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Research on the Construction of a Multidimensional Evaluation System for Ideological and Political Education in Smart English Course Clusters Based on an Evidence Chain

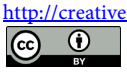
Deping Zou, Zihan Li

Department of Foreign Languages, Qilu Normal University, Jinan, China
Email: dpangle@126.com, hannali_han@163.com

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of deepening digital transformation in education, smart course clusters have become an important vehicle for universities to promote multi-course collaborative education and implement ideological and political education in foreign language courses. Traditional evaluation of ideological and political education in college English courses relies heavily on summative scores and teachers' subjective experience, featuring a single evaluation perspective and fragmented evidence. It can hardly capture the dynamic development of students' value literacy or adapt to the multi-course linkage and integrated education characteristic of smart course clusters. To address practical problems such as insufficient traceability of evaluation, difficulty in scientifically judging educational effects, and weak feedback for teaching improvement, this study constructs an evidence-chain-based multidimensional evaluation system for ideological and political education in smart English course clusters. Drawing on evidence-based teaching evaluation theory and the CIPP multidimensional evaluation framework, and taking into account the educational rules and disciplinary characteristics of ideological and political education in college foreign language courses, the study integrates multi-source teaching evidence covering teaching implementation, learning process, outcome production, and value literacy development. It forms a closed-loop evaluation chain that runs through the entire teaching cycle of course clusters, shifting evaluation from summative judgment to process-oriented, evidence-based, and multidimensional assessment. The proposed system is expected to compensate for the shortcomings of traditional evaluation and to support the

diagnosis of teaching quality, the judgment of educational effects, and the optimization of teaching in smart English course clusters. It also aims to provide references for evaluation reform in foreign language courses at normal universities. However, its effectiveness has not yet been validated through classroom pilots.

Subject Areas

Educational Technology, Linguistics

Keywords

Evidence Chain, Smart English Course Clusters, Curriculum-Based Ideological and Political Education, Multidimensional Evaluation, CIPP Model

1. Introduction

The Guidelines for the Construction of Curriculum Ideology and Politics in Institutions of Higher Education issued by the Ministry of Education clearly propose that universities should continuously improve the quality evaluation mechanism of curriculum ideology and politics, innovate evaluation implementation methods, and support the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education with scientific evaluation [1].

With the popularization of smart education technology in foreign language teaching in universities, smart English course clusters built on digital platforms have become increasingly common and, in some institutions, have begun to replace the traditional single-course teaching mode [2]. By integrating teaching resources of multiple related English courses, unifying overall educational goals, and designing teaching activities in a coordinated manner, these clusters realize coordinated ideological and political education across multiple courses.

Nevertheless, in the current practice of ideological and political education in smart English course clusters in universities, the construction of supporting evaluation systems still lags behind and fails to match the new smart and clustered teaching mode. In many universities, the evaluation of ideological and political education in English courses remains largely experiential and summative [3]. Evaluation evidence mainly consists of summative achievements such as final examination scores and course papers, ignoring students' process growth such as classroom participation, cultural critical thinking, value cognition, and collaborative communication throughout the learning cycle of course clusters.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Ideological and Political Construction of English Courses in Smart Classroom Environment

The growing maturity of digital teaching environments has opened new paths for

process-oriented evaluation reform in curriculum-based ideological and political education. Chinese scholars have conducted extensive research on smart English teaching. Wang (2024) explored the construction path of ideological and political education in smart college English classrooms and confirmed that digital smart teaching platforms can fully record students' whole-process learning data, such as online learning, classroom interaction, and task participation. Such platforms can effectively integrate language teaching and value education, providing carrier support for the regular implementation of curriculum-based ideological and political education. However, relevant research is mostly limited to the smart classroom construction of a single course and has not extended to the multi-course integrated teaching scenario of course clusters, so it cannot fully meet the evaluation needs of clustered education [2].

2.2. Research on Evidence-Based Teaching Evaluation

From the perspective of paradigm transformation, teaching evaluation in the digital era is shifting from subjective empirical judgment to evidence-based evaluation. Evidence-based teaching evaluation advocates abandoning vague subjective perceptions, conducting teaching diagnosis and effect judgment based on multi-source heterogeneous evidence generated throughout the teaching process, and improving teaching and learning by building a complete evidence closed loop. This idea provides a new solution for evaluating implicit educational effects such as those of curriculum-based ideological and political education [4].

2.3. Multidimensional Evaluation of Curriculum Ideology and Politics and Foreign Language Education Research

In terms of evaluation system construction, existing studies have built comprehensive evaluation frameworks for curriculum-based ideological and political education based on the CIPP evaluation model. They emphasize that evaluation should cover context, input, process, and product dimensions, and advocate diversified evaluation subjects and whole-process evaluation, thus breaking the limitations of single summative evaluation and providing mature theoretical paradigms for indicator design [3]. At the disciplinary level of foreign languages, Wen (2021) points out that curriculum-based ideological and political education in college foreign language courses differs from that in other disciplines. It requires the simultaneous cultivation of language competence, cultural literacy, patriotism, and cross-cultural critical thinking. Evaluation should therefore not only focus on students' mastery of language knowledge but also dynamically track changes in their values and cultural cognition through diversified process evaluation methods [5].

2.4. Research Gaps in Existing Studies

A review of existing literature shows that previous studies have accumulated achievements in smart foreign language teaching, evidence-based evaluation, and

multidimensional evaluation of curriculum-based ideological and political education, yet deficiencies remain. Most existing studies focus on the ideological and political evaluation of a single course, and few designs are developed from the integrated perspective of course clusters. Meanwhile, most evaluation schemes lack systematic construction of evidence chains, and scattered educational evidence cannot support continuous tracking of educational effects. Accordingly, this study constructs a multidimensional evaluation system based on an evidence chain in the context of smart English course clusters to fill these gaps.

2.5. Framework Development

The evaluation framework was developed through a two-stage process. First, a literature search was conducted in CNKI and Web of Science using keywords such as "evidence-based evaluation", "CIPP model", "curriculum ideology and politics" and "smart English course clusters". Studies were selected if they addressed evaluation models, indicator design, or foreign language curriculum-based ideological and political education. Second, the theoretical foundations of evidence-based teaching evaluation and the CIPP model were used to deductively derive the four evaluation dimensions. Among the indicators, "objective integration", "resource and activity design" and "collaborative teaching research" were adapted from existing CIPP-based frameworks for curriculum ideology and politics [3]. "Platform participation", "interaction and collaboration", and "reflection depth" were specifically designed for the multi-course and platform-based features of smart English course clusters. "Language works" and "cultural expression" were drawn from foreign language education assessment literature [5], while "value literacy" indicators were adapted to capture the dual goals of language acquisition and value guidance in foreign language courses.

3. Core Concepts and Theoretical Basis

3.1. Definition of Core Concepts

Smart English course clusters refer to integrated course groups that combine multiple related English courses on digital smart platforms. The clusters uniformly plan teaching objectives, teaching content, and educational tasks, enabling coordinated language teaching and value guidance across multiple courses and addressing the fragmentation of education in single courses.

Evidence chain refers to a series of teaching materials and learning data collected, archived, and connected throughout the teaching process of course clusters, including teaching documents, classroom records, student works, and platform learning data. These sources corroborate one another to form a traceable evidence set for objectively judging the educational effects of curriculum-based ideological and political education.

Multidimensional evaluation of curriculum-based ideological and political education breaks through single summative assessment. Based on process materials, it conducts comprehensive evaluation of the implementation process and educa-

tional effects from multiple dimensions and with diversified subjects.

3.2. Theoretical Basis

This study is grounded in evidence-based teaching evaluation theory and CIPP evaluation theory. Evidence-based teaching evaluation theory stresses that evaluation conclusions should be built on authentic and verifiable teaching evidence to reduce bias caused by evaluators' subjective preferences, thus providing theoretical support for constructing evidence chains [4]. The CIPP evaluation theory consists of context, input, process, and product evaluation, covering the whole teaching process. It provides a basis for constructing the multidimensional evaluation framework of this study and fits the whole-process educational characteristics of curriculum-based ideological and political education [3]. In this study, context evaluation informs needs analysis and objective setting; input evaluation corresponds to teaching resources, instructional design, and teacher preparation; process evaluation corresponds to teaching implementation and learning process; and product evaluation corresponds to outcome production and value literacy development.

4. Construction of the Multidimensional Evaluation System Based on Evidence Chain

4.1. Principles for System Construction

Drawing on the teaching characteristics of smart English course clusters and the educational requirements of ideological and political education in foreign language courses, this study establishes four principles: integrity, traceability, multidimensionality, and development. The integrity principle requires evaluation to focus on the whole course cluster rather than viewing single courses in isolation. The traceability principle demands that all evaluation conclusions be supported by corresponding teaching evidence. The multidimensional principle covers teaching implementation, learning process, outcome production, and value literacy. The development principle emphasizes that evaluation aims to promote teaching improvement rather than merely grade and screen students.

4.2. Evaluation Dimensions and Evidence Sources

Four evaluation dimensions are established in this study: teaching implementation, learning process, outcome production, and value literacy, covering the whole educational process of course clusters and corresponding to the CIPP evaluation framework. Specifically, teaching implementation corresponds to process evaluation; learning process also corresponds to process evaluation; outcome production corresponds to product evaluation; and value literacy corresponds to product evaluation. Context and input evaluation are embedded in the design and preparation stages of these dimensions.

First, the teaching implementation dimension targets teachers' ideological and political construction behaviors in course clusters, which corresponds to the pro-

cess evaluation of CIPP. Its secondary indicators include objective integration, resource and activity design, and collaborative teaching research. Evidence sources consist of syllabi, teaching plans, platform resources, classroom records, and teaching research records, which are mainly evaluated by teachers and peers through document analysis, content analysis, and classroom observation.

Second, the learning process dimension focuses on students' learning behaviors within course clusters, corresponding to the process evaluation of CIPP. It covers platform participation, interaction and collaboration, and reflection depth. Relying on platform logs, discussion records, group work, peer assessment forms, and reflective journals, it records students' continuous learning performance. Learning analytics, content analysis, peer assessment, and qualitative analysis are adopted by teachers, peers, and students themselves to evaluate this dimension.

Third, the outcome production dimension collects students' learning outcomes, corresponding to the product evaluation of CIPP. The secondary indicators include language works and cultural expression and project outcomes. Evidence sources include assignments, translation works, presentations, speeches, and project reports. Teachers and peers evaluate these outcomes through scoring rubrics, rubrics, and performance assessment.

Fourth, the value literacy dimension relies on students' learning reflections, questionnaires, peer evaluation, and teachers' qualitative comments to comprehensively judge the development of students' patriotism, cultural confidence, and cross-cultural critical thinking. It also corresponds to the product evaluation of CIPP, covering patriotism and cultural confidence, as well as cross-cultural critical thinking and value judgment. Qualitative analysis, rubrics, and qualitative analysis are mainly adopted to respect the progressive characteristics of value literacy cultivation.

(Note: Indicator weights can be determined by the Delphi method or AHP in follow-up research.)

To clarify what the value literacy evidence can reasonably establish, illustrative rubric descriptors are provided. Reasoned cultural judgment is demonstrated when students can compare cultural perspectives, justify their positions with evidence, and show awareness of cultural complexity. This is distinguished from mere English proficiency (fluent expression without critical reflection), passive participation (agreeing with peers or teachers without independent reasoning), and superficial agreement with teachers' views. For example, a student who simply repeats textbook statements about cultural confidence would not be rated as demonstrating reasoned cultural judgment. In contrast, a student who analyzes a cross-cultural conflict from multiple perspectives and supports a nuanced position would be rated highly.

4.3. Closed-Loop Operation Mechanism of Evidence Chain

The evaluation system forms a complete closed-loop evidence chain. During teaching, raw evidence of each dimension is continuously collected, classified, and

archived. The evidence is then sorted, interpreted, and cross-verified under the multidimensional evaluation framework. Evaluation results derived from evidence judgment are fed back to teachers and students. Teachers optimize teaching design and implementation strategies for ideological and political education in course clusters according to the feedback, while students adjust their learning orientation. Evidence is continuously collected in the next round of teaching, forming a cyclically iterative evaluation mechanism.

To illustrate how the evidence chain operates, consider an example involving two English courses in the cluster: "English Reading" and "English Writing". In the reading course, a student's discussion posts show strong cultural confidence and critical thinking about Western media. In the writing course, however, the same student's essay avoids taking a clear stance on a cross-cultural issue. The evidence from the two courses is cross-verified. The teacher identifies a gap between the student's oral critical thinking and written expression. Based on this judgment, the teacher adjusts the writing course by adding a scaffolded argumentation task that requires students to take a position and support it with evidence. In the next round, the student's writing shows improved critical expression. When evidence conflicts, the following rule applies: qualitative evidence from multiple sources takes precedence over a single quantitative indicator, and any unresolved conflict is reviewed by at least two teachers before a final judgment is made.

5. Safeguards for the Implementation of the Evaluation System

To ensure the operation of this multidimensional evaluation system in smart English course clusters, supporting measures are required in several aspects. First, a regular teaching research mechanism for course clusters should be established. The teacher team should unify ideological and political educational objectives, standardize evidence collection criteria, and regularly discuss problems in evaluation implementation to avoid inconsistent standards across courses. Second, the data storage and aggregation capacity of smart teaching platforms should be fully utilized. The online archiving process for various types of teaching evidence should be standardized to ensure convenient collection and complete storage. Third, diversified evaluation subjects should be built by integrating teacher evaluation, student self-evaluation, and peer evaluation to reduce subjective bias caused by a single evaluator. Fourth, evaluation criteria should be carefully balanced. For implicit literacy such as patriotism and cross-cultural critical thinking, qualitative evidence analysis should be prioritized, and over-quantification should be avoided so as to respect the progressive nature of value literacy cultivation. In addition, ethical review, data privacy protection, and evaluator training should be included in the implementation safeguards.

6. Research Limitations and Prospects

This study only completes the theoretical framework construction of the evalua-

tion system and has not yet entered the classroom pilot stage. The weight of each evaluation indicator and the rules of evidence collection still need to be tested and adjusted in real teaching scenarios. In addition, the system highly depends on the data aggregation capacity of smart teaching platforms, which creates barriers for implementation in universities with limited digital conditions. Moreover, even with multi-source evidence, the judgment of intrinsic value literacy such as patriotism and cultural critical thinking can hardly eliminate subjective bias in qualitative analysis.

Subsequent research can carry out teaching pilots in English course clusters, collect frontline teaching data, and revise and improve evaluation indicators and evidence collection procedures. Further research can also explore automatic aggregation methods for evidence chains to reduce teachers' burden of evidence sorting and continuously optimize the evaluation scheme for curriculum-based ideological and political education.

7. Conclusion

Against the background of educational digitalization, smart English course clusters serve as an important carrier for universities to implement foreign language curriculum-based ideological and political education and realize collaborative education. A matching evaluation system is key to guaranteeing educational quality. Based on the evidence chain idea and combined with the CIPP evaluation framework, this study constructs a multidimensional evaluation system covering teaching implementation, learning process, outcome production, and value literacy. It is intended to rely on whole-process multi-source teaching evidence to realize traceable evaluation of educational effects, shifting the evaluation focus from summative result judgment to whole-process educational diagnosis. The proposed framework is expected to provide references for quality evaluation of curriculum-based ideological and political education in college smart English course clusters and to facilitate the continuous promotion of teaching reform in foreign language curriculum-based ideological and political education. Its practical effectiveness, however, remains to be tested in future classroom pilots.

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Author Contributions

D. P. Zou: Conceptualization, Supervision, Project administration, Funding acquisition. Z. H. Li: Investigation, Data curation, Writing Original Draft, Writing Review & Editing. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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