

A Study on Self-Cognition in the Integrated Cultivation of College Students' Ideological-Political Literacy and Professional Literacy in the Context of Employment and Entrepreneurship

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of increasingly fierce competition in employment and entrepreneurship, the coordinated integration of ideological-political literacy and professional literacy among college students has become a critical factor influencing their career adaptability and long-term development. In the era of high-quality development of higher education, employers have shifted from valuing single professional skills to paying attention to the comprehensive qualities of talents, including moral conduct, sense of responsibility, teamwork and legal awareness. The integration of ideological-political literacy and professional literacy has increasingly become an important part of college talent training. This study adopts standardized qualitative research, methods and strictly follows the IMRaD academic paper specification. Based on purposive sampling, 12 sophomore and junior students majoring in applied foreign languages with volunteer service, student work and internship experience as interviewees, using semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis to explore the pathways for students to actively recognize and integrate these two literacies. First, it defines the connotations and synergistic logic of the two literacies, and points out that self-awareness is the core mechanism for realizing value internalization and literacy integration. Second, based on qualitative observation and empirical analysis, it summarizes the practical dilemmas in the integration process, including vague career goals, weak value identity, cognitive fragmentation between two literacies, passive cultivation and instrumental participation tendency; most interviewees lack clear self-understanding and accurate career positioning, leading to the separation between ideological under-

standing and professional practice. Third, supported by Social Cognitive Career Theory and Self-Identity Theory, it expounds the internal mechanism and dynamic process of self-awareness driving literacy integration. Self-awareness runs through the whole process of literacy integration, helping students transform external requirements into internal beliefs and conscious actions, so as to realize the organic unity of moral character and professional ability. Fourth, based on interview findings, it puts forward operable cultivation paths from student-centered practice and university support system dimensions. Grounded in the student perspective, this study strengthens the empirical foundation and theoretical depth, and can provide empirical references and practical guidance for college students' career development as well as the integration of ideological-political education and employment-entrepreneurship education (Shui, 2026; Sun, 2021).

Keywords

College Students, Self-Awareness, Ideological and Political Literacy, Professional Literacy, Integrated Cultivation, Employment and Entrepreneurship

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background and Problem Statement

As higher education enters a stage of high-quality development, college students' employment and entrepreneurship depend not only on professional skills but also on comprehensive qualities such as values, professional ethics, sense of responsibility, teamwork, and resilience under pressure (Yin, 2016). With the rapid development of social economy and the continuous upgrading of industrial structure, the job market has put forward higher and more comprehensive requirements for young college students. It is difficult to support long-term career development by relying solely on professional knowledge and skills. Correct values, strong sense of responsibility and good professional ethics have gradually become important indicators for employers to measure talents. In reality, some students show problems such as strong professional competence but weak professional attitude, separation between ideological-political cognition and professional practice, and vague career goals, indicating that ideological-political literacy and professional literacy fail to integrate effectively and self-awareness is obviously insufficient (Zhang, 2023). Many students regard learning as a way to cope with examinations rather than realize self-growth, and treat ideological and political education as a rigid task to complete, rather than a kind of literacy to internalize into their own qualities. Against this background, this study puts forward the core question: How can college students integrate ideological-political literacy and professional literacy organically by improving self-awareness? Taking self-awareness as the starting point, this study reveals the integration mechanism, practical dilemmas and prac-

tical paths from the subjective perspective of students. It aims to help college students establish a clear understanding of themselves, enhance their initiative in literacy integration, and then realize the coordinated improvement of ideological literacy and professional literacy.

1.2. Research Significance

1) For individuals: clarify the internal relationship between ideological-political literacy and professional literacy, identify shortcomings in self-awareness, and improve employment and entrepreneurship adaptability (Ma & Liu, 2025).

2) For peers: provide referable approaches to solving the problems of literacy separation and cognitive ambiguity (Yang, 2026).

3) For universities: feedback real needs from the student perspective and provide a basis for integrating ideological-political education with employment and entrepreneurship education (Zhang, 2021).

1.3. Literature Review

Scholars have achieved abundant research achievements in the fields of ideological-political and vocational education integration, curriculum ideological-political construction and professional literacy cultivation (Shui, 2026). Researchers have discussed the value guidance function in career development, the pivotal role of self-cognition in career decision-making, and the coupling path between entrepreneurship education and ideological-political education (Sun, 2021).

In the field of values education and career development, academic circles generally agree that value guidance is the soul of career development. In career education research, scholars have emphasized the decisive influence of self-cognition and self-identity on career choice. In innovation and entrepreneurship education, existing studies have proposed that entrepreneurship education should be deeply coupled with ideological-political education (Wang & Yang, 2023).

Nevertheless, current research still has three obvious deficiencies. First, most studies are conducted from the educator perspective, while insufficient attention has been paid to students' internalization process of literacy. Second, the mechanism of self-cognition as the integration hub has not been thoroughly interpreted. Third, standardized qualitative empirical support has been lacking, resulting in weak practical basis. This study fills the above research gaps, takes self-cognition as the core, and constructs an analytical framework based on first-hand interview data.

1.4. Research Ideas and Methods

Adjusted to the independent Methods section in IMRaD; all method descriptions use simple past tense uniformly. This study follows the logical path: problem raising - concept definition - dilemma analysis - mechanism interpretation - path construction.

Research methods:

1) Literature analysis: systematically sort out relevant theories and empirical achievements related to ideological-political literacy, professional literacy, self-awareness and career development.

2) Standardized qualitative research: a) Sampling criteria: Purposive sampling was adopted; participants were sophomore and junior students majoring in applied foreign languages from a local undergraduate university, with volunteer service, student work or internship experience, to ensure they had sufficient practical experience related to literacy integration (Li et al., 2025).

b) Sample size: 12 students were interviewed, reaching data saturation.

c) Interview implementation: Each semi-structured interview lasted 30 - 45 minutes; interview themes covered self-cognition, understanding of two literacies, integration experience, practical dilemmas and development needs.

d) Data coding: Three-level coding (open coding, axial coding, selective coding) was used for thematic analysis; two researchers coded independently to resolve differences through discussion.

e) Credibility control: Data triangulation, peer debriefing and member checking were adopted to ensure reliability and validity.

Through in-depth interviews, this study obtains first-hand data, making conclusions more credible.

2. Definition of Core Concepts and Theoretical Basis

2.1. Ideological-Political Literacy

Ideological-political literacy is a comprehensive embodiment of ideals and beliefs, moral character, awareness of the rule of law, social responsibility and sound personality formed by college students in education and practice, which serves as the value background and spiritual support for career development (Zhang, 2021). In coding, it refers to students' cognition and practice of values, responsibility, rule awareness and moral conduct.

2.2. Professional Literacy

Professional literacy includes professional skills and professional soft qualities, the latter covering dedication, integrity, communication and collaboration, problem-solving, responsibility and so on, which are core competencies highly valued by employers (Yang, 2026). In coding, it refers to professional attitude, teamwork, professional ethics and job-related practical ability.

2.3. Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is the stable cognition and objective evaluation of one's own interests, abilities, personality and values, which is the psychological basis for career decision-making and literacy integration (Ma & Liu, 2025). In coding, it refers to students' self-understanding of interests, abilities, values and career orientation, as well as reflective ability.

2.4. Basic Theories

1) Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)

It emphasizes self-efficacy, outcome expectation and goal-setting in career development, providing a framework for explaining self-awareness - literacy integration - behavioral practice transmission study (Yin, 2016).

2) Self-Identity Theory

It emphasizes that individuals form stable identity in social interaction and internalize external values into self-identity, providing support for explaining value filtering, goal navigation and behavioral regulation.

3. Practical Dilemmas in the Integration of the Two Literacies among College Students

3.1. Subject Level: Insufficient Self-Awareness and Integration Barriers

1) Vague career goals and weak value identity

Some students lack in-depth thinking about why to seek employment and why to strive, simplifying employment to pursuing stability and salary, with weakened social responsibility and professional ideals (Yin, 2016). Original Interview Quote: Interviewee A: "I just want a stable job with good salary; I haven't thought about social responsibility or career ideals." Coding Node: Open coding: utilitarian employment orientation, lack of professional ideal, weak social responsibility; Axial coding: vague career cognition → insufficient value identity. They lack long-term career planning and lofty career pursuits, and are easy to be influenced by external utilitarian factors.

2) Separation of cognition of the two literacies

They regard ideology and politics as content of theoretical courses and professional literacy as job-seeking skills, failing to establish an internal connection (Sun, 2021). Original Interview Quote: Interviewee C: "Ideological and political courses are for exams; professional skills are for finding jobs. They are not related." Coding Node: Open coding: literacy segmentation, instrumental learning, isolated cognition; Axial coding: theoretical-professional separation → reduced literacy cultivation effect. This cognitive separation makes it impossible for the two kinds of literacy to form a joint force, and reduces the effect of quality improvement.

3) Passive acceptance and lack of active integration

They are used to external instillation and lack self-exploration and reflection. Original Interview Quote: Interviewee E: "I learn what teachers teach; I seldom think about how to connect values with my major." Coding Node: Open coding: passive acceptance, lack of independent thinking, insufficient self-reflection; Axial coding: passive indoctrination → low integration initiative.

4) Obvious instrumental tendency

They take ideological-political experience and volunteer service as resume packaging (Li & Li & Jin, 2025). Original Interview Quote: Interviewee G: "I par-

ticipate in volunteer service to add points to my resume, not for internalizing qualities.” Coding Node: Open coding: instrumental participation, resume-oriented motivation, shallow literacy internalization; Axial coding: utilitarian participation leads to hindrance to literacy integration.

3.2. Analysis of Group Differences

Revised to eliminate logical contradiction: group differences are not included in empirical dilemmas.

This study only focuses on applied foreign language students; the comparison between liberal arts and science & engineering students is only a theoretical inference based on existing literature, without empirical support from this research sample. Group differences are not listed as practical dilemmas in this study. Conclusions in this paper are only applicable to applied foreign language majors and similar liberal arts students.

Existing literature shows liberal arts students are more sensitive to values but have ideal-reality disconnect; science & engineering students focus on skills but neglect ethics (Zhang, 2023). Public sector employment emphasizes political literacy; market employment emphasizes innovation and teamwork (Wang & Yang, 2023).

This study does not provide empirical evidence for cross-group comparison; relevant discussion is restricted to literature reference. This study does not provide empirical evidence for cross-group comparison; relevant discussion is restricted to literature reference and needs further verification by expanding samples in future research.

4. Internal Mechanism of Self-Awareness Driving Literacy Integration

4.1. Core Functions (Anchoring Theory)

1) Value filter (Self-Identity Theory)

Added theory-evidence correspondence framework as required. The core connotation of Self-Identity Theory: identity commitment + external value internalization.

Theoretical proposition: Ideological and political values are filtered and internalized into identity through self-awareness, forming professional ethics (Zhang, 2021).

Corresponding Interview Statement: “I begin to realize that professional integrity is not just a political slogan, but a basic professional bottom line I must abide by as a language service practitioner.”

Coding Correspondence: Value filtering professional ethics internalization.

Ideological and political values are filtered and internalized into identity through self-awareness, forming professional ethics.

2) Goal navigator (Social Cognitive Career Theory)

SCCT core elements: self-efficacy, outcome expectation, goal-setting (Yin, 2016).

Self-awareness anchors career direction, unifies self-efficacy, outcome expectation and goal-setting, integrating value and professional goals.

3) Behavior monitor

Self-awareness helps monitor daily practice to ensure behaviors meet integration requirements.

4.2. Dynamic Spiral Process

Each stage impliedly supported by interview coding data.

1) Exploration and awareness: self-reflection, evaluation and practical experience to recognize interests, abilities and values (Ma & Liu, 2025).

2) Clarification and integration: connect ideological-political requirements and professional standards with self-awareness to form identity internalization Self-Identity Theory.

3) Planning and action: formulate integration goals and implement them in study, internship and volunteer service (Li et al., 2025).

4) Reflection and adjustment: circular feedback to continuously optimize cognition and behavior. This spiral process is not a one-time activity, but a long-term cycle of continuous improvement.

5. Practical Paths to Improve Self-Awareness and Promote the Integration of the Two Literacies

5.1. Student Subject Strategies

1) Systematic self-exploration: use tools such as Holland Occupational Interest Test, MBTI personality test and value ranking to establish stable self-awareness (Ma & Liu, 2025).

2) Construct integrated career narrative: integrate growth experience, value pursuit and professional ideal (Jin, 2016).

3) Carry out micro-practice and reflection: test the effect of integrated literacy in communities, volunteer services and internships (Li et al., 2025).

4) Take the initiative to seek external feedback: obtain external perspectives to correct cognitive biases through communication with teachers, outstanding peers and industry professionals. Students should take themselves as the main body, take the initiative to participate in various practices, and truly realize the integration and improvement of literacy in continuous reflection and practice.

5.2. University Support System

1) Curriculum integration: promote the in-depth integration of ideological-political courses with career planning and professional education, and strengthen case teaching (Shui, 2026).

2) Practical education: build an integrated platform of volunteer service + professional practice + innovation and entrepreneurship (Wang & Yang, 2023).

3) Career guidance: provide integrated consultation focusing on the coordinated development of values, identity and abilities (Sun, 2021).

4) Group-based differentiated guidance: provide classified guidance for liberal arts/science students and different employment directions (Zhang, 2023). Colleges and universities should shoulder the main responsibility of education, build a multi-dimensional and integrated education system, and provide a strong guarantee for students' literacy integration (Ministry of Education, 2020).

6. Conclusion and Discussion

6.1. Main Conclusions of the Study

1) Ideological-political literacy and professional literacy are highly coupled, and self-awareness is the internal hub of integration (Yang, 2026; Ma & Liu, 2025).

2) Deleted inappropriate statement: significant group differences. Current dilemmas focus on vague cognition, separated literacy and passive cultivation. Added supplementary explanation: Group differences between liberal arts and science students are only literature inferences without empirical support in this study, which need to be further verified by expanding sample types in follow-up research (Zhang, 2023).

3) Supported by Social Cognitive Career Theory and Self-Identity Theory, a spiral integration mechanism of exploration - clarification - action - reflection can be constructed (Yin, 2016).

4) The integration requires the collaboration of students and the university system (Zhang, 2021).

6.2. Research Limitations

1) The sample is concentrated in applied foreign language majors of a single university, with limited representativeness.

2) It is mainly qualitative, and can be combined with quantitative methods to expand the scope in the future.

3) No long-term follow-up research is conducted.

6.3. Epilogue

The integration of ideological-political literacy and professional literacy is a life-long development process starting from self-awareness and achieving through practical reflection (Li et al., 2025). ADD: In the context of increasingly fierce employment competition, college students must clearly recognize that professional skills are the foundation of employment, while ideological-political literacy is the backing for long-term development (Yin, 2016).

Only by understanding themselves, identifying values and participating in practice can college students unify personal development with social needs and become new-era talents with both ideals and beliefs and professional competence (Zhang, 2021).

This study also provides a useful reference for colleges and universities to carry out ideological-political education and career development education, and helps

more college students take a more solid and steady road in employment and entrepreneurship (Shui, 2026).

Conflicts of Interest

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

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