinese and Western Costume History provides a prime example of how to embed cultural and ethical education within a professional training context. It will employ Project-Based Learning, experiential learning with VR, and the Blended Learning Model to make the learning of costume history more accessible and interesting to students than simple technical study. PBL engages learners with the historical context, material, and cultural meaning of traditional costume actively and develops a much deeper insight into the way in which traditional costume reflects societal values. For instance, in project work such as reproducing Tang Dynasty costume, students take part in hands-on practice in historical costume analysis, thus strengthening the knowledge of traditional Chinese cultural values and the role of costume in historical social structures. In this way, practical learning will encourage and allow students to think about costume as something more than an aesthetic object but also as a medium in which ethical values and social responsibility are conveyed.

The use of VR in experiential learning provides students with an immersive approach that bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and historical context through virtual recreation of real historical settings. This immersive element enhances engagement in the subject of costume history, with improvements in retention regarding cultural information as students view costume in its appropriate societal context. Combined with a blended learning model of online resources and in-class activities, students will have the opportunity to explore the foundational knowledge on their own and then apply the information in interactive settings. This overall approach provides a significant strengthening of students' cultural pride and their ethical awareness, meeting the IPE objective of fostering social responsibility (Table 1). In that respect, students not only learn about costume history but also understand how these historical costume echo broader ethical and cultural values, thus preparing them for a more responsible and culturally sensitive approach to fashion design.

Table 1: Comparison of Course Design and Learning Objectives

Course Module	Specific Content	IPE Objectives	Learning Outcomes
Chinese and Western Costume Cultural Background	Introduction to the cultural, historical, and social contexts of Chinese and Western costumes	Cultural Confidence: Strengthen students' appreciation for traditional values and aesthetics	Cultivate cultural pride, deepen understanding of cultural heritage, and broaden design perspectives
Ideological and Political Education (IPE) Integration	Embedding social responsibility, ethical considerations, and cultural identity within costume studies	Ethical and Social Awareness: Foster a sense of responsibility and moral commitment	Encourage students to apply ethical values in design, relate professional skills to cultural context
Project-Based Learning (PBL)	Tang Dynasty costume reproduction project with research on historical materials and techniques	Active Learning & Cultural Application: Connect hands-on experience with historical analysis	Develop critical thinking, practical skills, and an appreciation for cultural elements in design
VR Experiential Learning	Immersive experiences in historical settings (e.g., Pre-Qin Dynasty costume displays)	Empathy and Cultural Understanding: Enhance engagement with historical and cultural contexts	Deepen cultural understanding, enhance retention of cultural insights, and build empathy toward traditional heritage
Blended Learning Model	Combination of self-paced online resources (videos, digital archives) with interactive classroom sessions	Integrated Knowledge Retention: Reinforce comprehension through self-study and collaborative learning	Improve knowledge retention, foster independent learning, and strengthen collaborative problem-solving skills

5. Conclusion

Integrating IPE into the Chinese and Western Costume History course effectively merges cultural education with professional skill development, fostering a connection between academic knowledge and societal values. Through PBL, VR-assisted experiential learning, and blended learning, this course enriches students' understanding of costume history while fostering cultural pride, social responsibility, and ethical awareness. Findings indicate that these methods cultivate students' motivation and deepen their appreciation for cultural heritage. The inclusion of VR and experiential learning proved especially impactful by making historical contexts more accessible, reinforcing cultural awareness. PBL encourages students to engage actively with cultural and ethical dimensions in their projects, cultivating critical thinking and problem-solving skills that are essential for today's fashion industry. Future research could expand the use of immersive technologies to further enhance IPE's impact, preparing graduates who are culturally attuned, ethically conscious, and capable of making meaningful contributions to society.

Acknowledgement

This research was supported by the Teaching Reform Project of Changsha Normal University

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