

## Investigation into the Construction of University Public Ethics Courses Based on the Philosophy of Inclusive Education

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**Abstract:** In the context of the nation's strong push toward becoming a leading global force in education, universities must clearly define their talent cultivation objectives and prioritize the fundamental task of moral development. Thus, enhancing the construction of public ethics courses has become an essential endeavor. The concept of inclusive education, which centers on students, recognizes their individual worth, and embraces their diverse characteristics, is an ideal match for the development of public ethics courses in universities. This paper analyzes the challenges currently faced in the construction of public ethics courses in higher education, and explores how the philosophy of inclusive education can be practically applied within the realms of belief, knowledge, action, and course design. Based on these insights, the paper proposes strategies for improving the development of these courses.

**Keywords:** Inclusive Educational Philosophy; Public Ethics; Higher Education; Course Construction

### 1. Introduction

Recently, China has released the *Outline for Building an Educational Power (2024-2035)*, highlighting the essential need to understand the political, societal, and strategic dimensions of education and to commit to the primary task of cultivating virtue. In the quest to build a strong educational nation, clear objectives for talent development must be established. Public ethics, as a societal norm, relies primarily on individual beliefs, public opinion, and customs for its maintenance and regulation<sup>[1]</sup>, in contrast to the coercive nature of legal systems. It emphasizes the "soft" shaping and transformation of individuals, focusing on the cultivation of moral character and the internalization of ethical norms, making it a

pivotal concept for modern national development and societal progress.

Public ethics, an interdisciplinary field combining applied ethics and management studies, provides a theoretical framework for students to view real-world problems from a public ethical perspective, seamlessly integrating professional courses with ideological education. University courses in public ethics serve as an effective platform for cultivating ethical concepts, fostering ethical character, and developing the moral qualities of "governing with virtue" among young university students. Through the construction of public ethics courses, students receive systematic instruction in ethical knowledge, including ethical principles, case analysis, and the application of ethics in public affairs. Advancing public ethics course development effectively integrates resources such as curriculum materials, faculty expertise, and teaching methodologies, thereby enhancing the overall quality and practical effectiveness of public ethics education.

Given the theoretical foundations of public ethics courses, it is essential to adopt an inclusive teaching approach that encourages active student participation, thus creating an inclusive classroom environment that effectively enhances the quality of instruction. The concept of inclusive teaching emerged in the 1990s, initially focusing on special education and addressing social and educational issues arising from diversity, primarily targeting basic education. In the 21st century, scholars expanded the scope of inclusive teaching research to higher education, exploring this model from a broader perspective, addressing not only special groups but also issues of equity among all learners<sup>[2]</sup>. However, there is no consensus on the definition of inclusive teaching models, largely due to differing understandings of the philosophical foundations of inclusion, whether common or individual<sup>[3]</sup>.

Subsequently, the concept of "universal design" was introduced and applied to university teaching practices, providing a theoretical reference for the development of inclusive teaching by defining its essence as "encouraging the participation of all learners in classroom life"<sup>[4]</sup>. Essentially, inclusive teaching emphasizes the recognition of individual student value, the appreciation of differences among students, and the importance of teacher-student interaction<sup>[5]</sup>.

In China, research on inclusive education began relatively late. Scholars have summarized American universities' practices and experiences with inclusive education, underscoring its importance in enhancing talent development in higher education<sup>[6]</sup>. Others have merged multicultural education theories with universal design to create more inclusive learning environments, explored strategies for implementing inclusive teaching in specific disciplines, and evaluated inclusive teaching practices in political theory courses<sup>[7]</sup>. In summary, Chinese research on the theoretical and practical aspects of inclusive education remains limited. This paper attempts to introduce inclusive education principles into the practice of university public ethics courses, aiming to explore its application from diverse perspectives.

## **2. Current Status and Issues in the Development of Public Ethics Courses in Universities**

Due to the unique nature of the discipline, the development of public ethics courses in universities often faces several common issues in areas such as theoretical teaching, extracurricular practice, teaching methods, and strategies:

Firstly, incomplete construction of a standardized public ethics curriculum system. The public ethics curriculum system should encompass a comprehensive structure that includes theoretical teaching, practical education, teaching evaluation, and operational management systems. However, the development of public ethics curricula in universities today largely focuses on the formal classroom, with an emphasis on theoretical instruction. The content often leans towards shaping students' political stance, beliefs, and attitudes, and in some cases, the teaching of public ethics is replaced by

political education, blurring the line between political education and ethical instruction. As a result, the extracurricular practice system for public ethics courses remains underdeveloped, including the establishment of public ethics practice bases and the organization of public ethics social practice activities, which undermines the formation of an effective feedback loop for teaching. Furthermore, the construction of a teaching evaluation system and management protocols for public ethics courses requires further improvement and refinement.

Secondly, mismatch between teaching practice and talent development goals. The goal of public ethics teaching in universities is to instill ethical values and principles in young students to shape their worldviews and moral perspectives, aligning them with the societal needs for ethical development. This educational practice seeks to internalize moral values and public spirit in students, equipping them with the fundamental qualities required to become competent public managers, such as a strong sense of public duty and responsibility. This is particularly important in areas like public policy-making and ethical decision-making in public affairs. However, current teaching practices fail to effectively align with these real-world talent development objectives. Often, the focus is limited to the theoretical transmission of ethical knowledge, neglecting the practical and process-oriented needs of ethical education.

Thirdly, emphasis on theoretical knowledge transfer over internalization of skills and qualities. At present, the public ethics education mainly involves imparting ethical knowledge to young students, with less attention given to how students can internalize this knowledge into their own ethical values and character. This internalization process relies heavily on diverse teaching scenarios and social practice, but the insufficient allocation of extracurricular hours has disrupted the connection between the theoretical learning of ethics and the practical application of ethical behavior in everyday life. Consequently, students may grasp ethical principles but struggle to cultivate the self-awareness necessary for ethical behavior in their daily routines. The professional nature of public ethics courses demands a greater emphasis on their practical application,

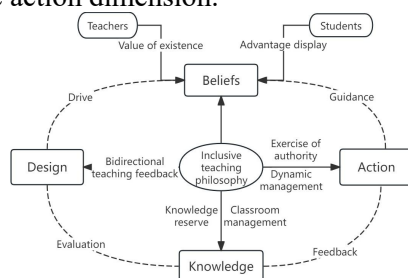
making the internalization of these qualities in students' character essential for effective learning.

Fourthly, traditional, monotonous teaching methods lacking interaction and participation. Effective teaching methods are crucial for enhancing the educational experience, particularly in public ethics courses. The relatively abstract theoretical content and the practice-oriented nature of public ethics require teachers to employ more innovative methods that stimulate creative thinking and cultivate students' ethical cultural awareness and abilities. In the age of information technology, there is a need to integrate diverse media tools and digital teaching methods into the classroom. Approaches such as case studies, scenario-based teaching, and student-centered learning can help create a more dynamic learning environment. This shift away from traditional, one-sided lecture-based teaching can mitigate the drawbacks of passive knowledge transmission and improve student engagement and understanding.

### 3. Design of Public Ethics Courses in Universities Based on an Inclusive Teaching Philosophy

#### 3.1 Theoretical Framework of Teaching under the Inclusive Teaching Philosophy

The teaching model under the inclusive teaching philosophy is primarily composed of four basic elements: beliefs, knowledge, design, and action<sup>[8]</sup>. These four dimensions are both independent and interrelated, forming a complete teaching loop, as illustrated in Figure 1 below. In this framework, the belief element guides behavior and becomes a key driver of design, while the knowledge element enhances the efficiency of the design dimension through evaluation and, with the help of feedback, strengthens the effectiveness of the action dimension.



**Figure 1. Dimensions of the Teaching Model under the Inclusive Teaching Philosophy**

First, from the perspective of beliefs, the inclusive teaching philosophy emphasizes the role of both teachers and students in constructing classroom relationships. Their value is most notably reflected in the creation of the teaching environment. A diverse student body brings various advantages to the teaching and learning process, particularly through the recognition and utilization of the different strengths within student groups. These not only enrich the teaching and learning experience but also foster a positive learning environment, improving the efficiency of feedback and ultimately enhancing teaching outcomes.

Next, in the design dimension, the inclusive teaching philosophy emphasizes the control of the bidirectional teaching process and feedback. This involves designing the teaching process, such as planning pre-class preparations, promoting interactive participation during the class, and validating practices post-class. These strategies aim to activate diverse knowledge acquisition methods among students, thus highlighting the effectiveness of the feedback loop in bidirectional teaching. Furthermore, this process drives the creation of a superior teaching environment through collaboration between teachers and students. The application of modern technologies in education, along with the construction of online educational platforms, effectively eliminates various existing limitations in education.

In the knowledge dimension, the inclusive teaching philosophy focuses on the teacher's accumulation of knowledge and classroom management expertise, particularly with respect to the conditional and general knowledge related to different student types and cultural contexts. This includes monitoring how students learn, organizing and managing classroom order, and utilizing assessment tools for classroom effectiveness. Simultaneously, it stresses the importance of practical teaching content as a valuable supplement, enriching the knowledge system through extracurricular activities.

Finally, in the action dimension, the inclusive teaching philosophy fully considers the essence of the teaching process, primarily involving the exercise of authority and dynamic management. This is implemented through specific rules and regulations. The

inclusive teaching philosophy emphasizes that teaching is not simply a process of action imposed by the teacher on the students but rather a collaborative effort between both parties. Teachers must maintain an open and accepting attitude towards students' existing knowledge and experience systems, avoiding the marginalization of any group of students. Efforts should be made to ensure that all students can integrate as much as possible into the teaching practice activities.

### **3.2 Inclusive Teaching Practices in the Construction of Public Ethics Courses**

In the educational and teaching practices of public ethics courses, the inclusive teaching philosophy is embodied in several aspects: understanding the differentiated characteristics of young university students within the dimension of teaching beliefs, meticulously designing the content of public ethics education, effectively conveying teaching management approaches for public ethics courses, adopting intelligent teaching tools and platforms, as well as implementing scientific feedback and evaluation systems alongside operational teaching frameworks<sup>[9]</sup>.

First, emphasis is placed on creating an optimal public ethics classroom environment and fostering positive teacher-student relationships. As one of the crucial quality courses in talent cultivation within the field of management, universities often offer relevant ethics courses at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, such as Engineering Ethics, Technological Ethics, Medical Ethics, and Corporate Ethics, tailored to the characteristics of each institution. Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* has long asserted that individuals who exist in a state devoid of ethics or within fractured ethical entities lose the foundation of their existence. Thus, cultivating ethical integrity in students within public ethics classrooms is of paramount importance. This aligns perfectly with the inclusive teaching philosophy, which advocates for creating a supportive learning atmosphere as a critical pathway to fostering students' awareness of ethical community building and patriotism. Lecturers can bridge strong teacher-student relationships through methods such as real-time classroom surveys, handling unexpected classroom situations, and post-class mentoring. Additionally, teachers

ought to take the initiative to understand students by considering their cultural levels, family backgrounds, and knowledge structures, helping them better understand themselves, build a sense of collective belonging, and integrate actively into campus life. This is particularly significant for professional master's students, who often face challenges in reconciling discrepancies in their work types and roles, as well as conflicts between work and study. Teachers can seize these opportunities to guide students in developing critical thinking skills, encouraging reflection on their personal assumptions and positions, and helping them internalize public ethics theories into an active, experiential ethical education. These practices exemplify the content of inclusive education within the dimensions of beliefs and actions.

Second, establishing fundamental principles for public ethics classrooms, implementing participatory teaching, developing diverse case studies, and initiating teacher training programs to guide mutual adaptation between teachers and students are key components of the inclusive teaching philosophy. This approach represents a significant departure from traditional teaching methods. The establishment of teaching development centers in universities, which initially aimed to enhance teaching abilities, has gradually expanded to address educators' personal growth and team management development<sup>[10]</sup>, forming an important foundation for the inclusive design dimension. In the design of public ethics courses, related discussion topics can be arranged gradually, guiding students through participatory learning using a "question-posing, group discussion, teacher analysis" model. Examples include the moral dilemmas of the Trolley Problem, Milgram's obedience experiments, and ethical guidelines for autonomous driving. Throughout these discussions, teachers inspire and summarize, cultivating students' motivation towards self-directed and cooperative learning. Simultaneously, public ethics case studies can be integrated, such as the controversial "nail houses" in urban renewal, procedural and substantive justice in the Simpson case, ethical dilemmas in public service, and ethical considerations in big data usage. By analyzing these cases step by step, teaching content becomes increasingly refined, deepening

students' understanding of public ethics knowledge. Additionally, online public ethics platforms can engage students in collaborative group work, including collecting data, reading literature, participating in discussions, and completing assignments. This systematic approach enhances inclusiveness in course design, improving classroom outcomes.

Third, monitoring classroom atmosphere, establishing scientific evaluation systems, and encouraging innovation in public ethics course design while incorporating interdisciplinary teaching reform are all important elements in implementing inclusive teaching. This includes introducing cutting-edge topics such as Artificial Intelligence and technological ethics into the curriculum, which continuously enrich the teacher's knowledge reserve regarding inclusive public ethics education. Areas such as creating classroom environments, integrating diverse teaching components, and innovating evaluation techniques are particularly emphasized. Course evaluations should combine professional ethics knowledge assessments with student ideological development objectives, highlighting the distinctive features of public ethics courses. Emphasis should also be placed on students' participation in both classroom activities and extracurricular initiatives, such as engaging in public ethics-related community work or case competitions. This approach transitions from traditional summative evaluation to process-based evaluation, ensuring that students' growth journeys and ideological transformations are carefully considered. For teachers, evaluation should consider their efforts in innovative teaching reforms, the integration of educational ideological objectives, and the establishment of collaborative teaching teams. Reasonable evaluation indicators should be created for teaching methods, content, and outcomes, using evaluation to drive growth and ensure the effective implementation of inclusive teaching philosophy in course construction.

Fourth, the construction of public ethics education and classrooms must work hand in hand. Consequently, a cohesive and synchronized teaching system operation becomes the driving force. This is reflected in the policies, management processes, and structural systems of public ethics education. Whether university administrators embrace the

philosophy of inclusivity directly influences the feasibility of teachers conducting inclusive teaching activities. The exercise of authority and dynamic governance within teaching management processes becomes a vital reference for the action dimension. At the institutional level, regulations, supervisory standards, and execution processes related to public ethics education should be established. Efforts should focus on improving curricular standards, designing educational management systems that incorporate equality and diversity, and fostering cooperative relationships between teachers and students. This reciprocal dynamic in teaching and learning enhances the educational quality of universities and serves as a significant component of advancing the national vision of an educational powerhouse.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The construction of public ethics courses grounded in the philosophy of inclusive education necessitates a reevaluation of the teacher-student relationship, shifting from teacher-centered to student-centered classrooms, while emphasizing a bidirectional feedback process between educators and learners. The dual attributes of specialized theoretical knowledge and ideological education in public ethics courses underscore the uniqueness of their educational objectives. Common issues in current public ethics classrooms, such as an overemphasis on theory at the expense of practical teaching, the need for more innovative teaching methods, and the insufficient internalization of ethical principles by students, can be more effectively addressed through the application of inclusive teaching theories. By considering multiple dimensions—beliefs, design, knowledge, and action—in the course construction, the ethical and moral development of students can be continually strengthened through course engagement.

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