

A Study on the Path of Integrating Curriculum-Based Ideological and Political Education into Junior High School English Reading Teaching under the Background of Fostering Virtue through Education

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Abstract

Fostering virtue through education constitutes the fundamental task of education, and CIPE is a crucial measure to put it into practice. Deepening the research on its application in English teaching is of great significance for cultivating young people with cultural confidence and a global vision. This paper focuses on the integration of CIPE into junior high school English reading teaching. It firstly elaborates the theoretical value of such integration, then systematically analyzes the prevailing difficulties, including language comprehension barriers, the pressure from exam-oriented education and teachers' weak awareness of ideological and political teaching. On this basis, the paper puts forward targeted solutions covering stratified teaching, construction of diversified evaluation systems as well as exploration and integration of ideological and political teaching resources. Methodologically, this paper is a policy- and literature-based conceptual study rather than an empirical investigation; it does not draw on questionnaire or interview data. It systematically reviews authoritative national policies and recent domestic scholarship on junior high school English CIPE and synthesizes them across three dimensions—policy orientation, theoretical research and classroom practice—to analyze integration dilemmas and derive targeted paths, which are then illustrated with representative reading texts from current junior high school English textbooks. The aims of this research are to offer theoretical reference and practical guidance for the in-depth integration of curriculum-based ideological and political education and English reading teaching, and facilitate the realization of the fundamental goal of disciplinary education.

Keywords

Curriculum Ideology and Politics, English Reading Teaching in Junior High School, Layered Teaching, Situational Teaching

1. Introduction

The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China clearly pointed out: “The most basic aim of education is to foster virtue. We will fully implement the Party’s educational policy, carry out the basic task of fostering virtue through education, and nurture a new generation of capable young people with sound moral grounding, intellectual ability, physical vigor, aesthetic sensibility, and work skills who will fully develop socialism and carry forward the socialist cause (Ding & Jiang, 2023).” As a core issue for education in the new era, delivering the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education is directly linked to the cultivation of talents for the great cause of national rejuvenation. Curriculum-based ideological and political education (hereinafter referred to as CIPE) is a comprehensive educational philosophy that integrates value guidance into knowledge teaching, digs ideological elements within all subjects, and realizes collaborative education between subject courses and ideological and political theory courses (Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, 2016). In operational terms, fostering virtue through education (立德树人) is treated here as making moral cultivation the central goal of teaching, so that students’ formation of a correct world outlook, outlook on life and values is pursued together with knowledge and skills rather than as an add-on; CIPE is correspondingly operationalized as the deliberate identification of value-laden elements within subject content—here, English reading texts—and the design of language tasks through which those values are taught by means of, and alongside, linguistic knowledge. This distinction separates the policy goal (what education is for) from the classroom mechanism (how a particular reading lesson delivers it). CIPE for teenagers constitutes a core component of this fundamental task, whose significance is self-evident and has always been a key concern of the party and the country. Currently, China is in a critical period of striving for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, and the new era has put forward higher requirements for talent training. Against this backdrop, the development of CIPE has become a crucial measure to fulfill the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education.

At the stage of compulsory education, the issuance of the Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition) explicitly requires teachers to fully explore the educational value centering on unit themes. It also emphasizes that English teaching should not only develop students’ comprehensive language application ability, but also elevate their humanistic literacy and values (Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, 2022). Furthermore, it clarifies that the objective of junior high school English curriculum is to cultivate students’ core competencies in the English discipline. All these provide policy support and theoretical basis for integrating curriculum-based ideological and political ele-

ments into junior high school English teaching. The fundamental task of fostering virtue through education stresses that disciplinary education should attach importance to ideological and political education for students, and guide them to establish a correct world outlook, outlook on life and values. The junior high school years are a critical stage for students to form their three outlooks, which makes this period extraordinarily important. With its cross-cultural disciplinary attributes, English presents particular necessity and uniqueness for carrying out ideological and political education. As a core segment of skill training, English reading teaching naturally serves as a vital carrier for the integration of CIPE.

Although English teachers have fully recognized the importance and necessity of CIPE and actively practiced it in daily teaching, the integration still faces multiple practical difficulties. On the one hand, some teachers lack an in-depth understanding of the connotation of CIPE, as well as systematic theoretical guidance and practical cases for reference. On the other hand, uneven distribution of ideological and political elements in reading materials and monotonous teaching methods also hinder the effective implementation of relevant education. In addition, exam-oriented education still dominates teaching practice, leading teachers to prioritize language skills over value guidance. It is difficult to realize the organic integration of knowledge imparting and value guidance. Therefore, a systematic research on the current situation of integrating CIPE into junior high school English reading teaching is of important theoretical and practical significance for strengthening the educational function of English discipline and implementing the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education.

This paper is a conceptual, policy- and literature-based study of subject CIPE practice; it analyzes and synthesizes authoritative documents and prior scholarship rather than collecting questionnaire or interview data. Sources were selected against three criteria: 1) Authoritative national policy texts on fostering virtue through education and the compulsory-education English curriculum; 2) Peer-reviewed Chinese studies, published mainly within the last five years, on CIPE in junior high school English; 3) Works that address classroom-level reading practice. The selected materials are screened and sorted chronologically following the development context of CIPE, and are then categorized and synthesized along three dimensions—policy orientation, theoretical research and classroom practice—so as to support the systematic analysis of integration dilemmas and implementation paths proposed throughout this paper. To keep the recommendations concrete, the analysis is illustrated with representative reading texts drawn from current junior high school English textbooks (Compilation Group, 2025).

2. Significance of Integrating Curriculum-Based Ideological and Political Education into Junior High School English Reading Teaching

2.1. Responding to the National Policy Orientation of Fostering Virtue through Education

As a key approach to delivering the fundamental task of fostering virtue through

education, CIPE aims to explore inherent educational elements based on disciplinary teaching carriers, and realize the integrated development of knowledge education and moral education. This philosophy highlights the goal of English discipline to cultivate new-era talents with ideals, competence and a strong sense of responsibility. Meanwhile, it indicates that English curriculum undertakes the historic mission of “disseminating ideas and truths, and shaping souls, lives and new generations” (Zhang & Ma, 2023). At the stage of compulsory education, the Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition) requires teachers to dig deep into educational values around unit themes, which not only points out the direction for English teaching, but also provides policy grounds for the integration of CIPE (Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, 2022).

As one of the core disciplines in basic education, junior high school English covers three crucial years of students’ growth, so its educational value far exceeds the instrumental function of language. Integrating ideological and political elements such as patriotism, cultural confidence and social responsibility into English reading teaching is an inevitable choice to align with national education policies and meet the educational requirements of the new curriculum standards. The subtle infiltration of mainstream values into the whole process of language teaching can make up for the deficiency of moral education in traditional English teaching, resolve the long-standing problem of valuing intellectual education while neglecting moral education, and truly root the task of fostering virtue through education in English teaching, so as to uphold the original aspiration and historic mission of basic education.

2.2. Promoting the Quality Improvement of English Reading Teaching

For a long time, influenced by the exam-oriented system, junior high school English reading teaching in China has formed a rigid teaching model centered on vocabulary, grammar and skill training. Teaching has long focused on the indoctrination of linguistic knowledge and the training of problem-solving skills. Such a model ignores the cultural connotation, ideological value and thinking implication of reading texts, as well as students’ thinking quality and cultural literacy, resulting in superficial reading teaching. Consequently, students only acquire fragmented linguistic knowledge, fail to develop sound reading literacy and critical thinking ability, and eventually fall into the dilemma of “being able to solve exercises but not to read comprehensively, mastering language but lacking cultural understanding” (Jiang, 2025).

The integration of CIPE brings new ideas and directions to the reform of junior high school English reading teaching. From the perspective of CIPE, reading teaching is no longer limited to the one-way output of linguistic knowledge, but takes texts as carriers to coordinate language training and value guidance. By exploring the educational connotation of texts and restructuring teaching objectives, contents and procedures, teachers can transform reading teaching from “exam-oriented teaching” to “literacy-oriented teaching” (Li & Wang, 2024). On the one

hand, the integration of ideological and political elements enriches teaching contents, eliminates dullness and monotony in classroom teaching, and motivates students to conduct in-depth reading and active thinking. On the other hand, diversified teaching activities guided by ideological and political education encourage students to study texts intensively and enhance their cross-cultural comprehension competence. These changes are expected to improve the depth and overall quality of English reading classes, to support the high-quality development of English reading teaching, and to lay a foundation for the all-round development of students' core competencies. Consistent with the cited studies, such outcomes—including deeper reading and stronger critical thinking—are theoretically grounded expectations rather than demonstrated causal effects, and warrant empirical verification in future classroom research.

2.3. Boosting the Coordinated Development of Students' Comprehensive Literacy

The junior high school period is pivotal for students to shape their world outlook, outlook on life and values. During this stage, students witness rapid cognitive development but immature value judgment, making them vulnerable to the impact of diverse online culture and foreign cultures from Western countries. Due to its nature of cross-cultural communication, English reading texts contain a large number of Western cultures, life philosophies and values. Without positive ideological and political guidance, students may blindly worship Western cultures, which will lead to vague cultural cognition and biased value judgment.

The integration of CIPE can effectively address the above challenges. By tapping ideological and political elements such as patriotism, cultural confidence and the craftsman spirit in reading texts, teachers can help students establish correct values and cultural identity. In addition, diversified teaching activities designed for CIPE can cultivate students' sense of social responsibility and global vision, so as to advance the coordinated development of their comprehensive literacy. Such all-round value guidance not only helps students form sound cultural cognition in English learning, but also provides solid ideological support for them to grow into outstanding talents for society in the future. The strengthening of cultural identity claimed here should be read as a literature-supported expectation argued on conceptual grounds, not as an established empirical finding.

3. Dilemmas in Integrating Curriculum-Based Ideological and Political Education into Junior High School English Reading Teaching

3.1. Barriers Caused by General Language Comprehension Difficulties

Before turning to the specific difficulties, it is worth stating how this paper positions the relationship between language comprehension and value guidance. Comprehension is treated not as a separate objective running parallel to value guidance, but as an enabling prerequisite that is at the same time an interacting

factor: adequate comprehension is the precondition for noticing a text's implicit values, while purposeful value guidance in turn gives students a motive to push through linguistic obstacles. The dilemmas below are therefore read as obstacles to this single, two-way process rather than to two competing goals. The particularity of English language is the primary objective factor restricting the in-depth integration of CIPE into reading teaching. In junior high school English reading classes, students' limited language proficiency greatly hinders their understanding of the ideological and political connotation of texts. Insufficient vocabulary and poor command of grammar prevent students from fully comprehending reading materials, and further hinder them from exploring and perceiving the implicit ideological and political elements in texts. When students fail to reach a certain language proficiency, they can hardly focus on the cultural values and ideas conveyed by texts, which weakens the actual effect of CIPE.

Furthermore, cultural discrepancies and logical differences between Chinese and English may cause connotation deviation in the transformation of some ideological and political elements. In addition, the ideological and political connotation of some English texts is implicit, which requires in-depth interpretation combined with cultural contexts, situational contexts and historical backgrounds. Restricted by inadequate language comprehension ability, students are unable to independently explore the educational value of texts, and teachers are also prevented from conducting in-depth ideological and political guidance. As a result, the integration of ideological and political education becomes a mere formality, reduced to simple moral slogans at the end of class, rather than immersive and in-depth value guidance. This further undermines the effectiveness of moral education. Language comprehension serves as an essential prerequisite for value guidance in reading teaching; meanwhile, value guidance can conversely drive students to break through language obstacles, so the two interact dynamically rather than exist as isolated parallel teaching objectives.

3.2. Persistent Pressure from Exam Anxiety

Currently, junior high school English teaching in China is still deeply influenced by the exam-oriented education evaluation system. Centering on examination scores, this evaluation mechanism leads to the prevalent phenomenon of prioritizing exam preparation over moral education in teaching practice. Under the exam-oriented environment, both teachers' teaching objectives and students' learning activities revolve around the examination syllabus. Too much emphasis is placed on memorizing linguistic knowledge and practicing problem-solving skills, while the cultural connotation and ideological and political value of reading texts are neglected.

Moreover, the senior high school entrance examination score remains the core evaluation criterion for junior high school English teaching. Question types, scores and accuracy rate of answers are the main indicators to measure teaching effects. In contrast, ideological and political education and literacy cultivation are implicit educational objectives without quantitative evaluation criteria, nor are

they directly linked to further education. The existing teaching evaluation mainly focuses on reading proficiency while ignoring students' emotional attitudes and other dimensions (Xu, Sun, & Wang, 2026). Such evaluation orientation drives students to devote most of their energy to score-improving learning activities, resulting in low attention and participation in ideological and political education. This phenomenon not only weakens the educational function of English reading teaching, but also hinders the realization of CIPE goals. Therefore, breaking the shackles of exam-oriented education and establishing a comprehensive and diversified education evaluation system is the key to promoting the integration of CIPE into junior high school English reading teaching.

3.3. Weak Awareness on Ideological and Political Teaching

Teachers are the main practitioners of curriculum-based ideological and political education. Teachers' ideological and political cognition, ability to explore teaching resources and instructional design capacity directly determine the final effect of integrated teaching. Nevertheless, some teachers currently hold a one-sided understanding of CIPE and are deficient in professional competence. On the one hand, many teachers fail to fully recognize the importance of CIPE, and simply regard it as an additional task rather than an indispensable part of education and teaching. They still take cultivating students' listening, speaking, reading and writing skills as the top priority, and marginalize the requirements of ideological and political education (Wang, 2024). Such biased cognition makes teachers lack initiative and creativity in teaching practice. They neither dig deep into ideological and political elements in textbooks nor combine these elements with linguistic knowledge organically.

On the other hand, most teachers have not received systematic theoretical learning and professional training on curriculum-based ideological and political education, and have not mastered scientific methods for exploring resources, designing lessons and infiltrating ideological and political education in English reading teaching. Meanwhile, some teachers are deficient in cross-cultural literacy and ideological and political attainment, so they cannot accurately extract the core ideological and political connotation of texts. When dealing with diverse reading materials, they only dig out superficial educational elements and waste high-quality educational resources in texts, making in-depth moral education impossible. To sum up, strengthening teachers' awareness and professional capabilities in CIPE has become an important prerequisite for improving the educational effect of junior high school English reading teaching.

4. Paths to Integrate Curriculum-Based Ideological and Political Education into Junior High School English Reading Teaching

4.1. Implementing Stratified Teaching Based on Students' Learning Conditions

Junior high school students differ significantly in English foundation, cognitive

ability and thinking level. A unified teaching model cannot meet the diverse demands of students in ideological and political learning. Hence, stratified teaching tailored to students' actual learning situations is an important approach to implement CIPE in junior high school English reading teaching. The core of stratified teaching is to design targeted teaching objectives and contents according to students' differences in English proficiency, cognitive ability and learning interests, so as to ensure that every student can acquire linguistic knowledge and internalize ideological and political elements within their own capacity.

For students with weak English foundation, the teaching objective is set to consolidate basic linguistic knowledge and infiltrate elementary ideological and political cognition. Teachers can arrange basic vocabulary and sentence patterns as learning tasks, and convey themes such as patriotism and social responsibility through simple texts. For students with solid language proficiency, the teaching focuses on critical thinking and value discrimination as well as comprehensive literacy cultivation. Teachers can guide students to analyze complex texts in depth, so that they can establish correct cultural views, values and world outlooks through intensive reading and critical discussion, and realize the transformation from passive acceptance of educational ideas to active practice of values. Such teaching method of teaching students in accordance with their aptitude can satisfy the learning needs of students at different levels, and achieve the goals of ideological and political education imperceptibly, which fully reflects the practical value of stratified teaching in the integration of curriculum-based ideological and political education. For example, the Unit 4 reading "Reaching New Heights" (Compilation Group, 2025), which recounts how a Chinese team first scaled Qomolangma from the northern side in 1960 (climbers Liu Lianman, Wang Fuzhou, Qu Yinhua and Gongbu), can carry two objective tiers from the same text. Students with a weaker foundation work on core vocabulary and sentence patterns—such as "reach the top", "survive the terrible conditions" and "8848.86 metres"—together with one basic value takeaway: that this was a national first achieved through courage and teamwork. Stronger students take a critical discussion prompt—"Why did climbers call the northern route the 'Death Road,' and what does turning it into 'new heights' suggest about that generation's spirit?"—and connect the text to national perseverance and the 2020 re-measurement of the peak.

4.2. Establishing a Diversified Evaluation System

To fully assess students' learning outcomes in English reading teaching integrated with curriculum-based ideological and political education, it is essential to build a diversified evaluation indicator system. Traditional evaluation of English reading is score-oriented and neglects the development of students' thinking quality and ideological and political literacy. Therefore, to break the predicament of exam-oriented teaching and promote the regular integration of curriculum-based ideological and political education, the fundamental solution is to abandon the single exam-oriented evaluation system and establish a diversified one that takes

into account linguistic competence, thinking quality and ideological and political literacy, so as to form a comprehensive evaluation orientation of “knowledge + literacy + morality”.

Reforming the evaluation methods for students’ learning and incorporating the objectives of value guidance, knowledge imparting and ability cultivation into curriculum evaluation can not only reflect students’ learning effects in an all-round way, but also provide a scientific basis for teaching improvement (Zhao & Chen, 2024). In terms of evaluation subjects, we can adopt a combination of teacher evaluation, student self-evaluation and peer evaluation. This mode can reduce the subjectivity of single-subject evaluation, stimulate students’ active participation, and better achieve the educational goals of CIPE. The reform of evaluation system will thoroughly reverse the teaching tendency of prioritizing scores over moral education, make the effect of ideological and political education an important criterion for measuring reading teaching quality, and push teachers to optimize instructional design and fulfill educational objectives. For example, the Unit 8 task of writing an application email to join the Blue Sky Rescue volunteer team can be assessed on three aligned dimensions instead of a single score: language (accurate use of the present perfect with “since” and “for”, plus appropriate email register), thinking quality (whether the reasons for volunteering are organized and persuasive), and ideological-political literacy (evidence of social responsibility and a willingness to serve others). When teacher-, self- and peer-evaluation rubrics each rate these three dimensions, a student’s sense of social responsibility becomes a visible, recorded criterion rather than an unmeasured by-product.

4.3. Exploring and Integrating Ideological and Political Teaching Resources

High-quality ideological and political teaching resources serve as the foundation for integrating CIPE into reading teaching. Aiming at the problems of scattered, shallowly-explored and underutilized ideological and political resources in reading textbooks, teachers should explore, integrate and optimize teaching resources systematically based on textbooks and expand extracurricular materials, so as to construct a comprehensive and systematic ideological and political reading resource system to support educational teaching.

First of all, delve into textbooks to explore inherent ideological and political resources. Reading passages in junior high school English textbooks contain abundant ideological and political elements. Centering on unit themes, teachers should accurately extract the core ideological and political connotation of texts following the two main lines of language teaching and ideological education, and maximize the ideological and political value of textbook resources (Zhang, 2025). For instance, three readings from a single level already hold distinct value themes waiting to be drawn out around their unit questions: “Reaching New Heights” (Unit 4) carries patriotism and the mountaineering spirit; “The Secret Garden” (Unit 7) carries resilience and personal growth; and “A Cooking Accident” (Unit 2) carries

safety awareness and a sense of responsibility for others. Naming the specific value behind each unit question keeps extraction purposeful rather than tacked on as a closing slogan.

Secondly, expand extracurricular resources to enrich ideological and political teaching contents. Combined with textbook themes, appropriately introduce extracurricular English reading materials that conform to junior high school students' cognition and keep pace with current social hot topics. This helps students learn to tell Chinese stories and spread Chinese voices in the process of language learning, and further enhances their national pride and cultural identity. For example, paired with Unit 6, "How do we show respect to other cultures?"—in which Nancy's email explains French party manners—students can complete the unit's own project of writing an email that introduces Chinese customs, so that cross-cultural reading turns into practice in telling China's story and articulating cultural confidence. In the same way, the 2020 re-measurement of Qomolangma can be brought in as a short current-affairs companion to Unit 4, linking the 1960 first ascent to a present-day national achievement.

Thirdly, integrate teaching resources and innovate ideological and political teaching forms. A central form here is situational teaching, which recreates the real-life or historical context of a text so that students experience its values firsthand rather than receiving them as stated conclusions. With the help of information technology, teachers can integrate diversified teaching resources, transform abstract ideological and political concepts into vivid and intuitive teaching contents, create an immersive ideological and political reading classroom, and build a regular, systematic and efficient teaching mode for curriculum-based ideological and political reading teaching. For "Reaching New Heights", for instance, short documentary clips of the 1960 and 2020 Qomolangma expeditions—or footage of Blue Sky Rescue operations for the Unit 8 volunteering theme—turn abstract notions of perseverance and social responsibility into vivid, immersive classroom input that students can read about, watch and then write or speak in response to.

5. Conclusion

Fostering virtue through education is an eternal theme of basic education in the new era. Empowering junior high school English reading teaching with CIPE is an inevitable trend for English discipline to fulfill the educational goals of core competencies and achieve high-quality development. The construction of CIPE in junior high school English reading teaching is not a simple superposition of ideological and political elements, but the in-depth integration and organic combination of language teaching and value guidance.

Currently, the integration of CIPE into junior high school English reading teaching is still confronted with multiple difficulties including cognitive bias, restrictions from exam-oriented education, insufficient professional competence and inadequate teaching resources. Teachers should adhere to the fundamental

task of fostering virtue through education, follow the educational requirements of the new curriculum standards, and transform traditional teaching concepts. It is necessary to teach students in accordance with their aptitude based on learning conditions, reform the teaching evaluation system, dig and integrate ideological and political resources, and innovate practical teaching paths.

In future teaching practice, junior high school English teachers should continuously strengthen their awareness of ideological and political education, explore the in-depth educational connotation of the discipline, and constantly optimize the instructional design of curriculum-based ideological and political education. Efforts should be made to address the problems of superficial and formalized moral education, so that English reading classrooms can not only be a place for students to improve their language ability, but also a position to shape their characters, cultivate sentiments and develop literacy. We will truly realize educating people through culture and texts, and help teenagers grow into new-era socialist builders and successors with patriotism, global vision and fine morality.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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