

On the Connection of Moral Education and Law Education in Universities and Middle Schools in China

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Abstract: In Chinese universities and middle schools, certain content of moral education course and law education course is often repeated thus students always feel bored when they study these fields. This essay analyzes the connection between moral education and law education in universities and middle schools, and puts forward countermeasures to solve this problem. To connect the moral education and law education in universities and middle schools, efforts from revision of teaching materials, training of teachers' teaching ability, social practice teaching and other aspects are required.

Keywords: Moral education; Law education; Teaching ability; Social practice

1. Question

Students start to learn "Morality and the Rule of Law" from junior high school, learning the knowledge of morality and the rule of law in the classroom, and begin to receive systematic knowledge of moral education and rule of law education. At the senior high school stage, students continue to receive education on morality and law, from the compulsory course 004: philosophy and culture to the optional compulsory subjects of political courses, the law and life. After they go to universities, students continue to accept the courses of moral education and rule of law education. It could be seen that China attaches great importance to students' ideological and moral learning quality and legal literacy. From the perspective of teaching practice, however, there are many overlaps in the content of moral education and legal education in middle schools and universities, such as human rights and obligations, the Constitution and the rule of law, the value of life, and Patriotism and Mizu spirit, etc. This brings great challenges to the teaching practice, and also has a negative impact on the teaching effect to a certain extent. Judging from the students' reflections, there are a considerable number of students, especially college students, who are not interested in the relevant course content because they feel like they have already learned it. Therefore, students often do things that have nothing to do with the learning content in class. This situation poses a serious challenge to the moral education and legal education in colleges and universities. It is not conducive to the cultivation of talents in colleges and universities. Therefore, how to connect the moral education and legal education in middle schools with those in universities has been as a serious issue. It has become a prominent problem for our ideological and political educators. This essay tries to explore how to connect in order to provide some good suggestions.

2. Cause Analysis

During the process of transitioning from middle school to university, the purpose and needs of students undergo significant changes. These changes can be primarily attributed to the following factors:

2.1 Students have higher expectations regarding the depth of knowledge

They are more eager to understand the underlying reasons behind concepts. While the learning experience in middle school may have been satisfactory, students' intellectual curiosity expands further during their university studies. Consequently, the teaching approach employed in university classrooms should focus on persuading students, enabling them to not only comprehend but also internalize the knowledge. This becomes particularly apparent when discussing topics such as democracy,

freedom, the rule of law, outlook on life, values, and the spirit of collectivism. Students often raise numerous questions about these subjects during or after class. If the teacher fails to provide satisfactory answers, the effectiveness of classroom instruction will be significantly diminished.

2.2 Quite a significant number of students harbor a highly utilitarian attitude towards learning

During their time in middle school, their primary focus is on preparing for the senior high school entrance examination and college entrance examination, seldom considering the practical application of knowledge. However, upon entering university, students become highly skeptical about the practicality of moral education and legal education courses. Consequently, a negative attitude prevails within the classroom setting. Students question the relevance of these courses to their future employment prospects and career development after graduation, presenting a substantial challenge to the teaching of moral education and legal education courses in universities.

2.3 As students transition from adolescence to adulthood, their thoughts regarding moral and legal issues become intertwined with their connection to the country, society, and family, prompting a more rational analysis

In the teaching process, it is crucial for me to engage in critical thinking and stay informed about current national and societal concerns, enabling effective communication with students. Given the prevalence of an information-rich society and the openness of social trends, utilizing the standpoint, viewpoint, and methods of Marxism to explain and analyze the issues that students care about has become an essential skill for every reflective educator. This responsibility not only falls on teachers but also presents a significant challenge to their theoretical knowledge and literacy.

2.4 With the intensifying competition in the job market, the employment prospects for certain majors in universities have become less favorable

Consequently, some college students hold a relatively pessimistic view of their future academic and career opportunities, leading to an overall negative outlook. It is our moral education and legal education teachers' responsibility to guide these students out of the shadows of pessimism and negativity, empowering them to confidently embrace college life and make the most of their experiences. Cultivating a positive outlook on life holds particular practical and urgent significance. The exceptional teaching provided by educators may even help students prone to depression regain a sense of purpose and vitality in their lives.

3. Challenges

From middle school to university, both students and teachers undergo significant changes. The teaching objectives in universities aim to cultivate well-rounded individuals who possess morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetic appreciation, and practical skills, contributing to the socialist modernization of our country. However, due to the unique nature of moral education and legal education courses, teachers face specific requirements concerning their teaching abilities, methods, and ethical conduct. In the context of China, there are still several challenges in connecting moral education and legal education courses between middle schools and universities:

3.1 As the content of the “Ideology, Morality, and the Rule of Law” textbook in colleges and universities partially overlaps with that of middle schools, teachers should not simply rely on the textbook’s content

Instead, they should approach it from a distinctive and deeper perspective, striving to enhance the understanding of the subject matter. This necessitates university teachers to possess a high level of proficiency in Marxist theory and analytical problem-solving skills. For instance, when discussing democracy, university teachers may delve into topics such as our country's people's congress system and consultative mechanisms related to people's livelihood. Some students may inquire about the American democratic system and why our country's democracy is suited to our own circumstances. They may also question why our country cannot adopt an American-style democracy. When faced with such questions, teachers lacking a profound understanding of Marxist theory, analytical skills, and effective guidance may struggle to convince their students. It is essential to conduct a rational analysis of areas where our country's democracy can be improved, approaching the topic with objectivity, fairness, and theoretical depth, in order to achieve better teaching outcomes. Similarly, when discussing topics like freedom, rights, and regulations, teachers

should not solely focus on the Marxist concept. They should also explore Western perspectives on these notions, providing a clear comparison between the Marxist perspective and Western understanding. This approach yields a more profound lecture that is easily comprehensible for students. Moreover, when teaching patriotism, the choice of perspective becomes particularly crucial. Since students receive patriotic education from an early age, it can be challenging to delve into the depth of the subject matter. Therefore, patriotic education in the university classroom should emphasize a perspective that highlights rational patriotism, leading to more effective outcomes.

3.2 Establishing teaching authority for instructors of critical thinking courses in universities can be challenging

Students' lack of enthusiasm for topics such as morality and the rule of law necessitates significant efforts from university teachers to establish their authority in the classroom. The power dynamic between teachers and students undergoes a shift from middle school to university, with decreased school control and increased student autonomy. In middle school, strict student management and teachers' authority are more prevalent, creating a sense of fear among students towards both the school and teachers. However, in universities, students are generally adults, and the school adopts a more relaxed approach to student management. Consequently, students' fear towards the institution and teachers diminishes, granting them greater autonomy. Nevertheless, authority differs from power. Power is imposed externally, whereas authority comes from within. University-level teachers must find ways to establish their teaching authority to achieve better teaching results and gain students' respect. This requires teachers to dedicate their spare time to self-improvement and strive to embody characteristics such as knowledgeability, moral integrity, care for students, and dedication to their profession. Once teaching authority is established, classroom lectures gain recognition from students, ensuring effective teaching outcomes.

3.3 Teaching critical thinking courses in colleges presents notable challenges

When instructing on topics such as morality and the rule of law, university teachers should focus on cultivating students' thinking patterns and depth of analysis, which proves more demanding than in middle schools. For instance, during a discussion on the rule of law, the author once shared a case from CCTV's "Today's Statement" segment. The case involved a burglary in a rural area of Hubei province, where the thief was caught in the act and subsequently killed by the homeowner while waiting for the police to arrive. Surprisingly, the police faced no accountability for this incident. Two students raised a question during the discussion: why were the police not held responsible for dereliction of duty? Despite the program's guest teacher providing a clear explanation, the students insisted that the police should face criminal charges. This highlights the challenge of transforming students' moral-based thinking into a legal-oriented thought process. They believed that any mistakes should be investigated, and thus the police should be held criminally responsible in this case. Changing students' thinking patterns is difficult and requires considerable knowledge accumulation. However, if teachers actively care about students' knowledge development and provide guidance both inside and outside the classroom, students can quickly grasp the essence of legal thinking and improve their ability to approach legal issues with a legal mindset.

3.4 The teaching method employed for thinking and law courses in universities is overly simplistic

Currently, classroom teaching constitutes the primary mode of instruction, but the effectiveness and practicality of moral and legal education are closely tied to real-life experiences. Without the influence of social practice, students may be swayed by alternative ideologies, leading to disagreements with Marxist principles on morality, law, life, and values. Consequently, the teaching outcomes may be significantly diminished. Therefore, it is crucial to integrate moral and legal education with students' social experiences. Universities should appropriately incorporate social practice into the curriculum of thinking courses, allowing students to grasp the significance of virtue and the spirit of the rule of law in practical contexts. By actively engaging students in social practice under the guidance of teachers and demonstrating moral and legal principles through real-life examples, the teaching outcomes can surpass those achieved through classroom lectures alone.

The transition from middle school to university marks a significant milestone in students' personal growth. During the university stage, students' perspectives on life and values gradually stabilize and mature. Therefore, facilitating a successful transition from

middle school to university is of utmost importance. The influence of students' parents on their ideological and moral education, as well as legal education, cannot be overlooked. In order to help students embrace the Marxist perspective on morality and the rule of law, it is necessary to gain a deep understanding of the students' family upbringing. By implementing targeted education based on students' specific circumstances, the timeliness and relevance of thinking courses can be greatly improved.

4. Three Countermeasures

In conclusion, there are several issues in the integration of moral education and legal education from middle school to university in our country. To address these problems, we need to consider the overall education landscape of our nation and prioritize the growth and success of students as the fundamental goal. The following measures can be implemented:

4.1 Textbook revision

Conduct a comprehensive study of the similarities and differences between middle school and university textbooks. Develop a well-structured and progressive content arrangement for topics that may overlap, incorporating fresh and innovative content designs. This will provide students with a deeper understanding of ethical and legal issues, fostering a sense of novelty in their learning experience.

4.2 Enhancing teachers' theoretical knowledge and teaching abilities

Invest efforts in improving the theoretical knowledge and teaching skills of university teachers. Encourage teachers to engage in continuous learning, organize training sessions, and facilitate opportunities for advanced studies at higher-level colleges and universities. This will equip teachers with enhanced abilities to deliver engaging classroom experiences, inspiring students' interest in moral and legal education.

4.3 Diversification of teaching methods

Introduce social practice-based teaching methods, tailored to the individual circumstances of students. Pay attention to the influence of family and society on students and actively guide them in navigating societal and national emergencies and current issues. This approach will help students develop a more accurate understanding of these matters.

By implementing the aforementioned measures, I firmly believe that students will exhibit greater enthusiasm for lectures, and university teachers will play a more significant role in the growth and success of their students. It will contribute to resolving the long-standing challenge of connecting middle school ideological and moral courses with university-level courses.

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