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Exploring a Characteristic Path for Ideological and Political Education: A Case Study of Chongqing Technology and Business Institute

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Abstract

The "Great Ideological and Political Course" (GIPC) in vocational education seeks to nurture well-rounded individuals with professional expertise and civic responsibility. Chongqing Technology and Business Institute (CTBI) has pioneered an innovative model that integrates classroom learning with experiential extracurricular activities in rural communities, creating a dynamic linkage between theory and practice. By engaging students in local industry development, CTBI combines red culture, professional skills, and digital technology to revitalize traditional handicrafts, expand cultural influence, and strengthen market competitiveness. This distinctive approach has not only enhanced product visibility and sales but also fostered student leadership, teamwork, creativity, and problem-solving abilities while earning recognition from local governments and communities. The model embodies three core principles—cultural inheritance and innovation, immersive ideological education, and rural revitalization—providing a holistic, student-centered, and sustainable framework for integrating ideological and political education in vocational settings that can be scaled, adapted, and replicated nationwide with broad impact.

Keywords

Great Ideological and Political Course; Red Culture; Digital Media Activation; Experiential Education; Rural Revitalization

1. Introduction

In modern higher education, ideological and political education is pivotal in fostering professional competence alongside civic responsibility and ethical values (Li & Zhang, 2022). The "Great Ideological and Political Course" (GIPC) transcends traditional classroom instruction by embedding ideological education within students' social and professional experiences (Ministry of Education of China, 2020). Vocational colleges face a dual mission: producing technically proficient graduates while ensuring that these graduates embody social responsibility. As Cheng (2022) argues in his work on intelligent communication, education in the digital era must go beyond technical training and cultivate values that allow students to engage responsibly with society and technology.

CTBI has developed a pioneering "Three-Heart Guided" digital activation model that integrates professional curricula, ideological education, and experiential rural engagement. This approach not only fosters students' personal

and professional growth but also contributes to rural revitalization through culturally informed digital interventions.

Furthermore, CTBI's exploration aligns with the broader theoretical perspective of intelligent media (Cheng, 2023), which emphasizes the role of digital tools such as AIGC (generative AI), data visualization, and cultural communication in reshaping social learning experiences.

2. Methodology

2.1 Cultivating Local Awareness and Social Responsibility

Case narratives serve as both entry points and anchors in CTBI's exploration of ideological and political education, providing tangible stories that connect abstract values with lived realities. One particularly illustrative example is the story of Ruan Shuang, an animation student from a rural background, who recognized the decline of traditional handicrafts such as the "Cloth Tiger". Once deeply embedded in local family life as both a children's toy and a symbolic object warding off evil spirits, the Cloth Tiger represented not just material culture but also collective memory and community identity. However, under the twin pressures of industrialization and market modernization, such handicrafts were gradually marginalized, reduced either to tourist curios or forgotten altogether in the shift toward mass-produced goods.

Ruan's hometown, Zhongyi Township, had already undergone significant economic and infrastructural transformations as part of China's broader poverty alleviation and rural revitalization strategies (Xi, 2017). Yet, while basic livelihood and infrastructure improved, cultural industries lagged behind in visibility, innovation, and sustainability. This gap between material improvement and cultural continuity became the context for Ruan's realization. Inspired by the narratives of the Original Heart Courtyard, a local cultural landmark, and the vivid oral storytelling of artisan Ma Popo, who represented a living link to fading traditions, Ruan sought to channel his professional animation skills into reviving these endangered cultural forms. His initiative was not just about preserving handicrafts in their original state, but about translating them into digital forms that could resonate with younger audiences and compete for attention in the crowded digital marketplace.

This case illustrates how vocational education can act as a bridge between personal identity, community heritage, and professional practice. Ruan's personal ties to his hometown gave him a sense of emotional ownership and responsibility; his vocational training in animation provided the technical means; and the broader ideological framework of CTBI gave him the moral and civic lens to situate his project within national strategies of rural revitalization and cultural confidence. The story exemplifies what Cheng (2022) describes in Metaverse: Concept, Technology and Ecosystem: that cultural revitalization in the digital age requires new narrative vehicles—ranging from short videos and animations to immersive VR/AR media—that not only preserve tradition but also reframe it for contemporary consumption and interpretation. In this way, ideological and political education becomes inseparable from cultural inheritance, offering students a pathway to view their professional craft not merely as a technical pursuit but as a form of social responsibility, civic engagement, and cultural renewal.

To enable such practices, CTBI established a cross-disciplinary guidance team that brought together expertise in media design, ideological-political education, entrepreneurship, and rural sociology. Media design specialists provided students with the creative techniques to digitize handicrafts into engaging visual forms. Ideological-political educators ensured that the narratives embedded in student projects reflected core values such as red culture, craftsmanship, and innovation. Entrepreneurship mentors guided students in transforming cultural products into viable market offerings, while rural sociologists provided insights into the social fabric and cultural context of rural communities, ensuring that projects remained authentic and community-driven.

This structure reflects experiential learning theory (Kolb, 2015), which emphasizes the iterative cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Students first experienced rural life and handicraft culture directly, then reflected on its decline and significance, conceptualized strategies for revitalization through digital means, and finally experimented with concrete outputs such as animations and marketing campaigns. The approach also embodies the principle of multi-chain integration—"industrial chain, education chain, talent chain, and innovation chain"—a framework increasingly emphasized in Chinese vocational education reform. Here, industry provides the demand and application context; education supplies theoretical and practical training; talent emerges through students' participation; and innovation ensures long-term sustainability and adaptation to new technologies.

2.2 Multidimensional Collaboration for Ideological Integration

CTBI's model lies in its multidimensional collaboration, which carefully integrates professional training with ideological cultivation. Faculty members from diverse fields—including animation, ideological-political theory, rural sociology, and entrepreneurship—jointly designed a program that not only emphasized technical proficiency but also wove in cultural awareness and value education. This multidisciplinary guidance created an educational ecosystem in which each discipline contributed a unique perspective: animation teachers guided students on artistic expression, ideological-political educators emphasized value orientation, sociologists provided insights into community life, and entrepreneurship experts offered strategies for sustainable market integration. Together, this collaborative framework encouraged students to transform local cultural resources into digital products with both aesthetic appeal and cultural depth.

Importantly, this collaboration extended well beyond the classroom. Students were not passive recipients of knowledge but active participants in a process of discovery and creation. They traveled into rural communities to conduct field research, interviewed veteran artisans, documented oral histories, and observed traditional production practices. These experiences gave students direct access to the living texture of local culture, which could not have been fully captured through textbooks or classroom discussions alone. Armed with these insights, students translated their findings into animations, short films, interactive media, and digital marketing strategies, effectively building a comprehensive ecosystem of practice—from cultural observation to creative production, and ultimately, to market delivery. This holistic cycle reflected the spirit of "learning by doing," aligning ideological concepts with the real-world needs of communities.

Such processes resonate strongly with Vygotsky's constructivist theory (1978), which highlights the social and dialogical nature of learning. Knowledge in this model is not transmitted passively from teacher to student; rather, it is co-constructed through guided interactions within communities of practice. For CTBI students, learning occurred not only in the interaction with faculty and peers but also in the dialogue with artisans and villagers, whose lived experiences embodied values of resilience, craftsmanship, and community solidarity. By engaging in fieldwork and collaborative production, students not only acquired technical skills in animation, media production, and digital marketing but also internalized ideological values such as perseverance, social responsibility, and respect for cultural heritage. In this sense, the CTBI model operationalizes ideological education not through rote memorization or didactic instruction, but through lived experience—where values are discovered, embodied, and enacted in tangible social contexts.

Equally significant was the realization that professional communication is inseparable from ethical and social dimensions. When producing animations or promotional campaigns, students were often confronted with critical questions: How should local culture be represented without distortion? How can traditional crafts be modernized without erasing their authenticity? Who benefits when handicrafts are turned into commodities for larger markets? In managing e-commerce platforms, students also encountered dilemmas regarding pricing fairness, intellectual property, and cultural ownership. These questions underscored the fact that professional practice is not value-neutral but deeply embedded in social accountability.

This recognition echoes Cheng's (2023) arguments in *AIGC: Turning Generative AI into Your External Brain*, where he stresses that technological tools are never neutral conduits; they are always embedded in cultural, ethical, and social systems that demand careful navigation. CTBI's experience demonstrates this principle vividly: for students, the process of creating animations or launching digital campaigns was not only a technical exercise but also a profound lesson in the ethical responsibilities of communication and design. They came to see that every digital artifact—whether a short video, an e-commerce page, or a promotional graphic—carries implicit cultural and ideological meanings that shape community identity and public perception.

Ultimately, CTBI's multidimensional collaboration illustrates how vocational education can achieve more than skill training. It provides students with the opportunity to negotiate meaning, confront ethical dilemmas, and internalize civic values through practice. In doing so, it nurtures professionals who are technically capable, culturally sensitive, and socially accountable—qualities increasingly necessary in the digital era where communication and technology intersect with every aspect of social life.

2.3 Digital Animation as a Medium for Ideological Education

Perhaps the most innovative component of CTBI's methodology was the development of the "Xinhu" digital animation series, which translated abstract ideological concepts into engaging and emotionally resonant cultural narratives. Unlike traditional teaching methods that often rely on abstract political discourse, the Xinhu project harnessed the imaginative potential of digital animation to make ideological values vivid, personal, and relatable. The series was designed around three carefully constructed characters—the Guardian Heart Tiger, the Craftsmanship Tiger, and the Innovation Tiger—each embodying values central to both local traditions and national ideological frameworks.

The Guardian Heart Tiger, inspired by veteran Party member Ma Peiqing, symbolized revolutionary heritage, resilience, and community dedication. Through this character, students learned how political ideals are not simply theoretical constructs but are embodied in the lived histories of individuals who contributed to their communities with integrity and sacrifice. The Craftsmanship Tiger, modeled after artisan Zhang Yufang, highlighted excellence in traditional skills and underscored the importance of preserving and transmitting cultural knowledge across generations. This figure reminded students that professional quality and ethical commitment are inseparable, and that innovation must be built upon respect for cultural roots. Finally, the Innovation Tiger, representing the creativity and dynamism of the students themselves, symbolized how younger generations could channel professional expertise, digital technologies, and entrepreneurial spirit into serving the cause of rural revitalization. In this way, the three tigers together represented a holistic vision of ideological education: past dedication, present craftsmanship, and future innovation.

Produced using advanced 3D digital animation techniques, the Xinhu series combined traditional visual motifs—such as textile patterns, rural landscapes, and folkloric symbols—with modern design aesthetics, thereby appealing simultaneously to local communities proud of their heritage and to younger, tech-savvy audiences accustomed to digital storytelling. The choice of animation as a medium was particularly effective because it bridged generational gaps: elderly artisans could see their cultural practices reflected in animated form, while young students and online viewers could engage with ideological content in a format familiar to their media consumption habits.

Distributed widely through new media platforms, including short video apps, social media, and online streaming sites, the animations not only raised awareness of local handicrafts but also provided an accessible and emotionally compelling entry point into ideological education. Rather than approaching ideological content as distant or abstract, viewers encountered it in the form of stories, characters, and images that connected directly with personal experiences and cultural pride. This story-driven pedagogy allowed for deeper internalization: values such as dedication, craftsmanship, and innovation were not just taught, but felt, imagined, and enacted through narrative immersion.

The Xinhu project exemplifies what Cheng (2023) terms intelligent media communication, in which digital tools such as animation, visualization, and AIGC (generative AI) function as amplifiers of cultural meaning and civic education. Intelligent media does not merely transmit information but creates multi-sensory experiences that integrate ideological learning with aesthetic pleasure and social participation. In this sense, the Xinhu series operated on multiple levels: it was at once a pedagogical tool for students, a cultural product celebrating local traditions, and a commercial asset capable of generating market value through the revitalization of handicrafts. This multidimensional impact underscores the potential of vocational education to produce outputs that are not only ideologically meaningful but also culturally enriching, economically sustainable, and socially impactful.

Moreover, the Xinhu series demonstrated the dialogical power of digital media. It became a medium of conversation between tradition and modernity, between local identity and national values, and between older generations and youth. On the one hand, it reaffirmed the rootedness of cultural heritage in community life; on the other, it reimagined that heritage through the lens of digital aesthetics and contemporary narratives. In doing so, it illustrated how vocational education, when combined with intelligent media, can create a living bridge between historical memory and future aspirations, aligning ideological education with both personal identity formation and broader societal development.

3. Results

The outcomes of CTBI's model were both wide-ranging and influential. At the national level, the initiative attracted significant media attention, being reported by CCTV News, Guangming Online, and several other authoritative platforms. Such exposure not only validated the model as a pioneering practice in vocational ideological education but also positioned CTBI as a benchmark for peer institutions. The project further gained recognition through

governmental endorsement, having been selected as a representative case of national intangible cultural heritage workshops. This institutional validation underscored the value of integrating professional education with cultural preservation.

Beyond recognition, the model demonstrated a tangible market impact. By revitalizing traditional handicrafts through digital storytelling and online promotion, CTBI helped increase product visibility, enabling local crafts to reach wider audiences and achieve higher sales in both physical and digital marketplaces. This commercial success reinforced the sustainability of cultural revitalization by linking heritage preservation with economic viability. Equally important were the transformations observed among students themselves. Many reported a heightened sense of civic awareness, greater confidence in pursuing digital entrepreneurship, and a deeper appreciation of cultural identity. These personal and professional shifts illustrate the model's effectiveness in producing graduates who are technically skilled, socially responsible, and culturally grounded.

4. Discussion

The CTBI case illustrates how vocational education can innovate across three interconnected dimensions. The first concerns cultural inheritance and innovation. By employing digital storytelling methods, students were able to reframe endangered handicrafts in formats that resonated with contemporary audiences, thereby preserving local traditions while simultaneously reinforcing community identity (Wang, 2021). This dual effect of preservation and renewal reflects the broader potential of digital media to serve as a cultural bridge across generations.

A second dimension is the emphasis on immersive ideological education. Rather than relying solely on abstract classroom instruction, CTBI translated ideological concepts into lived experiences through the "Three-Heart Guided" framework. Students not only learned about the values of red culture, craftsmanship, and innovation, but also enacted them in practice by collaborating with artisans, engaging in community projects, and producing socially meaningful media. This experiential pedagogy helped students internalize ideological values more deeply and meaningfully than conventional methods could achieve.

The third dimension relates to support for rural revitalization. By contributing their professional expertise in animation, design, and digital marketing, students offered concrete solutions to local economic challenges. Their work not only improved the visibility and sales of handicrafts but also demonstrated how vocational education can directly empower rural industries. This alignment between education, industry, and community illustrates the socially responsive role that higher education can play in broader national development strategies. Taken together, these three dimensions reveal CTBI's model as an integrated framework that connects cultural preservation, value education, and social responsibility in a mutually reinforcing cycle.

5. Conclusion

CTBI's "Xinhu Dream-Building" initiative provides a replicable model for embedding ideological-political education into vocational curricula. By merging professional training, digital storytelling, cultural preservation, and rural revitalization, it expands the scope of the Great Ideological and Political Course. This model aligns with the broader intellectual vision that the future of education lies in the convergence of culture, technology, and values.

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