

A Systematic Analysis on the Integration of Marxist Religious Thought into Ideological and Political Curriculum Teaching Content

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Abstract: *The systematical integration of Marxist religious thought into IPC teaching content can counter the challenges posed by capitalist core values and enhance students' ideological and political literacy. The system elements and target of this integration is explored, highlighting the importance of treating religion in a materialist dialectical manner and focusing on personal identity, educational goals, and social relations. Discussed systematically is the boundaries and environment of integrating Marxist religious thought into IPC teaching content, emphasizing the need to analyze the specific situation and cultural environment. It suggests that the integration should be carried out in the context of religious sinicization and the sinicization of Marxism, and should help students criticize religion and establish scientific beliefs.*

Keywords: Marxist religious thought; The sinicization of Marxism; IPC; Teaching content; Systematic analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

A growing academic literature on internationalization has emerged in the field of higher education (Kehm and Teichler 2007; Zawacki-Richter 2018). Studies find increases in the number of international students globally (Shields 2013), curricular changes (Leask 2013), the growth of cross-border activities, branch campuses and education hubs (Wilkins and Huisman 2012; Knight 2013). And internationalization is practiced differently by institutions with varied student bodies, reputations, resources, and organizational mandates (Friedman 2018). Religion is an important subject improving globalization. Making curricular changes by integrating teaching content with main religions is becoming an international trend. Historically speaking, the way of religious survival and development is to adapt to the society where it penetrates. Both local and foreign religions in China continuously adapt to social development and enrich the connotation of education. Research shows that the essence of Western infiltration of Chinese religion is the infiltration of capitalist spirit, which is the infiltration of capitalist core values [1]. Among them, "capitalist core values" challenges the teaching effect of Ideological and Political Education (IPE), which has "socialist core values" as teaching content. Some scholars propose that universities should follow principles of orientation, subjectivity, integration, and practicality in constructing the network discourse power of Marxist religious views [2]. However, current countermeasures and approaches to resisting religious infiltration in universities confronted simplicity, inefficiency, and lack of universal research [3]. Current research emphasizes the harm of religion to China's ideological security, and reaches a consensus that resisting religious infiltration must be combined with the IPE. The "socialist core values" should be applied to guide and use Chinese culture to infiltrate all kinds of religions in China, and resolutely prevent the infiltration of Western ideologies and consciously resist the impact of extremist ideologies. Some studies advocate that we should make good use of classroom teaching as the main channel to implement ideological and political work throughout the entire education and teaching process [4]. Furthermore, it has been proved logically inevitable to integrate Marxist religious thought into the teaching content of ideological and political curriculum (IPC) [5]. It is obviously necessary to analyze how to integrate Marxist religious thought into IPC teaching content. Therefore, according to the principle of the dialectical relationship between content and form, where the content determines the form, we should first achieve the integration of the teaching content, and then adopt applicable teaching forms to match according requirements. It can be systematically explored from the perspectives of boundaries and environment, system elements and target, structure and function, to integrate Marxist religious thought into the IPC teaching content, give full play to the positive role of religion, optimize the knowledge structure of college students so as to enhance their ideological and political literacy.

2. SYSTEM ELEMENTS AND TARGET OF INTEGRATING MARXIST RELIGIOUS THOUGHT INTO IPC TEACHING CONTENT

System theory is a concept that covers multiple disciplines, mainly studying the patterns, structures, and laws of systems. According to the system theory, everything can be studied as a system. A system refers to an organic whole that is composed of several elements connected in a certain structural form and has certain functions. It includes the four concepts of system, element, structure, and function, indicating the relationships between elements and elements, elements and systems, and systems and the environment.

2.1 Elements of Integrating Marxist Religious Thought into IPC teaching content

The elements refer to the necessary factors, which are the smallest parts of a system. They are part and parcel of the system, and must obey and serve the system as a whole. They should be prepared according to the requirements of achieving the system's goals. The system as a whole is in a leading position, commanding the elements of the system, and playing a dominant role in its existence and development. This requires that when IPCs integrate Marxist religious thought, they should establish a global perspective, integrate teaching content from the perspective of achieving integration goals, better guide various religious ideas, and play a leading role in guiding religious public opinion. The selection, extraction, and preparation of teaching content elements should be conducive to building an evaluation system for anti-religious information warfare, serving the overall goal of enabling college students to systematically master Marxist religious criticism positions, perspectives, and methods. Only when students can actively abandon religion, consciously block campus missionary activities, and resist religious infiltration can we say that the integration of teaching content is successful, able to guide various religious ideas, and play a leading role in guiding religious public opinion.

The main elements of ideological and political course content integration into Marxist religious thought include treating religion in a materialist dialectical manner. On the one hand, religion is not equivalent to belief. Religious belief is not a scientific belief. Religion is discarded by philosophy, and religious belief is discarded by scientific belief. Religious beliefs are opposed to each other: Religion begins as spontaneous tribal religion and develops into later national religion. The Orthodox Church advocates that the Holy Spirit comes only from the Father, opposing the Catholic Church's claim that the Holy Spirit comes both from the Father and from the Son. Protestants do not recognize the traditional doctrines of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church maintains that Mary is the mother of God and believes in purgatory, disagreeing with Protestantism's assertion of "justification by faith". Scientific beliefs, in contrast, are unified: The socialist movement is the true inheritor of the early Christian church; Communism originated from the religious reform and is unified in human liberation practice. On the other hand, religion is an ideology that expresses practical interests. It is a spiritual opium for the working people and a tool of domination for the exploiting classes.

2.2 Target of Integrating Marxist Religious Thought into IPC teaching content

IPC belongs to ideology work, and religion is a kind of ideology, both have common subject. The commonality lies in that they both concern about "where we come from and where we go" and the belief issues of "who I am", "for whom" and "who to rely on". Specifically, "who I am" involves personal identity and sense of belonging. "For whom" emphasizes personal or organizational goals and missions, as well as the meaning and value of struggling for them. While "who to rely on" expresses a concept of social relations and interactions, that is, the mutual dependence, cooperation and mutual assistance among people in society. Some studies suggest that the ways to achieve integration include emphasizing humanistic care, respecting the laws of faith education and the actual conditions of students; improving classroom teaching to enhance the effectiveness of IPC; strengthening campus cultural construction to make Marxist faith education become a way of life and normalized. More importantly, General Secretary Xi has required that the work of united front actively guide religion to adapt to the socialist society. Therefore, it can be seen that the integrating ideological and political teaching content with Marxist religious thought must be carried out in the context of religious sinicization, which can be provided successful path by the sinicization of Marxism.

The Sinicization of Marxism is a process and approach that integrates the basic principles of Marxism with China's specific actual conditions and the essence of Chinese traditional culture. This means that the application of Marxist religious thought in IPC teaching can be adjusted and innovated according to specific conditions, assessment requirements, and the content of various courses, continuously achieving specialization and concretization. At the same time, this path also clarifies the integration of Marxist religious thought with the essence of Chinese traditional culture. We should, based on inheriting and promoting the excellent culture of the Chinese nation, integrate IPC with Marxist religious thought, forming a theoretical system with Chinese characteristics and style.

3. BOUNDARIES AND ENVIRONMENT OF INTEGRATING MARXIST RELIGIOUS THOUGHT INTO IPC TEACHING CONTENT

3.1 Boundaries of Integrating Marxist Religious Thought into IPC teaching content

The system boundary refers to the scope and field involved in the mutual relationship and interaction of various elements of the system. Within this scope, ideological and political course teaching can be organically integrated with Marxist religious thought to optimize teaching content and enhance students' ideological and political literacy. The core of Marxist Religious Thought is Marxist religious view, holds that religion is a social ideology, determined by certain social economy and culture, and changes with the development of social economy. This helps to restrain the teaching applications of Marxist Religious Thought in IPE, and helps students better understand the relevance of IPC to their lives in contemporary society.

Although teaching content cannot be separated from the form that unifies the content elements, the so-called integration of Marxist religious thought here focuses on the content, without involving the teaching form of IPC. Meanwhile, there is a difference between Marxist religious thought and Marxist religious view. Marxist religious thought includes Marxist religious view as its core content, mainly the ideological system of Marx and Engels' application of dialectical materialism and historical materialism to the study of religion formation. It does not include the later ideas developed with practice, nor does it include policies such as freedom of religious belief and the separation of education and religion. In terms of connotation, Marxist religious thought is the religious thought explicitly stated in Marx and Engels' relevant discussions. In terms of extension, it contains Marx's religious thought and Engels' religious thought, rather than their intersection. Some studies suggest that in the education of Marxist religious view, it should be achieved by adding basic theories of Marxist religion, knowledge of religious policies and laws, and basic religious situation to the teaching materials of IPC. Here, as far as "adding" is concerned, it cannot enhance the effectiveness of IPC, but only increase the teaching burden. Integration is better than simple "adding". On the one hand, IPC teaching content must integrate all Marxist religious ideas, but not all IPCs must integrate. Only when it is necessary and can be integrated can the necessary teaching content be generated. This requires each ideological and political course to analyze the specific situation of teaching content, rather than forced integration. On the other hand, it is necessary to fully grasp Marxist ideas about religion, and to achieve integration, Marxist religious ideas cannot be abstractly preached. Otherwise, it will only draw unnecessary attention. If it is not conducive to the explanation of the original ideological and political course content, and only inserts or adds, it is a failure of integration, which confuses the boundary. It is better to open a separate Marxist religious course.

3.2 Environment of Integrating Marxist Religious Thought into IPC teaching content

System environment refers to the external conditions and factors in which ideological and political course teaching integrates Marxist religious thought. These external conditions and factors include social environment, cultural environment, educational environment, etc., which have an impact on the way and degree of integration. Religion has not yet adapted to socialist modernization, and religious infiltration has caused the loss of integrity and trust crises. There are researches showing that China has an increasing proportion of religious students, and the internet penetration of religion also poses multiple threats to ideologies, requiring the enhancement of cultural soft power, the strengthening of online public opinion guidance, and the ability of college students to distinguish right from wrong and resist religious internet penetration [6]. The current environment obviously requires that the integration enhancing scientific beliefs against religious infiltration, so as to guide online public opinion. Furthermore, "Speech at the Symposium on Philosophy and Social Sciences Work" listed religious studies as one of the 11 disciplines that need to be "accelerated to improve the supporting role of philosophy and social sciences"[7]. This provides an academic environment for integrating Marxist religious thought into IPC teaching content.

From a materialist dialectical perspective, the boundary of integrating ideological and political course content with Marxist religious thought is formed in the interaction with the environment, mainly reflecting in the interaction with the cultural environment. The cultural environment of IPC is the inclusive and tolerant culture of Chinese culture towards various religions. Looking back at history, besides native religions, foreign religions have also been introduced to China. However, Buddhism, Islam or Christianity have been unable to unify the country, but instead have been influenced by the "harmony in diversity" of China, forming a cultural reality of "let a hundred flowers bloom". In the environment where religious infiltration has become a tool of Western ideological infiltration, the criterion for judging the success or failure of integrating Marxist religious thought with IPC has become whether integrating it can guide various religious thoughts and play a leading role in religious public

opinion. Therefore, to define the boundary, it is necessary to analyze the new changes and trends of religious infiltration, and serve the work of resisting religious infiltration and preventing campus evangelism within the framework of Sinicization of religion. Therefore, the outer edge of the boundary cannot be separated from belief and only focus on culture, so as not to open the door for religious infiltration. Therefore, to construct the boundary, it is necessary to specifically apply the standpoint, viewpoint, and method of Marxist religious thought to help students criticize religion and establish scientific beliefs. What's more, the trend of religious infiltration on campus is that Christianity is becoming the mainstream. Therefore, the main elements must include the development of Christianity by communism, and we must manifest that its main content has been sublated by the communist movement, such as: The objective reality marked by matter is the Lord that can be known; natural laws are the will of God that can be recognized; the truth that marks the conformity between subject and object is the savior that can be seen in practice anytime; the socialist public ownership system inherits and develops the "common use of everything" in the Apostolic Age; dialectical materialism can be actively learned as the Holy Spirit; Communist Party organizations are churches where everyone is equal. The various elements of the integration involved also include teachers, students, teaching materials, teaching methods, etc. Only by analyzing the characteristics and functions of these elements in details, can better integration be achieved.

4. STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF INTEGRATING MARXIST RELIGIOUS THOUGHT INTO IPC TEACHING CONTENT

4.1 Structure of Integrating Marxist Religious Thought into IPC teaching content

The system as a whole has functions that its individual components do not possess. Only when the individual components are organized into a coherent and rational structure can the system function be optimized, achieving a sum greater than its parts. The core of post-structuralism is Marx and Engels' position, viewpoints, and methods in discussing religion. These positions, viewpoints, and methods in addressing religious issues and cross-cultural religious exchanges can be abstracted from their respective discussions and integrated into the Marxist religious thought system. With the guidance of scientific worldviews and methodologies of materialist dialectics, the construction and optimization of the structure can reveal the essence of religion and the objective laws of its emergence, development, and disappearance. This in turn allows for the continuous improvement of the knowledge structure being integrated, maximizing the function of transcending religion. Therefore, the structural center is the scientific belief in the liberation of all humanity, leading to create new teaching structure of IPC.

The structure of IPC mainly consists of ideological and political practice courses and ideological and political theory courses, and Marxist religious thought should also be integrated into the respective courses to form an orderly and rational content structure. On the one hand, through practical activities, students deepen their understanding and mastery of ideological and political theory. By combining various forms of social practice, volunteer service, field investigation, and experimentation, students are helped to apply theoretical knowledge to practical situations, thereby improving their thinking ability and political level. This not only helps students gain a deeper understanding of social, cultural, and political realities through personal participation and experience, but also enhances their sense of responsibility and mission towards the country and society. Additionally, it cultivates non-technical skills such as teamwork, communication, coordination, and leadership. On the other hand, by learning about basic institutions and norms related to religion, students cultivate correct ideological concepts, political awareness, and moral character, promoting their comprehensive development. Through this integration, students not only grasp the correct ideological approach and political stance, but also cultivate their own moral character and civic awareness. Additionally, it helps students establish a correct worldview, outlook on life, and values, enhancing their ideological consciousness and political literacy, laying a solid foundation for their future development. This structure that combines theory with practice enables students to better understand the practical significance and value of religion, improve their ideological consciousness and political literacy, promote overall physical and mental development, and enhance their overall quality and collaborative innovation literacy.

4.2 Function of Integrating Marxist Religious Thought into IPC teaching content

Taking system elements, target, boundaries, environment and structure into consideration, the function of integration should be set to guide various religious ideologies and lead religious public opinion, possessing integral function of transcending religious roles. This requires inheriting the religious research that Marx and Engels pioneered, using the scientific worldview and methodological approach of materialist dialectics to specifically study the role of religion, and clarifying that the negative role of religion is the main aspect. Specifically, examples include the Crusades that caused humanitarian disasters; in life, hoping for the next life causes fatalism, resignation,

and decadence; ideologically, promoting superstition and covering up class conflicts leads to the unconscious maintenance of reactionary rule; and the "Dark Ages" severely repressed human nature, not only selling indulgences, but also persecuting those who pursue free thought. The misfortunes in real life can all be seen as a problem that the integration must handle.

The function of integration should also enable students to see in a materialist dialectical manner that the positive role of religion is the secondary aspect. Although it has undeniable moral deterrence, such as the "Ten Commandments" that require filial piety to parents, it can also advocate for good deeds, such as "loving others as oneself" to mitigate interpersonal conflicts and alleviate the contrast between rich and poor, giving people hope for the future. However, many of the positive roles of religion can be achieved in non-religious ways, even better and at lower cost. For example, cultural education does not necessarily require going to church; schools are more professional. It is better to find friends to study the classics together instead of listening to ministers preach the gospel. It is better to resolve sins and repent by oneself or to turn oneself in to the police rather than go to church to repent. Social evangelism such as disaster relief and aid is surely better organized by social workers, volunteers, or the government. This is also confirmed by the effectiveness of the anti-epidemic efforts in both the East and West. Additionally, one religious positive effect can be achieved by other religions. For example, Christianity in the UK promoted the "Glorious Revolution", and Islam in Iran expelled the king to complete the revolution. China has expelled invaders without relying on religion and achieved industrialization and modernization faster than India through socialist revolution. Of course, if we want to systematically transcend the role of religion, we also need to compare scientific beliefs with religious beliefs based on specific knowledge structures. We also need to comprehensively explore the impact of this integration on ideological and political education teaching, its effect on enhancing students' ideological and political quality, as well as its significance in resisting religious infiltration in colleges and universities.

5. CONCLUSION

The integration of Marxist religious thought into the teaching content of IPC is systematically applicable. It emphasizes the need to use core socialist values and Chinese culture to guide and infiltrate various religions in China, while resisting the infiltration of Western religions, so as to counter the challenges of capitalist core values. The system elements of integration include treating religion in a materialist dialectical manner and focusing on personal identity, goals, and social relations. The target of integration is to enhance students' ideological and political literacy and guide various religious ideas. The boundaries of integration involve analyzing the specific situation and cultural environment, and avoiding unnecessary insertion or addition of Marxist religious thought. The environment of integration includes the need to resist religious infiltration and guide online public opinion, which requires the integration should be carried out in the context of religious sinicization and the sinicization of Marxism, and help students establish scientific beliefs.

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