

# Guiding principles for the specialization and professionalization of college and university ideological instructors in China

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**Abstract:** Based on the global situation, strengthening a country lies in enhancing education, as a robust education leads to a strong country. When it comes to strengthening education, many influencing factors are at play with the building of an ideological instructor team being one of them. The building of the ideological instructor team in our country has been around for more than 70 years and is constantly improving according to the needs of educational development. Since the establishment of the ideological instructor system, its specialization and professionalization have always been important indicators of the ideological instructor team building. Therefore, to do a good job in college education, the professionalization and specialization of ideological instructors is a key link. In the context of the new era, the professionalization and specialization of ideological instructors in China faces many challenges. It is necessary to deeply integrate the needs at the national, school, and individual levels in order to nurture a large number of professional and specialized ideological instructor teams to respond to the needs of the times, the needs of the country, and the needs of the people.

**Key words:** colleges and universities; ideological instructor; specialization; professionalization

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## 1 Introduction

The professionalization, specialization and expert-orientation of the ideological instructor team are important institutional arrangements for universities to implement the fundamental tasks of moral education and talent cultivation. They play a systemic underpinning role in building the ideological and political work system of universities and accelerating the transformation of the role and responsibilities of ideological instructors. The fundamental requirements for the professionalization, specialization, and expert-orientation of the ideological instructor team in the new era include professional competence, professional skills, and expert-driven innovation [1]. The professionalization refers to the ideological instructors taking the ideological and political education of college students as their profession in a given environment and atmosphere. In the process of standardized career development, they steadily promote it according to the laws of career development and may engage in it for a lifetime according to the laws and work standards of ideological and political education for college students. The specialization refers to the process in which ideological instruction gradually becomes specialized and merits corresponding status. This process also means the transition from quasi-specialized,

semi-specialized to fully specialized. The professionalization and specialization of ideological instructors are mutually reinforcing and inseparable. The development of specialization and professionalization of ideological instructors requires them to take into account the needs of national talent cultivation, the overall high-quality development of the school, and the personal development goals. In addition, they should always regard specialization and professionalization as their development goals to truly achieve the goal of cultivating new talents from the ground up in the era.

## **2 Ideological instructors should take into account the development needs of national higher education and integrate specialized and professional development into national development**

With the rapid development of China's economy and society and the continuous expansion of higher education, the demand for high-quality talents is becoming increasingly urgent. Especially as higher education in China enters the stage of universalization, the continuous expansion of enrollment has taken the demand for ideological instructors in universities to a new level. The team of ideological instructors is an indispensable teaching force in China's higher education, and their level of specialized and professional development will affect the quality of talent cultivation in higher education. Therefore, based on the overall strategy of China's modernization path, ideological instructors should integrate professional development into national development, and promote the high-quality development of ideological instructors' team.

The development of universities in our country keeps pace with the times, and so does the cultivation of students. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the development of higher education in China was confronted with a new situation, and there was an urgent need to establish an ideological instructor system in universities. In this context, the ideological instructor system was officially established and achieved initial development nationwide in 1952. In 1966, the ideological instructor team was established in most universities of China. After the reform and opening up in 1978, the ideological instructor system in universities entered a period of rapid development. Since the establishment of the ideological instructor system, the ideological instructor team in higher education in China has made significant contributions to talent cultivation in universities after decades of development. However, the problems of unclear responsibilities and inadequate specialization and professionalization of ideological instructors also gradually emerged. Therefore, in 2005, the Ministry of Education clearly pointed out in the *Opinions on Strengthening the Building of the Team of Ideological Instructors and Head Teachers in Colleges and Universities* that ideological instructors are the backbone of carrying out ideological and political education for college students, as well as the guides for the sound growth of college students. In 2006, the Ministry of Education held a national conference on the building of college ideological instructor teams in Shanghai. This was the first of its kind since the founding of the People's Republic of China. The meeting pointed out that strengthening the building of the ideological instructor team is an essential requirement for adhering to the principle of education as the foundation and moral education as the priority, coordinating the reform, development, and stability of universities, and cultivating high-quality talents. The role, work, job responsibilities, and quality requirements of the ideological instructor team must be clear-cut, so that the ideological instructor team can play a greater role in ideological and political education for college students. We need to improve and perfect the leadership and management system for the building of the ideological instructor team. The ideological instructor team should follow the "dual leadership" of schools and departments and carry out the student ideological and political education and management work model with a focus on the class. In that case, ideological instructors serve as both teachers and management cadres. This meeting highlighted the significance of building a team of ideological instructors and also demonstrated the great importance that China attaches to the building of a team of ideological instructors. Later on, a series of new ideological instructor systems were introduced, providing more comprehensive institutional support for the building of China's ideological instructor team. In the new era, ideological instructors have a new role to play and need to meet the new

development requirements. We have made clear that ideological instructors are the backbone of carrying out ideological and political education for college students, and are the organizers, implementers, and guides of daily ideological and political education and management for college students. From an institutional point of view, this emphasizes the special and important role of the ideological instructor team in promoting ideological and political education for college students, which has further consolidated and enhanced its educational status. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the Ministry of Education has issued the *Provisional Standards for the Professional Competence of Ideological instructors in Colleges and Universities*, which provides clear guidance on the professional development of ideological instructors from various aspects such as job description, career definition, professional level, professional ability features, vocational training requirements, education requirements, political affiliation, professional rules, professional knowledge, and professional ability standards. In 2017, Order No. 43 of the Ministry of Education, *Regulations on the Building of Ideological instructors in Ordinary Higher Education Institutions*, specifically defined the main responsibilities of ideological instructors from nine aspects and provided institutional support at the national level for the specialized and professional development of ideological instructors.

After decades of development, a large number of excellent ideological instructors have been cultivated. But times have changed, which brings new difficulties to ideological instructors in the new era. From a professional perspective, the new difficulties faced by ideological instructors in the new era mainly include inadequate specialization, incomplete policy guarantees, unclear career development plans, lack of professional culture building, and so on [2]. This requires ideological instructors to constantly improve themselves, respond to the needs of national development, the times, and student growth, in order to make student cultivation effective. Firstly, only by following the trend of the times, can the team of college ideological instructors guide college students to have a correct understanding of the contradictions and risks in today's world, the expectations and sustenance of the country for young people, and the expectations and requirements of society for talents. Secondly, ideological instructors need to deepen and expand their responsibilities, constantly expand their work coverage, actively face challenges, and deeply grasp the laws of the growth and development of college students in the new era, in order to cultivate excellent college students for the times and society. Other than that, the new generation of young people in the new era is a digital generation, who have unique pursuits, preferences, and temperament. They are more self-centered in expressing themselves, more autonomous in academia and life, more confident in carrying themselves, and more open in thinking. These characteristics entail higher, more detailed, and more up-to-date requirements for the professional qualities and abilities of college ideological instructors, which requires ideological instructors to deal with them in practice. Ideological instructors need to constantly rise up to the difficulties to educate talents for the country, face real life difficulties head-on, strive to improve their comprehensive professional qualities and abilities, proficiently master national policies and methods of education, work to comprehensively improve the quality of talent cultivation in universities as they seek to cultivate talents with comprehensive development in morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics, and labor education for the country.

### **3 Ideological instructors should focus on the fundamental task of cultivating students with morality in schools, and integrate specialized and professional development into school development**

Cultivating students with morality is the fundamental task of education. As an important component of university teachers, ideological instructors should always focus on the fundamental task of cultivating students with morality in schools and integrate specialized and professional development into the development of schools. For students, having an excellent ideological instructor is a great blessing in life. Ideological instructors must build their own character before they

can cultivate the character of students. Teacher professional ethics are the foundation and must-have quality of an excellent ideological instructor. Good educational ethics require ideological instructors to always maintain a high reverence for the responsibilities in the teaching profession [3].

As is well known, China attaches great importance to the specialization and professionalization of college ideological instructors and has improved the relevant systems for the building of the ideological instructor team, providing policy basis for the management of college ideological instructors. Based on the guiding principles of relevant documents on the building and development of ideological instructors, universities adhere to the central link of moral education, and regard the building of ideological instructor teams as an important part of faculty management and building. They continuously improve the professional level and professional ability of the team. This is part of their effort to ensure that ideological instructors have the resources, platforms, support and development space they need. Universities should study and formulate relevant regulations for the building of ideological instructor teams in the light of the circumstances of the school, perfect the requirements for the evaluation of the titles of ideological instructors, complete the system for recruiting ideological instructors to further promote the professional development. Universities should incorporate ideological instructor training into the training program of the teachers, actively carry out pre job training, specialized training, advanced training, etc., covering all in-service and full-time ideological instructors, continuously increasing the quantity and quality of the training programs. Besides, universities should actively build platforms to enhance the quality and ability of ideological instructors, such as ideological instructor quality and ability competitions, the ideological instructor of the year competition, the studio for outstanding ideological instructors, paragon projects for ideological work, etc., so that ideological instructors with experience, management skills, research ability, and educational achievements can achieve better development, produce results at work, and elevate experience into science. Over the years, the team of ideological instructors can demonstrate their unique value in the reform and development of universities, as well as talent cultivation.

Universities should provide ideological instructors with room and resources for their growth and development. Ideological instructors should look at the bigger picture of the development of the school, integrate specialized and professional development into the building of the school, and make contributions to the development of the school. Ideological instructors need to strictly implement the school's various rules and regulations regarding the education of students and fully utilize various resources of the school to continuously improve themselves. Specifically, ideological instructors should actively participate in the management and decision-making of the school, providing suggestions and support for the development of the school. They can understand the development status and needs of the school by participating in school management meetings, major events, and so on, providing useful references and suggestions for the school's development. At the same time, ideological instructors should make sure they leverage their professional advantages and practical experiences to do a good job in managing and serving student and provide better support and assistance for the development of the school. Ideological instructors should actively promote the reform of education and teaching in schools to inject new vitality and momentum into the development of the school. Ideological instructors can promote educational and teaching reform in schools by participating in teaching reform projects, promoting advanced teaching concepts and methods, and other means. In addition, attention should be paid to cultivating students' innovative spirit and practical ability to provide better support and assistance for the education and teaching reform of schools. Ideological instructors need to strengthen cooperation and communication with other departments to jointly promote the development of the school. Cooperation and communication with other departments can be strengthened through establishing cooperative relationships and jointly carrying out activities. It is worth mentioning that many ideological

instructors have rich experience and effective methods in education. This type of ideological instructor should pass on and share experience with newly hired ideological instructors, helping them grow faster to better cultivate talents for the school.

At the national and school levels, great emphasis should be placed on improving the specialized and professional level of the ideological instructor team. Ideological instructors should have a clear understanding of this, be aware of the opportunities and challenges for ideological instructor development, the prospects for the specialization and professionalization of ideological instructors, and actively work with the school to implement the fundamental task of cultivating students with morality.

#### **4 Ideological instructors should identify goals for their personal improvement, and incorporate specialized and professional development into student cultivation**

With the continuous expansion of higher education and the deepening of educational reform, the role and status of college ideological instructors are increasingly valued. As ideological instructors, we should not only pay attention to the comprehensive development of students, but also constantly improve our professionalism and ability. Therefore, ideological instructors must identify goals for their personal development, integrate specialized and professional development into student cultivation, and truly cultivate students to meet the needs of the country, the people, and the times.

College ideological instructors are a noble profession with great responsibilities and a glorious mission. Ideological instructors should not only educate and guide students to consciously shoulder the mission entrusted by the times and strive for the mission, but also constantly seek knowledge and progress to meet the needs of student cultivation. To perform their due responsibilities well, ideological instructors must develop strong educational skills, that is, to learn knowledge comprehensively and to specialize in it, which requires ideological instructors to make great efforts. Firstly, strengthening theoretical learning and improving theoretical competence. Theoretical learning is the foundation for improving the professional skills and ability of ideological instructors. Ideological instructors should deeply study the Party's guidelines, principles, policies, higher education theories, student management theories, etc., and continuously improve their theoretical competence. They should pay attention to the combination of theory and practice, apply theoretical knowledge to practical work to improve their practical abilities. Secondly, it is necessary to improve mental fitness and enhance mental adaptability. Mental fitness is one of the essential and basic qualities for ideological instructors. Ideological instructors should improve their mental fitness and enhance mental adaptability by learning about mental health, participating in psychological counseling training, among other methods. At the same time, it is important to focus on fostering one's empathy and listening skills to better understand and care for students and help them deal with mental issues. Other than that, they should expand their work scope to improve comprehensive competitive edge. Ideological instructors should continuously expand their scope of work to cover as much ground as possible so that they can be more competitive in general. They can learn about the latest educational concepts and methods and learn from the successful experiences and practices of other universities by participating in various training programs, seminars, exchange activities, and other activities. They should focus on improving general qualities such as organizational and coordinating skills, communication skills, and innovation abilities to better respond to work needs.

Improving professional competence is the first step in the growth of ideological instructors, and the most important thing for ideological instructors is to apply what they have learned and thought to practice, that is, to integrate their specialized and professional development into the cultivation of students, and to provide better guidance and support for the growth and success of students. First, ideological instructors need to develop personalized development plans. Each student has their own characteristics and strengths, so ideological instructors should make individual-based development plans. By understanding the interests, strengths, and other aspects of students, ideological instructors can provide targeted

guidance and support to help students unlock their potential and leverage their strengths. Second, providing career planning guidance. Career planning is an important foundation for the future development of students. Ideological instructors should provide career planning guidance to students, help them understand their interests, strengths, and career development trends, and guide them to establish correct outlooks on career and life. At the same time, attention should be paid to cultivating students' professional competence and skills and improving their employability. Thirdly, we need to focus more on hands-on classes, which is one of the important ways to cultivate students' comprehensive competence and ability. Ideological instructors should strengthen the management and guidance of practical teaching and provide students with more opportunities and resources to practice. By organizing students to participate in various practical activities, internships, and training, we help them apply theoretical knowledge to actual work and improve their practical and innovative abilities. Meanwhile, attention should be paid to cultivating students' qualities such as teamwork spirit and social responsibility. Ideological instructors should make clear their personal competence and ability improvement goals and incorporate specialized and professional development into student training. They should constantly improve their professional competence and ability by strengthening theoretical learning, improving mental fitness, and expanding work scope. By formulating personalized training plans, providing career planning guidance, and strengthening practical teaching, we can provide better guidance and support for students. Only in this way can we better fulfill our responsibilities and missions to cultivate more outstanding talents for the country.

## 5 Conclusion

In summary, in the context of the new era, building a high-quality, specialized and professional team of ideological instructors is an important guarantee for implementing the fundamental task of cultivating students with morality. It is also an important measure for high-quality development of universities and our goal to become domestic and international "double first class" universities. Ideological instructors should respond to the changes of the times, implement the guiding principles of higher education, and focus on improving their own competence and ability in terms of perceptions, emotions, mindsets, and actions. They should "carry out the up-to-date, systemic and long-lasting building of ideological instructors' competence and ability" [4], always regard specialized and professional development as their lifelong goals, and always consider the fundamental task of moral education their lifelong pursuit.

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## Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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